

Consistent, connected, revitalised



Our core principles

Community

We feel that each young person should belong and have a positive role within their community.

Support

It is our intention to ensure that each young person is equipped and confident to make positive choices.

Equality

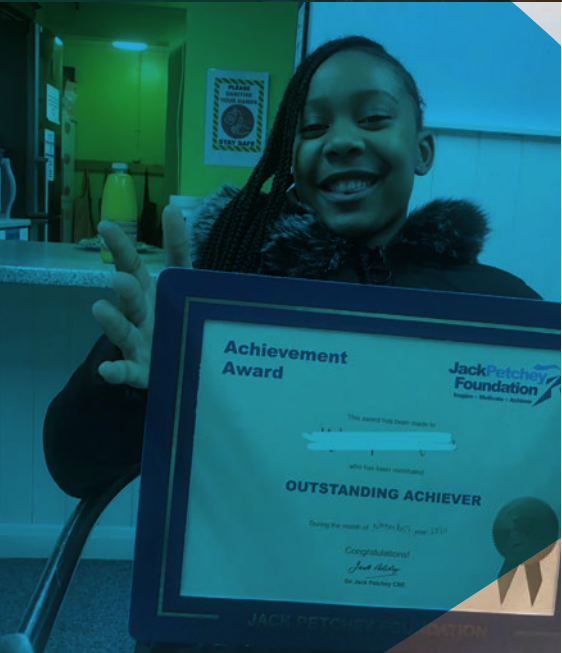
KYC is open to any young person regardless of gender, sexuality, disability, culture or religion.

We are Knights This is what we do

Knights Youth Centre (KYC) has provided a safe, fun, inclusive and engaging place for thousands of young people for more than 80 years.

It is the main provider of youth services in and around the Clapham Park Estate in Lambeth, London, an area of high social and economic need. Many of the 200 young people who come through our doors each week live in the area, but the impact of our work reaches across the borough.

Our work offers continuous and consistent care, transformative opportunities, positive role models and new experiences to young people aged 8-21 regardless of their gender, race, sexuality or disability. In addition to 'standard' activities, we provide sports coaching, offsite trips, regular residentials, specialised work with girls, arts and dance and access to IT equipment. Crucially, we work in partnership with two local schools and undertake targeted outreach with young people who, through disengagement with 'traditional' services, are at risk of involvement with gangs, drugs and anti-social behaviour.



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Chair's introduction and overview

Services fit for the future



The beginning of 2021 looked very different from 2020: we were breaking free of COVID restrictions, making full use of our building and phasing out virtual activities. Today we're fully up and running and we're seeing a healthy increase in young people coming through our doors.

We were pleased to welcome Bell Ribeiro-Addy, MP for Streatham, to the centre to see Girls@Knights and 'Seniors' in action. In addition to meeting members, staff and Trustees, Bell was given a tour by one of our Youth Champions – a member being given specific support to build confidence and take on leadership roles.

Our centre is our biggest asset and we took advantage of lockdowns by improving decoration, carpets and furniture. We now have plans to future-proof it for the decades to come by making it more accessible, adaptable and energy efficient.

We were delighted to welcome four new Trustees to the Board: Hakeem Duckworth-Porter, Deborah Gibbs, Rhiannon Sawyer and Geraldine Tovey. Our trustees bring vital experience and knowledge, and the new additions have strengthened our ability to support staff, provide innovative services to members and meet the standards required of organisations like ours.

We were proud this year to achieve the London Youth Silver award, a quality mark given for the quality of our services as well as the training and support provided to staff.

Thanks to all of you for your invaluable support: our corporate, small business and individual funders, our volunteers, and those who support us with prayer. In particular, I'd like to thank the staff team who work so tirelessly on behalf of local young people. I'd also like to thank our trustees: the incredible work you do behind the scenes keeps us going.

We've celebrated births and marriage in the lives of our team this year, but some of the team have also experienced the passing of loved ones. Knights is a family. I offer my condolences to them in their sadness as they remember those who are no longer with us.

We're well-positioned to build on the successes of the last few years to create more opportunities for young people and help them build skills and confidence. That is, after all, what our work is all about. It's what Knights is all about.

Bless you for your interest in this work - and for your support.

Millicent Grant QC (Hon)

Chair - Knights Youth Centre



Knights does inspiring work with local young people, undeterred by the challenging conditions of an ongoing global pandemic. Its longstanding efforts have helped countless local people reach their potential. I've been so impressed by the range of activities it offers local youth and its strong emphasis on equalities. I'm proud to support the centre as it continues to grow and adapt its services to the needs of children and teenagers in our area.



Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP

A year at Knights

Updates from our engine room: Juniors, Girls at KYC, Inters and a revitalised Seniors section. There's more on our partnerships, too.



2021 was a year of recovery and consolidation - a year we were finally able to look forward and revitalise our services for the years ahead.



Juniors

Friday's Juniors session continues to be a vibrant and welcoming session with an increasing membership.

The members make up young people from across the world including the Caribbean, Africa, South America, Eastern Europe and more. Many of these attend local schools where Knights delivers work as part of the Toolkit programme.

Open to young people aged 8-12 years old, Juniors sessions offer a range of fun, exciting term-time activities alongside a holiday programme. This year we've seen a growing number of girls and boys participating in football and keen to play more competitively. We're working on opportunities to make this happen and have already participated in the London Youth's football festival.

Alongside our staff team it has been great to see some of the older Juniors step up to take responsibility and help out with running sessions. These members have been supporting with a range of activities from cooking and running the tuck shop to coordinating sports and games.



Some of the older members of the group have been stepping up and helping out with sessions. It's all part of them learning they can take responsibility, play a part. It's confidence-building.



Most Juniors attend local schools, but they're young people from all over the world - from the Caribbean to Eastern Europe.



Girls at Knights

Girls club creates a safe space away from crime and violence. We explore topics and themes in ways that challenge members' perceptions of the world. Ultimately this is about teaching life skills, helping to prepare the young people for independent living and the world of work.

Highlights this year included kayaking at Wey Island where the girls could get some distance from the pressures of London life in the big outdoors. On dry land, dance lessons passed on routines the members have since performed at a wedding.

A number of the older girls who asked us for support with CV writing and job applications have gone on to part-time employment. We continue to help the girls with these kinds of life skills.

We encouraged the girls to have an attitude of gratitude during a Thanksgiving dinner. The group includes a number of keen chefs and bakers who we've 'recruited' to help us provide hot, healthy meals for those who may not receive such luxuries at home. Recently we had a 'bake off' to see which group could make the best brownies - Fatima and Joey were more than happy to taste test all the brownies and judge the winners!

The *I am* programme continues to offer targeted short-term mentoring focusing on healthy relationships, safety planning and self-esteem. It offers invaluable interventions when specific issues arise, as well as providing opportunities to help us build rock solid relationships.

It wasn't all plain sailing: the last stages of the pandemic saw some relationships start to break down as we struggled to give young people consistent access to our services. Since then, our team has grown and embraced new specialisms - we're excited to see what's possible from here.

What's next?

Our Girls@Knights Youth Workers are keen to cultivate a programme that allows for vulnerability, empowers members to share challenges and cheer each other on. By using consistent 'check-ins' - time for the girls to gather together and share their challenges and successes - the members have grown to revel in encouraging each other to make positive life choices.



Inters

We now have 20-25 young people attending Inters each week – higher numbers than before the pandemic. Young people are enjoying the centre and bringing more of their friends.

While Inters are a fun, adventurous group that like to try new things, the majority of young people who attend see Knights as a safe zone – somewhere to relax. We provided a diverse calendar of activities: trips to Wey Island, an Aqua Park, Southend and Hindleap Warren; sexual health advice; and team quizzes.

Team quizzes have been going for a few years now and are incredibly popular. Everyone gets involved, it gets competitive, and the winning team enjoy their winning status.



Every term we introduce a new activity designed to boost confidence and interpersonal skills. One recent new game, 'compliment', involved everyone giving someone they don't speak to regularly a compliment. The members threw themselves into it, building each other's confidence and self-esteem.

The positive work continues. We've been working hard to engage younger members in the group who had been struggling to integrate because of barriers between different ages. We're seeing some success engaging older members in the group through giving them greater responsibility. We'll be continuing this approach in coming months.

Seniors

We'd wanted to re-launch sessions for 'Seniors' for some time, but it had been a stop-start process because of COVID restrictions and the challenges of setting up a sustainable project for young adults. Happily, things are now going well.

We are delighted to have relaunched our Seniors sessions on Thursday nights. Since the launch, we've been committed to attracting new members through a creative, contemporary offering.



Our provision includes a wide range of activities including music production, sports and paid employment opportunities. The young people have had the opportunity to run a music studio mentored by an experienced engineer. Members sign up to time slots and produce tracks or instrumentals, learning how to use studio equipment along the way.

Basketball is also a popular activity – teams play at furious pace with music in background. Beyond music and basketball, we've run a varied programme. Food is prepared for and by the young people in every session. Importantly, workshops from Brooke and Safe London helped engage young people with health awareness information.



We've been trying to re-launch sessions for our oldest members for some time. It's been hard, but we're delighted it's now going really well.



Emerging from COVID

While many of us now feel 'free' from COVID, things weren't so straightforward in 2021.

During lockdowns, our staff and trustee management group met regularly to amend and adapt our policies to make sure we operated in line with school and local guidelines. With clear signage throughout the building, it was clear to members that we took safety and hygiene seriously.

In 2021 we were coming out of the restrictive lockdown period and were able to run regular sessions for all sections. Member numbers have grown consistently and we're now seeing numbers exceed pre-COVID levels.

Our Girls programmes have blossomed in particular, including a trip to Wey Island where 13 girls took part in raft-building on the lagoon. There were also two insightful, sensitively-delivered workshops on Sexual Health (specifically on consent and healthy relationships) from Brook.



We went on community walks in and around the Brixton Hill area. These were designed to show a presence within the community and get a better sense for how locals were responding as they emerged from lockdown. Each day was different, but valuable information was gathered. It was clear that many young people had found restrictions difficult, and that being at home for lengthy periods had created greater unease for some.

The foundations of good youth work continue to be important: engaging young people, listening to their views and building relationships. It's only through these behaviours that we can develop mutual understanding of issues, build resilience among young people and, of course, promote positive outcomes.

COVID throwback: how we adapted during lockdown

We were forced to transfer many of our services online. We also delivered food parcels to young people and their families and ran cooking competitions. We were particularly proud our five-week Cultural Food Project, an initiative that highlighted a country every week by asking families to prepare a traditional dish from a chosen country.

247

Hours of youth work provided

54

Sessions delivered to young people

97

Food packages delivered

72

Young people attended sessions

Our work with schools

Our work with schools continues to be an important part of our service. Teachers are extremely busy and the support we provide offers alternative perspectives and activities for young people.

We love bringing our youth service into schools to break up the day for young people and create space for reflection, preparation for future challenges and fun.

The school programme has developed from 'Reset' (which was a mental wellbeing response to COVID and settling back into school) to a 'Toolkit' programme. Toolkit is a transitional schools programme that focuses on preparing young people mentally and emotionally for life at secondary school and beyond.

Since our last report, we've expanded this area of our work. We now work with two local schools located in areas of significant social disadvantage. Families in these areas are at greater risk of poor mental health, relationship breakdown, poor physical health and low self-esteem. Through the programme we're able to engage with these topics and equip young people to tackle some of these issues. Teachers speak highly of the work we do and report they've seen students grow in confidence, improve self-regulation, use strategies to better care for themselves and build healthier friendships.

Our work in schools helps to bridge a gap between families and the club. Young people who wouldn't have otherwise accessed Knights have built confidence with our youth workers at school and now attend club. Transitional days - days where we invite the whole of Year Six from both schools to experience a typical Knights session - further support this.

Activities like table tennis, crafts, sports and encouraging healthy eating provide a valuable service to the community and open doors for Knights to develop relationships with young people. It's through these relationships that we can do vital preventative work to help divert them from potentially bad choices and towards safer ones - and avoid interventions at crisis points further down the line.



The children feel more 'held'. They feel like someone is there for them. I've seen children be better at regulating themselves. I've seen a situation where Knights taught a child breathing techniques, then I've seen a child practising those independently.



Our schools programme isn't just about providing activities for young people - it's about offering alternative perspectives, or ways of thinking about themselves and the world.



We're able to help young people engage with issues they might be struggling with at home, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.



Partnerships in practice

We're determined to become a 'community hub' where a range of services relevant to children and young people are provided every day of the week.

Research and common sense say organisations serving children and families should be located close together whenever possible, and try to wrap themselves around the young person and their needs. Why? It provides a better, more relevant service, and reduces the risk of a young person being passed from pillar to post to get the support they need.

It's this thinking that has seen Knights partner-up with like-minded organisations who share our passion for local young people over the last few years. As a result, we've been able to get closer to the real needs of more young people - and that the centre has continued to be used both day and evening, every weekday.

Our partners are a diverse range of remarkable organisations populated with talented, committed individuals. We have unique relationships with all of them. Some, for example, involve working closely to make sure our services dovetail together at the centre to the benefit of young people. Elsewhere, some partnerships are more targeted. Our work with the Council's Local Area Panels, for example, involves discussing individual young people with specific safeguarding needs, and playing our part in providing mentoring and support services for them as part of a wider package of council services.

Partnerships are always fundamental to organisations like ours, but they're particularly important to us - and to the young people and families we serve. We'd like to thank all our partners, including the council, Ecclesia Ministries, Injera Club, Clapham Consortium, Into University and St. Margaret's, to name just a few. You're a critical and invaluable part of what we do.

Lambeth Council



Into University



Ecclesia Ministries



South London Refugee Association (SLRA)



A new Minibus



In July 2021 we secured funding for our new minibus. Our old vehicle was in desperate need of replacing and was not compliant with new ULEZ regulations in London. We now have a sparkling 2019 17-seater Ford Minibus which can be used for offsite trips and residentials.

With design input from our members, our minibus now has the Knights logo emblazoned across it. It looks really smart: there will be no mistaking who we are now. A special thank you to everyone who donated and supported this project, including Bromley Signs who produced the logos for us.



Accounts and finances

The unexpected events of last 12 months have resulted in a remarkable year financially – in a good way. We ended the year with a surplus of just over £34,000 (some 13% of our income). This was considerably better than we had forecast at the start of the year.

It was no surprise that COVID-19 created challenges in terms of continuing to support young people, but it also had a surprisingly positive impact on our finances. As you might expect, our expenditure was lower than planned because we were unable

to run the normal programme of events and projects both at the centre and elsewhere.

We also benefitted from some £40,000 of COVID-19 support scheme grants alongside small business support funding distributed during the pandemic by the local authority. As a result, we were able to set aside £10,000 towards replacement of our minibus and £60,000 towards the modernisation and redevelopment of the club building.

The full accounts are, as ever, available from us or via the Charity Commission website.



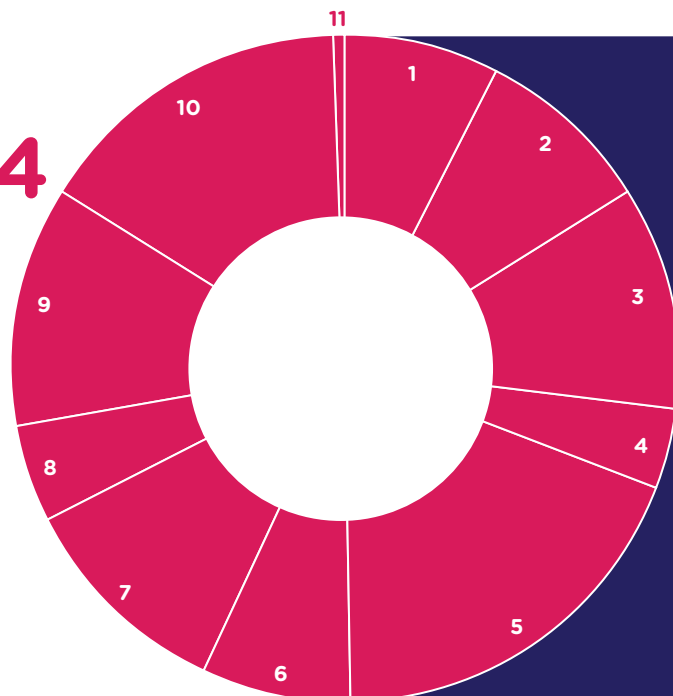
Knights Youth Club, as seen from Streatham Place

Where our money came from...

258,304

Total income

1. Personal donations inc. Annual Review donations and KYC 900	£19,932
2. Lambeth YLC	£21,744
3. Lettings	£28,623
4. Harriet Trust	£10,000
5. BBC Children in Need	£48,418
6. National Lottery	£18,800
7. Young Londoners	£26,891
8. UK Youth Covid-19 grant	£12,200
9. Other grants	£30,243
10. Other income	£40,286
11. Miscellaneous	£1,167

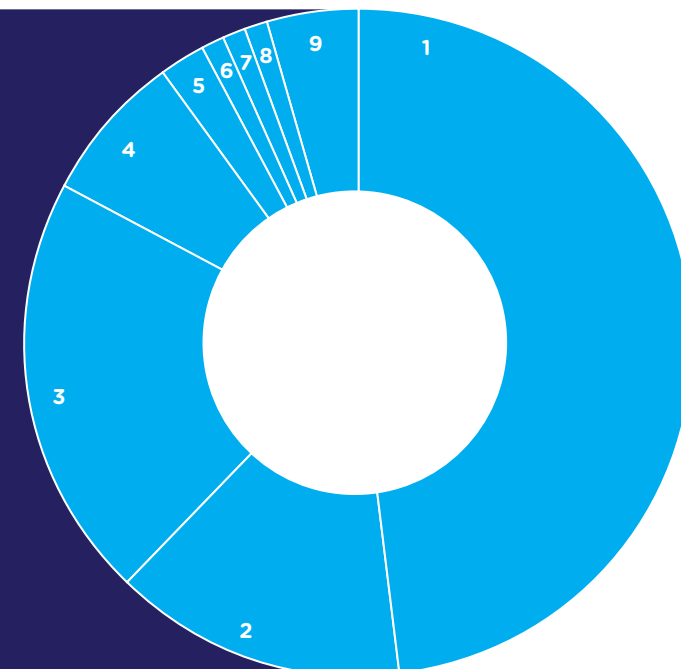


Where our money went...

189,162

Total expenditure

1. KYC Staff costs	£91,036
2. Property costs	£26,673
3. Club activities and projects	£38,879
4. Maintenance	£13,802
5. Insurance	£4,338
7. Minibus	£2,285
6. Telephone, internet and photocopier	£2,025
8. Training	£1,859
9. Other expenditure	£8,265



2021 summer project

An ambitious summer project saw us give local young people eye-opening new experiences both at the centre and further from home.



We delivered an ambitious, diverse and exciting summer programme of activity after a tumultuous 18 months of lockdowns.



Knights delivered a varied five-week programme throughout the school holidays. Whether inside or outside the centre, attendance was primarily offered to regular members.

The programme was delivered after a tumultuous 18 months where regular delivery had been disrupted by the pandemic. Despite the challenges of a reduced staff team, we delivered a full programme which was enjoyed by more than 70 young people.

The summer programmes were funded by GLA Young Londoners Fund, BBC Children in Need, Guys & St. Thomas' Trust (Impact on Urban Health), London Youth and Jack Petchey.

In total, the young people enjoyed 19 different activities amounting to over 150 contact hours. On average, each activity was attended by 14 young people, and some members attended as many as 15 different sessions. Read on for more on the various activities we offered.



Inters

In total, 14 Inters took part in a programme including paintballing, a day trip to Hindleap Warren and an Aqua Park, hiking on Box Hill and a Stop and Search workshop with Black Thrive.

Team leader, Shem, said: 'The Inters summer programme was a huge success because the young people attended all the activities and built really solid relationships. The highlight was the Aqua Park trip. We all had so much fun together - everyone got involved.'

Then we had a great discussion back at Wey Island about what they had enjoyed over the summer.'

The workshop with Black Thrive was great. The group engaged in the subject and shared their personal experiences and opinions. The young people thought the workshop leaders were passionate, engaged and genuine.



Juniors

43 Juniors took part in a summer programme that included Freejumping at the O2, raft-building and kayaking at Wey Island, Go-Karting and BMX riding. It was a very well-attended programme, with an average of 30 young people attending each trip.

Team leader, Ryan, said: 'Staff had time to really get to know the young people. It was great to see the young people from Glenbrook School and the regular Juniors integrate and build new friendships. It was a diverse programme that generated much excitement - many tried things they'd never tried before.'



Girls

17 girls took part in a diverse Girls programme that included Go-Karting, Kayaking, an overnight stay at Hindleap Warren and taking on the BlocFit climbing wall.

Team leader, Ellie, said: 'It was a joy to spend quality time with the girls over the summer. We saw young people overcoming fears and stepping out of their comfort zones to try new things. It was an encouraging environment, and it was great to see the young people impress themselves with what they could do. Our day at Wey Island was a highlight. The whole group had a fantastic time in the sunshine - there was lots of laughter, and we paddled our furthest ever distance down the river.'

A feedback survey suggests all the girls overcame challenges during the summer, with many noting that Knights staff and other young people had helped along the way. In addition to the club-specific programmes, we offered a series of trips and activities that were open to young people across various local clubs.



Breakfast club

We offered a Breakfast Club every Monday morning across the summer programme. Remarkably, this was led by a young person, Olivia, who took full responsibility for the planning and organising as part of her Duke of Edinburgh award. The sessions were co-delivered by one trustee, one young person and one staff member - it was great to see them working together.

Olivia said: 'Organising the breakfast club was a great experience. It taught me about the things that go on behind the scenes. I learnt how to write emails properly and how to plan for every possibility. Overall, it was a fun learning experience and I enjoyed having some proper input into something at club!'





Going offsite

32 Knights members over the age of 11 went to Thorpe Park, a trip aimed at integrating the older Juniors into the Inters age group.

One staff member mentioned Thorpe Park as a highlight of the summer. 'It was great to work with other members of staff and hang out with young people I don't get a chance to,' they said. Elsewhere we took 45 young people to Southend for the day.



Architecture project

20 young people attended a workshop with Foster Size Wilson Architects to begin designing the redevelopment of our building.

Reviewing the workshop, Foster Size said: 'some imaginative designs were produced by the young people, which should help inform the priorities and appearance of future improvements. From the written responses it was clear the toilets are thought to be in need of improvement, the appearance of the centre could do with an update and that generally the site feels small. Many of the designs focused on creative thinking about sports spaces.'

Studio sessions

Tony, a music engineer, delivered ten music workshop sessions at Knights since May 2021. Young people engaged enthusiastically in music production, recording, sound engineering and songwriting.

Participants needed to be creative, respectful and supportive of each other as well as disciplined and willing to learn. Members learned about a range of creative tasks involved in completing a music project including lyric writing, crafting musical arrangements, basic music theory, and sound engineering and mixing.

This enabled all involved to develop their understanding of audio engineering and computer-based music technology. Later, participants

completed the final mixes of their projects to gain a more in-depth understanding of the process. Critically, in taking turns to record one another – and offer each other support and guidance – they all played a role in driving up self-confidence.

We saw individuals who were initially happy to just record begin to take pride delivering a great performance and crafting a piece of art. Tony said: 'it was a pleasure working with these young people and it's something I'd be happy to continue with the aim of further developing participants' music theory, music production and audio engineering understanding. It would be great to have a little investment to bring our studio equipment up to a fully operational level.'





Dance

Teaching street dance for young people at Knights has been an enjoyable and rewarding experience for D'jon, our dance teacher: 'seeing them learn and have fun while doing it has been gratifying to watch as I can see their progress.'

There was a clear highlight from the summer sessions. 'Once I'd taught choreography, I put the children into two groups to gather ideas, create more steps together and then battle their routine against the other team. It was amazing to see what they could come up with in such a short space of time! It ended up looking like an actual performance show once it all came together.'

Going forward, we'll look to extend participation in dance sessions through social media, printed flyers and engagement with parents.



Richard Atkins club trip

Just before the start of the summer holidays, we hosted the entire Year Six cohort from Richard Atkins (approximately 45 students) for a taster session at the club.

This included a short presentation that explored ways to cope with the upcoming transition to secondary school, followed by a variety of activities ranging from designing a club banner and playing football upstairs to laying on a fruit salad bar in the kitchen.



We Rise Collaboration

Ten young people took part in a five-day film project with local partner, We Rise Brixton. The young people were tasked with creating their own short film to fit the following brief: young people in south London often get a bad rep. How can we change the narrative?

The young people took control of the project – generating ideas, delegating jobs, and completing tasks. They decided to engage members of the public in a discussion around stereotypes and how young people are perceived. They were involved in all aspects of the filmmaking from researching and writing a 'treatment' to devising a shot list, filming, and creating an edit plan.

Feedback from the young people was really positive. One commented that she was 'excited to come up with new ideas and see what we can create as a group'. Another found her voice throughout the week and said 'it made me want to join in, try and get more confidence in myself. I don't normally have confidence to share my ideas. It made me feel good about myself.'

As a result of their involvement in the project, 71% young people said they're now getting on better with others. 43% said they had fresh hopes and plans for the future, and that they felt they were better able to overcome challenges. 57% felt safe and supported.



Learning and improving: getting feedback

39 young people who attended the summer programme voluntarily took part in a feedback survey.

The survey found that 81% rated the programme 'five out of five'. 88% said they tried something new during the programme, and 100% said they felt safe. Suggestions for improvements ranged from having 'more trips' to 'a longer programme.'

100% of the parents completing a feedback survey rated the programme 'five out of five'. 83% said the programme had a significant impact on their child. 100% said their child would continue coming to Knights in the new term. One parent said: 'My son isn't a social person, but integrating with the staff and teenagers at Knights has increased his confidence. The staff are fantastic role models and a brilliant support network. The workshops they put on are very informative and enable my son to understand a world he's not part of.'

Knights memories



We were pioneers. Knights was the first Youth Centre in this part of London. We tried. We made mistakes. We learnt from them.

John Corfield

50 years a youth worker

John Corfield played a critical role in Knights' earliest years some 85 years ago. Here's an extract from some extended memoirs of this time at the centre.

In 1930, aged 16 years, I had my first experience of true poverty while helping at a Children's Mission in a poor part of Camberwell. While my family weren't well off, we owned our home and I was working in insurance in the City of London. The children I encountered had no shoes and would fight for a penny or any food that was going free. I was committed to trying to help.

Time rolled on. Having moved to Streatham Hill, I started teaching a class of boys at the Sunday School at All Saints Church in Clapham Park. Games on the Common with the local boys followed. These more casual interactions - and seeing something of their homes - opened my eyes to something: they had nowhere to play except the streets.

Sunday school wasn't going to interest them for very long. So, in 1936, me and three others started the first Boys Club in the area. It was called the Knights Boys Club and we started with 11 ten year-olds. It grew quickly soon we had one hundred young people of all ages attending, including a senior club of 30 or so very tough lads, including barrow boys.



We were pioneers. We tried. We made mistakes. We learnt from them. There were many problems, and we must have been a great trial to the local Vicar as we used the Church Hall facing Brixton Prison in Lyham Road. We soon joined the London Federation of Boys Clubs who had clubs in the East End, Camberwell and the Docklands.

The work was growing, and it became obvious to us that we'd need our own premises. We started to collect money and raised £50 in three months. With that £50 we purchased an old four storey house, 5 Streatham Hill, for £2,000, with a £1,400 building society mortgage and the rest in private loans at £50 and £100 each. The old house had a coffee bar, games room, chapel, table tennis room, workshop, library and much more. I was Club Secretary, fundraiser, and the work of the club was all done by volunteers.



The outbreak of war in 1939 saw more than one hundred members of the club, and most of the Leaders, join the forces. But the Club never closed, opening every night with the support of wives and sisters including Margaret Smith and Kath Beckett. We even were able to hold several short services on some Sundays in local Estate Air Raid shelters. Although many of our younger members were evacuated, the Club continued play an important role in their lives when they drifted back - as well as for those fighting abroad when they came home on leave.



Everything was in short supply. There were food permits for rationed goods, and we even had to get a permit to buy Table Tennis balls. We bought blankets because members often slept the night in the basement due to air raids. The Club was damaged five times including a direct hit on the 'gym hall' (which we had converted out of an old garage). For some periods the ladies ran the canteen with no gas - the mains had been destroyed - but they managed to provide a two course dinner plus a cup of tea for a shilling (now 5p).



Early in the war Bill Cartwright, one of our leaders, was killed overseas. Six other lads were killed. Others were injured.

Michael, a Junior and just ten years old, was a really lovely boy in every way. The air raid siren went and, instead of taking shelter, he said he'd go home because his mother was alone and nervous. He only lived 100 yards away in Streatham Hill.

His mother would expect him, he said, and he had time to get home. Unfortunately, outside he saw an elderly lady trying to get over the road to a shelter and, being the kind of lad he was, stopped, took her hand, and began to lead her over the road. With a screaming sound, a 500lb bomb came down in the middle of the road leaving a great crater 12 feet deep.

It left no sign of Michael, or the old lady. It was a terrible disaster. Michael's mother was injured and her home was damaged. The club had suffered damage too. Next to us numbers 1 and 3 Streatham Hill were totally destroyed. The land remains empty today. I could tell many stories of war time youth work, but it was essentially a holding and survival programme. It was nonetheless a great help to young people in some dark days.

In 1946 it was decided to form an Association to develop and expand youth clubs and I was appointed the Secretary of the Knights Association of Christian Youth Clubs. That year four new Clubs were formed: the Streatham Boys Club, the Streatham Hill Boys Club, the Balham Boys Club and the Crossroads Girls Club (as a twin to the Knights Boys Club).

In the years that followed others were formed, namely the Tooting Boys Club, Wandsworth Central Boys Club, South London Boys Club and Clapham Boys Club. I continued to be active in Club work up until 1950. Maurice Smith took over the reins at Knights from me in 1946, and as Secretary of the Association in 1950.

He did magnificent work, largely creating the new Knights Youth Centre in Streatham Place and the Clapham Youth Centre in Lyham Road. Some of the original clubs merged with those Centres, some died, and some appeared with new leaders elsewhere.

No history of the Knights Club would be complete without reference to George Allard who took over as Chairman following the death of Willie Brooks. George, who was a staunch Christian, was a very capable and practical man, and his help in keeping the old Club together was of tremendous value. When the new Knights Youth Centre was planned and built in 1959, his advice and experience were incredible.

I spent many years helping fundraising for the new building which cost some £15,000. The old house was decrepit and sold to the Council for £3,000. A grant of £5,000 came from the Ministry of Education. Maurice led the fundraising and was supported by many of the past members who later became leaders in the work. In the years that followed great service was given by Leslie Long, Ron Saunders and Jim Drury. Other well-known members who became full time Leaders were Brian Longman and Mervyn Wright.

Have you enjoyed John's walk down memory lane? If you'd like to read John's full story, head our website www.knightsyouthcentre.org.uk/history

Leadership and legends: my Knights memories

Dave King's Knights journey began nearly 70 years ago. Here he explores just what kind of impact Knights and its community has had on him - and his hopes for the future.

With Knights Youth Centre fast approaching its 90th birthday, I was delighted to be approached to reflect on my time there which began almost 70 years ago. I wasn't a Knights member initially - I got there by way of Balham Boys Club, which I joined aged 12 in 1956. At that time Balham Boys Club was under the leadership of Jim Drury, Fred Bradford and Pete Parry. When Balham Boys closed, it was a natural progression to move up the road to join our friends at Knights.

When I first came to the Centre I found all the things that any young person would find exciting. From sports to holidays and outings to football tours, being a part of Knights gave me opportunities I could never have had otherwise. More importantly, these opportunities helped to develop me as a person.



In our era, Jim Drury and Ron Saunders were instrumental. They moulded me as a Christian - a major step on my life's pathway. In addition, Maurice and Margaret Smith were fantastic leaders who did a brilliant job of keeping Knights running. They were an inspiration to so many, over so many years. They were absolute legends, and they stand at the very pinnacle of all those I've ever met.

Having friendships that span 70 years is incredibly unusual, and I count myself very lucky to have made friends for life at Knights. I still enjoy meeting up with the people who have shaped me to be the person I am today. I look forward to more great times and future meet-ups - all credit to Chris Saunders and the family for drawing us together. You are all in my thoughts and my prayers.

Looking ahead to Knights' future, I'd love for the club to continue to set a Christian example and provide help to all local young people who enter its doors in these very challenging and changing times.



Looking to the future

It's been a great year for Knights - the club, our people, our members, our community. But what's next?



In 2021 we were able to look forward and revitalise our services. But what about 2022? What about the longer term?



Looking to the future

2021 was a year of recovery and consolidation at Knights. When we all moved beyond the pandemic, we were finally able to look forward and revitalise our services for the years ahead. So what's the long-term vision?

Our core work will continue to focus on delivering consistent care, transformative opportunities, positive role models and new experiences for young people aged 8-21 regardless of their gender, race, sexuality or disability.

We'll continue to offer a range of additional activities including sports coaching, offsite trips, regular residentials, arts and dance, access to IT equipment and vocational training. Our specialised work with girls will be ongoing, and we'll continue targeted outreach with young people at risk of involvement with gangs, drugs and anti-social behaviour. Sadly, the importance of this work is undiminished.

We'll continue to explore new ways to make sure we act as a community hub for children and young people, laying on a broad range of services every single day.

We have some more specific plans, too. A big focus for us will be to consolidate improvements we've made in our weekly 'section work'. There will be a particular emphasis on our rapidly evolving Seniors section, where our structured programme on Thursdays is proving popular. As we get to know these young people better, we'll begin to think about training and leadership programmes.

Finally: we'll build our emphasis on our own one-to-one programme with girls in and outside schools. We'll continue to monitor its effectiveness in improving outcomes for girls and maintain (as far as possible within our resources) our detached work - vital work that provides spontaneous and safe activities within the Clapham Park Estate.



We hope you've enjoyed reading this report.

A quick word of thanks. Firstly to EScO, who have printed and posted this report for more than a decade. This year, they've distributed it electronically for us. Finally, we'd like to thank designer David Watson at London creative agency Radley Yeldar. Thanks so much to both for your invaluable input.

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