What has our organisation been doing with the grant:

Thanks to the investment from Tudor Trust into our Core Costs, our Senior Management Team have been able to continue meeting fortnightly and address the following urgent organisational priority issues:

* **Security of tenure:** Our CEO has been liaising extensively with Officers and Members from Newham Council with a view to them granting new 35 year leases on both our facilities. A detailed proposal has been put forward for consideration and we hope to have a resolution to this long standing issue in the coming months.
* **GDPR Compliance:** Our Operations Manager completed several GDPR training courses to ensure we had a clear understanding of the new laws and then developed our draft privacy/data protection policies, liaised with our monitoring software provider to address concerns, devised detailed action plans and delivered training for our staff and trustees.
* **Staff training**: We delivered budget management training to upskill our team and bought in training on supervision, wellbeing, customer service and dealing with difficult behaviour.
* **Community consultation analysis:** we presented a report to our board highlighting new trends and a comparisons following our 2018 community consultation exercise. The SST then brainstormed practical ways to address these new trends and our Fundraising team have been using the findings to shape new project proposals going forward.
* **Risk register and risk appetites:** We worked with our board to create these essential documents that have since been used to steer strategic resourcing decisions.
* **Policy development:** We have supported the board to refresh and create new policies (for Whatsapp, money giving and ex-offenders recruitment) in line with changes to best practice guidelines. We lead ‘Policy Spotlights’ at monthly All Staff and Project Coordinator meetings.
* **Strengthening our safeguarding:** Although external assessors from NCVO’s “Trusted Charity” Quality Mark team confirmed we already meet the best practice requirements, we conducted an in-house review of our safeguarding procedures then restructured the reporting routes and created an action plan to achieve our new ‘zero tolerance risk level’ in line with trustees’ requirements in the risk appetite policy. We have also recruited a safeguarding expert trustee.
* **Review of strategic partnerships:** BDCA’s SMT have been working with our Strategy and Fundraising Subcommittee to examine the benefits and risks of our current partnership arrangements with West Silvertown Foundation. A strategic working group have been meeting in recent months with a view to drawing up new terms that work better for both organisations. We have also strengthened our partnership with another local charity called Alternatives Trust East London by seconding a member of staff and submitting 2 joint funding bids to develop work with children in need.
* **Staff wellbeing**: Our staff go above and beyond, often battling unjust systems and supporting people suffering multiple layers of disadvantage so we have expressed our appreciation by organising staff socials, carried out consultations into the desired frequency of their 1-2-1 support meetings and gained trustee approval to pilot staff wellbeing days in 2019 so people can now enjoy one extra day off each year to do a morale boosting self-care activity.
* **Marketing and PR**: We have recruited a locally based Marketing Consultant as a volunteer to work on social media campaigns to promote individual giving and volunteer recruitment, refreshing written content of our publicity materials and developing a press contact list.
* **2 x SMT away days:** We have focussed 2 x SMT away days on strategy implementation and raising standards in the organisation.

Evidence of grant impact so far:

* Statistics generated from our Upshot monitoring software are presented in our attached Annual Impact Report, along with photos, user quotes, case studies and financial breakdowns. Key highlights include: 87,226 recorded visits to our venues (16% increase on previous year), 6,702 hours of community projects delivered, 2,417 unique registered attendees and 43,179 total participations. Our 180 volunteers gave £91,690 worth of hours (when calculated at London Living Wage), equal to a 14% increase on previous year.
* The Social Investment Consultancy produced a report titled ‘Social Value of Bonny Downs Community Association’ (January 2019) that found that our arts and sports provision saved the NHS £39,832 and our employment support saved the Council £184,000.
* We secured funding to invite external impact assessors Compost London to evaluate both our Elders and Poverty Response Projects this year. Highlights from their positive reports include:
  + *“Well-established, well-respected and effective initiative. Feedback from users, volunteers and staff is overwhelmingly positive. The project’s impact is clearly life changing for some and significant to many.”*
  + *“Volunteers and users seem often to be amazed at the extent of their enjoyment of and commitment to the project. They may have come thinking they would find something to do but are surprised that they have found is a sense of belonging.”*
  + *“The model is highly relational and responsive to individuals’ needs. It provides a warm, genuinely welcoming environment where people feel safe, valued, and respected, have their basic needs met, their dignity restored, and begin to build trusting, working relationships with staff.*
  + *“Staff are vocationally-minded, creative, focussed on the individuals with whom they work rather than rigid targets and processes, and committed for the long-haul.”*

What difference has the grant had?

We are pleased to report that the funding has enabled us to make good progress towards our overall strategic aim of ‘developing our operational and financial capabilities in order to be a stronger organisation, fit to develop the assets and meet the needs of our vibrant community’. Key achievements around developing our operational capabilities:

* Successfully embedding the more distributive leadership model across the organisation through fortnightly Senior Management Team (SMT) meetings, giving clear roles to each SMT member and enabling our CEO to go from 16 to 6 direct reports and delegate attendance at some trustee committees to other members of the SMT.
* Tudor Trust investment has freed up our CEO’s time to focus on BDCA by enabling us to recruit a part time Development Support Worker to handover delivery of tasks in our Service Level Agreement with West Silvertown Foundation. This staff member unfortunately had to move on last month, but a replacement has been now been recruited to support this arrangement.
* Offering increased capacity and opportunities to the workforce e.g. paid hours to coordinate events and our Admin Assistant is now Centre Manager at our Pavilion site 1 day per week.
* Improved staff support systems through roll out of termly Project MOTs, new line management structures and line management training for all supervisors.
* Recruitment of 2 new trustees who have helped to plug gaps in our board’s current skillset (Safeguarding and Legal expertise), bring project user insight and lived experience of living locally and also help us better reflect the diverse community we serve.

Other key achievements focussing on increasing the resourcing and financial opportunities for BDCA by expanding and developing our traded and fundraising services and activities include:

* Achieving 7% growth increase percentage of earned income compared to previous year.
* Securing City Bridge Trust ‘Stepping Stones’ grant to recruit expert consultants from The Social Investment Consultancy to create robust business plan for new nursery enterprise.
* Positive meetings with Early Years Foundation and Newham Council’s Early Years team and secured some funding for our capital project to extend our children’s centre into a nursery.
* Positive lease meetings with Newham Council’s community building team have made big step towards security of tenure, improving our ability to secure low cost loans and capital grants.

Key differences our organisation has seen in the past 12 months:

* Rohksana Fiaz was elected Mayor for the London Borough of Newham in May 2018. Her background in the third sector and genuine passion for tackling housing inequality and lack of social services has already caused significantly improvement in relationship between the statutory and charitable sectors. We have given her a tour of our premises and had a positive meeting regarding extension of our facilities leases. We have also secured large commissioning grants for our rough sleepers’ support and advice centre this winter.
* Newham now has the higher number of homelessness in London. The new Homelessness Reduction Act that came into law in April 2018 forces local authorities to help to prevent and relieve homelessness for all people, not just those who meet the old priority need criteria. But having axed their face-to-face support centre even more people are slipping through the net. We have responded by extending our advice centre from 1 to 3 days per week in order to assist vulnerable people to complete the new complicated housing support application form.
* East Ham South already had a severe lack of Early Years childcare (1 place for every 32 children) but then one of the 3 local nurseries walking distance from our centre closed in 2018. The government have also announced plans to expand their childcare subsidy scheme so nursery demand in our locality has never been higher.
* Having struggled to recruit a Manager with the required business skills as well as passion for food and community, we tendered out the running of our café facility to an external social enterprise catering company in order to reduce stress and financial risk for our charity.
* Thanks to recent grants, we have taken on new staff (Garden Coordinator, Sports Coordinator, Sports Apprentice and Volunteer Coordinator). An Elders Advocacy Manager starts this month.
* We restructured the staffing of our social enterprise After School Club childcare service and have supported 2 members of staff (previous service users as well) to step up into Management roles.

What our organisation has learnt as a result:

* Cross sector working with statutory housing team is challenging but can be mutually beneficial. For instance, the council commissioning team often pushed for unreasonable application timescales then had significant delays in their confirmation of contracts. However, we are surpassing our targets (achieved 3.5 times our target number in pilot period).
* We were aware that we needed to extend our current Children’s Centre in order to comply with Ofsted space ratios and make a nursery business viable so had initial plans drawn up. However, following advice from the London Early Years Foundation, we realised that we needed to increase the nursery extension floorplan further in order to boost profitability.

What are your priorities for the future?

* Continuing to deliver against our “Time fro Change” strategic plan.
* Seeking continuation funding to support delivery of our much needed elders and Poverty response projects.
* Negotiate a successful resolution to our long standing premises lease issues.
* Securing funding for the Children’s Centre extension and launch of the social enterprise nursery is also crucial. We will resubmit our delayed application to Power to Change once lease is extended. We are also waiting for verdicts of our Stage 2 Veolia application (£75,000).
* Our trustees are continuing to work on the Governance Enhancement Strategy produced by expert consultant Michelle Hill in 2017 and have adverts out online for new board members with skills in Campaigning, Property and Fundraising.
* We are also working with The Social Investment Consultancy (TSIC) to enhance our ability to evidence our impact. We have already begun capturing baseline self-assessment user surveys since September 2018 so will soon be able to measure the distance travelled by regularly repeated the survey as they attend services over time.
* We will continue working with TSIC to carry out thorough feasibility studies for other income generating social enterprise projects: grounds maintenance and gardening service, charity shop and day centre for elders with higher-level care needs.
* Continuing to diversify income streams through encouraging individual giving, legacy pledges and sponsored events.
* We will continue to explore the potential benefits or otherwise of merging or parting ways with West Silvertown Foundation.

On behalf of BDCA, the SMT would like to express our sincere gratitude to Tudor Trust for investing in our charity’s growth over the past year.