

The Vision

Thriving communities that are engaged in shaping and improving health and wellbeing with their families, friends and neighbours, see the places below.

1 Mozart

Hosted by Paddington Development Trust (PDT)
 • Office 1, Beethoven Centre, Third Avenue, W10 4JL
 • Clemence: clemence@pdt.org.uk or call: 07849 266791

1 Westminster Maternity Champions Borough Manager

Hosted by PDT
 • Office 1, Beethoven Centre, Third Avenue, W10 4JL
 • Emma: emma@pdt.org.uk or call 07522 499066

Website for all PDT projects:

www.pdt.org.uk/online-events-calendar

3 Westbourne

Hosted by PDT
 • Grand Junction at St Mary Magdalene's, Rowington Close, W2 5TF
 • Lina: lina@pdt.org.uk or call: 07801 749828

4 Church Street

Hosted by PDT
 • PDT office, Church Street Neighbourhood Centre, Cherwell House, Penfold Street, NW8 8PT
 • Layla: layla@pdt.org.uk or call: 07546 642389

2 Harrow Road

Hosted by WECH (Walterton & Elgin Community Homes) with Maida Hill Place
 • Maida Hill Place, 2-4 Fernhead Road, W9 3ET
 • Vonley: vonleychampions@maidahillplace.co.uk or call: 07539 932320

5 Churchill Gardens and Tachbrook

Hosted by Abbey Community Association
 • The Abbey Community Centre & Association, 34 Great Smith St, London SW1P 3BU
 • Churchill Gardens Youth Club, Churchill Gardens Road, SW1V 3AJ
 • Ian: ian.corpuz@theabbeycentre.org.uk or call 07597 487812
 • Website: www.theabbeycentre.org.uk/community-champions



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Programme Manager
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Introduction

Our Community Champions programme has always had a vision to achieve communities that are engaged in shaping and improving health and wellbeing with their families, friends, neighbours and wider community.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the disparities in those most severely affected, this has become more important than ever. Rewind a year and few of us could have imagined the changed world in which we would find ourselves.

Community and Maternity Champions come from some of our most diverse communities and have risen heroically to this challenge. They have been working tirelessly throughout this pandemic to offer support and assistance; mobilising and responding flexibly to the needs of their communities and, especially, the most vulnerable residents within those communities - all with empathy, humour, passion and creativity.

This year's report highlights and recognises the enormous efforts and contributions of our Champions in its many different forms throughout the pandemic. To really see those efforts brought to life spare a few minutes to view the film we made for our conference in November 2020:

[Champions during COVID: 2020-21](#)

Read on to catch a glimpse of how our Champions flexed and redoubled their efforts to support their communities, and continue to do so, through the most challenging of times and, for some, personal loss and tragedy. This report offers a few highlights from a relentlessly busy year and puts a spotlight on just three of our Community and Maternity Champions. The data infographics meanwhile illustrate the spike in reach achieved as a result of the extensive programme of online activity that has taken place.

Lesley Derry

Lesley Derry
Community Champions
Programme Manager



Community and Maternity Champions help safeguard their neighbourhoods from COVID-19

The Community and Maternity Champions swung into action as soon as the pandemic hit, undertaking the steepest of learning curves while moving activities online and continuing to share accurate public health messages in their neighbourhoods:

- Supporting vulnerable residents with phonline and, when possible, socially distanced face to face support
- Helping with shopping, prescription deliveries, food banks, food distribution networks and digital support
- Supporting the mass vaccination sites, community pop-ups and vaccine bus
- Aiding council and NHS response by feeding back insight from residents

One Champion, Comfort, who volunteered at the RHS Lindley Hall vaccine hub commented: *“It was good to be able to volunteer and to be given the opportunity to receive the vaccine. I felt great to be part of the millions of people who had received the vaccine jab. Glad also to say, I didn’t have any*

reactions after and would encourage everyone to take the vaccine when offered.”

Between February and March 2021, all the Community Champions’ projects took part in hosting and promoting a much appreciated series of online **Vaccine Community Conversations** over Zoom. Delivered in partnership with North West London NHS and some very proactive GPs from the **Community Immunity** initiative, the twelve sessions were attended by over 360 residents from some of our most diverse neighbourhoods and with the highest health



inequalities in our boroughs. Three of these were delivered



in Arabic with an Arabic-speaking GP, to some 91 residents. This session was recorded and edited offering a usable online resource for our Arabic-speaking communities: [Arabic COVID-19 workshop delivered by Dr Dina Ashraf - YouTube](#)

Many attendees were hesitant about having the vaccine and most had an array of concerns, anxieties and clinical questions which the GPs were able to help with. Feedback suggested that most participants left the sessions more likely to take up the vaccine as a result of these conversations:

“It was a good session, and my question was answered like many others here so thank you for organising this.”

“ Thank you so much everyone! Very insightful and helpful. ”

“An excellent and very informative session - an hour seemed too short thank you so much to the host, organisers and speakers” ... “Thank you, everything was clear and made sense to me and thanks for answering my question.”



‘Rise’, the first virtual Community Champions conference

Our 8th Annual Conference in November 2020 was also our first virtual conference as the programme adapted to a ‘new normal’. Given the title ‘Rise’, it denotes rising through adversity and rising to the challenges, personal and community issues presented by COVID-19.





Going virtual wasn't the only first, for the first time we had Community Champions hosting. Bibiana and Christopher rose to the occasion, providing a perfect co-hosting double act. Cllr Cem Kemahli, Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health at Kensington and Chelsea Council opened the event with warm words and welcomes. Following an action-packed morning, full of fun and tears, Cllr Tim Mitchell, Westminster City Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, closed the event with his reflections and thanks.

In the lead up to the conference the projects had been busy preparing videos, art, poems, photos and spoken word which premiered as films during the event. As these were shown, the chat section of Zoom lit up and showed how moved people were by the performances. Community Champion, Fionalees's Rise Again song performance at the end of the event raised the virtual roof!

[Let Us Rise Spoken Word](#)
[Rise Again - Fionalees](#)

Over 180 delegates logged on to the event, more than half of which were our Champion volunteers, the remainder our partners from all sectors. It was wonderful to see so many of our Champions embracing technology and enjoying the virtual experience.

Peter Merrifield from SWIM Enterprises delivered a thought-provoking keynote speech and Q&A on Black Lives Matter and the disparities amplified by COVID-19 from his research in North Westminster.

Some fun mentimetre evaluation tools were used to sum up how everyone felt about the conference. Comments included: *"What a superb morning, I am so impressed, it is a privilege to be invited to the conference and seeing the journey over the past eight years is wonderful" ... "I can't stop crying it is amazing so moved and inspired" ... This is a fab film and demonstrates the depth and breadth of the work you all do."* ...

"Really beautiful... and such a powerful film to see everything going on. The Champions are incredible."

"This is emotional, I felt like crying with happiness to be part of this."

Take a look at this short film to see the Conference highlights:
[8th Annual Community Champions Conference Highlights 2020](#)



The Numbers

92



ACTIVE COMMUNITY AND
MATERNITY CHAMPIONS
AT YEAR END

4897



VOLUNTEER HOURS
WORKED

5165



AVERAGE NUMBER OF
UNIQUE INDIVIDUALS
REACHED EVERY QUARTER

36260



ATTENDANCES, CONTACTS,
VIEWS FROM ALL FACE
TO FACE AND ONLINE
ACTIVITIES, GROUPS AND
PUBLIC HEALTH CAMPAIGNS



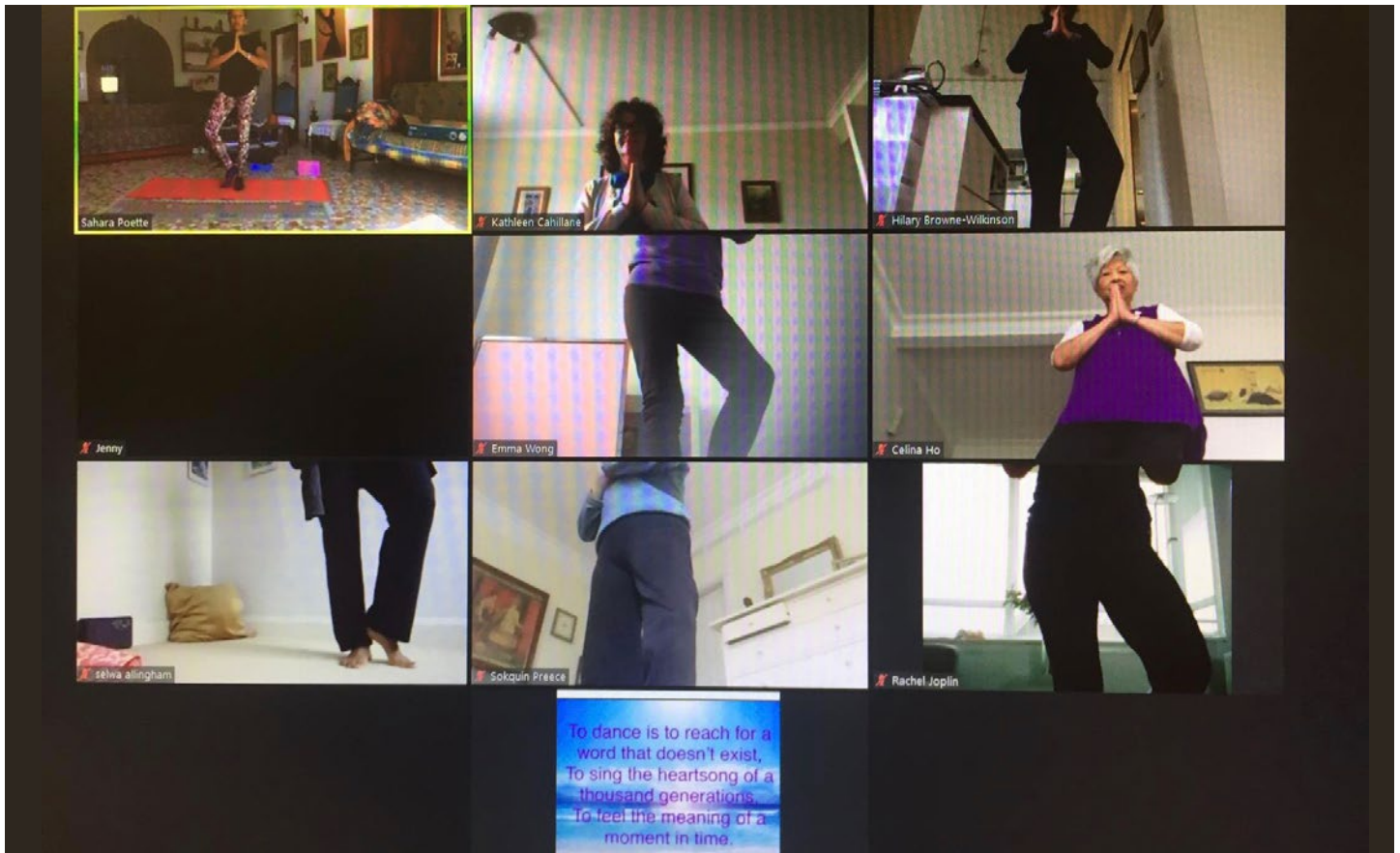
Spotlight on Maternity Champion, Nta

My name is Nta and I became a Maternity Champion in June 2019. I became a Champion because I had two kids, my youngest was starting part time nursery and I wanted to do something during school hours. PDT Employment Team mentioned to me about volunteering in the community which is how I was introduced to the Champions family. My role varies from information sharing to signposting parents or residents to services within the Westbourne area such as GPs or foodbanks. One of my main activities is the parent and baby music session on Friday where I assist with the running of the session with the other Champions and it's fantastic.

The pandemic didn't divide our team, instead we grew stronger and there was a lot of support from everyone. There was a sense of community, of support, love and care from the team as a whole. The managers and project leaders were fantastic. Our team actually grew bigger as we recruited more people during the pandemic. It's been great, it was not as bad as it could have been considering what was going on.

For me becoming a Maternity Champion has opened me to a lot of things. I've not only been part of a wider community I've also learnt new skills and met new people. It's very flexible, I can still spend time with my children and do as much or as little as I want to, there's training and job opportunities if you need it, it's really an endless opportunity. This would be a great door opener for me in the future, all thanks to the Community Champion network.





Yoga for men and women

With the onset of the pandemic Churchill Gardens and Tachbrook Champions moved their popular yoga classes on-line.

The long standing weekly class for women of all ages led to some older men asking for a similar class for them. The over 50s men's class in partnership with Open Age, became a popular addition. Both classes have continued to run successfully over Zoom throughout the year. The benefits to participants in assisting with their physical and mental wellbeing during the pandemic are summed up eloquently by one participant from the Women's Yoga class:

"I benefited hugely from these yoga sessions. Being locked up for months with no balcony or outdoor space and going out for only one hour daily to walk in a park was making me depressed. Yoga moves and meditation greatly helped rebalance my physical and mental health."

A member of the Men's class, Sam, retired from work last year. He lives very close to Open Age's Centre and, pre-COVID, attended the 'cardiac rehab class, but wanted to do something else during the week. In January 2020 he joined the Yoga for Men class and continued online over Zoom including during periods of self-isolation. He enjoys both the physical exercises and mindfulness and wellbeing aspects of the class and appreciates the individual feedback, help and guidance the teacher is able to give. Due to his health conditions Sam is anxious about returning to live yoga sessions but as these restart, he has been reassured that sessions will follow strict guidelines to ensure participants' safety.

Sam reflected,

"These are great sessions and long may they continue. I have pre-existing medical conditions and have been advised to self-isolate for 12 weeks. These sessions really help me to keep physically and mentally healthy."

Antenatal classes go online

Last spring after most of the country had locked down and normal hospital services were at a standstill, pregnant families were left unable to access antenatal classes through the NHS. Westminster and Kensington and Chelsea Maternity Champions managers responded by organising online classes for these families in need.

Three sets of eight classes took place in collaboration with the organisation Pregnant in West London and with Future Men delivering a session specifically for fathers or partners. They covered labour and birth, bringing baby home, breastfeeding, nutrition, emotional health and informed future parents about the current COVID-19 restrictions that would be in place at the hospitals where they would be going.

Each session lasted for two hours so there was time for questions and concerns to be explored. One parent to be commented, *"the classes were very informal and friendly and made us feel like no question is a stupid question"*. The classes always ended with a relaxing yoga and breathing session which all the parents enjoyed.

All participants fed back how extremely useful the classes had been in increasing confidence and feeling less anxious around giving birth and bringing their baby home.

One parent said,

"The breadth of knowledge was what I enjoyed most about the classes."

"These classes were the only opportunity I got to meet other pregnant women."





Spotlight on

Community Champion, Jamirun

My name is Jamirun. I originally became a Community Champion back in 2014, I then went back to work and re-joined in January 2021. I really enjoy all the activities, learning and training we do.

We promote health and wellbeing in our community and inform Westbourne residents of activities available within the area. This year especially has been around informing and educating people about the COVID-19 vaccines and attending sessions with doctors in order to educate ourselves so we could pass that information back to the community.

Having re-joined as a Champion during the pandemic it was a very anxious and frightening time for me as a new member. To my relief, after attending my first monthly team meeting on Zoom, the team were so welcoming, and it was nice to actually talk to familiar faces I had seen in my area. The team are so supportive of each other and always check in when someone is going through a bad time. I have come to think of the Community Champions as my little family.

The thing I like best about being a Community Champion is to be able get out into the community and to be able to talk and listen to people while promoting our activities. There are also job opportunities within PDT and Community Champions are given the opportunity to apply. Now we have a community allotment and we all come together through our love of growing, not only are we growing plants we are growing and forming friendships. I have grown so much in confidence since becoming a Community Champion and I can honestly say I truly enjoy every bit!





THIS WEEK'S DELIVERIES.	
MON :	
TUES :	
WED :	
THURS :	
FRI :	662
SAT :	41
TOTAL :	703

Addressing food poverty in North Westminster

Harrow Road Community Champions have a long-standing relationship with North Paddington Food Bank (NPFb), having offered volunteering support there since 2016. The pandemic saw food poverty increase everywhere, not least in North Westminster.

With the onset of COVID-19, the food bank replaced its collection service with home deliveries of food aid to vulnerable residents, many of whom had never previously required its services.

Community Champions were involved in coordinating other residents and volunteers to deliver some 600 packages weekly at its peak, with five or six Champions working tirelessly to ensure sufficient support to maintain the deliveries. Particularly noteworthy were the Christmas deliveries when they helped to put together over 800 food and care packages and presents, each tailored to individual family members.

Complementing the food bank deliveries and with funding support from the ward budget, Champions helped to form a new service. The project reached out to isolated and vulnerable residents who could not wait for a food parcel and needed nutritious ready meals. Working with various agencies such as NHS responders, NPFb and Westminster Connects, they were involved with local chef Brian in producing and delivering nutritious hot food from the Maida Hill Place community kitchen three days per week. Deliveries went to NHS staff in St Mary's hospital critical care wards, local care homes and residents

and families who were shielding or unable to get out shopping such as those with children with disabilities.



Musical drop-ins for parents and babies



The Community Families programme, a collaboration between Westminster Maternity Champions, Paddington Development Trust and Creative Futures; managed to swap their activities from face to face to online within weeks of the country going into the first lockdown.

These popular sessions that merge high quality music provision with support from Maternity Champions, were a lifeline for families across North Westminster unable to access their usual support networks or even health services.

Goody bags with musical instruments and songbooks were delivered to parents so children could join in with the sessions at home. Maternity Champions took on the role of phoning parents to signpost to relevant services and even offered one to one breastfeeding support over Zoom. Webinars for parents delivered by a team of paediatricians from Imperial Health took place to help with

parents concerns around COVID-19. During times of less restrictions, some live sessions were run in a COVID secure setting.

For some parents these sessions have been the first time their babies have met someone from outside their immediate families and the Maternity Champions have been able to support them on a range of topics from starting solid food, teething to breastfeeding. Two parents fed back,

"My daughter absolutely loved coming to these sessions before COVID and has enjoyed the online sessions to a certain degree. It's hard for a 2 year old to stay focused on

the screen but I think Julie and Ton are doing an amazing job under the circumstances. Thank you to all for trying to carry on and give us all some great music."

“Great to have somewhere where I can speak and see new mums especially during the pandemic, I don't feel as isolated or worried anymore, as we all seem to have the same problems and great to have a maternity champion to give us tips on breastfeeding.”





Spotlight on

Community Champion, Ann-Marie

Ann-Marie first started volunteering five years ago as a Harrow Road Community Champion with North Paddington Food Bank. When the pandemic first hit Ann-Marie and other Community Champions immediately redoubled their efforts to cope with the massive increase in demand from residents. In a matter of two to three months, demand at NPFB went up from around 80 households weekly to, in some weeks, over 700 at the peak. The increase took a herculean effort to manage volunteers and organise the logistics. Ann-Marie was at the heart of this effort, volunteering most days of the week to systematise the operation and train and organise other volunteers. Her massive contribution is best summed up in the testimonials of those who worked alongside her:

From Citizens Advice: "I just spoke with a client you made a delivery to last week. We mentioned in the referral that it was the client's birthday and he said he loves chocolate. You kindly included in the delivery an M&S caterpillar cake. The client has just informed us that in previous years he always purchased one of these cakes for himself on his birthday, but this year could not. He said he cried when he opened the food parcel and saw the cake. A fortunate coincidence made possible by your attentive service! Many thanks for everything your team does for the community."

It was of course no coincidence and down to Ann-Marie that this client received the caterpillar birthday cake!

From the NPFB manager: "I worked with Ann-Marie for almost four years and in that time she provided something that cannot be specified in a job description or built through training. For the people she did not already know, she sought to know and understand them so she could support them as



best she could. Organisations and projects live and die based on their ability to engage with their community with empathy and without judgement, and Ann-Marie has provided a focal point which, combined with her hard work and commitment, has helped people with dignity, kindness and well-natured humour. She deserves recognition and admiration for what she has done and how she has done it."

Ann-Marie herself reflects: "I've volunteered at the Food Bank for a long time and it became obvious that local people really needed our support as the numbers went up. I've gotten to know local people and what families and different people need, so that was useful as we began to scale up. I have really enjoyed meeting all the new volunteers and giving something back to our community."



Queen's Park Community Theatre

The Queen's Park Community Theatre began in 2018 after the Mozart Community Champions identified a need for more creative outlets in the local area.

Its purpose was to improve wellbeing through positive mental health activities and experiences. The theatre was so popular that it has continued since then with six public performances so far. It is an engaging way for attendees to develop drama skills, build confidence, improve the use of their voices and be an integral part of a group.

In September 2020, the theatre project went online via Zoom and made a significant difference to enriching the lives of those at risk of isolation from the impact of the pandemic. Meeting weekly, the theatre group offers a fun and interactive experience which involves everyone in physical and vocal arm ups, various drama games that help improve memory, concentration, and developing and

acting out scripts. At Christmas, the group performed the festive and witty 'A Christmas Carol' online.

The theatre facilitator said: *"It was difficult in the beginning for me to envisage what an online theatre group would consist of, as theatre relies so much on the energy we share in a particular space. However, after our first session it was clear that we could still connect, participate and create that positive energy. The Community Theatre sessions are fantastic and I thoroughly enjoy delivering them. The group is friendly, caring and always inspire my creativity for us to try something new. Our next challenge will be to create a piece that can be performed online, and I am excited at this prospect."*

Theatre attendees said, *"That class was amazing. I needed that so much; I forgot how much I missed it."*

"It's great to be involved in portraying characters on Zoom! I enjoyed the session thoroughly and our small act certainly made my day! I can't wait to tell my girls, they'll be so delighted to hear."

"That was really, really good. It was such nice energy and lovely to see everybody. You made it fun and I think everybody needs fun in their lives right now."

"I wasn't feeling so well today, so I was literally sitting in my bed and wondering maybe I wasn't gonna come and I thought no, I'm just gonna stay in my bed. And it was fine. So it's nice for me to know that if I do have a wobble, if I'm not well I can still be in bed and attend drama group."

Nature and mental health

During summer 2020 Westbourne Community Champions started online nature connection sessions designed to help people support their mental health and wellbeing through nature.

Each session set the group a challenge for the week ahead which they then talked about the following week.

People were surprised by how much they got from the sessions and how much the activities helped them to get through a very difficult year. The activities included nature art, growing, finding a favourite tree, focusing on colour and shape and the different senses.

One participant said,

“The nature and mental health training was so useful I have shared it with friends. Everyone knows that it’s good to be outside but now I know the reason why it’s good and can explain.”



Another said, “I have felt a lot of positivity from this group. I am going through a very difficult time and have lost a lot of people recently but this group is helping me. I can feel my relationship with nature getting stronger and stronger and I am really using this to help me at the moment.”

Some of the group were self-isolating or shielding and the activities were adapted so they could take part from home:

“I am not able to go outside and have enjoyed very much the conversations and the different perspectives of connection in the chat, enjoy looking at the pictures from others.”

All Cultures Community Choir

In April 2020, within weeks of the first lockdown starting, Church Street Champions launched the weekly 'All Cultures Community Choir' as a Facebook Live event.

With an average of around 60 people joining each week, these relaxed and informal singing for wellbeing sessions were open to all, with no experience required or ongoing commitment necessary.

The intention of the group was to offer an hour's respite in the day to be uplifted by music and singing and connect with other likeminded members of the community. Research has shown that singing offers many health benefits, including reducing stress, boosting immunity and lung function, enhancing memory, improving mental health and helping to cope with physical and emotional pain. With participants singing along at home an added benefit was that they could sing to their hearts content without the worry of judgement or insecurities that might usually hold them back from trying a live group.

The sessions are led by an award-winning singing and vocal coach and offer a valued opportunity for self-care and an escape from the pressures of the day.



One new attendee commented,

“Really enjoyable! I'll be back next week. It's nice to be able to breathe properly for a change. This is really working for me. Really glad I joined – thank you it was so much fun!”



With Thanks To...



City of Westminster

For information about the programme contact:

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