

Abbey News



Eid celebration

We held a special Eid celebration at the Abbey Centre, marking the end of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

It was wonderful to see our hall filled with colour as the 81 attendees wore their finest traditional clothes to the event. We were also impressed by the huge banquet and decorations set up by our partners at Victoria Islamic Cultural Education Centre.

Entertainment on the day included henna painting, music and belly dancing.

Our guests told us they enjoyed everything about the event, especially meeting friends, both old and new. One person told us "You gathered so many women from our community - that's a success", while another said it was "A wonderful day."

Thank you for your support!

In this edition we want to express our gratitude to our longest-serving volunteer Barbara, pictured here receiving her leaving gifts at our recent Tea Party. She left our organisation after many years of supporting our events and activities, as well as helping with admin work in our office. She will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best for the future.



In better news, we're pleased to welcome our newest volunteer Shelly to our team. She's been supporting our older people's activities such as our Monday Club and Tea Parties, and is really settling in well.

We must also thank the volunteer teams from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and the Ministry of Justice. They will be supporting our upcoming Tea Parties, which are some of the biggest events in our calendar.

We're always on the lookout for new volunteers. For further information including our current available volunteer roles, visit www.theabbeycentre.org.uk/volunteer.

Thank you for the donations

We are so grateful to Dolphin Square, "one of central London's most sought after rental locations", for donating a huge amount of high quality furniture, appliances and more for our centre. The tables, chairs and plants are looking lovely in our Wash House Cafe, while we have new shelves and freezer for our Community Pantry, and some high-end catering equipment for our kitchen.

If you get the chance, please do visit the Wash House Cafe to see the new look, as well as the redesigned menu we launched a few months ago. All proceeds from the cafe, as well as our room hire service, will go to support our vital community work.



Women Off to Work

Our successful employability programme, Women Off to Work, is back for another 3 years thanks to new funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

We're offering personalised advice, one-to-one support on CVs and interviews, friendly group workshops including English classes and digital skills, and accredited courses and training. We started the project to support women, but we now have places available for men too.

Contact Raisa for more information or to sign up at raisa.rahman@theabbeycentre.org.uk or 020 7227 0652.



Staff updates

Many people have taken the end of the lockdowns as an opportunity for a fresh start. Here at the Abbey Centre, we've been sad to say goodbye to our Head of Community Programmes, Phayza, after 17 years supporting our community at the Abbey Centre. Our Community Champions Project Coordinator Ian also left us after 8 successful years leading on the programme, as well as our Champions Project Outreach Worker Sharon. We wish them all the best for the future.



We are happy to welcome back to our team Assia, who is providing a new Information, Advice and Support service, and Laura, our former Women Off to Work (WOW) Project Manager, who will be providing self-employment advice.



We're also pleased to welcome several new team members: Health and Wellbeing Programmes Manager Raisa, Project Administrator Silvia, and WOW Project Worker Liza.

Vaccine clinics at the Abbey Centre

We are pleased to continue our successful partnership with our local NHS, providing Covid vaccines from the Abbey Centre every Tuesday. So far they have delivered well over 20,000 vaccines for local residents and workers, despite a relatively low uptake of the vaccine among the community in Westminster. This includes a number of MPs from nearby government offices, and a wide variety of local people up to the age of 103. We are delighted to be supporting our local NHS to keep our community safe and well.

Healthy cooking course

Our Healthy Cooking and Nutrition Advice course ended recently with attendees cooking then feasting on a Mediterranean apricot stew and paqla pilaw rice dish.

Participants told us they loved the food, and also enjoyed meeting new people and working as a team to create delicious and nutritious meals together.



Abbey Tea Parties

We are so excited to be back to our regular schedule of Abbey Tea Parties, which are one of the things we've missed the most during the lockdowns. Attendees have greatly appreciated being together again, as one told us, "I forgot how much I loved dancing and music. I felt great dancing."

There's also been great praise for our "friendly and helpful" volunteers, including staff from our corporate partners Bouygues. They have been supporting our last few events with wonderful enthusiasm, even joining in the dancing whenever they had a break from their volunteering duties.

We hope to run these events every couple of months, including a special event to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee in June.

Trip to Brighton

In May, we took our service users for a day out in Brighton. Participants told us it was wonderful to get out of London and enjoy the seaside.

Once we got off the coach, everyone was free to enjoy the town as they wished. Most spent their time "walking on the seaside, struggling with the seagulls, and eating fish and chips."

Participants told us it was "great fun" and "lifted the spirits." They said it was "very well organised" and there was also praise for the "support and carefulness" of our volunteers.

