

A photograph of children engaged in a craft project. They are painting a large green shape, possibly a tree or a landscape feature, onto a piece of cardboard. The workspace is covered with newspaper and various art supplies like paint containers and brushes. One child is using a brush to apply green paint, while another is dipping a brush into a container of red and blue paint. Several small, round objects, possibly potatoes or stones, are also being painted with different colors.

The Mill

*\*People making things happen*

The Mill Annual Report  
2011-2012

## THE YEAR OF THE RHINO

What a year it's been!

Since The Mill opened to the community in September 2011, it has been used by the public constantly. **A friendly, accessible and inclusive space** at the heart of Walthamstow, it provides support for groups with great ideas for improving their communities, and offers a particular welcome to anyone who feels isolated or lonely. In its first days, local school children flocked in to make our magnificent rhino, which enjoyed pride of place in The Mill and was displayed to all members of the community as they went past.

But our story starts even earlier than that. Back in 2010, the much-loved former St James Street Library was on the brink of being lost to local people forever. So residents applied to Nesta's *Neighbourhood Challenge* to help keep the building in use as a community hub – somewhere open for everyone to bring their skills and talents, to reach out to their neighbours, and to visit, use and enjoy.

A neglected building was brought back to life. Young design students moved in and worked for months with local people to create something really special. Our rooms were arranged to suit **our vision of a welcoming space**. The children's room was quickly filled with donated books and toys. The walls were painted by volunteers and the building gradually repaired. An honesty library was put in place, to make sure the building's former identity continued.

The Mill has quickly become part of the fabric of our neighbourhood. Ours is a story of the hundreds of volunteers who have given up their time and expertise to make The Mill possible, of all the groups who have made The Mill their home, and of the people who have inspired us with their ideas.



**“ This is a snapshot of all the amazing achievements The Mill has been witness to in its extraordinary first year. I know with your continued enthusiasm and support, we can continue for many more! ”**

Mo Gallaccio



## VOLUNTEERS AT THE HEART OF OUR SUCCESS

The Mill's success has depended on the creativity, commitment and care of our wonderful volunteers. Around fifty local people have volunteered on a regular basis, and many hundreds more have dedicated **thousands of hours of skilled work** to the project. Volunteers have undertaken any number of tasks: from repairing and painting the building, to gardening, baking, fundraising, mentoring, providing advice and organising celebrations.



### Zahra Ahmed

“Everyone was talking about The Mill when it opened, so I popped in last year to see what it was like. I had a look around and offered to volunteer that same day!

It's really nice to spend time behind the front desk, greeting people as they come through the doors and introducing them to the building. And I've had the chance to do things I wouldn't otherwise. I've designed posters for The Mill, and I've done some work to look at how many people are visiting us here and how to get even more people involved. It sounds a bit geeky but I've had great fun!

Working at The Mill has given me the chance to give something back to the community. It is a lovely feeling, knowing that people have somewhere friendly and welcoming to come to. I'm always telling my friends about it.”

### Oliver Reece

“I live next door, and volunteered to help out the moment The Mill opened its doors. I just wandered in and picked up a paint brush, and I still see the walls I painted every time I come in! Just being involved was great – I'd been off work for a long time with a serious back injury, and helping out at The Mill was a way to spend time with some lovely people and do some of the stretching and bending that the physio had demanded! I thought I'd be without work for three months, but it ended up being three months and three years. I hated doing nothing, and it was a perfect environment in which to do something which was helpful and was good for me.

I love coming in, and I always will, to say hi and chat a while. It's just cool. I love seeing the old blokes playing cards, the kids in the toy room. It'll be fun to watch The Mill maturing and offering more and more.”



## PEOPLE MAKING THINGS HAPPEN



It is the dozens of groups who use The Mill each week that really make the building **come alive**. We have been delighted to welcome and support:

One-to-One Computing classes ■ The Asian Women's Support and Social Groups ■ A Book club ■ ESOL and English conversation classes ■ A poetry group ■ Spanish and Italian classes ■ Art exhibitions and workshops ■ Children's after-school and holiday activities ■ An Arts Award course for secondary schoolchildren ■ Circus skills workshops ■ A youth theatre ■ A Community breakfast club ■ Arts and crafts clubs for children and adults ■ Sewing and patchwork sessions for adults and children ■ Drawing classes ■ A homework club ■ Yoga for adults, children and babies ■ Children's creative dance classes ■ Energy saving workshops ■ Residents' association meetings and community events

and many more...



"It's friendship... You've talked to people, you've laughed, you've chatted. It keeps your mind active. I love it here!"

### The Recycled Teens

The Coppermill Recycled Teens, a social group for pensioners met at The Mill once a week. A vibrant and active group from the moment they arrived, the Teens got together to listen to music, catch up with friends and neighbours, and even enjoy the occasional yoga class. The group became so popular that they outgrew their space at The Mill and have found a new home nearby. They are much missed, and were a central part of The Mill during our first year.



"The Mill is like your sitting room – you just come in here and sit down and chill out. It's a family"

### Knitting and Crochet Group

The knitting and crochet group meets twice every week. The group started life with a couple of neighbours who wanted a change of scenery in which to do some knitting. And from there it has grown through word of mouth into a busy, diverse and thriving group, including men and women, the young and the old, who meet to make things, chat, support each other, and then sell some of what they make to benefit The Mill.

## FINANCES

Thanks to the **generosity and kindness** of our funders in the first year, The Mill was ensured a solid start in difficult financial times. For the first year up to March 2012, The Mill was established and funded through:



✱ More than £120,000 - an initial grant from Nesta to fund our *Neighbourhood Challenge*. This investment allowed us to undertake the necessary work to repair and refurbish the building, and bring it back into public use. Over £8,000 of this funding was paid out directly through our grants scheme to enable local individuals and groups to realise their visions for change in the community.

✱ Almost £8,000 raised through renting The Mill's space to local businesses and community groups, and selling Mill merchandise. This income is from organisations and individuals who have made The Mill their home, and have given the building a sustainable platform for the future.

✱ £6,000 from the High Street Community Ward Forum, to install provisional heating for our first winter.

✱ £3,243 in donations from our friends, neighbours and supporters – from people dropping their change in our collection tins to local people running half marathons to raise funds for The Mill.

### Financial review

- The net assets at 31st March 2012 were £27,019.
- The charitable company had income of £141,395 and direct charitable and administration expenditure of £114,376.
- There was a surplus of £27,019.
- Funds carried forward of £27,019, represent £22,519 unrestricted of which £5,000 is designated; £14,481 free reserves; and £4,500 restricted funds, of which £4,500 is capital.

*The Mill's full Directors' Report and Financial Statement can be downloaded from the Charity Commission website.*

A small group of dedicated trustees worked hard to ensure that The Mill lived up to the high expectations of the community. The people who contributed in this way were: Alison Griffin and Mo Gallaccio (Chair), Michael Leigh (Treasurer), Louise Mitchell and Adele Tinman (Secretary), Ruth Duncan, Neil Meads and Ingrid Abreu Scherer. The Mill's first year success would not have been possible without the dedication of our members of staff: John Onelum, Natasha McFadzean and Nathan Grindley.



## Thank you!

Hundreds of people have given their time and hard work to make The Mill a success. There are far, far too many people to name individually, but we are hugely grateful to everyone who has been involved this year, whether you have given up two hours or twelve months, whether you have been into The Mill once or a hundred times.



**NESTA** Making  
Innovation  
Flourish



**“You just walk in and it feels like home. And once you come in you want to get involved and you want to help to make it a success”**



# The Mill

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