

The ^{*}Mill
**People making things happen*

How to Grow Your Idea



Introduction

The Mill is a community centre with a difference – we don't run groups or deliver services directly, instead we help local people make their ideas happen. The way we support these community entrepreneurs has developed over the years, as we've perfected our model of community development. Over time we've worked together with local people to find out what motivates and concerns them, and how we can help them use their skills and potential to make things happen. This is the story of our first four years on that journey.

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People Making Things Happen

The Mill was formed from the 'Save the Library' campaign as a way to safeguard the building for the benefit of local people. We knew that as a community we could make great things happen in this beloved building, and in 2011 Nesta's Neighbourhood Challenge grant allowed us to kick-start this process of renewal and growth.

Over the past four years we have challenged people to act on their ideas through a series of community competitions. These are regular rounds of small supported grants which encourage individuals and groups to try new things, or build up an idea which can benefit the community.

One essential element to the success of The Mill is that we take risks on new ideas, and we don't ask people to have a long track record of delivering projects. We know that there are many local people with amazing skills, knowledge and energy who might not have tried to lead a project before. We think these people are a unique asset to our project, and our mission over the past four years has been to develop packages of support to help them reach their potential.

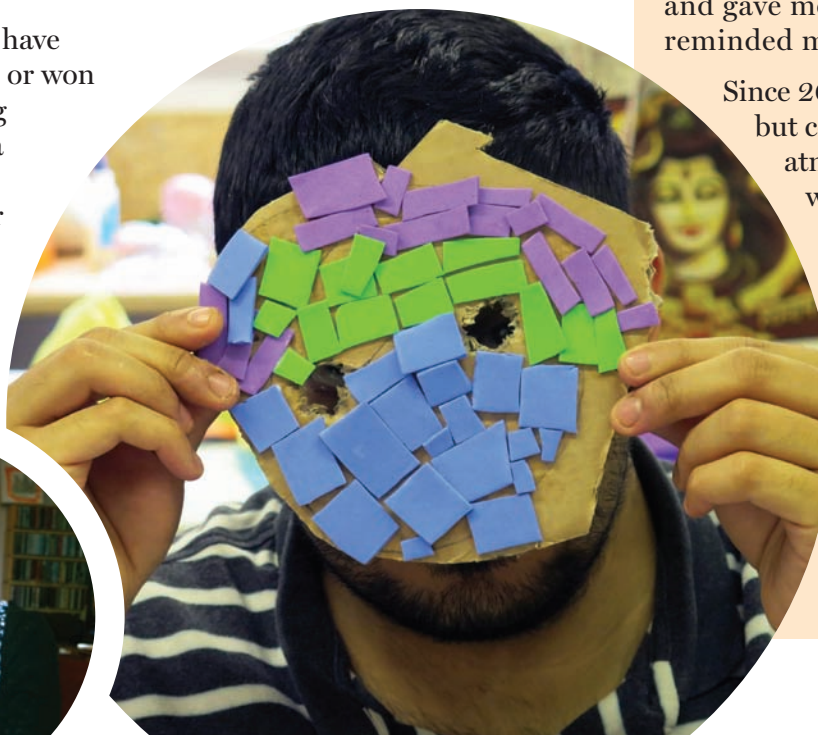
Here are some of our milestones in this process, and a celebration of the individuals and groups who have made The Mill into the vibrant and welcoming space it is today.

The first round of community grants

For our first community competition we looked for grassroots projects that would benefit small community groups and individuals in our local area. In particular we wanted groups that worked with or were made up of older people, families with children, people living with illness, unemployed people and vulnerable people. We also wanted to support groups working with different local nationalities and faiths as well as those working on environmental issues.

Many local people rose to the challenge, and when our panel of local voluntary-sector experts and community leaders met to make their decision they had a glut of wonderful ideas to choose from. We were able to support a range of activities for children and adults – some weekly and ongoing, others for one day or weekend. Many of the projects focused on sharing local skills or helping people gain confidence in their own abilities, a trend which has continued to drive community projects at The Mill ever since.

Many of our first competition winners have continued to run activities at The Mill, or won subsequent grants from us in following years, including Amanda, Amarjit, Sba and Sarah. The gardening squad has remained at The Mill and gained other local volunteers. It is now focused on bringing bright mosaics to the garden, running summer events, and maintaining all our outdoor growing spaces.



Sarah Chase: Grow Your Own Theatre



I had the idea for Grow Your Own Theatre as a place for young people to be creative. With no arts centre in Walthamstow but a wealth of art and art-potential, I wanted to provide opportunities for young people to play, create and be themselves.

However, having spent the previous years raising my three children, this seemed daunting.

In 2011 I came across a very very new community space called The Mill who were keen to help people develop their community ideas. With some funding and lots of kindness and support, I ran my first Play-in-a-Day project in October 2011. This was a great way to launch, discover what worked (and what didn't), and gave me the confidence to continue with my plans. And reminded me I loved teaching!

Since 2011, Grow Your Own Theatre has run at other venues but come back time and time again for the warmth and atmosphere of The Mill's community space. In 2013, I was successful at obtaining funding to run classes for younger children, which have continued. I also started classes for 3-6yrs and now all classes are self-funding - hiring space from The Mill or others, and charging an admission price that covers costs. Grow Your Own Theatre has also run events for local community providers and in schools.

My biggest challenges have always been time and publicity (as mother of aforementioned three small children, and also now working in a local school) but I'm hoping to continue collaborating with others to make the business a success. Growing my own story.

Some Neighbourhood Challenge projects

Amanda Simonson: 1-2-1 Computing

Local resident and mum Amanda Simonson won a Neighbourhood Challenge grant in 2011 to run sessions for older people on how to use their computers, set up email and social media accounts, and other digital tools.

Working with The Mill, Amanda then secured a further grant from Tesco to run more classes and reach even more people in the community.



The Coppermill Recycled Teens

The Coppermill Recycled Teens - a group for older local people to meet and socialise together every week - received a Neighbourhood Challenge grant, and was one of the first projects to really establish itself at The Mill. Dozens of 'teens' met each week to enjoy activities, listen to music, and

plan visits across London. The group was so well-attended that they outgrew our rooms at The Mill, and they now meet at a different local venue.



Amarjit Kaur Jagdev: Asian Women's Support Group

I am the Founder and Chairperson of the Asian Women's Support Group (AWSG). The AWSG was established in 2011 to provide Asian Women who feel a lack of confidence and ill health access to a social space and services.

In the four years the AWSG has been at The Mill, we have worked on various projects such as Arts and Craft, Basic English, IT Classes and awareness of health and wellbeing, and achieved positive outcomes for many local women

Our members participate in different workshops to help them grow in confidence, clear their minds of various issues which are ongoing in their private lives and access counselling on socialising and dealing with depression.

The demand for the project grew and we are very fortunate to have a second base through the Mill at Lea Bridge Road Library to expand the project and reach even more local women. I have also gone on to secure funding from other sources, including the High Street Ward Forum.

I was very fortunate to be nominated for an award from 'Love Your Borough Awards 2014' in the category of 'Leader's Highly Commended Award' which recognised the work and service I provide on a voluntary basis. It was an honour and privilege to be awarded with such recognition.



One year on

Our Anniversary Grant Competition was launched in 2012 with a new call for great community projects.

The idea behind the grants was simple: a small package of support - £100 plus 15 hrs room hire - to kick-start ideas; and a straightforward application process to encourage a wide range of local people.

We particularly wanted to support activities that could be the beginning of a longer-lasting relationship with The Mill, but which were in the very early stages of development. We favoured projects that were run by younger people and/or for younger people. And we also looked for ideas that benefited older people, those living with health or disability issues and carers.



Kids Creative Workshop

One of The Mill's Anniversary grants was given to a group of students from Willowfield School — Edwyn, Hollie, Emma, Zain and George — who wanted to run a creative arts workshop for other pupils. They designed and delivered a unique set of activities for local children aged 10 to 14, and arranged all the publicity, marketing and budgeting necessary to make the group a success.

Their success had its origins in an even earlier project at The Mill - the Bronze Arts Awards project run by Libby Liburd. Edwyn, Hollie, Emma and Zain all belonged to this group, and this is where their ideas first began to take shape. Once the Awards had finished, they were determined to devise and run their own classes. The Mill believes that community leaders can be any age, and awarded the group the same package of room hire and funding that all other competition winners received. They students had complete control over their budget and activities, with some support from key Mill volunteers.

The workshop was steered to success by Kim Dennis—a young volunteer who has assisted with many different projects in the building—and the advice of Mo Gallaccio, who oversees Art Works at The Mill.



The Mill at Lea Bridge

Lea Bridge & The Mill
*Working together to make things happen

The Mill has always received lots of interest and requests for help from other organisations. We are delighted if what we do can help others to achieve their community development and project aims.

We set up Mill Consultancy to do some of this on a paid basis. Our first project was a community development initiative for Waltham Forest Council, in the Lea Bridge neighbourhood, starting in 2013.

We got to know the neighbourhood better and meet lots of its people through asset mapping. We found local people willing to be on a project steering group. We ran several competitions for the best ideas in the neighbourhood to have free use, thanks to the council, of the large Community Room upstairs at Lea Bridge Library. Some amazing projects came forward.

We gave support to the people who'd written the successful proposals to organise and promote their activities. Lots of community activity went on to take place in this formerly underused public space. It does still – and the steering group constituted themselves, with our support, as The Bridge community organisation to take the project forward.

Groups and activities, all run by wonderful community volunteers, included: two different pensioners' groups, a homeschooling group, a community quilt, a parent and baby group, Mandarin lessons, herbalism workshops, a teenage afterschool arts club, an Asian women's health promotion project, a children's art group and a mental health project. Mill Consultancy has gone on to help other organisations and projects, and to raise funds for The Mill in the process.

Dedicated sessions for older people

In 2014 the High Street Community Ward Forum awarded The Mill a grant to run a series of activities for local older people. We wanted this project to do two things: provide regular activities for a particular group of people in a predictable time slot (Thursdays between 2pm and

4pm), and provide a range of offers for people to try out new things. Many of the activities we chose have been developed and are led by older volunteers, including the Memory Catchers oral history volunteering group.



Grow Your Idea

After our first experiences with community competitions, we quickly realised that people needed a more comprehensive package of support in order to make their project a success.

The Grow Your Idea in competition in 2014 offered this package of support in the form of room hire (around 20 hours fully subsidised, and 20 more half-price to encourage financial sustainability), £350 for materials and expenses and the support of a dedicated Mill Mentor.

Additionally, over this programme we developed a toolkit which collected all the information someone would need in order to develop, plan, promote, run and measure their project.

Marina Theodoropoulou

Competition winner

I moved to Walthamstow about two years ago, and I love it. I was born and raised in a tiny village in south Greece, lived in Corfu and in York for several years and then moved to beautiful and chaotic London!

I believe that getting to know people from the local community, and being able to meet in the streets and in the markets people that you know and greet, makes life more pretty. This is why I like being part of The Mill: to meet local people. Having studied music and classical singing, through The Mill Voices I am trying to make my little offering to the community.

The Mill Voices is a non auditioned adult singing group for anyone who wishes to enjoy the positive effects of singing. We sing for pleasure and health, and our main goal is to enjoy our singing time together.



Beth Kelly

Competition winner

My background is in the arts, having studied Photography, Fine Art and Textiles in college and Wood and Metalwork at University. I also have experience working with people with learning difficulties in an art studio setting and have worked with groups to make 3D artwork.

I ran Friends Empowered Tree Project, a 10 week art project with a group of young people with learning difficulties from The Limes. Each participant was given a cardboard tree to decorate with things that they identified with using a range of creative techniques including print, collage and needlework.

I maintained a positive and playful feel throughout which allowed the group to be experimental whilst working harmoniously together. I got an idea of the group's sense of achievement when I asked each of them at the end of the project 'whose tree is your favourite?' and they all said it was their own!

Liz, my project mentor, was on hand whenever I needed advice and often checked in on me which was warmly welcomed. She was a great help in getting the project off the ground and has continued to support me even after the project has finished. The planning process was also made much easier with the handy help of the toolkit The Mill provided me with.

This process has boosted my confidence in planning and leading an arts project and reaffirmed my ongoing interest in working with people with learning difficulties in a creative capacity.



Who are the Mill Mentors?

Mill Mentors are volunteers from the local community who provide guidance and support to people who want to start new groups or activities at The Mill. They were set up to support winners of the Grow Your Idea competition.

Mill Mentors advise local people on how to set up new groups and activities, how to plan and promote their activities, and how to make budgets and build networks to ensure that their endeavours are sustainable. They work together with other Mill volunteers and staff to help new groups to flourish here.

We ask each mentor to attend five training sessions at The Mill, and to meet with their designated group leader once a month at least, for four to six months. During that time, Mill Mentors are supported by The Mill with regular drop-in sessions, advice, troubleshooting and mentor socials.

Mill Mentors go through a unique training scheme to prepare them to support others in the community. The training consists of five two-hour group sessions, and covers all the aspects of Community Mentoring that Mill Mentors might need during the programme. It also maps the Mentors' abilities, knowledge and networks and uses these to match each mentor with a suitable group leader.

Kiechelle Degale Competition winner

I ran First Steps to Employability, a course of mini-workshops teaching practical skills and building self-confidence and resilience for unemployed people, to help give them a more positive outlook about returning to work or volunteering.

I love Walthamstow. I have lived here for over 20 years, and I wanted to use my skills directly with the community. So when I saw the competition at The Mill advertised I knew I had to apply. The idea was already fully formed in my head, so creating a structure and getting started only took a few weeks.

The training was well received, and the group worked very well together.



They encouraged and supported each other throughout, and at least half the group found a job or had interviews by the end.

Lesley – my mentor – was brilliant, and was always just a phone call or email away.

As well as my training business, I am now employed by Waltham Forest Council as a Lecturer of Employability skills on a part-time basis. I was able to talk confidently in my interview about the success of this group, which I think this went a long way to helping me to secure the post. I am very grateful to The Mill and all the participants who took part in the course.

Lesley Brandon Mill Mentor

I work as a TV freelance producer, and sometimes I find sitting in an edit suite with just one other person quite stifling. I've always wanted to get involved with my community, and when I had some down time I saw The Mill's ad for the Mentoring programme. Here was my big opportunity to use the communication skills I use in the media to help other people.

I'm Walthamstow born and bred, and still a resident. I even used to work in The Mill's building every Saturday, back during my school days when it was a library. My decision to get involved was also driven by nostalgia and seeing the old library come back to life in another form for the locals.

I thoroughly enjoyed working with Kiechelle. I chose her project to help the long-term unemployed as it was particularly interesting to me—I have gone through the process of trying to make a career change, and finding work isn't easy for anyone.

I sat in on a couple of Kiechelle's group sessions and the whole two hours were full of laughter. She engaged everyone so well! There were role play, small tests, speaking skills and more. I could see how people began to come out of their shells and gain confidence.

Being a Mentor has given me a sense of contribution within my community. If I wish to participate in other community projects I hope my experience will go towards that, and I like to think I was of some support to Kiechelle. Hopefully I'll get the chance to do it again.

The Neighbourhood Challenge Competition winners were:

- **Sue Clarke** – Coppermill Recycled Teens: Weekly over-60s social group.
- **Alejandra Leiva-Parodi** – E17 Puppet Project: shadow puppet workshops for children.
- **Catherine West** – Making Mamas: sewing and confidence building workshop for parents.
- **Jennie Caminada** – Children's half-term craft workshop.
- **Amanda Simonson** – 1-2-1 Computing: basic skills workshops for older people
- **Sarah Chase** – Grow Your Own Theatre: a play-in-a-day workshop for 11-14 year olds.
- **Angeline Conaghan & Gareth Howells** – Groundswell Arts: story-gathering workshops for a documentary film about local people.
- **Layla Rosa** – Rosa Circus: circus skills workshops for children and teenagers.
- **Sab Bham** – Salaam Peace: computer equipment for the Positive Routes homework club.
- **Jacqueline Connor** – African drumming and percussion workshops.
- **Libby Liburd** – Bronze Arts Award: a 13-week art and drama

course for young people.

- **Amarjit Kaur Jagden & Musaratt Butt** – Asian Women's Support Group: a weekly social network for Asian women to build self-esteem and confidence.
- **Elfneh Bariso** – AHEAD: training in IT, education for work and life for adults and children.
- **Sba Shaikh** – Block printing textile workshops.
- **BAG Gardening Squad** – development of The Mill's garden and related activities.

The Anniversary Grant Competition winners were:

- **Charlotte Pereira & Mary Sathanthanan** – Young Person's Study Scheme: homework club for GCSE students, run by their peers.
- **Sarah Chase** – Grow Your Own Theatre: theatre workshops for teenagers.
- **Zain, Hollie, Emma & Edwyn** – Kids Creative Workshop: a weekly arts workshop covering drama, animation, music theory and more. Run by teenage graduates of the Bronze Art Award programme.
- **Ailsa Betts** – Wiggly Rhythms: a weekly music and singing session for babies and toddlers.

- **Mussaratt Butt** – Asian Women's Social Club: a regular social get-together for members of the Asian Women's Support Group and others.
- **Sba Shaikh** – Textile workshops
- **Margaret Elias** – Healthy Living Workshops: a series of sessions to encourage health and wellbeing in disabled adults and carers.
- **Amanda Simonson** – 1-2-1 Computing: basic skills workshops for older people.
- **Veronica Lindsay-Addy** – Book-making Craft Group: a workshop and creative group for carers.
- **Jo-Anne Cox** – Cello for Babies: a weekly session of live cello music for babies and toddlers.
- **Rasheeqa Ahmad** – Herbal medicine workshops.
- **Jo Davis** – Coppermill Poets: a weekly poetry group.
- **Charlotte van der Byl** – Teenage Yoga: sessions for teenagers and their parents.

The Older People's Pop Ups winners were:

- **Mill Memory Catchers**: volunteer training on how to work with older residents in particular to capture their memories of fun and special times in Walthamstow.

- **Conversation Mill with Waltham Forest Community Radio Group**: a celebration and archive of the life experience of older people in Waltham Forest.

- **Papercrafting and Card Making with Aamna**: sessions to teach older people to make greeting cards using a variety of techniques.

- **Telling Tales Lounge with Sonali**: sessions for older people to socialise, document the diverse and rich experiences of older people in the area, and continue the ancient tradition of oral storytelling.

- **Chi Kung with Heike**: introductory Chi Kung sessions for older people

The 2014 Grow Your Idea Competition winners were:

- **Rasheeqa Ahmad** – Permaculture in Diverse Communities: a series of one-day workshops.
- **Ben Austin** – Animation Workshops: a series of workshops starting in Spring 2015.
- **Mark Bushell** – Incloodu Deaf Awareness: a series of workshops for deaf and hearing people.
- **Kiechelle Degale** – First Steps

to Employability: a series of workshops for the long-term unemployed focusing on confidence building.

- **Natalie France** – Excel Spreadsheet Skills: group sessions to learn how to use Excel.
- **Beth Kelly** – Friends Empowered Tree Project: a series of creative workshops with young people from The Limes community centre.
- **Marina Theodoropoulou** – The Mill Voices: a weekly singing group
- **Kate Westbrook** – Build It Up: a series of all-day creative workshops for children.
- **Antonia Windsor** – Making Theatre from Stories: a series of workshops to gather local stories and create a theatre piece with them.

The 'Grow Your Idea' Mill Mentors are:

- Sarah Vincent
- Lesley Brandon
- Nuria Rodriguez
- Catrina Holmes
- Cate Knowles
- Amy Wevill

- George Law
- Roza Wojciechowiec
- Elizabeth Wells-Thulin
- Elizabeth Ray
- Viv Warrener

It wouldn't have been possible without...

- Some wonderful organisations have funded our community competitions and grants. We are incredibly grateful for their support. We are also always looking for more organisations who might like to fund something like this, so that we can grow more community ideas and projects.
- Nesta funded the founding year of The Mill under their Neighbourhood Challenge programme. This made the Neighbourhood Challenge and Anniversary Grants possible.
- Waltham Forest Council Communities Department contracted The Mill, as a consultancy, to deliver the Lea Bridge community development project, making all of the activities there possible.
- The People's Health Trust made a grant to The Mill for the entire Grow Your Idea programme,

its activities and its mentors, making all of these activities possible.

- The High Street Community Ward Forum made a grant to The Mill to fund a year of older people's activities, making the older people's popup programme possible.

Nesta...



The Mill is an independent community space run for, and by, the people of Walthamstow. Here you can organise and take part in activities, meet other local people, enjoy great exhibitions, play in our children's room, borrow books from our 'honesty' library and much more!

Everyone is welcome at The Mill, which is here for all local people to visit, enjoy and to make things happen for the whole community.

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For more information about The Mill and what we can offer, get in touch!

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