

TOWER HAMLETS
**GP CARE
GROUP** CIC

LOCAL PEOPLE, LOCAL HEALTH

200 NATIONALITIES

**Annual Report
and Accounts**

2019/20



Overview



Highlights of
services



Supporting
Primary Care
At Scale



Learning from
Complaints



Our
Workforce






Finance

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Our Annual Report cover image is courtesy of ATMA, Paint the Change and Rich Mix.

People from 200 nationalities work for the NHS. Paint the Change and Rich Mix are celebrating their diversity and dedication through this work. The design by artist ATMA features more than 200 flowers drawn by members of the public.



2019/20 An Extraordinary Year!

Through necessity, we moved forward several years in a few weeks not only harnessing the agility, creativity, and innovation of the Care Group and our partners in primary care, but also the resilience of the organisation to meet the demands of the pandemic.

Our Mission

Tower Hamlets GP Care Group is led by local GPs and aims to improve the health and wellbeing of the residents of Tower Hamlets by supporting General Practices and providing excellent primary care in partnership with others.



Welcome message

Chair of GP Care Group, Dr Simon Brownleader

Welcome message

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This has been a difficult and remarkable year in so many ways. COVID-19 has dominated our landscape and is still influencing all aspects of our daily lives. Individually, we have all had to make sacrifices whether they be at work or at home, nevertheless what has been evident within the Care Group has not only been the communal spirit to support each other but also displays of duty and courage to protect the patients and the communities we serve.



Through necessity, we moved forward several years in a few weeks not only harnessing the agility, creativity, and innovation of the Care Group and our partners in primary care but also the resilience of the organisation to meet the demands of the pandemic.

Change can be difficult at the best of times and all the services that we deliver have all had to make enormous adjustments. It is a testament to everyone who works in these services that they have all been able to do so with a sense of unity that was imperative to keep services working.

Our relationships with partners have never been stronger and our key position within primary and community services has allowed us to support primary care network development as well as assisting

better integration of services for the benefits of patients. Care Group colleagues have been continuously working at a practice, network, and system level to ensure support when needed and underpinning our role as a connector within Tower Hamlets.

The winter months will be challenging for all of us but with the fortitude witnessed so far, I feel assured we can meet these challenges head on.

And finally, I'd like to thank our joint chief executives Chris Banks and Tracy Cannell as well as the rest of the executive team for demonstrating exceptional leadership and for skilfully navigating the Care Group through such tumultuous times.

Dr Simon Brownleader
Chair of GP Care Group



Joint Chief Executive Officers' Report

Annual reports typically refer to the period covered by the annual accounts, which is for the year ended 31st March 2020. However, this report is published in early November 2020 and the events of 2020 have been so extraordinary, we are including an account of the part the Care Group has played since March 2020 when the country was first locked down.



In 2019, our focus was:

- Consolidation of our three children's services, health visiting, school nursing and family nurse partnership into a 0-19-year-olds integrated service. This maintains and builds on the strengths of each individual service while providing a more joined up offer to our service users, through better co-ordination, joint-training and information-sharing across the services.
- We set up a new Urgent treatment Centre (UTC) over the summer of 2019 at the Royal London Hospital. The final approval was given in July 2019 and we had only four weeks to mobilise the service ready to open in August 2019. This was challenging, even by our standards, but was ultimately successful and the UTC played a significant part in reducing the number of people attending the Emergency Department at the hospital over winter.
- Supporting individual GP practices; and also networks, as they became Primary Care Networks, to reflect the change in national policy.
- Continuing to strengthen and improve all our services, and our corporate support functions, and we were assessed as "Good" by the CQC for our Out of Hours service.





As we moved into the New-Year we faced the challenge of COVID-19. Our three priorities were to keep our patients and staff safe; to continue to deliver services that met patient needs; and to support our GP practices.

We had already invested in some remote working capability and quickly extended this to all staff to enable working from home wherever possible.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies were poor initially, so we secured as much PPE as possible from around the world for both our staff and a reserve for practices. We organised webinars to help practices switch to virtual consultations and we provided laptops to many of them.

We supported a WhatsApp group that has over 250 users from across general practice, a space to share information and ideas, finding answers to the many questions clinicians had where we could, and we set up a communications system with daily bulletins and a special website to find and share desperately needed local information.

As patients stayed away from NHS services, appointments booked in our six extended access hubs declined. We centralised resources into our

UTC creating an 'integrated care hub' running on a 24/7 basis that could see COVID+ve patients as well as non-COVID patients in a safe environment, and visited patients at home when necessary to support our practices that were struggling with the impact on staffing.

We set up a home monitoring service for COVID sufferers enabling 80 people a day to avoid being in hospital or to leave hospital sooner. See Page 17 for more on this innovative service.

Throughout this time our staff have been incredible in so many ways, whether in the UTC or out visiting people's homes, GP practices and children's centres. They have worked under extremely challenging conditions and they have adapted brilliantly, finding ways of doing whatever was necessary with great imagination and creativity.

Working from home is also very challenging especially for those with young families or elderly dependents and limited space. We have tried to keep our collective spirits up by providing office equipment to home workers who wanted it, and organising regular team huddles and briefings by video, and even growing sunflowers to brighten our days.

As we publish this report, we face a winter surge of COVID and flu, but we go forward with optimism that we will get through this together, sooner or later. We are fortunate to have such an amazing team of people in the Care Group and in Tower Hamlets general practices, dedicated, resourceful, caring, and supporting each other. We thank you with all our hearts.

Chris Banks & Tracy Cannell
Joint Chief Executives



Tower Hamlets GP Care Group Board



Primary Care Networks in Tower Hamlets

There have been several changes to our Board since the last Annual Report:

Dr Naureen Bhatti (Network 7) and Dr Mike Fitchett (Network 8) stepped down as board members. Dr Shera Chok, the Executive Team's Medical Director, also left. We thank them for their valued contributions to the Care Group and wish them well.

The Care Group is pleased to welcome Dr Phillip Bennett-Richards (Network 7) and Dr Sonal Shah (Network 8) to the board.

Non-Executive Directors (appointed July 2019)



Mr Alistair Williams



Mr David Monk



Ms Sukhvinder Kaur-Stubbs

Executive Team



Mr Chris Banks
Joint Chief Executive



Ms Tracy Cannell
Joint Chief Executive



Ms Zainab Arian
Chief Financial Officer



Ms Ruth Walters
Director of Quality Assurance



Mr David Robertson
Chief Operating Officer



Dr Isabel Hodkinson
Joint Clinical Director



Dr Jackie Applebee
Chair LMC in attendance

LMC Representative

Elected Representatives



Dr Judith Littlejohns
Network 1



Dr Simon Brownleader - Chair
Network 2



Dr Ben Dougall
Network 3



Virginia Patania
Network 4



Dr Tania Anastasiadis
Network 5



Dr Joe Hall
Vice Chair
Network 6



Dr Phillip Bennett-Richards
Network 7



Dr Sonal Shah
Network 8

Commissioning Network 1. Weavers, Bethnal Green, St Peters			
1	Strouts Place	4	Mission
2	Bethnal Green	5	Globe Town
3	Pollard Row		
Commissioning Network 2. Bethnal Green South, Spitalfields and Banglatown			
6	Blithehale	8	Spitalfields
7	Health E1	9	Albion
Commissioning Network 3. Whitechapel, Stepney Green and St Dunstan's			
10	Whitechapel Health	12	Brayford Square
11	City Wellbeing	13	Harford Health
Commissioning Network 4. Shadwell, St Katharine's and Wapping			
14	East One Health	16	St. Katharine's Dock
15	Jubilee Street	17	Wapping
Commissioning Network 5. Bow West, Bow East			
18	Grove Road	21	St. Stephen's
19	Tredegar	22	Ruston Street
20	Harley Grove		
Commissioning Network 6. Mile End East, Bromley by Bow			
23	Merchant Street	26	St. Andrews
24	St. Paul's Way	27a	Bromley by Bow
25	Stroudley Walk	27b	XX Place
Commissioning Network 7. Limehouse, Lansbury, Poplar			
28	Limehouse	30	Chrip Street
29	Gough Walk	31	Aberfeldy
Commissioning Network 8. Canary Wharf, Blackwall & Cubitt Town, Island Gardens			
32	Barkantine	34	Island Health
33	Docklands	35	Island Medical



Highlights of Services

The GP Care Group provides a range of primary care and community services to the residents of Tower Hamlets.

The following pages share highlights of some of the work and achievements since the last annual report, along with details of how, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, services were able to pivot and shift to continue offering safe, high quality care to the borough's residents.



Urgent Primary Care Services

We provide two services to meet the urgent primary care needs of residents and visitors to Tower Hamlets – the Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) and GP Out of Hours service (OOHs).

We were one of the first providers to help the London Ambulance Service and NHS 111 cope with the unprecedented numbers of patients needing assistance. NHS 111 was stretched to the maximum as they tried to deal with the surge in demand, and patients were waiting for up to 24 hours for a call back. The service was so good at this that it went on to assist neighbouring boroughs.

We emphasised the importance of taking care of yourself to take care of others. This was particularly important as it became apparent that staff and patients from the BAME communities were more at risk of complications from COVID-19 infections.

The UTC and OOHs services are now focussing on developing an integrated urgent care service with a multi-professional focus, including social prescribing.

Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC)

The UTC was created to treat urgent but not life-threatening ailments and support people to access mainstream GP Practice care. It has been operating for just over a year having launched in August 2019.

The Royal London Hospital had run a GP Urgent Care Centre within its Emergency Department for several years. The new Urgent Treatment Centre sits on the hospital site but separately from the Emergency Department in Clinic 1.

As a new service, an early challenge was the time patients were waiting to be seen in the UTC. We increased the staffing by adding more doctors, nurses and healthcare assistants to the team, and now most patients are seen within one hour of walking into the UTC with over 99% seen within a maximum of four hours.

We have sought feedback from our patients and participated in a Healthwatch patient survey, these both received generally positive feedback with some helpful suggestions; for example a new pelican crossing is now in place on Stepney Way.



GP Out of Hours Service

Since the early 1990s, the Tower Hamlets GP Out of Hours Service (OOH) has provided clinical care and support to those seeking urgent health care when their GP service is closed. Initially a standalone service, OOH now works closely with the NHS 111 service and the UTC.

Patients wanting assistance when their GP practice is closed must dial 111. The NHS 111 service undertakes a telephone assessment and if necessary, transfers patients to OOH. Our OOH doctors provide a telephone review, and if necessary see patients either at the centre in Clinic 1 at the Royal London Hospital or visit them at home. The patient's GP is kept fully informed and receives a discharge summary the following day. The CQC Inspected the service in 2018 and rated it 'Good'.

The pandemic also ushered changes that had been waiting in the wings: a telephone review could successfully become a video consultation, a laptop was made available for home visits and for many admin staff, home working became possible.

We have feedback cards for our patients who have been positive about the service.

Single Point of Access for community health services

The Care Group has been operating the Single Point of Access (SPA) service since April 2017. The service supports Tower Hamlets residents to access community-based health care. Referrals are received from GP Practices and other services and processed by our central team that works on a 24/7 basis.

The start of the COVID-19 pandemic saw the service developing homeworking opportunities to reduce the spread of the virus and the risk to staff. Most notably, the SPA provided support to local services by extending to support the Integrated Discharge Hub Referrals programme and the Barts Health Phlebotomy. The service also supported changes to the access of End of Life Medication (EoL) and directed patients to the correct pharmacies for home monitoring.



P-RESET - Primary Care Drug and Alcohol Service

P-RESET is a collaboration of GP practice teams and the Reset Tower Hamlets Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services. It is organised by the Care Group and provides vital services in GP practices including:

- Opioid Substitute Prescribing
- Problem Alcohol use Identification and Brief Advice (IBA)
- Primary Care focused Annual Health Checks and Plans for those registered as having substance misuse problems.

The service, which is in its third year, encourages practices to assess problematic substance use and support GP registered patients aged 18+ to get treatment for their substance misuse at the Reset Tower Hamlets Drug and Alcohol Service.

The COVID-19 pandemic required the service to change how it operated in order to safely continue offering care to this vulnerable cohort of patients. Much of P-RESET's work is now provided through remote consultations. With the help of locality clinical leads, the service visited 35 practices virtually to communicate the new changes.

Despite the disruption, the service has continued to support 220 patients in shared care for Opiate Substitute Treatment across practices in the borough.



Some highlights of 2019/20:

P-RESET officer, Tariq Wooding-Olajarin put his arts and craft skills to the test creating a wheel of symptom game, raising awareness to some of the symptoms caused by drug misuse at the Tower Hamlets Together Fair in May 2019.

P-RESET delivered the RCGP Part 1 Course in Substance Misuse and Alcohol earlier this year. So far, more than 100 Tower Hamlets clinical staff members have been trained.

P-RESET team spoke at the annual RCGP conference in "Managing Drug and Alcohol Problems in Primary Care". Explaining our model of substance misuse work in primary care settings. Our workshop was full and so well received we are invited again next year!



Tower Hamlets Advocacy and Interpreting Service

The Tower Hamlets Advocacy and Interpreting Service (THAIS) helps patients and carers for whom English is a second language to access primary care services in the borough.

We sub-contract part of our service to Praxis, a local charity, to whom we offer our gratitude for their continued support as our delivery partner.

Over the last year we have improved our booking and scheduling process through the introduction of a new electronic booking system called 'Interpreter Intelligence'. This gives GP practices that use our service, the ability to:



- Create their own bookings faster and easier than before.
- Review bookings in a diary form, giving real-time information on their status and the staff assigned to them.
- Send a confirmation email of the booking and the individual assigned.
- View reports specific to their GP practice, such as the number of bookings and languages used.
- Assign individual accounts for staff members and/or have a general log-on.

However, the most significant challenge of the year was the COVID-19 pandemic which saw us switch to remote provision of the service by the end of March 2020.

The installation of the new booking system proved timely as it made communication between advocates, interpreters, partner organisations and management much easier. All services are now provided through either three-way telephone or video link which means that staff can work safely from home and the chance of cross infection to patients is greatly reduced.

Due to this new virtual provision, the Care Group has provided IT equipment including up to date smart phones and laptops as well as a home workstations budget for every member of staff.

We set up a Steering Group to advise on the new system and to consider other ways we can improve the quality and efficiency of our service. The Steering Group provided a space for advocates to discuss issues and share experiences of providing a telephone and video offering to the borough's ethnic minority communities and how to remain responsive to their needs, especially for those without access to digital technology. In addition, the service is putting together an action plan to mitigate these challenges in collaboration with General Practices and other partner organisations.





Social Prescribing Service

Social Prescribing supports local Tower Hamlets residents to improve their health and wellbeing reducing the need for a medical intervention.

Often, patients visit their GP for reasons other than clinical problems, as they might not know where to get help for problems like welfare needs, isolation or housing. These issues can have a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing but can't be solved by medicine.

Our social prescribers have a wealth of local knowledge to find the right services or organisations to help local people. The service gets the most referrals from GPs, nurses and other healthcare professionals but residents can also refer themselves to the service.

Over the year to 31 March 2020 we helped 4,783 residents (16% above our annual target). The service also referred residents to more than 40 organisations across the borough for specialist support.

Over 60% of people helped had a long-term health condition.

During the year we worked with the Borough's eight Primary Care Networks, each of which has its own funding to provide social prescribers, to combine resources with the Care Group's and create one integrated GP Practice-based Social Prescribing Service across the borough. This has enabled the combined social prescribing team to double from eight in 2019 to 16 by the end of 2020.



What service users said about the Social Prescribing service

I received my food parcel and thank you so much about your concern for me and my family. It helped us a lot.

I feel safe talking to you about my sexuality because you don't judge, I feel better once I have spoken to you, I would like to give your details to my friend who is also gay. I feel he will also benefit from seeing you because you have been very helpful.

I feel like I now have people who know I exist and care. If I had not seen my Social Prescriber I would still be at home and lonely.

The Social Prescribing service was very supportive and really helped me to build my confidence and to improve my mental health. The ongoing support from the service, significantly increased my self-esteem to find employment.



0-19 Integrated Service

We successfully completed a three-year contract for health visiting services during which we improved it from being one of the worst performing services to one of the best in England based on national key performance indicators. On 1 April 2019 we were awarded a new five-year contract (with scope for an additional two years) which now also includes the well-established Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) team.

We have restructured the service which resulted in more streamlined and efficient leadership, management and administration with clinical and locality leads. For all elements of the service we focussed on recruitment to keep our staffing levels at well over 95% of establishment. This has been a challenge but a successful one, particularly for School Nursing which only had 27% of staff in post when we took the contract over.

From March 2020, national guidance required health visiting services to work from home unless there were compelling client needs. We reviewed how we could continue to deliver all of the 0-5 Healthy Child Programme, FNP service and as much of the 5-19 Healthy Child Programme as possible using remote digital resources. Any necessary face to face contact was only undertaken with appropriate PPE.

We had already introduced remote working as an additional tool for the 0-19 team, so it was relatively straightforward to make home working the norm as most clinical staff already had laptops and smart phones.

Other developments included the additional use of secure video consultation software (AccurX) to make digital contacts easier, linking

to our electronic record system, with training for staff to perfect their digital consultation techniques. Service users have fed back that they generally preferred video to telephone for consultations and our clinicians found the quality of the consultation was better too. Along with the rest of the organisation, the service used Microsoft Teams for video calls, webinars as well as the chat/phone functions. This has supported communication during difficult times and whilst not the same as being in a room with others, it is the next best thing and attendance at organised meetings has improved.





0-19 Integrated Service - Some highlights of 2019/20

The service rolled out 'eRedbook' as part of a London-wide initiative to expand the use of digital records.

We presented at the Liverpool PHE conference on innovative use of art and open forum theatre with local families to increase awareness of safety in the home and prevention of accidents.

NEON – a funded research project being delivered in the Tower Hamlets area promotes early optimal nutrition to Bangladeshi families with young children using a participatory learning activities approach. The 0-19 services have been actively involved in membership of the core group advising on delivery of the work.

Engagement with Tower Hamlets Together partners and Local Authority colleagues at the "Every Chance for Every Child" launch event.

National Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) training for 20 Health Visitor Champions delivered by the iHV in response to a funded initiative from the Ministry of Justice Social Action Mobility Plan. This was aimed at reducing the word gap for 2-5 year olds and improving readiness for school as a major health outcome and indicator for children in Tower Hamlets.



Supporting Primary Care

One of our main purposes is to support general practices to provide care to the residents and visitors of Tower Hamlets. We do this by working directly with individual practices who require help with specific issues, such as recruitment, service delivery, business advice and mentoring. We also work at scale providing training and services at borough level that complement the work done in the practices.





Home Monitoring Service

The Care Group piloted an innovative COVID-19 Home Monitoring Service in April 2020 to support patients with COVID-19 symptoms.

The service aims to help patients recover in their homes and reduce the length of hospital stays, the need for face to face visits or admission to hospital. Several other boroughs set up their own service based upon the Care Group's model and we provided details of our arrangements to help them.

At the time there was emerging evidence of a phenomena specific to COVID-19 with people experiencing critically low levels of blood oxygen with little or no symptoms of breathlessness. This 'silent hypoxia' was a significant risk for people suffering from the infection.

The Home Monitoring Service delivers thermometers, blood pressure meters and pulse oximeters to people in their homes with detailed

instructions. Referrals received before 2pm received a kit the same day, those received later receive a kit the following day. A video or telephone consultation with a clinician is scheduled for the day after delivery and each day after that until the patient is better. We make more frequent calls if needed.

If a patient's condition worries them or us, we see them face to face in the Urgent Treatment Centre, or we arrange a home visit by Advanced Nurse Practitioners or the borough's Physician Response Unit.

Feedback from service users and clinicians has been very positive and an evaluation of the service demonstrated lower admissions to A&E and increased patient safety and outcomes. The Home Monitoring Service has now started a 48-hour Asthma review service for children discharged from Royal London Hospital.



Supporting COVID-19 Testing in Tower Hamlets

In early May, following increasing rates of COVID-19 in Care Homes both nationally and locally, the Care Group was approached by London Borough of Tower Hamlets Council (LBTH) to develop a service to carry out COVID-19 testing in the homes.

We formed a nursing team to visit the care homes and the service was rolled out during the following three weeks, with all Care Homes visited by the last week of May.

The team continued to visit each Care Home every two weeks, testing both residents and staff. Tests were processed by the Barts Health lab and the result communicated back to the Care Homes via secure email addresses. The results took an average of two days to be returned.

Initially the uptake of testing amongst care home staff was low but this improved as the service became established. The team used the visits to discuss the importance of testing with staff in the Care Homes. There was also an impact on uptake when LBTH developed a scheme to support salaries of staff who were self-isolating.

At a time when national testing in care homes was not available, our service was able to identify and isolate COVID positive members of staff and residents, thereby reducing the level of outbreaks and saving many lives.

We rolled out antibody testing for staff in primary care in less than a week to provide surveillance data on the level of COVID-19 in healthcare staff.

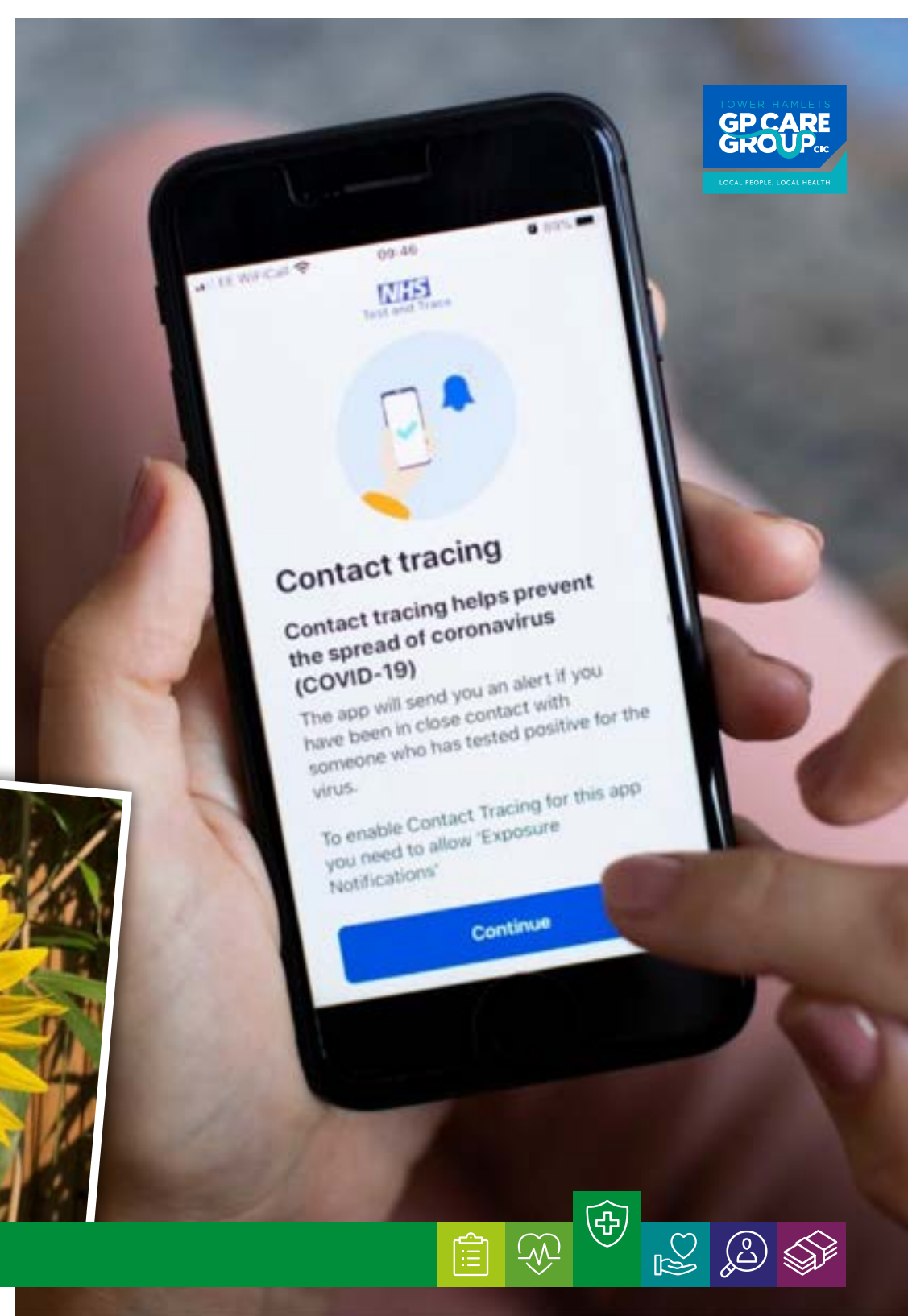


Developing a Local Test and Tracing Service

In May, in partnership with other local organisations including the Local Medical Committee, Poplar Harca, Bromley By Bow and Queen Marys University we reviewed the needs of Tower Hamlets residents and the risks of COVID-19 and concluded that primary care had a key role to play in supporting our local communities. We set out proposals to develop a local test and trace service to improve the identification and management of COVID-19 to reduce the level of transmission.

Tower Hamlets had a lower rate of testing uptake than other areas of London and so we successfully bid to become a pilot to become the first borough to provide testing in primary care for vulnerable groups that find it difficult to access mainstream testing. This includes the provision of home visits to undertake swabbing by our central team.

We have worked with London Borough of Tower Hamlets Public Health team to develop a local tracing service working in co-ordination with the national tracing service. This commenced in October and is initially focusing on those which the national team have been unable to reach. It aims to contact those with a positive to identify any contacts that may have a risk of infection and to support the patient to access support to help them isolate and recover successfully.





Networks and Practices

The year ended 31 March 2020 was the first year of the Primary Care Directed Enhanced Services (DES) scheme which created Primary Care Networks of GP Practices across England.

Tower Hamlets' eight general practice networks were set up in 2009 so the new policy builds upon well-established ways of working in the Borough.

The DES offers participating practices new funding to run their networks and to increase the workforce in primary care. Networks are reimbursed for new roles which increase the range of services practices can provide while compensating for gaps in the number of doctors going into general practice. The new roles are specified by NHS England and in 2019/20, networks were encouraged to recruit more social prescribers and clinical pharmacists.

The Care Group has supported our networks and practices to deal with this change of focus by helping with recruitment of new roles and even employing staff on behalf of some of the networks. We continue to employ the network management teams that were transferred from the networks into the Care Group on 1 April 2018.

We have also organised a learning set for Clinical Directors, a new role created by the DES, and this group now meets fortnightly and actively guides primary care strategy in the borough.



Our support to General Practice is extensive. We provide several services at borough level:

Extended Access Hubs

During 2019/20 we operated six hubs across the borough providing additional appointments to see GPs, nurses or healthcare assistants at evenings and weekends outside normal practice opening hours.

When the pandemic hit, the borough demand for hub services dropped so we centralised our resources into our Urgent Treatment Centre at the Royal London Hospital where it was easier to maintain tight infection control and to provide back-up for any practices that were unable to provide services from their own premises due to outbreaks of COVID-19.



CEPN and Open Doors

Our training arm, CEPN (Community Education Provider Network), was designated a 'Training Hub' by East London Health Care Partnership (the regional branch of the NHS). It continued to expand its range of training packages throughout the year and is widely regarded as one of the best Training Hubs in London.

CEPN has worked with our Education Committee, the GP Vocational Training Scheme programme directors and Health Education England to provide bursaries and organised placements for newly and recently qualified GPs to improve recruitment and retention in the borough. Consequently, Tower Hamlets has some of the highest doctor to patient ratios in East London.

During the lockdown and since, the CEPN team has worked tirelessly and creatively to support its sister services in the Care Group, general practices and partner organisations

in Tower Hamlets, and health systems across London and the country. They have organised numerous webinars on different subjects, but particularly dealing with many COVID-related subjects. This has proved vital to practitioners across the health system and to staff in the Care Group.

CEPN does a lot of work behind the scenes keeping morale up and looking after the health and wellbeing of staff in the Care Group and practices. This has been appreciated by many of us during the pandemic.

Open Doors, which provides high quality specialist training for Practice Nurses, continued to have another successful year. There has been a change in leadership during the year with the retirement of Vicky Souster who has been an outstanding and inspirational leader. We send Vicky our best wishes and we welcome her successor, Helen Simpson to the Care Group team.

Communications

We expanded our communications team towards the end of 2019/20 which was fortunate because the pandemic led to some frantic activity as primary care switched gear. We introduced daily bulletins to pull together the torrent of information from different sources and ran a special website for healthcare professionals to find technical advice and guidance and check changes in hospital and other services as the NHS came under pressure from COVID-19 cases.

Island Health

The Care Group provides direct managerial support to the Island Health practice, and in the two years since the partners asked us to step in, we have stabilised the practice, renegotiated the lease on its premises, supported a successful grant application to improve the surgery and instigated quality improvement projects to improve patient access.

Online Consultation and Central Registration

We have supported primary care across the seven boroughs of North East London to modernise their use of IT to deliver more services online. Leading the Digital Accelerator Programme we have increased the use of online consultation tools, including the development of borough-wide ehubs and enabled Tower Hamlets residents to register with a GP via the internet. Tower Hamlets now has a higher rate of eConsults than any other borough in North East London.



Learning from Complaints

Summary

There was a total of 49 complaints between 01/04/2019 and 31/03/2020. All were acknowledged within the three-day timeframe. Two complaints were responded to after the 21-day deadline due to the complexity of the complaint and requirement to obtain information from other teams/organisations. On both occasions the complainant was contacted and advised of the delay.

Outcomes

The analysis of outcomes revealed the majority were upheld. The UTC complaints related to expectations of investigations or treatments not available in the service. There were a number of complaints that cited another health care professional advising that a test or a procedure would be done (e.g "111/my GP told me I needed to have a .."). We have followed up with each healthcare professional or service following these complaints to reduce the risks of future similar issues arising.

Learning

The number and diversity of complaints across the Care Group makes identification of themes complex. The learning from individual complaints has been used to implement changes and these have been shared across teams. The following examples demonstrate how this has been achieved at service level.

A complaint about vaccination advice led to the implementation of a number of discussions at each Team meeting and a presentation at the Health Visitor Forum regarding the importance of the childhood vaccination programme.

Complaints about care and compassion in the OOH and Urgent Treatment Centre have led to the implementation of a programme of customer service training within the Care Navigator team and conflict resolution training across the service.



Our Workforce

The COVID-19 pandemic was felt across the workforce. Staff had many questions, and so HR began producing regular Q&A updates to give clarity during what were particularly uncertain times.

For many, the issues were about how to work safely and effectively at home, the impact of childcare and school closures, and access to equipment. For others, concerns about health vulnerabilities, infection risks and how to work safely were paramount.





Our Workforce

During the early period of the pandemic the Human Resources team worked hard to give consistent and considered information, giving clarity where possible.

There has been a huge impact on employees so we extended our external counselling service to include all staff within primary care in Tower Hamlets, and CEPN established an internal support group.

We supported our employees to work at home where possible, providing them with additional IT equipment and office furniture. For those that had to travel to work we obtained parking permits, provided overnight accommodation and face coverings. The safety of staff has been a high priority so we ensured they always had PPE that complied with national guidelines, and introduced social distancing arrangements in all workplaces. We have held frequent staff meetings, encouraged teams to have check-ins and huddles to share information and support each other. Team activities have included online group exercise classes and fun quizzes to keep up morale and provide staff with some social life to compensate for working at home.

We have undertaken personal risk assessments of all staff to support working safely in the current situation. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff have higher risks of complications from COVID-19 and we have provided additional support and flexibility where needed for them and for colleagues who were shielding.

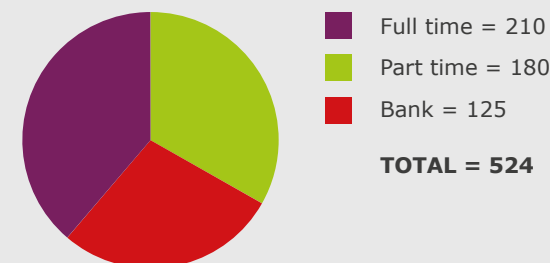
Our recruitment team continued to thrive during this year with a very responsive and individual service provided. This has been a particularly busy period with 149 new staff brought into the Care Group.

As the Care Group has grown and become consolidated, we continued to develop the HR service. In April we developed a Care Group pay structure, finalising this during the spring and backing this up with a new job evaluation system and review process in the summer.



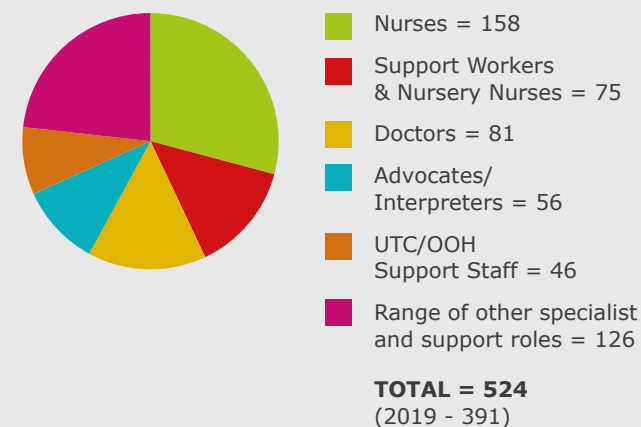
Staffing breakdown

by contracted hours March 2020



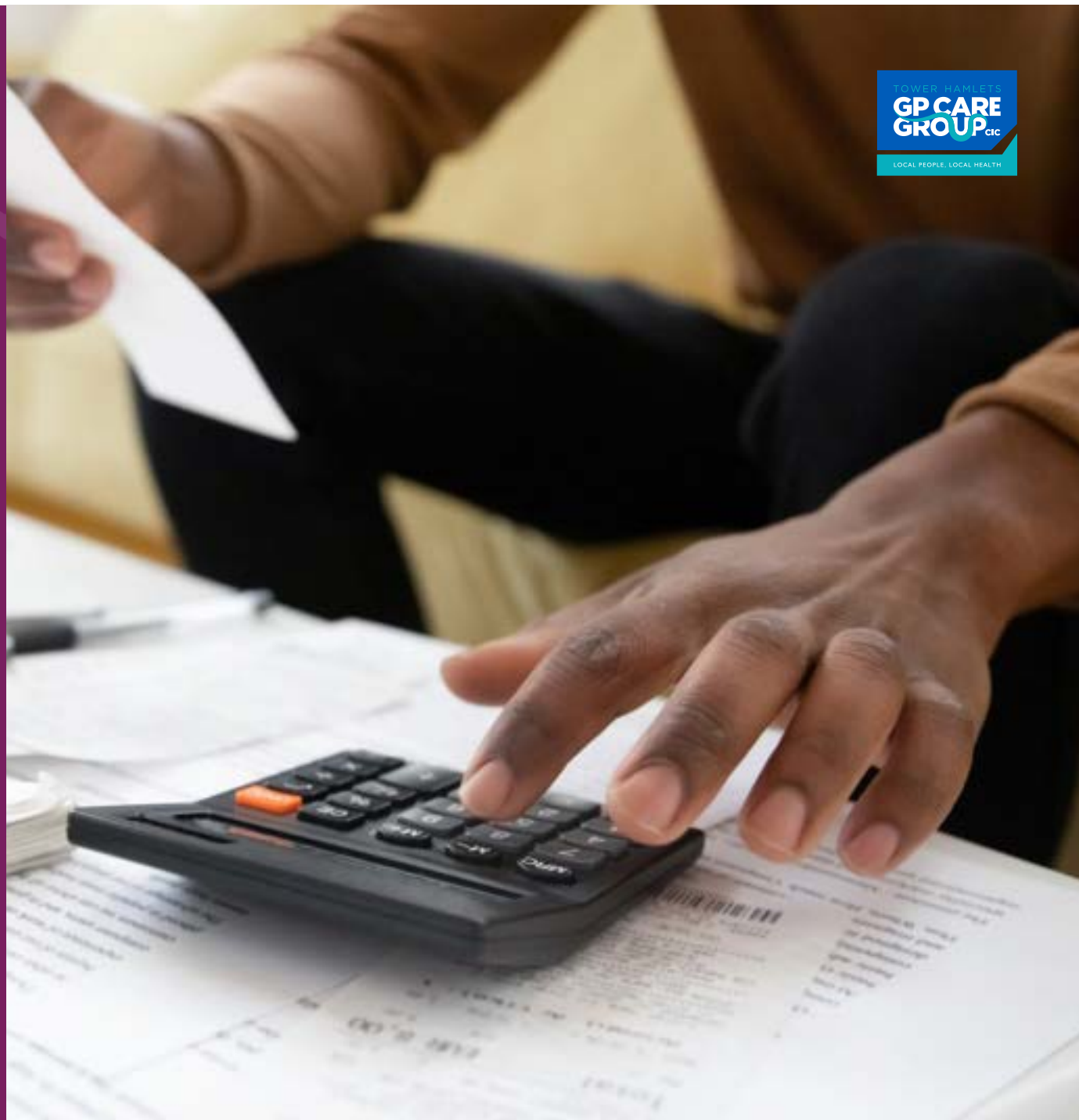
Types of staff employed

WTE 2020



Finance

To ensure the continued financial viability of the Care Group, the Board and the Executive Team will actively pursue new areas of income generation to help diversify and grow our organisation to support our primary care members.



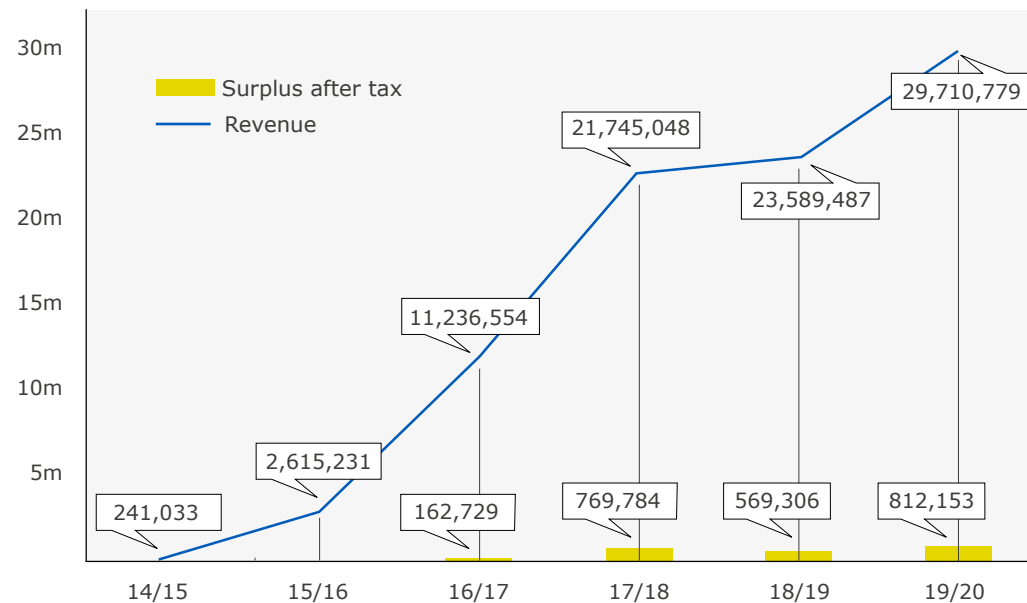


Revenue - £29.6 Million (26% growth):

New Contracts: Urgent Treatment Centre

The service went live on 14 August 2019 and currently sees more than 140 patients a day. Approximately a third are visitors to Tower Hamlets from other areas or abroad.

GPCG Revenue Growth £



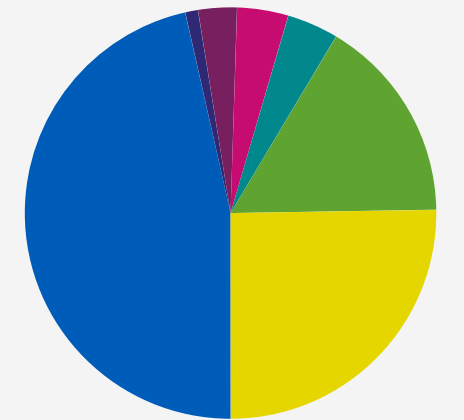
Spend Analysis - £28.7 Million (25% increase):

Due to the nature of the services we provide, just under half of our expenditure relates to staffing costs. Our headcount increased in year with the addition of new services as well as an increase in staffing within current services.

We have also heavily invested in digital technology (ICT) this year with the implementation of Office 365 across all our workforce, supporting at scale remote working; a key enabler during the COVID-19 response.

Primary Care Network payment is the second largest area of spend. Contract and Locum staffing spend relates to both project management and GP expenditure. Non-pay items span across the normal categories, with an increasing workforce both ICT and Estates expenditure has grown.

Top Expenditure Areas



- Staffing 46%
- Insurance 1%
- Rent and Rate 3%
- ICT and Telephone 4%
- Training 4%
- Contract and Locum Staffing 16%
- Primary Care Network Payments 25%





Financial Results

BDO, our External Auditors, have issued an unmodified audit opinion on the individual financial statements. They have confirmed that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the companies' affairs and there are no issues to report in respect of going concern.

They commended us on our financial governance structures, and we will continue to ensure these are strengthened as we grow in the years to come.

A version of the full set of accounts is available at Companies House.



Profit And Loss Results

	2019/2020 £	2018/2019 £
Turnover	29,680,371	23,573,425
Gross Profit	29,680,371	23,573,425
Administrative Expenses	-28,700,989	-22,886,640
Operating Profit	979,383	686,785
Interest receivable and similar income	30,408	16,062
Profit before tax	1,009,791	702,847
Tax on profit	-197,638	-133,541
Profit after tax	812,153	569,306
Retained earnings at the beginning of the year	1,501,815	932,509
Profit for the year	812,153	569,306
Retained earnings at the end of the year	2,313,968	1,501,815

	2019/2020 £	2018/2019 £
Surplus	£812k 100% Retained for Investment	
EBITDA %	3%	3%
Cashflow	£0.24m	£2.08m
Shareholder Funds	2.3m	£1.5k
Working Capital	£1.841m	£1.297m

Going Concern

The Board of Directors are required by company law to assess the Care Group's ability to remain trading for at least the next 12 months. The test for going concern was undertaken and the Board's assessment shows that the Care Group can continue to operate for a 20-month period up to and including March 2021.





TOWER HAMLETS
**GP CARE
GROUP** CIC

LOCAL PEOPLE, LOCAL HEALTH

A special 'thank you' to Care Group colleagues who shared pictures of their sunflower blooms grown from seeds gifted by the Care Group Exec Team to help lift spirits during the first lockdown earlier this year.

Tower Hamlets GP Care Group CIC

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