



WINTER 2020

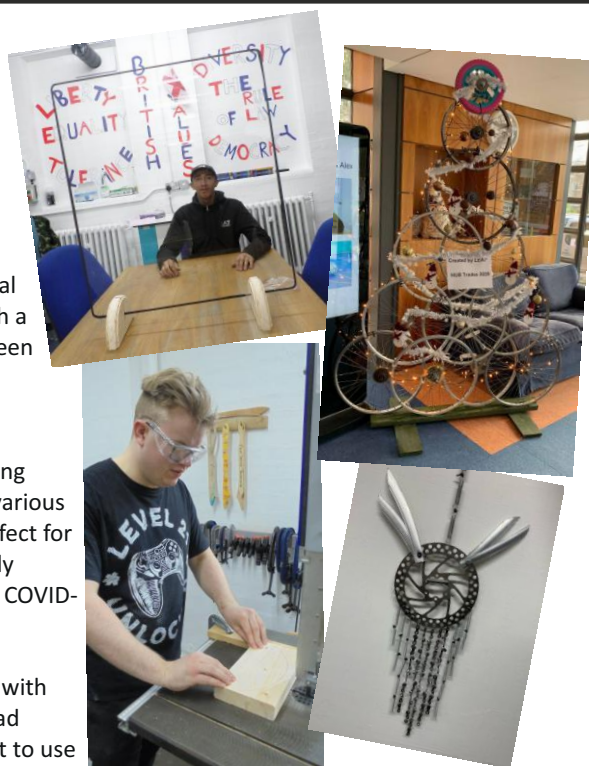
## LEAP Hub Creativity

Students in our LEAP Hub Trades and Motor Vehicles groups are very practical and enjoy getting their hands dirty with a range of activities, and this term has been no different.

Putting their practical skills to the test, students worked really hard at producing protective screens to be used around various areas of College. The screens were perfect for use in offices and classrooms, and really supported the College's efforts against COVID-19, helping keep everyone safe.

The groups then got more imaginative with their creations, looking at what they had around the workshop that could be put to use and given a new lease of life.

Not only did they get involved in the students' Festive Catalogue, creating a range of different characters, they got even more creative by putting their own spin on the traditional Christmas tree. They used old bicycle wheels, tinsel and lights to create the festive piece, which they delivered to QAC reception to take pride of place welcoming people as they come through the doors.



Imaginations didn't end there, with the group using other spare bicycle parts to create a one of a kind metal dreamcatcher, which was put up for auction to raise money for the group. The piece looked great and was highly sought after amongst staff, with the winning bid being over £42! Well done to all of the students, we look forward to seeing what you create next term.

## A Word from Bev



What a year this has been! 2020 cannot move on fast enough for us all at QAC and although we have to remain vigilant and safe moving forward into the New Year, we can now begin to see some positives ahead.

So much has changed in the world since March when we went into the first lockdown situation. What never changed was the commitment and respect QAC staff have towards students, clients and each other. Staff have ensured education, support services and safety continued to the highest standards, working way over and above in terms of what was expected from them. I cannot adequately thank every member of staff at QAC enough for all that you have managed to achieve this term despite facing such adversarial times.

QAC has still celebrated the good times, making excellent use of social media to get our messages and events across to a wide audience. Our Marketing Team played an integral and exceptional role in enabling QAC to run online Autism Central, Respite and Supported Living webinars, professional days and open days. Similarly, our Fundraising Team moved their endeavours online with the Christmas Fayre, raffles and managed to continue meaningful collaborations with partners such as THSH. College staff have embraced the online world to ensure communication remains high and that everyone feels part of the whole, despite existing in zones or remotely.

The New Year will see us all at QAC refreshed, masked, sanitised, distanced but definitely wiser. We are reflecting on the positives, and never losing sight of the bigger picture of why QAC exists. It is a real strength that in the longer term, all of us at QAC never lose sight of our purpose – our students, clients and staff. From me and all the Governors at QAC, we wish all of you the very best for Christmas and the New Year, "let's hope it's a good one...!"

**Bev Jessop**  
Principal & Chief Executive

## Pudsey Fun

Children in Need is always a fun day at QAC, with students and staff getting into the Pudsey spirit. Although we had to do things very differently this year, groups were not put off from getting involved.

PFL Blue took the lead on organising things in the Bradbury Centre, creating posters to encourage people to get involved by dressing up and doing penny trails in their classrooms.

LEAP Ruby organised a Pudsey Trail with pictures and clues around campus for others to take part in, LEAP Creative made Pudsey badges and Residential houses got involved with their own activities and decorations whilst watching the TV show.

Everyone worked really hard across College to make it a fun day, with donations raising nearly £200 towards this year's campaign which is fantastic - well done everyone.





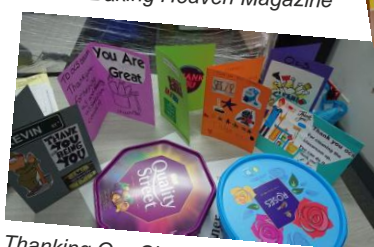
## Highlights



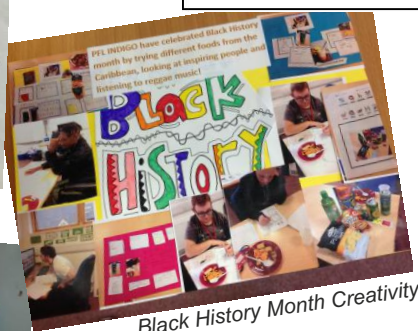
Baking Heaven Magazine



Poet Abdullah



Thanking Our Cleaners



Black History Month Creativity

### OCTOBER

To celebrate National Poetry Day on 1st October 2020, we hosted our own 'Poems & PJs Day' encouraging staff and students to revisit the joys of a poem and get their creative juices flowing by writing poems to share with others by video recording. In order to add a fun element to the day, everyone was able to wear their pjs to College for the day – with some colourful ones being worn. There was a competition to find the best 3 student poems from across campus with some wonderful entries featuring topics such as Harry Potter, Autumn, Relationships, Trains in Pain and acrostic poems. There were so many great poems it was hard for the judges to choose, but congratulations to winners Daniel, Troy and Fathima. All poems will be available in a folder in the library, and will be added to with future poems written by students.

Around 10 - 15% of the world population is affected by dyslexia and the first few days of October saw us 'go red' for Dyslexia Awareness Week. It is something we get involved with every year as a way to support The British Dyslexia Association and promote an understanding of dyslexia and inclusion, raising awareness of the support and services that are available, particularly within QAC. As part of the week, our dyslexia specialist produced an introductory video for groups to watch and there were a range of quizzes and games for the students to participate in. We also added a range of wonderful new dyslexia books to the library to support people going forwards.

QAC always celebrates Black History Month, but due to things being different this year we could not host our usual workshops. Instead, students and staff got creative and produced their own QAC Black History Month Magazine. Groups worked really hard to fill it with fun and

interesting pages including history and facts around Black Lives Matter, Black Pound Day and Windrush. LEAP Creative drew portraits of black actors including Idris Elba, Jessica Plummer and Lenny Henry, PFL Amber created collages for black musicians including Jamelia and Beverley Knight and LEAP Ruby researched people such as Michael Jordan, Bob Marley and Phyllis Wheatley who they found inspiring. No magazine is complete without food and problems, and this magazine was no different, with PFL Indigo trying a range of Caribbean food and Auntie Corinne giving the advice. The magazine was a great success and something we hope to repeat – well done all.

October 21st was 'Thank Your Cleaner Day'. We are lucky enough to have an amazing cleaning team at QAC who have, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, worked harder than ever to keep the College clean and safe for everyone. This includes communal spaces, classrooms and offices across campus, so is no easy feat. We are always grateful for the work our OCS cleaning team do, but 'Thank Your Cleaner Day' was an opportunity to show it, with students offering handmade cards and sweet treats as their way of saying thank you to them.

### NOVEMBER

We were unable to have our usual Remembrance Day activities and workshops this year, but we were invited to take part in a remembrance display at Asda Barnes Hill. A lot of groups took part with pride, either using poppy templates or getting creative and coming up with their own wonderful designs that would feature in the supermarket's poppy display. As part of the activity, groups looked at what remembrance means and why we do it every year; some groups researched into the different poppies, adding purple and white poppies into their work, and some groups created their own classroom displays as an act of remembrance.

Bullying is taken seriously at QAC, so Anti Bullying week is an important one, with plenty going on. This year, as with previous years, we promoted the act of kindness, encouraging everyone to be kind to each other and share examples of 'acts of kindness' they had done or received. As a way to understand more about bullying, its impact and why we should be kind, students were asked to design comedy sketches, posters, scripts, problem page letters and other pieces to portray an example of bullying and a positive resolution. It was a thought-provoking week with a lot of discussion and, as always, great work from students.

Our Hospitality Group has received an annual subscription to Baking Heaven magazine, providing them with plenty of ideas and inspiration for different recipes to try in the kitchen. Not only that, but the magazine wanted to feature QACafe in the '10 minutes with' section of their website, and included an interview and photos of the group. Baking stardom beckons!

Congratulations to Health & Social Care student Abdullah, who entered a writing competition called 'Write to Unite', organised by [www.youngwriters.co.uk](http://www.youngwriters.co.uk). Abdullah's poem, titled 'Corona', was written to uplift people and say thank you to the heroes amongst us who have helped others get through. It was a great piece of work and the judges thought so too, choosing it as one of the poems to include in their upcoming book 'Write to Unite' which is available to buy, with a copy also being held in The British Library. Well done to Abdullah for his heartfelt creativity and doing so well - everyone at QAC is really proud of you.

# Spotlight

## QAC's Twelve Days of Christmas

Normally, the Performing Arts show is one of the festive highlights at QAC - with students, staff and families all hoping to get tickets to the limited performances. Unfortunately, in person live performances were not able to go ahead this year due to social distancing and College zones, but this did not stop the Performing Arts group from entertaining us all.

Instead, they created their own '12 Days of Christmas' to share with everyone. Each of the twelve performances were written, developed and performed by the students and featured songs, well known stories, parodies, comedies and more.

It was a great way for the group to still get into the festive spirit, whilst also learning how to perform with social distancing or in bubbles, using minimal costumes and props and performing in front of a camera and without an audience.

The aim was to bring joy, show the importance of the performing arts industry and how it can be made accessible for all. With this in mind, the videos were so good we had to share them, so they all featured on our social media too.

Well done everyone involved, this was not an easy task but was another example of QAC's values and creativity at work.

## All Formats Endeavours

As College went into lockdown back in March, our AllFormats Team continued to provide a valuable transcription service to their customers. The situation created many challenges, causing the team to change their working patterns. One large team became two smaller teams working rotas, meaning many of them haven't seen each other since spring, but their commitment and hard work has ensured they have been able to meet the demands and needs of all of their customers.

The team is looking forward to 2021 and a number of exciting things on the horizon, including moving into new premises and launching a new website. Not only does the enterprise provide a valuable service for many, many people, it also provides a valuable income for QAC, so the team deserves a big thank you and well done!

## Introducing New PFL Groups

We would like to introduce two new PFL Groups that started in September.

PFL Step Out attend College three out of five days a week, accessing other provision in their local community for the remaining two days. This offers them opportunities to experience environments outside the classroom, continue their learning and build on the skills they have already developed at QAC. The goal is for students to be prepared for their transition into adult services and to leave QAC being as independent as they possibly can be.

Since September, students have been looking at what skills they already have and have worked on their communication skills by getting to know each other. They have been busy clearing the garden ready to build their own vegetable patch and looking at other household tasks.

The students in Step Out really enjoy the relaxed, friendly and fun atmosphere and the fact they are able to be as independent as possible whilst preparing for life beyond QAC.

PFL Bridge is the other new group this year, giving our Springboard learners the opportunity to try the different kinds of subjects and activities they might do as they progress to other PFL and College courses. This enables them to see what they enjoy whilst also expanding their social and independent living skills, preparing them for their next QAC steps.

Both groups have already enjoyed being involved in College wide projects including Eco Group activities and the Students' Crafts Christmas Catalogue.

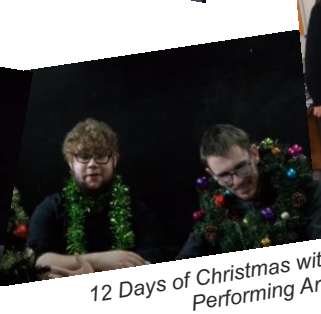
## QAC Festive Fun

Christmas is usually a fun filled, lively time at QAC, with everyone doing their bit to get into the festive spirit with performances, fairs and other Christmas activities happening.

This year it was very different, with no in person fairs or live performances. However, there was still plenty of festive spirit in the air as people worked together to think of other ways we could start the countdown to Christmas.

Some of our student groups took their creative talents to another level, making items to be featured in our first ever Students' Crafts Christmas Catalogue, which was shared with staff and families to place orders from. Although not the same as the annual Fair, it was a great opportunity for students to still design and make things they wanted to sell, making them think more about how to display, photograph and market their items. The catalogue worked really well and we are already thinking about doing it again in the Spring!

Festive Friday took place on the first Friday of December, encouraging everyone to put on their Santa hats and Christmas jumpers and get the tree and tinsel out to decorate their rooms and there were competitions for the most festive groups and individuals, and Christmas jumper designs. It was a great way for everyone to bring some festive cheer to College - congratulations to winners Zainab, Elliott, PFL Blue and PFL Black staff!



Festive Friday Fun

12 Days of Christmas with Performing Arts



# Spotlight

## IP Spectra Project

Spectra is a performance project for people with learning disabilities and QAC has been involved with them for a number of years, with students and clients taking part in a variety of exciting and creative projects.

Earlier this year, some of our Independence Plus clients got involved in their latest project, Spectra Strips, a comic/story book. The group had to come up with ideas of superheroes that they wanted to be and then create stories around them. Groups used writing, drawing, props and flip charts to pull ideas together and share ideas. Once happy with the storylines, participants then got to act them out, working with a photographer to choreograph poses and add different backgrounds and effects.

Spectra is great at working with us, using their experience to get the most from our students and clients who, in turn, always get a lot out of working with them. This project was something a bit different and participants really enjoyed being part of it and seeing the end result.

## QAC Gets Silver!

We're very proud that in September QAC achieved its Investors in People (IiP) Silver Award. It means not only that staff recognise QAC is a good employer to work for but it keeps us on track on our continuous improvement journey for the benefit of our employees. As a charity, the glue that binds QAC is its ethos, culture and values and our Silver Accreditation confirms that our staff are motivated and live the QAC values in their working environment.

The accreditation process involved a staff survey and an assessor having discussions with a random selection of employees across the organisation as well as meetings with Bev, our Principal & Chief Executive, and a Union Representative. He also reviewed various pieces of evidence about different areas of QAC's work, including our strategic plan, collaborative working/corporate social responsibility, Values Awards, succession planning/training and staff collaboration to improve working practices.

It has been helpful to see the assessment of QAC against external IiP benchmarks and the process also showed how far we have progressed our organisational and people management systems and it is great that staff have recognised those strengths too.

## Exciting Community Services Developments

During October half term, QAC Community Services ran its first holiday club, something we have been wanting to do for some time – it allows continuity for those who appreciate a bit of routine and provides an opportunity for students and clients to interact and take part in social activities together away from the normal College day.

The sessions ran across two days, with a wide range of activities on offer, including seasonal Halloween-themed arts and crafts, group projects, quizzes, music, games and performances.

It was a great success and feedback was very positive, citing the benefits of familiar settings and staff, as well as the choice of activities, with some offering suggestions as to what they would be interested in doing next time. It is definitely something we hope to build on, offering more regular holiday clubs in the future.

We were really pleased to start our Support Worker Service in June 2020, providing person centred 1:1 support for students, former students and other young people in the community who have been funded for a Personal Assistant via direct payments from their Local Authority. Young people accessing the service are matched with a small team of support workers who support them to access a range of activities of their choosing including leisure and social activities, work experience and volunteering, developing independent living skills and building new friendships and interests. Clients access anything from a few hours support a fortnight to four or five hours each day depending on individual needs.

Moving forward, we are really excited about some of new Community Services projects that will be starting next year. Thanks to funding from QBE Foundation we will be delivering a community based LGBTQ+ support group offering advice, support and opportunities to engage with others. The project aims to support LGBTQ+ young people with disabilities to not only engage with each other, but also positively engage with their local communities, in turn developing their confidence and supporting their mental health.

Another project for 2021, thanks to funding from Assura Community Fund is 'Let's Get Jammin'', a music based project offering blocks of group and individual music sessions for people to engage with, all working towards a 'Music Camp' and community performances in the summer. This is an idea that grew from us seeing the positive impact music has for our students and we're looking forward to getting started.

Finally in early 2021 we hope to have a base for Community Services close to the College enabling us to run the provision centrally, offer before and after college provision as well as day time, evening and weekend activities.

For more information on our Community Services provision, including the above projects, please contact [communityservices@qac.ac.uk](mailto:communityservices@qac.ac.uk) or call 0121 803 5310



Spectra Story Book



Holiday Club Fun

# Events

## Fundraising

With no in person 'ho ho ho' from Santa or jingles from the elves at our annual Christmas Fayre, we took things online. Our online raffle featured some great prizes and was open to staff and others to get involved, and was a lovely way for people to send a festive message too. A big thank you to everyone who got involved, especially those who donated prizes, helping raise over £500.

Santa Saturday, which should have been a great in person event, turned into a 'collect and craft' event. Santa bags were crammed full with lots of festive crafts to make, colouring, activities, a very special Santa Storytime USB, chocolate treats and of course a gift from Santa. Those who had one enjoyed the different activities and it is something we hope to do at other times of the year.

Our Christmas Craft Fayre is always a highlight - for our Fundraising Team, stallholders and visitors - and it was with a sad heart we couldn't host it this year. But, not to be grinchy, we took it online and turned it into first ever Virtual Christmas Market, with stall videos and links taking over our Facebook page for the weekend. There were some lovely things showcased and it was great to engage with new stallholders and we look forward to working with them and our existing stallholders again soon.

Something we introduced as part of #GivingTuesday in December was our new 'Friends of QAC' initiative where people can make a donation and sign up as a friend of QAC and in return get goodies and discounts throughout the year. More information will be on our website in the New Year.

It has definitely been a period of forced change, but we have learned plenty and look forward to taking some of the ideas (and new ones) forward to next year!



## Corporate & Community

A big thank you to a group of coaches, families, supporters and Junior rugby players from local club *Bournville RFC* who took part in a virtual round the world cycle challenge over the summer, pedalling 29,241km. They raised over £1000 in total, donating half of it to QAC's minibus fundraising.

We have been working with *Birmingham Town Hall & Symphony Hall* on ideas to engage students and planning ideas for more collaboration in the future. In the meantime we supported their 'Big Give' campaign to raise money to provide music and performance opportunities for Birmingham carers.

We often welcome students from *UCB* to QAC to support activities including face painting and Looking & Feeling Good Club, but again circumstances have prevented this. However, we are looking at ideas for how they might be able to offer virtual tutorials and tips sessions for students, which is something we hope to develop after Christmas.

We were invited to take part in *Zurich Community Trust's* seasonal challenge this year, but due to social distancing we had to think differently. We were lucky enough to have a national team choose our 'Santa Gifts' challenge and turn one of their virtual team meetings into a shopping spree, complete with festive jumpers. Between them, the team spent a £500 ZCT donation on items from our Amazon Wishlist with sensory toys, books, games and speech and language tools being some of the great items we've received. We also received a further £500 donation towards our seasonal fundraising.

In early December, Harborne based Metro Real Estate donated £1000 towards our festive fundraising, which was a lovely - and much appreciated - surprise.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank a number of companies who have supported us this term;

*Chiltern Seeds* donated seeds for our PFL groups to use in their gardening activities;  
*Beeswift Limited* sent ponchos to help keep students dry when out and about onsite or at Umberslade.  
*Magnifico Magnifier Company* donated hand magnifiers for students and staff to use to make life easier in the classroom.  
*Big Brown Carrier Bag Company* supported our Santa Saturday event, donating the bags for us to fill.  
*First Corporate Clothing* donated clothing for our Supported Interns, including smart menswear and outdoor workwear.  
*Bird Watching Magazine* donated an annual subscription along with back issues for PFL Green and others to use.  
*Baking Heaven Magazine* donated an annual magazine subscription for our Hospitality group.

A big thank you to everyone who has supported us this year, at a time when we really needed it, we really do appreciate it!

If you would like to know more about how you can get involved in supporting us, please contact [fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk)



# Life at Pinewood

As always, things have been busy at Pinewood, with a new group of students and Supported Interns getting used to their new setting.

The group has been busy with various activities, including creating their own newsletter shouting about what they have been getting up to and everything that happens there. They took the opportunity to get involved in the Students' Crafts Christmas Catalogue, using their different skills to create items including handmade decorations and 'year you were born' prints as well as the current importance on hygiene to create mini 'hands, face, space' bags.

Due to the current circumstances and the impact on our partners, it has been difficult securing and maintaining work placements for students. However, the team has worked really hard to find valuable experiences for the students.

One such opportunity is with ExtraCare Charitable Trust who have been delighted with the work placements and the dedication that our students have shown so far. All Supported Internship and STRIDES students have now successfully completed their induction training at ExtraCare, meaning they

are now registered volunteers with them.

This is fantastic news and means the Team has achieved the outcome for all Supported Intern students 'to gain a voluntary work placement' once they leave QAC. All students were presented with certificates to mark the achievement and recognise their hard work.

As part of their work around job searching, students have looked at the importance of making a positive first impression and how personal presentation is key. Thanks to support from Next, Slaters and First Corporate Clothing, they were able to put theory into practice to choose suitable interview clothing they could wear. There were some fantastic transformations, we hardly recognised them!



QAC is the UK Agent for Revolution Advantage Carbon Fibre Canes. These canes are light weight, give greater sensitivity, are highly reflective and have a 12 month warranty.

If you would like to order please call 0121 803 5484 or email [enquiries@qac.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qac.ac.uk). You can find out more information on our website at [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk).

## Conferencing Facilities

QAC has a range of excellent facilities available for hire and offers fully accessible amenities together with a unique friendly atmosphere. With excellent transport links to/from New Street Station and all major motorway links, QAC is the ideal venue for meetings, training, team building away days and conferences.

Our high quality facilities range from small intimate rooms for 8-10 people to larger rooms which will accommodate 200 delegates. In addition, our on campus sports hall is also available for hire evening and weekends. A new addition to our campus is our Commercial Training Kitchen. This high quality facility is available for small businesses and training companies for catering production, cooking demonstrations and classes.

All our facilities are available for hire throughout the year with some restrictions during term time but we welcome all enquiries. By choosing QAC as your venue, not only will you benefit from our first rate facilities and friendly staff, you will be supporting our services for people with disabilities.

If you would like more information about hiring any of our facilities please contact Karen Easthope by email: [kareneasthope@qac.ac.uk](mailto:kareneasthope@qac.ac.uk) or call 0121 803 5310.

We are currently open to clients offering activities permitted within Government Guidelines in relation to COVID-19. We have increased our cleaning regime and have robust protocols in place to ensure that our venue is COVID secure.



Queen Alexandra College, Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9TG  
Tel: 0121 803 5489 Email: [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)  
Registered Charity No. 1065794 Registered in England No. 3387540



For more information about what is happening at QAC and how you can get involved visit [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk) or follow us on social media



@QAC\_Official



Queen Alexandra College (QAC) Official Site



@qac\_official



Queen Alexandra College