



QAC News



SUMMER 2022

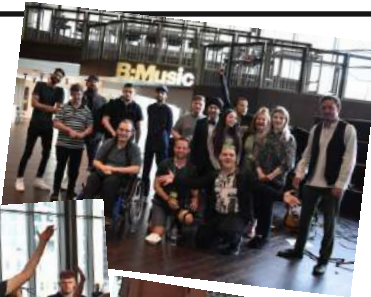
Joyous Jubilee Shenanigans!

The Queen's Jubilee took place during half term, but that was not going to stop us from celebrating! Not ones to miss a party, our 'Joyous Jubilee Jamboree' took place at the end of June instead.

Thanks to funding from Arts Council England's Let's Create Jubilee Fund, we were able to develop a creative project to engage all our students, including the opportunity for some students to work with industry professionals to develop their talents.

QAC Collective was lucky enough to work with multi-instrumentalist, musician, songwriter and producer Tim Prottey-Jones. They had regular sessions to help build skills and confidence, learn some industry tricks of the trade and co-write their own celebration themed song, 'Jubilation'. Our QAC Dance Troupe was physically creative, working with Anushka Parmar and Jess Campbell from Aspire Dance Academy to choreograph their very own dance routine, complete with solos.

Although working separately, both groups then came together for a public performance at the Jennifer Blackwell Performance Space at Birmingham Symphony Hall and despite the nerves, everyone did really well and really



enjoyed their moment in the spotlight.

But that wasn't the end of our Jubilee fun, as both groups performed again at our Joyous Jubilee Jamboree on campus, complete with themed decorations and cake. Students and staff dressed in red, white and blue to take part in a Jubilee parade in front of 'royal' judges, waving flags that their groups had decorated, creating a fun atmosphere before performances and a disco. Great fun was had by all - even the Queen was in attendance!

Hello Perry!

With everything gearing up to the Commonwealth Games taking place in Birmingham this summer, there was a lot of excitement at QAC as students had a surprise visitor to the sports hall; none other than Perry, the cheeky Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Mascot, and his friend Amber.

They talked to students about the sports involved in the games, why the sports were selected, the Queen's message and the baton handover. It was very informative and interactive and the students loved Perry, especially when they got to take part in light exercises and games with him.

It was a great way to build students' excitement and interest in the games, and start the build up to our very own Summer Games at the end of term.



A Word from Bev



I hope you will be impressed reading about all the events, learning and activities that have happened in this year of adjustment, following two years of lockdown educational disruption.

Space on the main campus continues to evolve with the recent large growth in student numbers. We have 4 new modular buildings and a Yurt on the main campus, as well as additional space at our Pinewood Campus. Having secured a long lease on our Umberslade Campus, we push ahead with a phased plan to develop the site with capacity for 60 students; this will also become a 2nd base for QAC's Community Services (the main hub is on Court Oak Road), which has gone from strength to strength.

Despite a disappointing Ofsted outcome, we are still positive and committed, working at pace to further strengthen the educational experiences of students at QAC.

We have a newly developed sustainability strategy with much action planned by students, clients, and staff so that everyone does their bit for the environment AND we were ranked 4th in the National Centre for Diversity's "Top 100 most inclusive workplaces". Fantastic!

It has been a joy to see visitors and the public back on campus and having QAC slowly coming back to its pre-lockdown way of life. The Summer Games returned, there have been successful music performances at Symphony Hall and we all enjoyed the Joyous Jubilee Jamboree, as well as the end of term performances and our Friends and Families Days.

We look forward to continued collaboration with our friends, supporters and donors and to #Bring Back the Magic! Wishing everyone a summer of sunshine!

Bev Jessop
Principal & Chief Executive

Highlights



LGBTQ Awareness

To help celebrate LGBTQ History Month in February, our SPARK group organised a number of fun activities for people to be involved in. There was a competition for the best LGBTQ+ themed display board, a raffle and a stall selling a variety of things including badges, whistles and colourful shoe laces.

The library also got involved, creating a great display of some of their new LGBTQ+ inspired books, fiction and non-fiction, for our students and staff to use.

Women in Science

International Day of Women and Girls in Science takes place in February, and is all about promoting access to and interest in science for women and girls.

To celebrate, we invited The Education Group to college to run some 'Silly Science' workshops for students. Workshops were opened up to all students to get involved in and enjoy, hoping to peak the interest of our female students and encourage them to consider occupations associated with science.

With the help of Louise, our 'Nutty Professor', students made fire, initiated chemical reactions, performed gravity experiments and much more. Not forgetting the obligatory exploding Coca Cola and Mentos experiment.

It was a fun and exciting session, with lots of smiles and cheers from everyone involved.

Students Keeping Busy

PFL Green took advantage of the nice weather and planted a small garden outside the Springboard building with a range of plants that will come back each year including alliums, lavender and sweet williams. We can't wait to see it in bloom.

PFL Blue have continued to run their regular pop up sales, practising their functional and retail skills. They even hosted a Jubilee themed one in the run up to our celebrations.

LEAP Creative have tested their designs in a number of ways, including producing uniform t-shirts for other students to wear for their activities. They also produced t-shirts and merchandise for our upcoming Community Services Fun Day, and they did a great job.

Performing Arts have taken to the stage a couple of times, firstly with their 'spooky' rendition of The Addams Family in March, which they performed to live audiences, then Grease which they filmed. They worked hard on both performances with some great singing, dancing, acting and set designs on show.

Our Performing Arts group also had the opportunity to take part in a special effects workshop with some Theatrical Make Up students from UCB - with some gruesome results.

As part of their jubilee work, PFL Black decided to make direct contact with the Queen herself. The group wrote letters offering their best wishes for the celebrations, and were rewarded with a personal letter from Her Majesty's 'Lady in Waiting' in response. Great work PFL Black.

Health & Social Care students have been getting creative, not just during ArtsFest (which they loved!) but by learning how to knit and crochet.

LEAP Forward have been busy helping the Fundraising Team with their activities, selling raffle tickets, creating posters and helping decorate and publicise upcoming events.

Ben, a Creative Media student, works as a consultant for Body Shop and was able to combine this role with his course, creating a promotional video including professional pictures and transitions with a voiceover.

Art Exhibition

As part of this year's ArtsFest, Vocational Art & Design students had the chance to install their own work at Stryx Gallery as part of their "Bounce" Spring Art Show!

The gallery, located in the Digbeth area of Birmingham City Centre, hosts work from

various artists throughout the year, and this opportunity offered students a taste of how a professional and commercial arts setting works. Students worked really hard, creating some fantastic pieces to show. Friends, family and members of the public were able to attend the exhibition, giving students invaluable experience and the chance to see what it feels like to have their work on public display. Well done to all involved.

Saving the Animals

We love to dress up, so as part of our Eco Group's work to raise awareness of endangered animals they organised an 'animal dress up day'. They created posters and went around classrooms to tell people about the day.

Lots of people got involved, dressing in leopard print, bird print and full on animal costumes! It was great fun, and as a result we were able to adopt a penguin, and more locally a donkey called 'Harbin'.

Students' Talents

As part of the return of our Summer Games, the Hospitality Group worked hard to bring back QA Factor - the annual student talent show.

Students from across college took to the stage to wow the judges with their singing and dancing - with some jokes thrown in too!

Everyone had a great time - performers and audience - and the judges had a very difficult time choosing the winners. Well done to everyone involved.

Spotlight

Dragons Den Success

After a couple of years' break due to limited fundraising events taking place, our Dragons' Den competition returned. Students (and staff) were able to apply for up to £300 to make their projects possible, and following their initial applications they had to use their research, communication, presentation and money skills to prepare presentations to pitch to 3 (very friendly) 'dragons'.

The panel saw 30 presentations for different projects from across college, and even got to make their own lava lamps as part of an experiment.

Groups did really well, impressing each of the 'dragons', and as a result, 22 of the projects were successful.

Community Services successfully pitched for some kitchen and living skills equipment, LEAP Creative and PFL Blue were able to buy sales and merchandising equipment to support their group activities, the LRC ordered new books and a new sofa which has proved very popular. LEAP Arts, LEAP Community and PFL Indigo all benefited from new art and crafts materials and resources and a few groups got to enjoy some trips out - including Thinktank, Cadbury World, bowling and Black Country Living Museum - something they had really missed in the last couple of years.

Summer Games Fun

With the end of term approaching, it was great to see QAC's Summer Games return, and students and staff taking part in a range of activities organised by our sports groups.

Vocational Sport & PCFA organised wheelchair friendly competitions including slaloms and basketball in the sports hall, whilst welly wanging, penalties and relays took place on the field. LEAP Sports took to the gym to host 'beat the record' challenges including plank and hang tough, as well as 3-minute challenges on the bikes and treadmill.

As part of the event, there was also a quiz in line with this year's theme of sustainability, and groups had to research and create their own displays on topics such as deforestation, save the turtles, farm to fork, business sustainability and food waste.

As always, there was a cake decorating competition, art competition and the grand final of QAFactor was part of Summer Games week, with the winners of each round taking to the stage to see who would be crowned champion.

ArtsFest Returns

We have really missed ArtsFest in the last couple of years, so it was great to be able to bring it back to College just before the Easter break. ArtsFest is all about celebrating everything QAC has to offer, and this year it did so with a bang, with workshops, competitions and performances.

Over 30 workshops took place across campus for students to take part in such as badge making, tote bag design, beadwork, musical sessions and origami - with some great creations coming out of them. Not only did students participate in workshops, some groups, including LEAP Creative, LEAP Forward and LEAP Arts also hosted sessions, developing skills aligned to their courses and targets.

Activities didn't just take place at main campus. Pinewood students were tasked with their own t-shirt decorating competition, entered the noticeboard competition and art exhibition and some students engaged with main campus workshops too. Umberslade hosted 'Making a Birdfeeder' and 'Plant a Basket' workshops for groups visiting, and the Art Group completed their 'commissioned' tree art mural, transforming a boring brick wall into a colourful tree, which looks fantastic!

As well as internally led sessions, we also welcomed external hosts into college to deliver workshops including Creation Station, Freshwater Theatre, UCB, Education Group and Sofia's Steel Drums, so there was plenty happening for people to choose from.

ArtsFest wouldn't be the same without our student exhibition and performances, and they didn't disappoint. M30 was transformed into an art gallery displaying students' artwork, with some great interpretations of this year's themes of 'Colour', 'Environment / Sustainability' and 'The Commonwealth'. The last day saw the Performing Arts group perform their very own 'Meat vs Veg' medley in their studio before QAC Collective took to the courtyard to perform.

Not only is ArtsFest a great way for students to get involved in something creative and try something new, it's a great way for them to develop new skills and engage with people they wouldn't normally work with and we saw lots of students grow in confidence over the two weeks. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this year's event, with amazing feedback from students and staff showing it was definitely missed! We're already looking forward to next year's event and making it even better.



Spotlight

Residential Activities

Oakwood residential students have been busy, getting out and about exploring Birmingham. Charlie and Daniel had a lovely day at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery with staff members John and Sonya. They were mesmerised by the old historic items, asking plenty of questions about everything they saw and making sure the group didn't miss any of the exhibits as they walked around. They enjoyed another fun day when they visited St. Andrew's ground to watch the Birmingham City vs Blackburn football match. They may not have won the match, but they had

a great day, joining in the cheering and singing.

Always keen to host a party, Oakwood students enjoyed celebrating the Queen's Jubilee in the sunshine. They took part in games and activities, made flags, crowns and other 'royal' decorations - and had a great time celebrating in the garden. We think the Queen would have been proud of what they made!

The sun shone as Mary Badger student, Joshua, enjoyed a visit to the Botanical Gardens where he explored the different areas, taking in the beautiful sights and sounds as an orchestra played whilst visitors looked around.

Night Owl News

The Community Services Team has been working to build inclusive and accessible spaces and places to socialise and get together, and we are excited to tell you about something that has been happening since February.

We work with young adults with a wide range of support needs, and know from listening to our clients that events don't always feel as welcoming as they should. After two years of COVID-related restrictions and not being able to go out and enjoy ourselves, we wanted to create a space for people to go and have a drink and a dance with friends, somewhere to meet new people, and do all the other things we missed, and which sometimes aren't that easy to enjoy if going out in the evening poses a few challenges.

'Come As You Are' is a monthly nightclub hosted by the Night Owl nightclub in partnership with our Community Services Team, and is a welcoming space for everyone, inclusive of autism, neurodiversity, disability or other support needs.

First and foremost it starts at 7pm, so it's easier to arrange support and transport. The venue is wheelchair accessible, there's a full bar with a dance floor, accessible toilets, and indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as flat access to a car park over the road. In addition, the volume is a little lower, there are more seats than usual in a nightclub, absolutely NO strobe lights, and the dress code is 'please yourself'! So go as dressed-up or dressed-down as you like.

We also wanted to make sure that it was as financially accessible as possible, so it's £5 entry, with carers going free. The night runs on the third Monday of the month and have been really popular, so we look forward to seeing you on the dance floor!

Community Services Catch Up

It's been very busy in Community Services and we have lots to tell you about. Our peer groups are going from strength to strength. Every week we run a men's group or a women's group. The women's group is currently involved in an amazing community textile art project, facilitated by artists Magda Jasiak and Hira Butt from Stryx Arts, called Strength Strings. The work will be exhibited as part of the Digbeth First Friday in August - watch this space! Our men's group continues to be a safe, social space to meet, socialise and chat about the things that matter (or, sometimes, just eat pizza and put the world to rights). We've also moved our fabulous community LGBTQI+ group, SPARK+, offline and back into the real world, and we meet every Friday at 3:30pm at the Hub.

Day to day life in the Hub continues to be as busy and interesting as ever. We've started a weekly swimming group and with the warm weather upon us we've been enjoying spending time outside in the garden (our new ginormous paddling pool helps!). Of course our crafts and chats still take place for those that want them.

In May, we hosted a brilliant student Showcase at the Hub, and treated our stakeholders (including members of our immediate community and the organisations we share our building with) to some outstanding musical, theatre, dance and comedy performances from students and clients, including the unstoppable QAC Collective. It was great to host something like this at the Hub and the atmosphere was fantastic, with everyone enjoying the show.

Staff and clients took part in the Summer Fete, running the book stall as well as our crafts stall, and our Commonwealth Games-themed Inclusive Community Fun Day will be taking place at the start of August. We are also planning our summer holiday club and are looking forward to seeing everyone back for a good time through July and August.

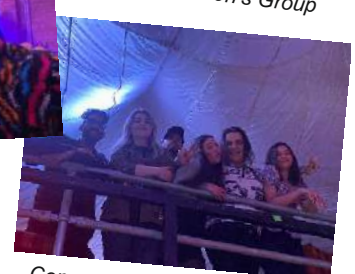
As we come towards the first full year in the Community Hub we have been reflecting on how much the service has grown and developed, and looking forward with excitement to what comes next.... starting with celebrating our one year anniversary over the summer!



Oakwood Jubilee Fun



Art in Women's Group



Come as You Are Smiles

Events

Fundraising

In March we hosted a new event, a Spring Craft & Food Fayre, which was our first in-person community event in two years. It was great to be back doing events again and we were really excited to see some familiar faces and new visitors who came to support us on the day, along with the sunshine. It was a great event, raising nearly £1400 for QAC Community Services.

We ran our Virtual Pet Show in April, with some great entries from some very loved pets (and their owners). The cats and dogs had their moment in the spotlight as people voted for their category favourites on Facebook, with Archie winning 'Best in Show' and being crowned overall winner. Money

raised was split between QAC and Bromsgrove Blue Cross Rehoming Centre.

Another new event for us was our Fun Dog Show, in collaboration with Wythall & District German Shepherd Dog Training Club. We've loved having mini dog shows at our summer fete in the past, but hosting our own dog show was great fun. The sun shone and it was a 'pawsome' day with lots of people and pooches joining the fun of competitions and obstacle courses, helping us raise over £1000 to be shared between both groups. Congratulations to everyone who took part, especially the winners!

Thanks to a wet weather forecast, we had to postpone our Summer Fete by a week, but that didn't stop us from having a great event, eventually! Craft stalls set up in the courtyard along with the ever popular book stall and tombola. The field was a hive of activity with people enjoying table top games, penalty shoot out and 'crook smash' which was great fun. We also welcomed Mari from Guide Dogs, along with the lovely guide dog India, who gave an interactive demo on the life and work of a guide dog. The sun shone and the rain came, but it was a great event with everyone enjoying the day, raising just under £1000 for activities including the library and Independence Plus.

Student Eliza and staff member Emma headed to Skydive Langar in Nottingham and took to the skies for our tandem skydive. A mix of nerves and excitement was in the air, along with some sunshine as the anticipation built whilst watching other people jump, but they both thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They raised over £900 between them, well done both!

Fundraising has been particularly hard in the last couple of years, so a big thank you to everyone who has supported our events and fundraising this year. We are now busy planning events for next academic year, which will mark our 25th anniversary as an independent charity, so there will be some exciting things being planned!

Corporate & Community

Our Hospitality Group has worked with our Fundraising team to host some corporate coffee mornings where invited guests have been treated to drinks and cakes as they met students, found out more about what we do and how they can be involved with us going forward. It has been great to welcome people back in, and the mornings have been a great way for students to practice their hospitality and café skills whilst meeting some of our friends and supporters.

We have developed a great relationship with the Community Champion at Morrisons in Stirchley. Debbie has kindly donated items to support our events and has also attended some of them too, meeting students and other QAC supporters. Students were given the opportunity to take part in Morrisons' 'Seeds of Hope' initiative using paper chain templates to colour in and write their own positive messages on, ready to be displayed in store. They enjoyed discussions around what hope means and what messages to include, as well as getting creative to make them bright and colourful. Some green-fingered groups have also been planting cornflower seeds as part of the activity and we look forward to seeing those bloom around campus! We look forward to working with the Morrisons team more next year.

We were pleased to accept a £5,000 donation from Sharegift, who, as a share donation charity, collect unwanted shares to generate funds which they then donate to other UK charities, as suggested by donors and supporters. We were lucky enough to receive a donation from them back in 2009, so this second donation was a very welcome surprise.

Metro Real Estate in Harborne have supported our after college clubs in the past and earlier this year they kindly donated £1000 to support some of our Community Services activities at the Hub, including their popular Saturday Socials.

At the end of term we were lucky to be chosen by a Zurich team as their summer challenge project, meaning we will receive £500 of items from our Amazon wishlist. We look forward to receiving these over the summer ready for students to use next year!

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

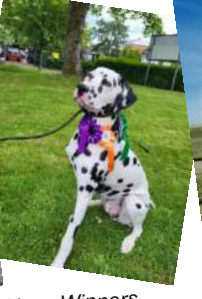
Coffee Mornings



Spring Fayre



Dog Show Winners



Skydive Wings



Summer Fete Fun



Life at Pinewood

There has been lots of success at Pinewood this year. Our Supported Intern (SI) Team worked hard on a project with HSBC, resulting in 10 students from College having an interview for paid, full and part-time roles, with three of them being offered job roles at HSBC – achieving their long-term goal of gaining paid employment.

Based at the Broad Street branch in Birmingham, Abdullah, Charlotte and Joe, will be meeting and greeting customers, often as the first point of contact to answer queries, show customers how to use self-service equipment and direct them to a colleague if they have a more complex enquiry.

Charlotte (pictured) commented: "I feel really happy as I never thought that I'd ever get a job. I can't wait to start working at HSBC." Abdullah (pictured) said: "I never thought I'd be able to work as I have two impairments. Thank you to everyone at QAC for making my dream come true!"

Brad, another Supported Intern, has also secured paid employment, this time with our Community Services team, following a successful work placement with them.

Brad (pictured) commented: "This year has been amazing! I have had a really positive experience".

This was the final year of our Fund Me initiative, made possible thanks to a donation from The National Express Foundation three years ago. Once again, our SI and STRIDES students had the opportunity to apply for a grant to buy their very own equipment and resources, to support with their programme and life beyond QAC.

Applicants had to research into what they wanted to spend their grant on, and present to a panel about what they thought they needed and why. They had to explain how it would impact them now, and for their next steps once their programme had finished.

As with previous years, there were some great presentations and we were pleased to offer grants to a number of interns, with shopping lists including qualification and training courses, protective clothing and equipment, books and technology. Students worked really hard on their applications and were really pleased when they found out they had been successful, even more so when their items started arriving!



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You can find out more information on our website at www.qac.ac.uk.

Facilities for Hire

QAC has a diverse range of 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 days and conferences.

Our on campus facilities include training & seminar rooms, a hall that is suitable for larger groups and a modern sports hall - all of which are available for hire evening, weekend and out of term time.

In addition, our high quality commercial training kitchen is also 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: keasthope@qac.ac.uk or call 0121 803 5310.



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For more information about what is happening at QAC and how you can get involved visit www.qac.ac.uk or follow us on social media



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