

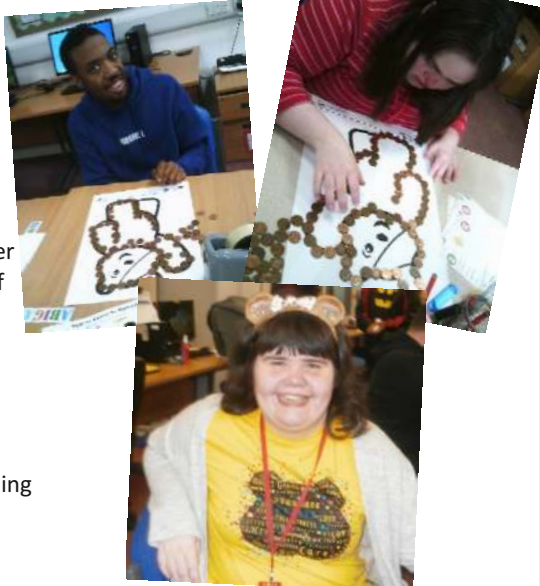
Pudsey Power for CiN!

Pudsey Power returned to QAC in November as different groups took on the challenge of raising money for Children in Need - raising over £900 in total, which is a fantastic amount!

LEAP Retail made the most of having their Treasure Box shop up and running, selling a range of official Pudsey merchandise including ears, pens and pin badges. Everything was really popular with some items selling out quickly, especially as the group visited classrooms and offices to sell as much as they could.

PFL Bronze took the lead in organising our annual penny trail on the carpet as well as Pudsey drawings, collecting pennies from staff and students - with some donations even coming across from Pinewood. On the day itself, people joined them in the Bradbury Atrium to use the coins to create designs and trails, having a lot of fun in the process.

PFL Yellow appealed to everyone's sweet tooth with a 'guess the number of sweets in the jar' competition along with a tombola,



and PFL Red used their creative skills to make and sell Pudsey inspired keyrings.

Our Health & Social Care groups joined forces to host a Children in Need Fun Day with an ever popular cake sale and games including 'Pin the Spot on Pudsey' and 'Bear Pong' for people to get involved in.

It was great to see staff and students coming together to raise money for a worthwhile cause. Everyone had lots of fun, with the lead groups also developing their skills and experiences through organising and promoting their activities.

A Word from Bev



It only feels like a few months ago that I wrote about QAC having reached its 20-year milestone as a charity, independent of Birmingham Royal Institution for the Blind. Now we are already celebrating 25 years.

Despite the disruption of the pandemic, the charity has continued in its growth and development, not least in student and client numbers. This year we have a fully functioning Wellbeing Hub for students where our counselling and mentoring support services are based. It's a really welcoming space for everyone. After refurbishment work at our Umberslade campus during the last summer term, students are back there, as well as the space being a second base for Community Services. The Community Services Hub at Onneley House continues to offer its popular clubs and groups which provide a safe and inclusive social space to boost the confidence of our vulnerable clients. We're also really pleased that a number of former students are now employed at Community Services.

Life at Pinewood has become busier with both Supported Internships and LEAP Business based there. The Work Placement Team has been working hard to establish employer contacts; see our Pinewood feature later in the newsletter. The range of things student groups have learned whether through special themes or projects internally or from visiting professionals is wonderful to see again. History, sustainability, retail, disability and health awareness have all featured. There are too many staff, student, client achievements and activities for me to write about here but I hope readers will get a flavour of QAC life from this newsletter.

Thank you to our donors and professional partners - whether you have donated, fundraised, attended an event on our campus, committed to taking a student on a work placement or attended to provide educational experiences, you've enriched the QAC experience.

Bev Jessop
Principal & Chief Executive

Catalogue Creativity

This academic year marks QAC's 25th anniversary as an independent charity. As such we wanted to celebrate it and involve students as much as possible.

After running a logo competition for all students to enter, the Fundraising Team worked with LEAP Design & Production students to design a range of celebratory QAC memorabilia featuring the winning design.

The students have worked hard in the print room to produce the items, including limited edition 'Lexi the Lions', mugs and magnets with prices ranging from £2-£12. The full catalogue is available through our website or contact fundraising@qac.ac.uk

The team have been kept busy this term, as on top of the anniversary merchandise they have also been producing team t-shirts and hoodies for the Fundraising Team and uniforms for LEAP Retail, as well as a range of festive items to order.



Highlights



Sound Healing Sessions



Breast Cancer Now Cake Sale



New LRC Resources



B4S



Virtual Reality Travel

September

Students have started to take part in Sound Healing sessions, delivered by our PFL Fitness and Yoga Teacher. Sessions use various methods and instruments such as Tibetan bowls, and hand gongs etc, to help students relax and rejuvenate, as well as reduce their stress, anxiety and chronic pain levels. The experience has been really popular, with some sessions being offered as part of staff wellbeing sessions.

October

As usual, we hosted our Bright4Sight awareness week across campus. B4S aims to raise awareness of sight loss and understanding vision and blindness. Various activities took place throughout the day, including competitions, artwork, a focus on braille books and much more. Our resident Visual Impairment Training Officer took the lead and ran informative, interactive sessions on sight loss and assistive technology and there were practical activities using simulation glasses, canes and equipment. To bring a fun element to the day, there were competitions for the brightest dressed individuals and class as well as colourful facepainting and make up for students, thanks to the skills of some UCB Beauty students.

October is also Breast Cancer Awareness Month, an annual campaign for people all over the world to show their support for people affected by breast cancer. With this in mind, and with a personal connection, our Performing Arts group worked hard to organise a cake sale to raise funds for Breast Cancer Now. The event went really well, with lots of cakes selling out, raising a fantastic £141.55 in total! Thank you and well done to everyone involved for supporting such an important cause.

Thanks to a donation from BRIB, we were able to develop our LRC resources with students and staff being asked about what books they wanted to see for the year ahead. There were lots of suggestions and it was great to get input from

people, with popular topics including wellbeing and self-help, healthy eating and lifestyles, Disney, young fiction, annuals, anime, special interest, facts and reference, and sports. It was like Christmas had come early as lots of deliveries arrived, with the LRC Team creating displays to showcase the new books available, which were met with lots of enthusiasm.

November

As part of QAC's drive to become a more eco-friendly college, we invited The Education Group to visit and offer students a virtual reality experience, travelling around the world to see the damage that we as humans have caused. Students visited the Great Barrier Reef, Antarctica and quickly passed over the Equator as they learned how much damage we're doing to the earth and the oceans with our excessive use of plastic, overfishing and pollution. For some students, it was the first time that they had used VR goggles and being able to see immersive 360 degree footage of the earth was a fantastic experience. It generated lots of discussion, with everyone learning a lot about how we can do things differently and we plan to incorporate our new found knowledge into our everyday college lives.

Although QAC is a charity, we also like to help and support other charities and people in need. With this in mind, through the Fundraising Team, students and staff took part in an unwanted book collection to support another Birmingham charity, Cherish, who were collecting books to support 100 young girls who they work with. They want to create a library where girls who attend their sessions have easy and regular access to books, along with providing them each with a book to read over the holidays. Students, staff and our library all contributed, collecting bags full of great books which were collected and put to use by the organisation.

After not running properly for a couple of years, we were pleased to see our Wednesday afternoon 'Club' sessions start up again, with some clubs securing Dragons Den funding to help buy equipment and resources. 'Club' is such a great activity for students to take part in, it was great to see some new clubs on offer including Lego, Scouts and Graffiti Club, as well as some returning favourites. Students took to the field for Football Club, enjoyed pamper sessions as part of Looking and Feeling Good Club and practiced their kitchen skills in Cookery Club.

December

Anything Disney is always popular at QAC, so to celebrate this, and Walt Disney's birthday on 5th December, we hosted our first 'Disney Day'. There were book displays in the LRC and quizzes for students to enter, with lots of Disney themed outfits around college too with prizes given out to the winners. Our friends from UCB joined the fun, hosting a facepainting session in the morning, with students channelling their inner Disney characters!

Our PFL Christmas Fair returned for the first time in a few years, with groups taking over the Bradbury Atrium to sell the various items they had worked hard on making - from gifts to crackers, cards to decorations, there was plenty for people to choose from, and of course there were plenty of 'winter woolly' outfits on show too!

LEAP Retail Opens Treasure Box

Treasure Box is the new on-campus shop, run by our LEAP Retail Group as part of their coursework. The students have all chosen to do a retail-based course at QAC and this is an excellent opportunity for them to put theory into practice.

During the first half-term a lot of work went into deciding how the group wanted the shop to look, what skills they would need to do the jobs best and what roles needed to be covered. A cross-college competition was launched to get suggestions for a new shop name, and after much discussion, the group decided on Treasure Box as the name.

As the time to open Treasure Box came nearer the group focused on advertising with flyers and posters distributed around college to get people's attention. The first batch of stock arrived and all the students moved, sorted and displayed it before moving it all back again until they were happy with how it looked, making sure it was well displayed ready for the first customers. Everyone has got lots of practice welcoming customers, using the till, and giving change as the shop has been busy since opening day! They also sold Children in Need Merchandise across college on behalf of the Fundraising Team, selling just under £400.00 worth of items - the Pudsey ears proved very popular.

LEAP Retail students, with staff support, are taking it in turns to keep Treasure Box open over breaks and lunchtimes and it's clear to see we have some natural retail assistants developing their skills. The shop is a superb opportunity for them to do this as a regular internal work placement, whilst also meeting the needs and demands of everyone on campus. They really look the part too as their friends in LEAP Design & Production have printed some uniforms for them to wear when working in the shop! The shop has been a great success so far, which is down to the hard work of everyone involved; LEAP Retail's ongoing efforts, as well as everyone who helped get the shop ready. Not forgetting the customers who are spending their money and keeping the group busy.



Umberslade Update

Over the summer, the Estates Team embarked on a massive series of changes, engaging 3 large external contractors to help refresh the site. One helped us completely renovate and refresh the Main Building, adding much needed toilet facilities, a new kitchen and servery area, a canteen and PC room. The second installed new gates, fences and security to the entire site and the third widened the paths and pavings to wheelchair accessible standards throughout the entire site, completely levelled and relaid the car park areas. The Estates Team coordinated the establishment of a temporary classroom to house our permanent PFL Green group and the painting and refreshing of the new Community Services hub building. Ongoing works this term have included levelling of the grassed areas, preparation of planting sites for visiting groups and works to prepare for projects involving water conservation and the establishing of a raised pond for users.

PFL Green are now permanently based at our Umberslade campus, and despite some cold weather at the end of the year have been making the most of the new facilities. They have been preparing some of the ground and gardening beds ready for planting, and also planting some gifts ready to sell at the PFL Christmas Fair in December. They have also been using the indoor areas to enhance their independent living skills. Now that the site is more accessible, we also have some other PFL students regularly visiting the site and enjoying the outdoor learning opportunities it offers - especially they chance to get their hands dirty!

With increased numbers of clients, Community Services has expanded their already thriving Personal Assistant service by adding a new base at Umberslade. Early activities have included cleaning the greenhouse, planting acorns and painting the dilapidated garden ornaments, with the only 'disaster' being the brown hedgehog ornament being painted blue to match Sonic. The group has created their own "Make and Grow" shed for clients to socialise and take part in meaningful activities based around nature, gardening and artisan craft. This has proved really valuable to many clients who, having experienced increased social isolation due to Covid lockdown, needed the opportunity to interact socially with their peers. Clients have also been busy developing creative and practical skills by making decorative wreaths, macramé hangings and calendars in time for the festive season.

Students and Clients have really enjoyed spending time at Umberslade and after a great, albeit cold, start, are looking forward to more activities in the New Year, tailored to the different seasons. Work at the site has been a big undertaking and a massive thanks to all involved for helping make it happen, we are looking forward to continuing the work through Phase 2 of the project next year.



Spotlight

Festive Fun With Residential

Residential students have been getting into the festive spirit this November, making the most of what Birmingham has to offer. At the start of the month, students and staff visited the German Christmas Market enjoying the sights and sounds, as well as some of the funfair rides. They had a great time looking around the stalls and taking in the atmosphere. There were plenty of smiles from everyone, especially as they also enjoyed dinner whilst they were out.

Towards the end of November, some of the students, along with staff took the bus to Moor Street Station in the city centre where they were then handed a golden ticket to board the Polar Express steam train. Once aboard the train, the group enjoyed a fully themed journey, and even met the train driver. One of the highlights was meeting Santa who visited each of the carriages to wish passengers a Merry Christmas, giving them a shiny Santa bell to take home, as a sign that they 'believe'. The group had a fantastic time, with the hot chocolate and biscuits being another highlight!

Fun With History

Thanks to support from Dragons' Den last year, the Collaborations & Citizenship Department have been able to introduce a British History project for students.

The project kicked off in great Roman style, welcoming Lucius Felix Silvarus, a Roman soldier, into college to talk to us about life as a gladiator, display Roman weaponry, discuss the type of food they ate and much more. Students engaged in a mock battle with the winner's status being elevated and the promise of new houses etc, but unfortunately the audience got to choose the fate of the losing gladiator, which was much more gruesome. There were lots of artefacts for the students to handle and they learned a lot of what the Romans were responsible for in modern day life - including things such as roads and toothbrushes.

Vikings were next to visit, with two 2 female vikings from Reaching Out Group delivering student workshops where they spoke about life in Viking times. Students learned about the food they ate, the clothes they wore, the work involved with making the items and best of all, the students were able to try on the garments and make coins of their own.

The project has been a great success so far, with students really enjoying the interactive sessions and learning about the different eras - and how they have shaped life today. It will continue after Christmas, with more sessions, including Tudors, Victorians, The Great Fire of London & Samuel Pepys and other historical figures of importance.

Community Services Catch Up

As well as opening our second home at Umberslade, Autumn has been really exciting here at the Community Services Hub.

At the end of August a team of QAC CS superheroes and sidekicks travelled down to Dorney Lake in Windsor (the home of Eton College's rowing team) for this year's Marvel Superhero Series super-tri event, which they took part in as charity partners of Zurich Community Trust. The group donned their masks and capes and took to the challenge with determination and enthusiasm, swimming (or boating), cycling and walking across the finish line, completing each leg as a team. Thankfully the weather was great and the water wasn't too cold, and there were plenty of smiles as everyone crossed the final finish line tired, but happy. Over 1100 superheroes and sidekicks took part in the event, which was also covered by a TV team, and some of our superheroes appeared in the background, with others meeting and chatting with TV presenter Clare Balding and 2012 London Paralympic Gold Medalist Richard Whitehead MBE. The team did amazingly well and had a great day, with everyone working together and raising over £800 for QAC Community Services, which really showed their superhero powers.

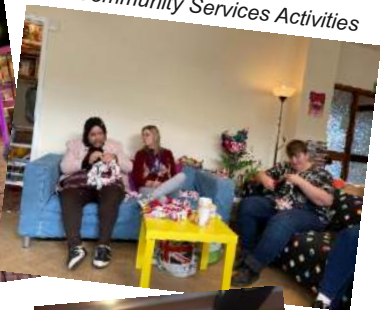
We are very pleased to announce that our peer and social groups are back and in full swing. Men's Group has enjoyed social sessions including a meal out and Women's Group has welcomed UCB Hair & Beauty students to some of their meetings which has been a lovely pampering experience for all! We are really excited that our Thursday night Games Club is going from strength to strength, and have recently enjoyed having a group of students from Baskerville school joining us. Friday nights see our LGBTQ+ group, SPARK+ running and being attended by a group of regular clients. There have been some great Saturday Socials, including a trip to the pub and a visit to the German Market. Our next Saturday Social is on January 28th, when we will be going for a meal to the Court Oak pub to welcome in 2023.

We ran our first ever singles night at the Night Owl at Halloween and despite the awful weather it was a great night with lots of people filling the dance floor and enjoying the atmosphere. We will be hosting another one in February so keep watching our socials for more information. The last Come As You Are of the year will be taking place on 19th December at the Night Owl and will be a Christmas extravaganza so please come and join us for a dance.

Festive Fun in Birmingham



Community Services Activities



Historical Visitors



Events

Fundraising

November saw the return of Dinner in the Dark, taking place at Macdonald Burlington Hotel. Guests enjoyed the comfort of a welcome drink before putting on blindfolds and being guided to their seat as they anticipated the evening of darkness ahead of them. Other senses heightened, they enjoyed a two course meal followed by an after dinner play-doh game for some added creative fun. Once blindfolds were removed, they relaxed with teas and coffees as a 'sports themed' auction took place, with items including event tickets and signed memorabilia proving popular. It was a great evening, with lots of positive feedback, giving people a small insight into living with vision impairment and the work we do to support our

students. The event raised over £700 in total towards our anniversary fundraising, so a big thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event.

Festive spirit filled our hall and dining room as our Christmas Craft & Gift Fayre took place. It was a busy event, with nearly 40 stalls offering a range of gifts and treats, with new stallholders joining some of our regulars. Although cold outside, the atmosphere was warm as Rock Choir Birmingham, Lichfield, Solihull and Sutton Coldfield performed some Christmas songs as well as some of their favourites, with a sell out mulled wine and samosa stall! A big thank you to everyone who came and supported the event which raised just under £1200 in total!

Our Festive Raffle was as popular as ever, with people entering online and in person. To help boost ticket sales even further, LEAP Business sold tickets at Pinewood and LEAP Retail sold them at main campus. With some great prizes on offer including hotel stays and entertainment tickets, people were keen to enter and win, with it raising just under £1000, which is fantastic.

The Fundraising Team is busy working on a number of different events for next year, including a Pamper Night in collaboration with UCB Beauty and a student Fashion Show. We will announce more information on our website and social media in the New Year, so keep looking and get in touch for more information.

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

Corporate & Community

We have continued to work closely with University College Birmingham (UCB) this year, with a number of groups visiting student sessions and also supporting some of our community events. Kayla from our RATTs team delivered a sight loss presentation to this year's Cabin Crew students in their cabin suite, highlighting how they, as cabin crew, could better support passengers with vision impairment during their travel, before they got to have a go at sighted guiding. At the end of the session some of the group had a go at being blindfolded to see how it felt, finding it very strange not being able to see anything. Some of the group went on to volunteer at our Dinner in the Dark event, putting the skills to practice. We look forward to working with the UCB team again next year, with some events well into planning stages for the first few months of 2023!

Following an polite ask from QAC, the team at Baird Group kindly supported our request for interview clothing to support our students based at Pinewood. They donated a number of different suits including Ben Sherman and Racing Green, which the students can use as part of their interview planning and preparation, as well as attendance, helping them secure work placements.

Over the Summer we pitched to Kyle and Alicia at Embello, a printing and merchandising company based in Tamworth, hoping to secure support for our Community Services development. Although we didn't win the main pitch, they did like what we said and have offered to support with other activities, including student workshops and designing some marketing materials for us, including a new Umberslade logo. The ideas are flowing and we are excited to work with them more in the New Year.

The Fundraising Team welcomed some of their corporate friends into college to celebrate International Day for People with Disabilities, a global initiative to celebrate the diversity of our global community and the roles we play, which takes place in December. Students were at the heart of the event, hosting different sessions for our visitors to get involved with including an inclusive sports session (featuring boccia, curling and wheelchair basketball) led by LEAP Sport and a cafe session with 'coffee and cake' courtesy of LEAP Hospitality. They also enjoyed a condensed sighted guide training session with one of our RATTs team, where they experienced what it was like to guide and be guided, and how wheelchair users can also work as guides for people with vision impairment. It was a great session, with lots of fun had by all - especially when one of the visitors won the game of 'LEAP'!

Dining in the Dark



Christmas Fayre Fun



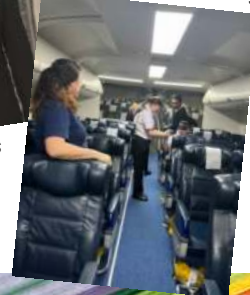
IDPWD Activities



Smart Suits



Cabin Crew Training



Life at Pinewood

Our Pinewood campus is as busy as ever, and with more students and staff based there now, we have taken on additional space, a.k.a Pinewood 2, home to our Student Interns, with LEAP Business being based in Pinewood 1. The new space also offers students a breakout space to enjoy some free time - and their lunch!

The work placement team has been working hard to create a range of valuable placements for all students, with 17 internal placements at QAC since September, 33 external placements and 10 Student Interns currently being on placement.

Successful placements include Charlotte who has tapped into her love of animals to complete placements at National Sea Life Centre, Who Zoo and Moor Pool. Arooj and Miya have been working at Extra Care supporting Reception staff, creating a Remembrance Day display and some festive preparations. Oliver is attending a placement at Martineau Gardens and continuing our relationship with Macdonald Burlington Hotel, we now have Sami working there in the maintenance team, our fifth successful placement at the hotel.

We welcomed BeeZee Bodies to Pinewood to speak to students about healthy living, what food contains and how to make good decisions around the food they eat and being active. Students really enjoyed the different sessions, with interesting discussions taking place before they created their own vision boards.

All Pinewood students had the opportunity to apply for Fund Me bursaries again this year, with six students submitting applications for funding for their very own equipment and resources, to support with their programme and life beyond QAC. Applicants researched into what they wanted to spend their grant on and explained how it would impact them now, and for their next steps once their programme had finished. Students did really well with their presentations and the panel were pleased to offer grants to support students with their wish lists including technology, training courses and PPE.



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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.



Queen Alexandra College, Court Oak Road, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9TG
Tel: 0121 803 5489 Email: info@qac.ac.uk
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