



QAC News



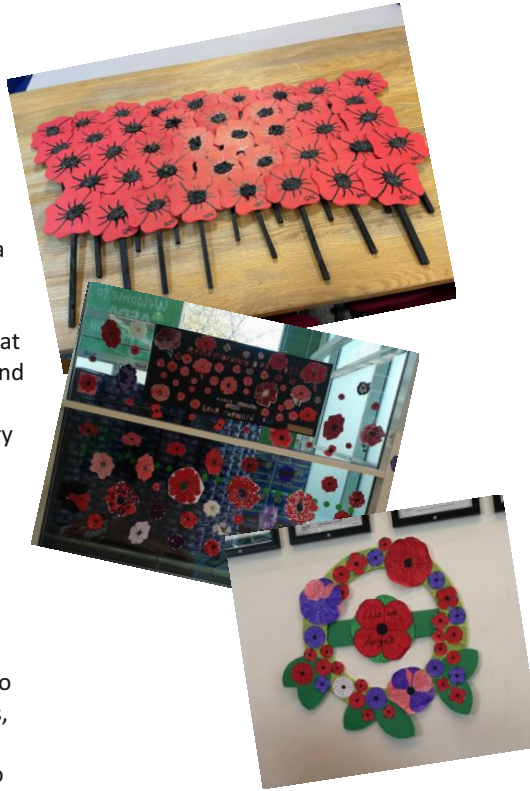
WINTER 2021

Marking Remembrance Day

QAC always marks Remembrance Day with a variety of activities, and this year was no different. A number of groups created their own remembrance displays, highlighting what it was and what it meant, both historically and today. There were some beautiful and well researched displays throughout the Bradbury Centre in the run up to Remembrance Day, showing how important it is.

The creativity did not stop there though as shoppers at Asda's Barnes Hill store were treated to a week-long display of poppies made by QAC students. Students worked really hard to produce a variety of poppies to feature in the display; there were large ones, small ones, wreaths and collages, featuring not only red poppies but also purple ones to remember the animals that died during the war.

Our LEAP Trades group tapped into their woodwork skills to design and make a couple of wooden poppies to feature in the display, which were so good that QAC staff wanted to buy them so they made some to sell, raising £100 for the British Legion.



As well as poppy activities, students also had the opportunity to see some war memorabilia close up as Ian Hales, one of our Independence Plus Team Leaders, brought some pieces from his extensive collection in to share with the groups. Students were able to handle things that they would not ordinarily have access to, finding the stories behind them fascinating.

Christmas Gifts Collection

This year, QAC supported Midlands Riders in collecting toys and gifts for children at Birmingham Children's Hospital who will not be home for Christmas due to ill health - something Midlands Riders have done for a number of years.

In November, LEAP Community collected the gifts, which people had kindly wrapped and donated, from across college. These were then counted by LEAP Creative before one of Santa's helpers called by to collect them ready to take to the Midlands Riders.

QAC donated over 20 gifts to the cause, which

were delivered to staff and patients at the hospital as part of a group 'ride out' event in December, making Christmas in hospital that bit nicer for the children who received them.

This is the third year Midlands Riders have organised their Christmas Toy Run, and it was great to be involved!



A Word from Bev



QAC has had to get used to living under the shadow of ongoing government covid-related directions throughout this year – on staying safe as employees and keeping our students and clients safe in their educational and community programmes as well as in residential and IP care and support. We started with mobilising everyone to undertake lateral flow testing, on site and at home and staff, students and clients have taken the opportunity to get vaccinations when they have become available.

Our Community Services Hub at Onneley House opened in the Spring and staff wasted no time in putting the space to very active use. This new QAC service goes from strength to strength.

Much work has gone into our diversity aspirations, which resulted in QAC being awarded the Leader in Diversity accolade in October. We will continue to ensure our policies and systems are strengthened as part of our ongoing improvement plans.

I am extremely proud of peoples' commitment to staff-run initiatives to support menopause and men's wellbeing, which have been augmented by our Menopause and Mental Health Policies. The focus on mental health and wellbeing continues and we now have 16 Mental Health First Aiders in place.

Staff have pulled together highly effectively as a whole College team to manage the larger than usual intake of students and to say we have been busy is an understatement. We look forward to implementing our 5- year sustainability action plan from 2022 and thank everyone for such excellent contributions.

Our governors and external stakeholders continue to offer QAC invaluable support and show their commitment in so many ways and we thank you all. Happy Christmas to all and best wishes for 2022.

Bev Jessop
Principal & Chief Executive

Highlights

Dhol Drumming



Marvellous Medicines



Climbing Challenges



Congratulations Bev



Black History Month Display



Cardboard Knights



Winning Christmas Card

SEPTEMBER

Bev Jessop, QAC Principal & CEO attended the West Midlands Leadership Awards 2021 where she won the 'Company Leader of the Year (100+ employees)' category. The awards showcase and recognise the very best leaders and organisations across the region, so Bev winning the award is great recognition of her decisive leadership and ability to steer, trust and empower people.

OCTOBER

The AOC's Colleges Week took place and as part of their #LoveOurColleges campaign we shared some student success stories across our social media. We featured Hannah, Jess, Charlotte, David and Charlie, all of whom have successfully gone on to achieve things they should be proud of including going to university, getting employment, running their own business and independent living. Well done guys!

Our LEAP Arts and LEAP Creative groups took on a creative challenge with a difference as they had to design, make and decorate a suit of armour using only cardboard. After plenty of research and teamwork, lots of ideas came out of the project, ending with Sir Tophat, Sir Gryffindor and Sir Phoenix meeting to show off their completed suits of armour.

The theme for this year's Black History Month was 'Proud To Be' and encouraged people to share what they are proud to be. A list of influential black people was provided and students were invited to choose someone to research, providing as much information as possible. Some groups selected from the list and some chose other black people who they were proud of, including the likes of Idris Elba, Emily Sande and Stormzy. Students created colourful

and vibrant displays, with lots of information and it was clear that a lot of work and effort had gone into them.

Dyslexia Awareness Week took place in October, and as many of our staff and students are dyslexic, we decided to support the British Dyslexia Association, going red for dyslexia across our social media sites, using the hashtag #GoRedForDyslexia, also encouraging staff and students to wear red for a day. A group of staff members became 'Dyslexia Champions' for the week, which was great, as they became a point of contact for the students and were able to offer guidance and support as well as show them that they can succeed with dyslexia.

NOVEMBER

Diwali is a celebration of light and hope and this year we invited Jag Kumar from Dance Sansaar to come and host a series of workshops for students. Jag brought lots of dhol drums and background music, and everyone was able to have a go at playing the drums - many of the students were able to follow the beat and put a rhythm together. For those that did not want to play the drums, Jag showed the groups a number of dance steps which the students could then put to music. It was all very energetic and lots of fun.

Anti bullying week took place in mid November and the theme for this year was 'One Kind Word'. QAC works with the Anti Bullying Alliance to promote kindness and also to put a stop to bullying, and students were able to make use of activity sheets and participate in the 'design a poster' competition. They created a variety of designs portraying how to prevent bullying, how it makes them feel and outlining different bullying scenarios. Everyone was encouraged to take time during the week to be extra kind to each other,

and understand how one kind word really does make a difference.

After listening to George's Marvellous Medicine, PFL Indigo got creative and designed their own medicines. Not only did they design what they wanted the bottles to look like, the ingredients lists and what the medicines were for, they also used their maths skills to make some real life medicine - minus the toe nails and spider juice of course!

DECEMBER

Our climbing wall is up and running again and we have been hosting taster sessions for students. There has been a huge response so far, whether it is students wanting to have a go for the first time or those who want to come back and try to complete the route that they had not completed before. As well as enjoying the fun of the wall, students also get a huge sense of achievement when using it and challenging themselves.

Art & Design students' skills were showcased as the winner of our official QAC Christmas card was announced. Well done to everyone who entered, there were some fantastic designs, and congratulations to Alice, whose design featuring snow-capped mountains was chosen as the winner. The group also worked hard to create the images for our 2022 QAC calendar, with some wonderful pieces of 2D and 3D art being featured.

Spotlight

QAC's Children in Need

Children in Need is always a busy time at QAC and this year was no different with lots of groups organising activities for people to get involved in.

PFL Indigo did sponsored laps around the playing field completing 174 laps in fancy dress with characters including Del Boy, Cinderella, The Flash and Pudsey himself getting involved. They also organised other events during the week including a karaoke session with some great performances

from a number of PFL stars who love to get on the microphone and entertain the crowd. A sell out audience enjoyed popcorn and refreshments at the CiN cinema as they watched Disney film Moana, and later in the week there was a tombola, 'pin the buttons on Pudsey' and Pudsey photo booth. PFL Indigo's hard work really paid off as they raised over £100 which is fantastic.

As part of their 'Understand the world around us' unit, PFL Bronze looked at what Children in Need is and the meaning behind it. They then decided to organise our annual penny trail, using their creative skills to design posters and their work experience sessions to engage with others and collect penny donations from staff and students. On Children in Need day itself they started the trail and were amazed at the number of people who turned up to take part. Maths skills then came into action as the group had to count the money raised, totalling over £130.

LEAP Forward organised a Pudsey trail for students, featuring 20 clues in different places around college with rhymes and riddles which students had to solve before moving on to the next clue. This proved to be very successful and everyone who completed the course received a certificate and lollipop.

LEAP Community students took the lead in creating general posters and resources about Children in Need for tutors to share in class, using PowerPoint and Symwriter to create different versions that everyone could access, as well as collecting donations and joining in with other activities around college.



Pudsey Photos

Introducing New LEAP Groups

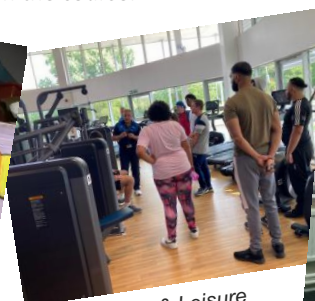
In September, we introduced some new LEAP courses to meet the increasing demand and interest in the programme, taking the number of courses up to nine. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce the new ones! So, alongside LEAP Creative, Trades, MVS and Hospitality groups we now have:

LEAP Forward and LEAP Ahead are 'stepping stone' courses between PFL and LEAP, giving students the opportunity to develop skills and explore different areas of interest before choosing one, whilst also adjusting to a new way of learning. Students get to have taster sessions within our LEAP Hub groups to see what they're about and what's involved, and also focus on 'preparation for adulthood' activities including employment experience, independent living skills and health & wellbeing.

Students in LEAP Sport & Leisure take part in a range of sports and physical activity sessions on campus, as well as weekly visits to Worcester University for wheelchair basketball sessions. Practical activities are supported with theory sessions around anatomy, balanced diet and other areas, as well as work experience opportunities within sport and leisure industries.

LEAP Arts is a practical, hands-on course where students get to explore topics including art, design & craft, performing arts and creative media. They are able to draw on the experience of a staff team with a lot of arty skills to develop their own skills and interests in class, before looking at work experience opportunities to suit.

Our LEAP Community group explores the importance of community and how we can have a positive impact, whether it is the QAC College community or the wider community around us. Students get involved in activities to support our Fundraising and Citizenship teams, as well as looking at how we can support others in the community such as local charities. This also ties in with elements of health and social care which are covered on the course.



LEAP Sport & Leisure



Festive Friday Fun

Festive Fun & Frolics

The run up to Christmas is always a fun time at QAC and although some of our usual events still weren't able to happen this year, we still got into the festive spirit!

Our residential students were excited to get their decorations up in their houses, and student Charlie added a bit of extra creativity by making a life size Santa collage to welcome people. Everyone was really pleased with Charlie's efforts.

Following on from last year we ran another Christmas Catalogue, with lots of groups creating a range of wonderful items including gift sacks, decorations and festive ornaments. In the absence of the student Christmas Fair, it was a great way for them to still design, make and sell some festive items, with a lot of thought going into the presentation and sales process.

LEAP Community students supported our Fundraising team with a name the teddy competition, with everyone having the opportunity to choose a name for our giant teddy in the hope they would get to take him home for Christmas. LEAP Trades made the most of their handiwork skills to create a bespoke Christmas tree made out of bicycle wheels and handmade decorations, which they auctioned off.

Festive Friday returned and there were plenty of Christmas jumpers and festive outfits across campus as students and staff got into the spirit, with prizes awarded for the most festive individuals and

groups. Some students took the festivities to another level as they got to decorate some of the senior managers' offices for the last week of term - with lots of tinsel and glitter everywhere!

Spotlight

IP Fun and Activities

Independence Plus had a great term with clients taking part in many exciting activities including archery, outings and in house events. They have been able to resume trips to the cinema, bowling, pubs and cafes while adhering to Covid guidance.

In November, a group of clients dressed up to attend the 2021 MCC Birmingham Comic Con event, which was a fun filled celebration of movies, sci-fi, comics and gaming that everyone enjoyed. Clients and staff have continued with their charity efforts with a Macmillan coffee morning and Christmas appeal for Birmingham Children's Hospital as well as supporting our very own Fundraising efforts.

Many clients returned to their work placements and some have achieved new opportunities including working at The Birmingham Repertory Theatre and the British Heart Foundation shop.

PFL Blue Pop Ups

PFL Blue have been busy with their enterprise project since the start of term, organising regular pop up shops for people to attend.

They worked together to collect donations from people for their first stall, using their I.T skills to create posters to promote their project. Once donations came in, they carefully checked them to make sure they were sellable, before looking online to make sure they priced them fairly so that people wanted to buy them. Keen to make the most of the money-making opportunities, student Hazel also decided to run a wellbeing raffle, taking responsibility for collecting items she could put in a hamper and selling tickets. They also took into account other peoples' anxiety, arranging for 'quiet time' and pre-booked sessions for those who needed it.

Although nervous, the group worked hard on the day, taking on different responsibilities to make the sale a success, from welcoming guests to handling money. It went really well and the £93 they raised exceeded everyone's expectations.

After tasting success, the group were excited to plan their next one which took place in December, adding a festive feel to it. They supported the Fundraising Team in selling some Christmas decorations and cards as well as other things they had donated. They even welcomed some of our IP clients along so they could sell some of the crafts and gifts they had made too.



PFL Blue Sales

Exciting Community Services Developments

So much has happened since our last update when we had only just moved into the Community Hub and had yet to run our summer holiday club.

We have been lucky enough to receive donations from a number of trusts including Grimitt Trust, RD Turner Charitable Trust and We Are All Making a Difference which have helped make the Hub functional and look a bit more 'us'. Following an application earlier in the year, we were awarded a grant from Garfield Weston Foundation to support the development of our Community Services Hub, including personal care facilities. Asda's Bringing Communities Together Fund donated £650 towards Community Services' Christmas activities, which bought a range of festive decorations and games for the hub as well as plenty of food and drink for their Christmas activities over the festive break. Thank you to Katey, Community Champion at Asda Barnes Hill for supporting the application, we're looking forward to welcoming her to one of the parties.

A lot of work, by a lot of people has made things possible, and we particularly need to say thank you to our Fundraising, Resources and Maintenance teams for getting us sorted out.

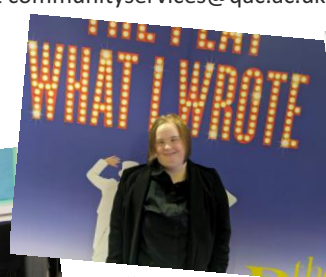
Over the summer we ran an extremely busy and successful five-week holiday club, and another through the October half term. These were supported by QAC staff as well as our CS team and offered music, yoga, cookery, gardening, crafting, art, dance – you name it and we had a go at it. We also had our first trips out to Go Ape and Star City, and everyone survived to tell the tale.

We've been running a music provision and hosting some of the Step Out students for cookery groups through the autumn term and have really been enjoying welcoming students from across campus and Pinewood to join our regular clients in the Hub. We also run weekly peer support and social groups for clients and students – our womens' and mens' groups – with plans for more regular social events in the new year.

On the client front, our provision continues to grow rapidly and now we've settled in properly, we provide sessions 7 days a week, into the evenings and beyond. For those who don't know what our client provision is, we offer 1:1 bespoke PA support, paid for through direct payments, and this can be anything from accessing services in the Hub to being supported in the home to going out into the community, accessing work placements, or even going further afield for days out. We regularly support clients to do the things they want to do – some weekly examples include going to the football, accessing faith settings, going shopping or playing tabletop RPG.

For the last few weeks, our clients have been working hard on producing crafts for QAC's Christmas Fayre and the festive spirit didn't end there with the Hub turning into a grotto in time for Christmas.

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



IP Placements



Community Services Fun in the Hub

Events

Fundraising

After two years of not doing them, we were really excited to bring back 'in-person' events, with Dinner in the Dark marking our return, once again hosted at Macdonald Burlington Hotel. Guests enjoyed a welcome drink before putting on blindfolds, being plunged into darkness and guided to their seats. As their senses adjusted to their new environment they enjoyed a two course meal and after dinner play-doh game for some added fun. Once teas and coffees were served, blindfolds came off and 'normality' resumed. As part of this year's event we also hosted an art auction, with pieces of art, created by Beth, an ex-student at QAC, commissioned especially for the evening. Pieces proved popular with some eager bidding taking place inside and outside the room. It was a great evening, with lots of fun and laughter as well as insight into living with a vision impairment, and raised over £600 towards our seasonal fundraising. Thank you to everyone who attended and supported the event, we can't wait to do it again next year.

Our Christmas Craft & Gift Fayre is always a popular event, and after missing it last year, people were eager to get through the door this year! There were plenty of stalls offering a range of gifts and treats and it was great to see a lot of returning stallholders as well as some new ones. 'Snowy' performances from Rock Choir Birmingham, Lichfield, Solihull and Sutton Coldfield helped people get into the festive spirit, as did the mulled wine stall which sold out! A big thank you to everyone who came and supported the event, making it a huge success, raising over £1400 - a record amount for our Christmas Fayre!

Following on from the success of our Festive Raffle last year, we ran another one with entries done online and in person. There were some great prizes on offer including hotel stays and entertainment tickets, so it proved very popular, raising over £500 towards our festive fundraising.

The Fundraising Team is busy working on a number of different events for next year, and will announce them on our website and social media as they get confirmed.

A big thank you to everyone who has supported QAC 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

Dinner in the Dark



LoveBrum Donation



Christmas Fayre



Symphony Hall Training

Corporate & Community

In September we visited Symphony Hall to see their new spaces that were completed during Covid. As part of the visit, we delivered sighted guide and disability awareness training to some staff from across the business, including their Chief Executive. It was a great session with everyone learning some skills and tips to help them better support vision impaired visitors going forward.

We have worked closely with University College Birmingham for a number of years and were pleased to visit their new Cabin Crew group this year. Our RATTs Team delivered a presentation on sight loss and how, as cabin crew, the students could better support visually impaired passengers. 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. We look forward to going back again next year and doing a session in their simulated cabin.

We welcomed Lisa Bryan, trustee for Baron Davenport's Charity to QAC for a post-grant visit. She enjoyed a tour of the campus, seeing where donations have really made a difference to students and was impressed with what she saw - especially after meeting PFL Black and seeing what they were up to.

QAC was one of the lucky winners of LoveBrum's September charity vote and was awarded £1000 towards library resources and Citizenship activities. Kathryn, LoveBrum's Causes & Executive Co-Ordinator visited QAC to present us with the cheque and see the library in action, meeting Charlie, one of our student ambassadors. Our Fundraising & Grants Manager, Sarah, then attended their Christmas Social event to talk about the donation and the difference it will make, including a lot of new books for the library and some citizenship activities.

We were pleased to hear that the Zurich UK Executive Team signed up to our Festive Challenge this year, playing 'Secret Santa' with our Amazon Wishlist. Not only did they use a £500 Zurich Community Trust donation to buy a range of things from the list, they also donated some of their own money so that they could buy even more! A big thank you to the team, it really was like Christmas when the deliveries started arriving in the office and we look forward to getting them out to students across College in the new year.

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

Polygon Direct donated a set of pedometers and reflector bands for students to use during our Step-tember challenge.

Both *Just Artificial* and *Village Green Wholesale* sent lots of colourful artificial flowers for our creative groups to use in their projects.

Brookside Nursery donated a number of plants for PFL Green to use in their gardening activities.

Crown Display Ltd supported our LEAP Creative group by donating some professional display stands for them to use for their products.



UCB VI Session

Life at Pinewood

Our Pinewood groups have, as always, been busy this term with lots going on.

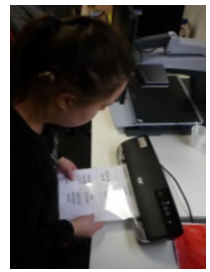
Alongside learning about customer service and business administration, the STRIDES group have been busy making resources for their own use and for other groups in the college. They have produced very professional resources that can be easily wiped clean and reused - which is not only safe to use in the current climate, but also helps reduce our environmental impact as it means less printing!

Students set up mini enterprise projects so that Pinewood could be included in this year's Christmas catalogue. They worked together to come up with ideas for things they could make including festive goody bags and wooden table decorations which could also be personalised.

We welcomed Stacey Lewis, from 'Can Do' and Helen Morris from Northfield Community Partnership to talk about the work they are doing to support people at Christmas, and to help students create hampers to be distributed to those in need. Students had to come up with a system of how they were going to work and ensure all hampers had the correct

items, creating different work stations for each process including packing and quality control. Everyone really enjoyed being part of such a worthwhile project, putting more than 50 hampers together, including essential items such as deodorant, soap, shampoo and toothpaste.

Work experience is an important part of life at Pinewood and it's always great to see students thrive in their placements. Mamoon, one of our Supported Interns, is currently working with staff and volunteers at Martineau Gardens, helping maintain paths, formal gardens, wildlife area and the woodcraft workshop. He loves being outside in nature and working with other people, so this is perfect for him, so much so he's hoping to increase his placement days, saying "when I'm working at the gardens I don't get a headache and I don't feel anxious". Mamoon has been a hit with the staff and visitors, with staff member Isis saying "Mamoon is an absolute superstar. He's very helpful, very kind and has fitted in very well with our team. He is doing well with teamwork, he has done lots of helpful jobs for us and has even helped to walk Mabel the dog", which is one of his favourite things to do. Well done Mamoon!



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



QAC Sight Village exhibitions are UK events showcasing technology, support and services for people who are blind or visually impaired and those experiencing age related sight problems. Events are free to attend and take place across the UK. For more information visit www.qacsightvillage.org.uk or call 0121 803 5484

South West (Exeter)
26 April

Central (Solihull)
28 / 29 June

North East (Leeds)
21 September

South East (London)
8 / 9 November

Conferencing Facilities

QAC has a range of excellent facilities available for hire and offers fully accessible amenities together with a unique friendly atmosphere, an 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 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: kasthope@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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