

Providing services to the  
community since 1913



## **The story of Manor Gardens**

### **Early 1900s**

In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century public health and welfare provision was patchy. Without the National Health Service most people had to pay for their medical treatment and the poorest had to rely on rare free services, charity organisations or just go without.

At that time North Islington was a very overcrowded place to live. The population density reached a peak of 412,994 in 1911 larger than the populations of Belfast, Edinburgh or Newcastle at the time and twice of that today. Many of its inhabitants lived in poverty, a fact reflected in the high infant mortality rates. In the years between 1905 and 1910 110 children out of every 1000 died before their first birthday compared to 72 per 1000 in Hampstead.

### **1913**

#### **The Centre begins.....**

Angered by the vast difference in health between rich and poor in the borough, two Highgate ladies, Mrs Florence Keen and Mrs Nora Hobhouse, start a 'School for Mothers' to teach local women how to feed and care for their babies properly. They believed that educating the mothers could prevent disease and death.

Dr Vance Knox, a local female doctor, offers to work one day a week to run a free clinic and the Centre opens in rooms donated by the Presbyterian Church in Highgate in their Mission Hall on Elthorne Road, off Holloway Road near Archway.

In the first week just nine mothers attend and, it is reported, that Mrs Keen herself stands in the street wearing a sandwich board to spread the word.

### **1914**

The Centre moves to new premises at 9 Manor Gardens. The basement is sublet to the London Invalid Kitchen. This space has been used as a kitchen, canteen and café ever since.

State funding allows us to take on a second medical officer, Dr Maxwell. *In August Britain declares war on Germany and so enters WW I*

## 1915

The Centre starts a home help service.

The war continues to impact on the staff and users of the Centre. Florence Keen writes:

“We feel now, as we have never felt before, that all of us, rich and poor, are members of one another. The fact that a baby born of working-class parentage in a poor Islington street should run twice the risk of death in the first year that a baby does who is born in ‘residential’ Hampstead is becoming intolerable to us. We realise with new vividness that our national existence must in the future depend on the efficiency of our whole people; and when the sons of every class were fighting and dying side by side, those whom they left behind became conscious of a new sympathy with each other, and a new common responsibility.”

*The area is hit by Zeppelin bombing raids causing damage, alarm and anxiety. Holloway Tube station is used as a bomb shelter*

## 1916

Mortality rates of infants attending Manor Gardens drops to half that of the surrounding area.

Princess Christian, the third daughter of Queen Victoria, becomes the Centre’s first Royal Patron.

The Ante-Natal Clinics start.

The number of subscribers and donors reaches 425. The annual report includes a call for donations; the wish list of items includes ‘toys, mangle or wringer, banana crates, coal, nursery chairs.’ The banana crates were used as makeshift cots.

Married men of certain ages are now called up to fight in the war including some of the fathers of children attending the Centre. The Centre begins to receive letters from husbands at the front thanking them for looking after their children.

## 1917

The Centre expands into No 8 Manor Gardens.

The dental clinics and sewing class start.

Toddler’s massage sessions are started.

Wards are set up at 8-9 Manor Gardens, supported by the American Women’s Club, a group of wealthy American women living in Britain. The wards provide beds for children with malnutrition who, on average, stay for one month.

On the 29 September the Great Northern Hospital, just moments from the Centre, is hit by a bomb. The Centre does not close.

Arthur Clive Keen, Mrs Keen's second son is killed in action on 10 May. Mrs Keen says "The School [Centre] in so far as it was concerned with the wives and children of soldiers was definitely involved in war work."

### **1918**

A gift from the American Women's Club in London allows the Centre to extend to No.8 Manor Gardens.

6 September, William Allen Keen, Mrs Keen's eldest son, dies of wounds. To escape her grief she throws herself into her infant welfare work.

*The Great War ends in November.*

*The Borough of Islington employs two health visitors.*

*The Representation of the People Act extends the vote to some women.*

### **1919**

Lady Domini Crosfield becomes President of the Centre, aged just 27.

The Queen of Spain visits the Centre.

*The Ministry of Health is created.*

*Islington Borough Council sets up a free milk fund.*

### **1922**

The Fathers' and Mothers' Committees are set up. It is notable to involve fathers to such an extent at this time.

The holiday scheme starts.

Prince Mahidol Adulyadej, 'Father of Thai medicine', Prince of Siam visits the Centre

### **1923**

The Duchess of York (later Queen Elizabeth and then Elizabeth the Queen Mother) becomes our second Royal Patron.

### **1924**

Sunlight treatment is introduced at the Centre using the Eidenov Carbon Arc Light recommended by Professor Leonard Hull of the Medical Research Institute. It is thought to treat rickets as well as muscle tone and catarrh, it is also believed to treat depression in mothers.

"Mrs Keen's Teeth" go on display at the Wembley Exhibition. The display consisted of casts of teeth demonstrating the effects of thumb-sucking and neglect.

## **1925**

Planning permission for an extension is granted. The Architect is Arthur Keen RIBA, younger brother of WB Keen.

The Centre becomes a registered charity with a Board of Trustees.

## **1926**

HRH the Duchess of York visits the Centre.

6,7,8 and 9 Manor Gardens are bought by the Centre (with grant-aid from Ministry) until now they have been leased.

## **1927**

The number of visitors to the Centre is up to 37,000 in a year. In 1926-1927 Centre staff and volunteers make 13,545 home visits to mothers.

## **1928**

The new buildings are opened by HRH the Duchess of York; one is named Princess Elizabeth Hall in honour of her eldest daughter.

Miss Ruth Draper, an American singer, raises £410 for the Centre and a baby cot is named after her in thanks.

Mr Dooley, a member of the Fathers Committee, describes Mrs Keen as the 'Florence Nightingale of North Islington'.

## **1934**

Post-Natal exercises begin at the Centre.

Fred Perry, fresh from his Wimbledon win, attends a fund-raising tennis party at Witanhurst, Lady Crosfield's luxurious home in Highgate.

## **1935**

Keep fit classes begin.

## **1937**

Diphtheria immunisation starts at the Centre.

There are 5,766 attendances for the sunlight treatment.

Florence Keen is awarded the OBE

## 1938

3,243 free dinners are given.

Mrs Keen resigns because of ill health.

In preparation for the coming war, all staff attend Air Raid Protection (ARP) lectures and are issued with ARP badges. Centre staff also take responsibility for registration of potential evacuees and distribution of gas masks and 'babies' helmets'.

## 1939

6-7 Manor Gardens and the Centre Block are partly requisitioned by Islington Borough for Civil Defence.

The proportion of the Centre's income coming from the public sector exceeds the voluntary component.

*Britain declares war on Germany.*

## 1940

*A bomb falls on the Royal Northern Hospital, two hundred yards from the Centre.*

## 1941

Dr Vance Knox, one of the founding doctors, leaves.

*37,296 homes in Islington are destroyed or damaged by bombing.*

## 1942

Mrs Keen dies. Lady Crosfield writes

"Mrs Keen's constructive brain and clear vision foresaw the necessity of educating mothers in the care of themselves and their children and the great benefit that would accrue to the nation of establishments where this preventative tuition could be given free of charge."

The Day Observation Wards open allowing exhausted mothers some rest and guidance on how to care for their babies.

Every week the Centre distributes:

100 bottles of orange juice

150 bottles of cod liver oil

250 packets of dried milk

Plus many grocery parcels to 'necessitous mothers'

Dr Jessie Maxwell, now Lady Maxwell, resigns from her medical post and Dr Eve Atkins takes over from the pioneer doctors

*The Beveridge Report proposes social welfare reform including early plans for the creation of the National Health Service.*

### **1945**

The Centre runs six Ante-Natal Clinics a week.

*War in Europe ends 7 May and with Japan 14 August.*

*Clement Atlee becomes prime minister as Labour wins a landslide victory at the general election.*

### **1946**

Lady Domini Crosfield resumes her fundraising tennis parties. The guest list shows an impressive selection of 'patrons' from the political and art worlds including Mrs Winston Churchill, Mrs Clement Atlee, Lady Megan Lloyd-George, Mr and Mrs JB Priestly and Noel Coward.

### **1948**

Her Majesty The Queen visits the Centre and, later this year, attends one of Lady Crosfield's fundraising garden parties with her daughter Princess Margaret.

The Holiday Scheme is re-established.

*The National Health Service Act is passed in July and the service begins. Its creation will have a long-term impact on the work of the Centre. The London County Council are given the responsibility to provide local health services including maternity and child welfare, health visiting and home helps.*

*The British Nationality Act is passed giving full British citizenship to all Commonwealth citizens. On the 22 June the passenger ship Empire Windrush docks at Tilbury, London with 493 passengers from the West Indies.*

### **1950**

The Playroom, the predecessor of today's pre-school and one of the first of its kind, opens using funds donated by Lady Crosfield.

### **1951**

Althea Davis, Mrs Florence Keen's daughter becomes Hon. Secretary and now takes charge of the Centre

### **1953**

*Queen Elizabeth II is crowned at Westminster Abbey.*

## **1954**

Toddler clinics start.

*Wartime food rationing finally ends.*

## **1956**

Polio Vaccination clinics and cookery classes begin.

## **1959**

Lady Crosfield retires as Chairman.

## **1960**

Lady Turner becomes Chairman.

Between 6<sup>th</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> December the Centre administers 14,533 polio injections.

The Centre begins hosting tea parties for the elderly.

*Immigration of citizens from Cyprus reaches a peak of 25,000.*

## **1961**

*The number of Caribbean born British citizens has risen to 132,000 from 15,000 in 1950.*

## **1962**

The Parents-to-be group is set up.

## **1963**

Lady Crosfield dies.

The playground opens.

GP's now attend the Midwives Ante-Natal Clinic.

## **1964**

Princess Elizabeth Hall is re-designated as a space for a 'Play Centre'. It becomes more organised under Anne Jennings, the Head of the Pre-School who was in charge for well over three decades and starts a link with BBC's Children in Need Appeal which continues to this day.

More than a third of those using Manor Gardens are from the West Indies, Cyprus or Africa

## **1965**

The Queen Mother visits the Centre where 16 different nationalities are represented.

The Apple Fund is started. 25-30lbs of apples are eaten each week.

A new main entrance and pram port are built.

Lady Maxwell, one of the Centre's pioneer doctors, dies after 40 years of service.

Minister of Health, Aneurin Bevan has a meeting with senior members of Manor Gardens.

## **1966**

Family Planning Association clinics are set up.

The Centre acquires playground equipment from the BBC Appeal Fund.

## **1967**

Princess Elizabeth Hall is turned into the playroom.

The sunlight treatment ends after 45 years.

## **1968**

Geriatric Home Visitors join the staff.

The Department of Health and Social Security replaces Ministry of Health.

## **1969**

Annual report shows renewed concern about falling numbers. However the Play Centre has 19,000 attendees.

## **1971**

A party and outing are organised for elderly service users.

Language classes for immigrant mothers begin. By 1976 68 classes are held and there are 476 attendees. Lessons are complimented by cross-cultural socialising and parties with 'exotic food'.

*Social Services Departments are created.*

**1974**

*The National Health Service is reorganised; local health services are renamed Community Health Services and taken over by NHS Area Health Authorities.*

**1976**

The Women's Therapy Centre, founded by feminist psychotherapists Dr Susie Orbach and Dr Luise Eichenbaum becomes a Manor Gardens tenant organisation.

**1977**

Dame Geraldine Maitland Aves, a retired senior civil servant and social reformer, becomes Chairman and sets in motion a number of changes.

Althea Davis retires.

**1979**

Brian Earl is appointed as a full-time senior administrator; the first time this has been a paid position. He implements many new plans and projects.

The centre becomes known as 'Manor Gardens Centre'.

**1980**

The Stroke Project begins. It has been the longest lasting of the new projects initiated after Brian Earl's arrival. It has only had two managers during this time: Gillian Young (1980-98) and Kath Birkett (1998-present).

**1981**

The Sickle Cell Anaemia Counselling and Advisory Service begins.

Chairmanship passes to Mrs Mana Sedgwick OBE, JP.

**1982**

*The National Health Service undergoes another reorganisation; District Health Authorities now replace Area Health Authorities.*

**1987**

Brian Earl resigns as Director, Laura MacGillivray takes over and introduces the beginnings of computerisation.

The Queen Mother donates £500 on the occasion of her Jubilee.

## **1988**

The Queen Mother visits for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary at the age of 88.

Lack of space becomes an issue and all the rooms at the Centre are booked morning, noon and night, seven days a week. The Centre is even forced to turn groups away

## **1989**

The Centre comprises 60 different services provided by 26 organisations all under one roof.

## **1990**

Althea Davies dies.

## **1991**

Black and Minority Ethnic Health Project and the Under 5's Accident Prevention Project begin.

The accounts system becomes fully computerised.

The Youth Club becomes a Youth Project – a group for young people with disabilities and their friends - with a full-time worker and two sessional workers.

## **1995**

Manor Gardens adapts to the new 'contract culture' and pilots its Homecare services.

## **1998**

The Health Advocacy Project begins.

## **2000**

Frank Wood becomes Director.

## **2001**

The last of the NHS clinic services leave the Centre.

The Community Kitchens Project is set up to help local people learn how to eat healthily on a budget.

## **2002**

The Queen Mother dies; she had been the Centre's Royal Patron for 79 years.

Tim Davis, Florence Keen's grandson, retires as Chairman.

## **2003**

The Centre receives the Investors in People Award.

## **2006**

Andrew Turton is elected Chair.

## **2007**

The Centre starts The Friendship Phone Network, a befriending scheme for isolated elderly people.

Robert Warner, son-in-law of Tim Davis in turn the grandson of Florence Keen, resigns as a Trustee. This ended 93 years of direct Keen family involvement in the Centre.

## **2009**

Phillip Watson is appointed Chief Executive Officer.

## **2010**

The Mental Wellbeing Champions programme starts work promoting positive mental wellbeing.

## **2011**

The Pre-school celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **2013**

The Centre celebrates its centenary. In the lifetime of the Centre some diseases have largely been eliminated: rickets, tuberculosis, smallpox, diphtheria, measles, whooping cough and polio. However, today we face the increase in diseases and conditions of old age and aging: heart and stroke, cancers, dementia, social isolation. There are also new medical issues affecting new citizens, sickle cell anaemia or Female Genital Mutilation and the resurgence of old diseases that originated in other homelands such as rickets & TB.

Other challenges include health problems exacerbated by modern life styles – obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise, poor mental health and wellbeing, sexually transmitted diseases etc

## **Organisations based at the Manor Gardens Centre**

**Today the Centre provides space for a wide range of organisations.**

**The African Health Forum**

**African Sub Saharan Development Partnership**

**Africa Relief Support Project**

**African Women and Children Support Organisation (AWACSO)**

**AGLOW (Association of Greater London Older Women)**

**Baobab Centre (therapeutic support for young survivors)**

**B2B Somali Arts and Education Ltd**

**CARILA (support for Spanish and Portuguese speaking community)**

**Congolese Association of Elderly People**

**COFIPRO (Congolese Financial Project)**

**Coram (parenting support)**

**iCope (NHS service to help people cope with feelings of stress, worry and depression)**

**Islington People's Rights**

**Islington Age UK**

**Islington Mind**

**Kurdish Children & Youth Centre**

**MTSSP (The Mother Tongue and Supplementary Schools Partnership)**

**Music for People**

**PAMODZI (for the benefit of people of the southern African Communities)**

**OPAM (Organisation of HIV Positive African men)**

**Roundabout (Dramatherapy)**

**RAINP (Refugee and asylum seekers integration project)**

**Solace Women's Aid**

**Women's Therapy Centre**