



WORDS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Stepping inside Unitas Youth Zone is always an inspiring experience. A hive of activity, Unitas provides a safe space and a true 'home from home' for our thousands of members. Whether it is the large-scale events that we run on a regular basis or the one-to-one mentoring conversations between a young person and our amazing youth workers, everything we do is focused on supporting young people when they need it most.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to be a substantial challenge for our young people and their families, but also to Unitas itself. To ensure Unitas is sustainable and that we can continue to serve our community, we are putting a greater emphasis on fundraising in the year to come. We have appointed an exceptional new Head of Fundraising, Yusuf Kalam, and brought two new Trustees on board to provide oversight and support, Anthony Hayman and Alison Benjamin.

We regularly receive visits from donors and I always value hearing your input. If you would like to see what we do with your own eyes, or would prefer for us to come and visit you, we would be happy to arrange this.

UNITAS IN NUMBERS

JAN-MAR 2023

841

JUNIORS MEMBERS
ATTENDANCE



924

SENIORS MEMBERS
ATTENDANCE



10,627

NUMBER OF VISITS



+16%

ANNUAL
GROWTH RATE



282

HOLIDAY CLUB
ATTENDANCE



5,596

FREE MEALS PROVIDED



THANKS TO A
VERY SPECIAL GRANT

69%

ACTIVE MEMBERS FROM THE 50%
OF MOST DEPRIVED HOUSEHOLDS
NATIONALLY



99

LIMITLESS FAMILIES
ATTENDANCE

CASE STUDY



SPOTLIGHT:

Vernon Douglas, Employability Coordinator

Tell us a little bit about yourself

Hi, I'm Vernon I started Unitas in the Summer of 2022. I work three days a week at Unitas. Working part-time fits in nicely with the demands of the counselling qualification that I am working towards and the skills I am learning as part of my degree programme are aiding me to provide additional support needed by our members. When I am not working or studying, I like to play tennis and I have recently taken up learning the acoustic guitar. I'm also a trained actor and previously worked professionally for over 20 years!

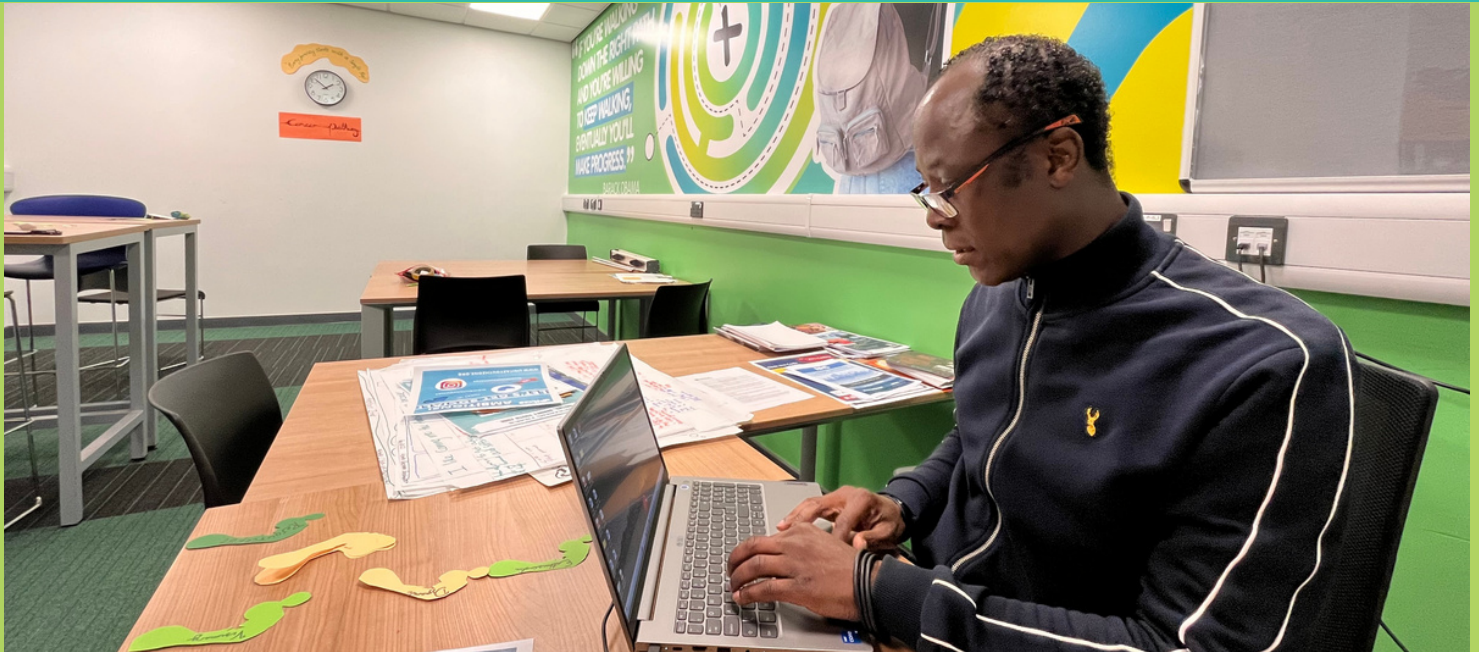
Tell us a little bit about your new job

I support our members with anything related to employment. That could be helping a young person to create or update their CV, conducting mock interviews or helping them to decide what career path they may want to go down and putting together a roadmap of how they are going to get there. A lot of the young people we work with are classified as NEET (not in education, employment or training).

I work mostly on a 1:1 basis with our members so that I can really focus on their individual needs and support them in the right way. This also helps me build up a relationship so that they grow to trust me. We often start by talking about other things that are going on which may be affecting their mental and physical health such as home life, friendships and school.

I also work with companies on alternative opportunities such as apprenticeships and work experience for our young people. Getting a foot in the door can be a real barrier for our young people, we can help them with that by building meaningful relationships with local businesses.

CASE STUDY



How do you identify the young people that need your support?

I believe that it is important to build relationships with our young people first before I can offer any meaningful support to our young people. I spend time during the evening sessions chatting with them to build up a rapport, often over a game of pool or table tennis. This helps in making it easier for them to approach me, providing a greater understanding of how best I can support them. Many of our young members are also signposted to me by other youth workers who know the members well and think they would benefit from some support.

What do you like most about your job?

Working with young people!! I've always loved it and feel like I really connect and make a difference. I enjoy empowering them, to not put limitations on themselves and chase their dreams. No two days are the same in my job. I could be having a 1:1 session with a young person teaching them GCSE maths one minute and planning a careers day for our young people the next.

What are you working on now?

Currently I am working with three young people on an individual basis, meeting them each twice weekly. I am also putting together a programme for our members who are NEET, and also planning a careers day with one of our charity partners (Pentland). I'm also gathering attendees for a programme that's being run by a major organisation. The focus of this is traineeship apprenticeship and work experience. Lastly, I am developing relationships with some of our members who come to us primarily to play sport. Although employability may not be the first reason they come to Unitas, they can often really benefit from support with the next steps in their lives. That's the great thing about Unitas. It's a holistic offering. Young people may come in for one reason but can then get introduced to another room that can help them with other parts of their lives. This is an approach that I am very intentional in creating for our young people. In addition I regularly check in with young people who I've supported but no longer need employability support, just so I know they are ok and can reach out to me if they need to.

CASE STUDY

“

Unitas supported me to pursue my dream career”

A story of a Senior member



Yvonne

Yvonne began coming to Unitas in April 2021 and used our Performing Arts space, accessing a dance programme run in partnership with another local charity, Youth Realities. When she first came to Unitas, she was shy and reluctant to talk to anyone. She kept everything emotional in, which was unhealthy and caused high levels of anxiety. Because of Unitas' holistic offering, often young people come here to use one space and end up stumbling upon others that they wouldn't have even considered before, but which can have a life-changing impact.

Yvonne started to feel more comfortable at Unitas and explored new areas. As an avid football player and fan, the first and most obvious choice was the MUGA, our amazing outdoor football pitch on the Youth Zone roof. Every night that we open, a football game is on offer to our members. Our young members are supported and coached by experts in their field and football is no exception.

As a charity we also run a mentoring scheme, matching up a young person with a mentor that they connect with. Yvonne met with her every week. At the beginning they discussed different areas of her life that she wanted to change, including doing more physical activity and improving her mental health.

They caught up and tracked progress, with the same supportive, trusted adult always there to listen and encourage. Unitas also run group mentoring sessions when members get the chance to speak openly to each other. Yvonne took part in this and built up connections and friendships that are still important to her today.

Unitas has been there to support Yvonne through the good times and the bad. One such challenging time was when she decided to drop out of university. She had reached a crossroads. Unitas supported her by pointing her in the direction of the enterprise and employability room. Vernon worked with Yvonne to coach her into coming up with a plan for the next steps. He built up her confidence and encouraged her to pursue her dream career in education at a primary school. He helped her write a CV, research agencies and prepare for interview. She got the job, and has now been employed for three months. Yvonne works as a teaching assistant in a local school. In Yvonne's own words, "I would never have gotten there without the support of Unitas. If I could describe Unitas in one word, it would be 'saved'".

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



Volleyball Friendly

At Unitas we hold regular volleyball sessions for all young people, including female-only, Junior and Senior sessions. We are partnered with AST Volleyball, a local club affiliated to England Volleyball, who provide free coaching for our young people. We are really excited by the progress and talent that exists within our club. Our recent volleyball friendly only further highlighted the potential of our young people. It was amazing to see our Sports Hall full of volleyball players from Unitas and Future Youth Zone, and although we lost the match, our young people gained valuable experience. They are now training harder than ever and we look forward to many more matches in the future.



Babyzone Opens

In January, Unitas became the latest location for an amazing initiative called Babyzone. Every Thursday, Babyzone provides a free, open-access provision for 0-5 year olds and their parents. There is a huge range of activities on offer, from exploratory play to evidence-based classes and advice services. So much early years provision is either expensive or inconvenient for new parents but Babyzone removes all of the traditional barriers. Over 100 families are now attending each week and Unitas is proud to play host to such an important service for the community.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



2023
31 JAN

Community Awards

Earlier this year, over 180 distinguished guests and community leaders attending a gala dinner to celebrate the Barnet Group's Community Awards. All nominations had gone through a rigorous submission process by Barnet Homes and Open-Door Homes residents, staff, volunteer and community partners from across Barnet who wanted to acknowledge those who have made a positive impact in the local community. We are delighted to share that Unitas won the award for Charity of the Year! Our staff and young people accepted the award on behalf of Unitas and we could not be prouder.



2023
FEB

Sanaz completes Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food Course

Unitas is a strong advocate of eating a wide range of wholesome foods and encouraging a balanced diet. This ensures young people can get all the nutrients they need for maintaining a healthy weight and positive wellbeing. Sanaz is one of Unitas' sessional workers with a specialist background in food and works in our training kitchen.

Each week Sanaz hosts a small group (4-5 young people per session), providing a fun and interactive environment where children learn the importance of eating healthily. Through regular sessions, these young children have been able to cook delicious, nutritious meals.

Recently, Sanaz successfully has been accredited by Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food, a national scheme that she will be running at Unitas. This will allow us to run courses in basic cooking skills and we already have young people excited to get going! We are also grateful to the Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food, who donated kitchen equipment to us.



RECENT HIGHLIGHTS



2023
18 Mar

Basketball Champions

Our basketball team, Unitas Force, entered their first tournament of the year, which pitted us against our local 'rivals' Future Youth Zone and Barking and Dagenham College. The games were very competitive and due to the tremendous effort of our team and coaching staff we not only reached the final but won the game in overtime. This initial success will only help our young people add another positive experience which will surely build their development.



2023
18 Mar

St Patrick's Day Fun

Unitas was proud to celebrate Irish heritage and culture. To honour this rich history, our young people were involved in a giant scavenger hunt, which created much excitement and a healthy competitive spirit amongst all those who participated. We were delighted that so many young people embraced the festive spirit with face-painting and wearing green. Our staff also didn't want to miss out on the fun and led by example, dressing up and creating a real party atmosphere.

