



**URBAN PARTNERS  
FOR KING'S CROSS  
EUSTON &  
ST PANCRAS**

Working together  
for a thriving urban  
neighbourhood

## Annual Report 2020

@UrbanPartnersUK  
[www.urbanpartners.london](http://www.urbanpartners.london)





# Contents

3

Our Boundary

4

Welcome and Foreword  
by Wendy Spinks, Chair of Urban Partners

6

External Contribution  
by Cllr Asima Shaikh, Executive Member for Inclusive  
Economy and Jobs, Islington Council

8

Sustaining a voluntary partnership  
through a pandemic  
by Michael Richardson, Project Director  
of Urban Partners

10

Year in Overview

12

Volunteering update  
by Grace Coffey, Head of Partnerships  
at Camden Giving

14

Member profiles

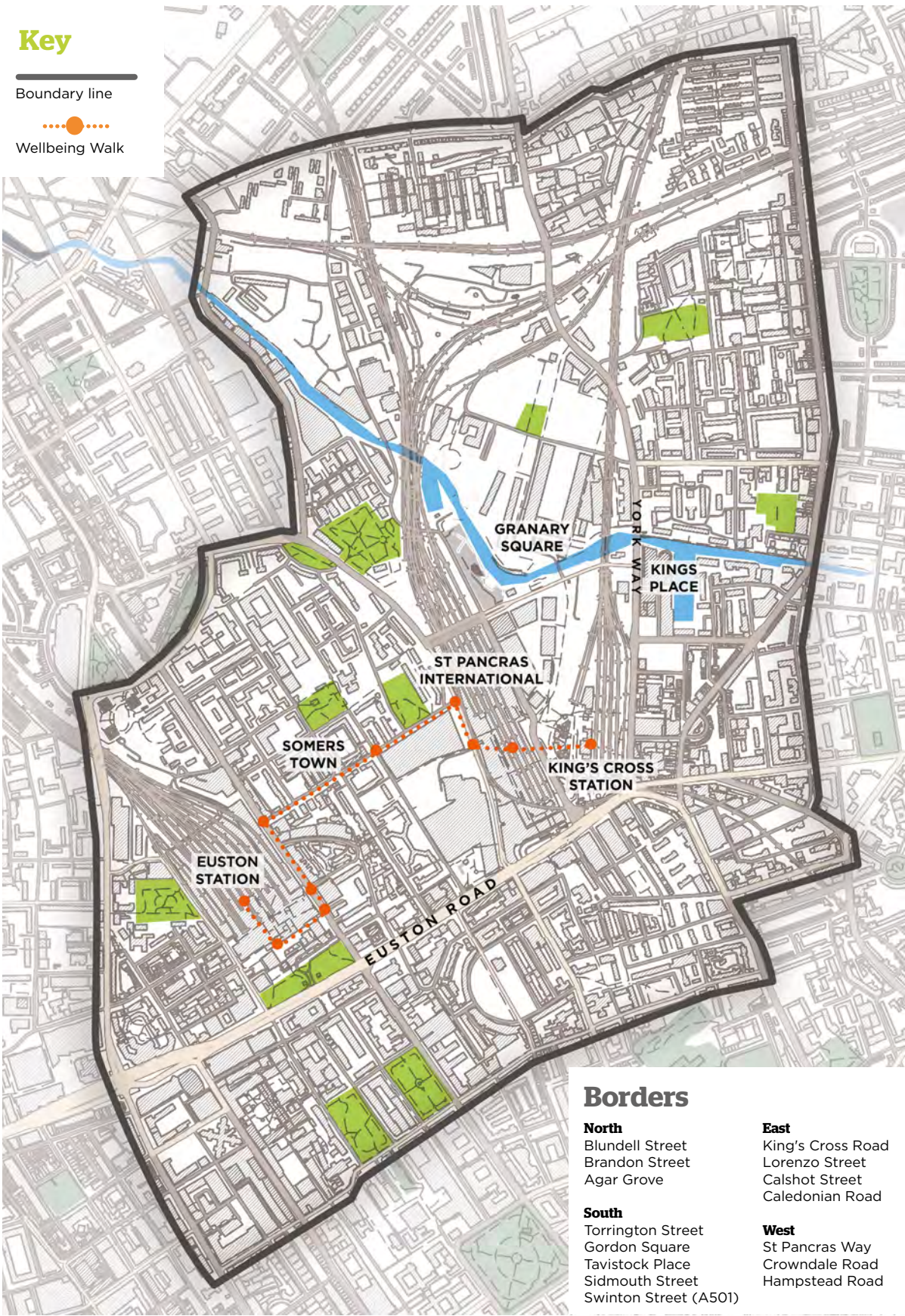
20

Board and Executive Members

## Our Boundary

### Key

- Boundary line
- Wellbeing Walk



### Borders

- |                                                                                                                   |                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>North</b><br>Blundell Street<br>Brandon Street<br>Agar Grove                                                   | <b>East</b><br>King's Cross Road<br>Lorenzo Street<br>Calshot Street<br>Caledonian Road |
| <b>South</b><br>Torrington Street<br>Gordon Square<br>Tavistock Place<br>Sidmouth Street<br>Swinton Street (A501) | <b>West</b><br>St Pancras Way<br>Crowndale Road<br>Hampstead Road                       |



# WELCOME AND FOREWORD

## Welcome to Urban Partners and our Home: King's Cross and St Pancras

There is no hiding how challenging this year has been. We are all aware of the devastating effects of Covid-19, and as a place-based business partnership we have seen and felt what it has meant both for individual businesses and the local community.

Many of our members have suffered significantly from the truly painful economic impact of Covid-19, particularly those in the hospitality, retail and travel space, who have experienced their business abruptly stop in a previously unimaginable way. But in the face of such adversity, it has been inspiring to see businesses pull together and support one another. It is also plain to see just how important a role our members have to play in helping to build the area back. We can take great pride

in how we have persevered as a partnership, with the admirable support from our Project Lead, Michael Richardson, adapting to the world of virtual meetings and supporting the local area in different and innovative ways.

Communications has moved to the forefront of what we do, supporting the local agencies and Islington and Camden councils to share key Covid-19 messaging through our channels. Members have adapted to supply PPE to local charities, accommodate essential workers, and help tackle local housing issues.

Our members' support for the Next Generation in our local area has continued too - from conducting virtual work experience and mentoring, through to hosting online French classes with local students.

Members have also found ways to support the wider local community, with Green and Fortune cooking and supplying over 2,500 meals, and the King's Cross Estate helping to create a free outdoor exhibition to celebrate the local people who have made a difference in this difficult period.

We were also able to finish the year with the unveiling of Edith Neville Primary School's new mixed-use games area, funded by a donation from Urban Partners. The upgraded facilities will make a very real difference to the children at the school.

Finally, underlining the ethos of our partnership, despite the challenges that we are all so aware of, member volunteering has gone from strength to strength in 2020. Working with our partner, Camden Giving, 76 Urban Partner members have volunteered with 30 local grassroots charities across the year, an increase on 2019.

### About Urban Partners

Founded in 2011, Urban Partners is a voluntary business partnership made up of organisations in the King's Cross, St Pancras and Euston area. Urban Partners exists to represent its businesses, provide benefits to its member's almost 11,000 employees, and to contribute to the local community. Much of its work focuses on projects designed to tackle environmental and sustainability challenges, and to forge closer links between its member businesses and local young people. Its work is funded by its diverse membership base, ranging from global organisations to local businesses across a wide variety of sectors. Members give their time, expertise and resources in order to build and sustain a thriving urban neighbourhood that is a good place to work, live and do business.



**We have another challenging year ahead, but together I believe we can help to make a real difference and ensure our local area, businesses and communities recover towards a bright future.**

Turning to 2021, there are clearly still considerable hurdles to overcome, but with the hope of a gradual return to normality from the spring, there is also now a clear light for us to work towards and the Board has focused on how best we can contribute to rebuilding locally this year. We will continue to work closely with our local partners and councils to ensure we maximise the benefits we can deliver. Our core priorities will be around boosting local employability, continuing to grow the benefits of the Urban Partners Homework Club, helping to support the reduction of homelessness in the area, and contributing to a green recovery, both through collaboration on sustainability and through working to expand the Urban Partners Wellbeing Walk.

And so, to finish, I want to say a huge thank you to all of you. Despite the incredible adversity that our member businesses have faced, I have been inspired by the countless acts of philanthropy and kindness - there is a very real sense of collaboration, to support one another and the wider local community, and to ensure we bounce back stronger.

We have another challenging year ahead, but together I believe we can help to make a real difference and ensure our local area, businesses and communities recover towards a bright future.

**Wendy Spinks, Commercial Director HS1 Ltd,  
Chair of Urban Partners ('UP')**





## EXTERNAL CONTRIBUTION

Cllr Asima Shaikh,  
Executive Member for Inclusive  
Economy and Jobs,  
Islington Council

This has been a year unlike any other, with the lives of every resident and business disrupted by Covid-19, and existing inequalities brought to the fore. We have been working tirelessly to get help to those who have been hit the hardest, with employment and skills support for many people already facing significant barriers, and financial support for small businesses, while the incredible response from community partners and businesses has helped us to give vital assistance for the most vulnerable through the We Are Islington campaign. We know the next year will bring further challenges, and we are committed to working with local partners including Urban Partners to build back better for an inclusive, fairer, greener and more creative local economy that works for all our residents and businesses.

**We know the next year will bring further challenges, and we are committed to working with Urban Partners to build back better for an inclusive, fairer, greener and more creative local economy that works for all our residents and businesses**





# SUSTAINING A VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP THROUGH A PANDEMIC

On Monday, 9th March, I attended the Urban Partners Board meeting on my first day as Evergreen Reputation's new Project Lead for the business partnership. It was a meeting held in the mounting uncertainty of COVID-19. Two days later, the WHO would declare COVID-19 a pandemic and within a week the UK was in lockdown.

With both the business community and wider society reeling, the question facing Urban Partners was clear: how do you sustain a business partnership reliant on voluntary contributions through the greatest upheaval to normal life since the Second World War and what, if anything, could we do to support our members, partners and the local community through the pandemic?

Our first priority was to look inward at Urban Partners' raison d'être - we are ultimately a community of businesses aiming to support the local King's Cross, St Pancras and Euston community. Understanding the impact on our members was therefore imperative, as was reaching out to Islington and Camden councils and our local partners to understand their Covid-response priorities.

In April we released a statement announcing Urban Partners' Response to COVID-19, an action plan subtitled 'Support and Collaboration' that was born out of countless conversations with members, colleagues and partners who were compiling responses to the pandemic as hastily as we were. The action plan detailed our priorities for 2020, including a focus on supporting young people, working closely with local authorities, mobilising our members to respond to immediate needs in the council's own Covid-response plans, maintaining engagement and communication with members, and supporting our volunteering partner Camden



Giving wherever possible. We also repurposed our communication channels to support these priorities, share local information and provide COVID-19 updates, and ensure home-working member employees retained a connection to the area they work in.

Support and collaboration were not only the tenets of our action plan but have proven a defining characteristic of how the business partnership has worked together throughout the pandemic. Members have remained highly engaged throughout the year despite the exceptional circumstances and the strong attendance at our newly virtual monthly meetings is highlighted by the 400-plus hours of time member employees have spent attending meetings this year. I still remember my relief as we hosted our first virtual Executive Committee meeting in April when there was the now familiar 'beep' of people joining the call; I knew then that Urban Partners would continue to deliver in some way throughout the year, albeit with very different results to normal.



**Our impact is undeniable and Urban Partners enters 2021 in a much stronger position than we could have foreseen.**

It is a testament to this dedication that we find ourselves here, at the end of such a challenging year, with an annual report and a set of achievements of which I am immensely proud. From supporting Camden's virtual work experience programme and Islington's Youth and Employability Skills programme, to our members providing essential PPE in the early response to the pandemic, to planning for the new Wellbeing Walk route for 2021, to the stunning volunteering statistics resulting from our partnership with Camden Giving; our impact is undeniable and Urban Partners enters 2021 in a much stronger position than we could have foreseen.

A big thank you must go, as ever, to our member businesses and their representatives, to our partners, to the Chair and Vice Chair of Urban Partners who steered the ship this year and, of course, to my project team for helping me to doggedly pursue every opportunity for collaboration, attend every online meeting and share in all the moments that made up a year like no other. Here's to continued success for the business partnership in 2021 and to an annual report next year that is very different to the one you're currently reading.

**Michael Richardson,**  
Project Director of Urban Partners



# YEAR IN OVERVIEW

## Membership

We now have over 100 local businesses as part of the Urban Partners network.

## Member Engagement

While we have not been able to run the many and varied events we normally host, from the annual Youth Career Expo to our much loved networking and masterclass events, members have nonetheless committed over 400 hours attending Urban Partner meetings to help sustain the partnership and identify and deliver the support we have been able to provide.

## Edith Neville

This year, Urban Partners funded the upgrade of the mixed use games area (MUGA) at Edith Neville Primary School. The business partnership donated £12,995 and on Monday 7 December, the new play space finally opened to some very excited children.

Ruby Nasser, Head Teacher at Edith Neville Primary School, shared the excitement of the children and why it is so important they have an outdoor space to enjoy: "We are really grateful to Urban Partners for funding our MUGA upgrade. The children are so excited to have such an amazing place to play. Many of our children live in overcrowded housing and have challenging home lives, so the fact that they have such a high quality play space is incredibly beneficial."



"This is the best playground in London."

Year 4 pupil

"We have a proper football pitch.

I wish I could stay here forever."

Year 3 pupil

"This is the best day ever!"

Year 6 pupil



## Volunteering

Volunteering has gone from strength to strength this year with 76 Urban Partner members volunteering at 30 local grassroots charities, an increase on 2019.

## Next Generation

Urban Partners' members work to support the Next Generation this year has included:

- ▶ **YES Programme:** Six member businesses are currently working with Islington Council to provide opportunities for young people via their Youth Employability and Skills Programme (YES Programme). This provides pathways to employment via paid work experiences for young people aged 18-25 who are not in education, employment or training and who are facing barriers to employment that have only increased due to Covid-19.
- ▶ **Camden Council's Virtual Work Experience Programme:** Four member businesses participated in the pilot programme run by Camden Council over the summer. In total, the nine businesses involved, provided virtual work experience for a total of 400 students.
- ▶ **EPQ Mentors:** Five Urban Partners businesses provided Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) mentors for Camden Council's EPQ Mentorship Programme.
- ▶ **Urban Partners Virtual Work Experience Programme:** Urban Partners provided two virtual work experience sessions for local students, one focused on city planning and construction and the other on the creative industries.
- ▶ **The Homework Club:** In the first months of 2020, the Homework Club continued to build on its success in tutoring local pupils, before the first lockdown required it to be paused. Nonetheless, members continued to find ways to deliver support, with Eurostar staff providing online zoom classes and Springer Nature laying plans for virtual mentoring sessions with students from Elizabeth Garrett Anderson School.



"I had the privilege of continuing as the Next Generation Coordinator this year which saw us deliver Urban Partner's Virtual Work Experience programme for local students which focused on City Planning & Construction and the Creative Industries, as well as online masterclasses for young creatives, via Tileyard Impact. I was also able to record a number of career interviews with Urban Partners employees from LNER and Argent"

**Wisdom Layne, Next Generation Coordinator**



# VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

In 2020, 76 Urban Partners business employees have volunteered via Camden Giving, supporting 30 grassroots charities in the borough of Camden. With the majority of the year spent under lockdown or tiered restrictions, with many UP-business employees working from home or furloughed, we are very proud of this number. The volunteering that has occurred has been more meaningful than ever and led by what the charity needs, with Camden's grassroots charities stretched beyond imagination this year. Volunteers have mostly been virtual, arguably not quite able to get the same 'feeling' from face-to-face volunteering... which makes the time they have given even more remarkable than a typical year. Camden's grassroots charities were thrown into rapid response back in March with a demand for their services increased but income and funding hugely suffering. Many also didn't have the technical infrastructure to adapt and to operate 'virtually', with websites outdated for example.

A volunteer from Argent, who supported local Camden charity Speak Street with updating their website commented that, 'lockdown has made charitable organisations realise how important digital capabilities are and there is a great opportunity for charities to benefit from consultancy, support, ideas and advice from professionals in IT, IM and digital roles. Instead of the constraints

## Highlights:

- ▶ 76 Urban Partners business employees volunteered in 2020 via Camden Giving
- ▶ Supporting 30 grassroots charities in the borough of Camden
- ▶ Supplying over 100 meals a day for local children at risk of going hungry during October half term NW5 Play Project



of travel time, logistics, requiring a location or a rigid, inflexible session time, digital volunteering can provide support in less time and in a flexible way. It opens up the possibilities of volunteering - to contribute via an online meeting/support session, advising on best practice, putting materials together.'

The relationship between Urban Partners members and Camden Giving has undeniably strengthened in 2020, with the businesses working to help support local charities and Camden neighbours in need in a multitude of ways. From Havas working with Camden Giving funded project NW5 Play Project during October half term, supplying them with over 100 meals a day for local children at risk of going hungry, to Argent's 12 Heroes of Camden campaign, a captivating art installation celebrating 12 remarkable people who have gone above and beyond this year whilst also encouraging fundraising for Camden Giving; from the support of Google, who made a significant contribution to Camden Giving's Pathways to Employment Fund, our third round of funding in response to the covid-19 pandemic that funded projects Rathbone Amateur Boxing and C4WS Homeless Project, to support a wide-range of people into training and employment; and to the colleagues at Springer Nature who hosted a Virtual Quiz to fundraise during the pandemic.

It is clear that the relationship between Camden Giving and Urban Partners businesses enables the generosity of Urban Partners employees - be that their skills, their time or their money - to be put to great use, quickly, in Camden and to help the most vulnerable people in our community.

With hundreds of hours volunteered, skills shared that charities wouldn't have access to otherwise, and people working together who otherwise would not meet, Camden Giving want to thank all Urban Partners members for helping us to ensure employees who want to volunteer are able to do so. We're optimistic that 2021 will allow us to build on the successes of this year, with virtual but also in person volunteering, and that the spirit of 2020 continues, with caring for others and lending a hand when we're able to - something we've all been reminded of the value of.

**Grace Coffey, Head of Partnerships at Camden Giving**



# MEMBER PROFILES

In this most unusual of years, we have focused the annual report on how Covid-19 has impacted upon our members, shining a light on some of the challenges faced, how members have struggled and coped, and some of the inspiring ways in which they have continued to support and benefit the local community.

## The impact of Covid-19 on our members

Covid-19 has impacted all of us, but each business has also faced its own set of challenges. Those in hospitality, retail and travel have faced the very real challenge of shops shutting, events cancelled, non-existent hotel bookings and a nigh-on freeze in train travel. Despite these incredibly challenging circumstances, members such as DoubleTree pivoted to provide PPE to local charities and businesses, while also supporting the council on local housing issues and remaining open for key workers throughout the pandemic.

Some members have also been able to contribute to the global effort to understand Coronavirus. Springer Nature, for example, has been able to create a free Coronavirus hub providing access to over 70,000 relevant research articles and book chapters and publishing more than 14,000 new research articles on the virus.

## Keeping employees motivated and engaged

The world of virtual working has dramatically changed how member businesses communicate with their employees this year and has led to a host of new ways we engage. From 'virtual cafés' to Zoom yoga classes, and in Argent LLP's case, even an online DJ set, our members have continued to be creative in how they support their employees.



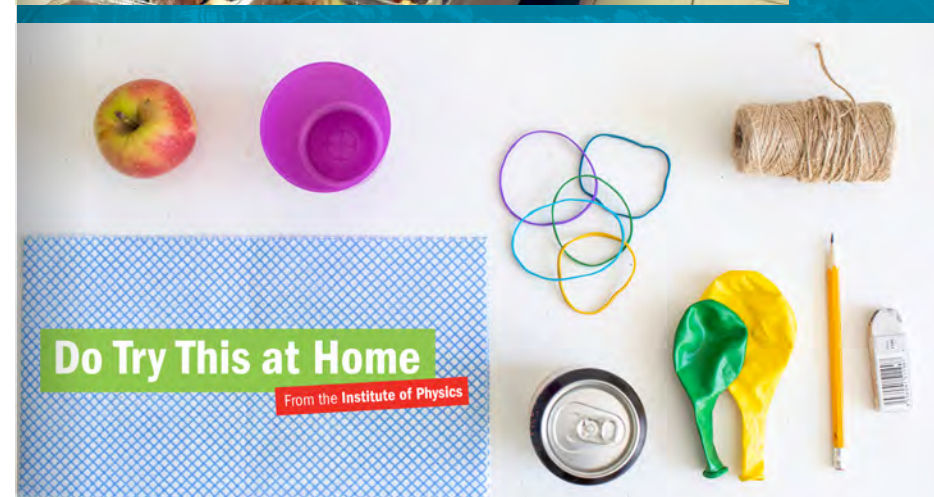
## Working with the local community

From repurposing space to support NHS staff, to supplying weekly meals, members have found ways to support the local community throughout the pandemic.

One notable example has come from Green and Fortune, who in the initial lockdown began making and donating 100 meals a week to two local charities, the London Irish Centre based in Camden square and the Copenhagen Street Foodbank. To date, Green and Fortune have now supplied over 2,500 meals to the local community.

Members have also helped to celebrate local heroes, with King's Cross Estate showcasing 'the 12 heroes of Camden' exhibition in collaboration with Camden Giving, to celebrate and shine a light on 12 local people who have really made a difference during the pandemic.

To help people exercise in a safe way, King's Cross Estate also put together a programme of 'alfresco exercise', with free spaces for NHS workers and a summer bootcamp for local young people.



## Supporting the Next Generation

Working to increase opportunities with local young people has long been a priority for Urban Partners and members have continued to find ways to support this throughout the pandemic.

Eurostar managed to move some of the Homework Club classes online, providing French Conversation lessons for Maria Fidelis Sixth Form students.

Meanwhile, the Institute of Physics (IOP) was able to swiftly adapt to the lockdown by rolling out 'do try this at home' physics packs for families. Delivered by members of IOP staff and filmed in their homes, the activities consist of friendly "how-to" videos of experiments that families can do at home with guidance for parents and carers to support them to have conversations with their children about science and technology.

A number of members were able to continue to provide work experience opportunities virtually. For example, Argent LLP worked with Camden students on a programme considering the future of the high street, and an initiative that introduced young people to careers in the built environment. Separately, Springer Nature, working in collaboration with Camden STEAM and Speakers for Schools, who received an introduction to research and education publishing and found out more about topics such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

"I learnt a lot about the world of publishing and about the different types of publishing. I also learnt a lot about the different roles in the publishing industry and about all the types of jobs Springer nature offers. What I liked the most about the work experience was learning about everyone's career paths and hearing their tips ... I did not realise how diverse the publishing industry is."

**Virtual Work Experience Student**





## Supporting local employability

With employability likely to be an increasing focus over the coming year, members were able to adapt to continue to provide support for local people in 2020.

Notably, Springer Nature partnered with Laamiga, a local charity providing mentoring to minority ethnic women, to host a virtual workshop on skills and professional development, designed to support attendees in their career progression, development and confidence.

Elsewhere, King's Cross Recruit is using its skills to address the growing need for deeper candidate support, helping those who had lost employment due to the pandemic. Through its in-depth CV screening service and tailored employability advice to candidates, the team has worked closely with over 60 people to help put them in a stronger position to look for work.

## Building local resilience

Across the year, members have also worked to help protect the local economy and enhance sustainability. A number of member businesses, including Springer Nature and HS1 Ltd. have announced ambitious new decarbonisation plans, while the King's Cross Estate helped to launch the 'United we Shop' campaign in December to encourage people to support physical retail (when allowed and safe to do so).

With homelessness another key local issue, King's Cross Estate partnered with local youth homelessness charity New Horizon Youth Centre to support their 10 Days to end Youth Homelessness campaign. The campaign galvanised support from office and retail occupiers across King's Cross, including a takeover of a 40-foot hoarding adjacent to King's Cross station to deliver its core messages, helping to raise £40k and delivering employment outcomes for New Horizon's clients.



## What have members learnt about the area and what can we learn moving forward?

Members reported that there are some benefits to virtual working for the partnership, including the possibility of virtual meetings facilitating higher attendance. Members also reported a new focus on making the workplace a desirable space to be and anticipate an emphasis on ensuring employees enjoy coming to the area when they are able to.

### Cat Lee, Ted Baker:

“As a result of the Pandemic, our teams continue to work more remotely. This hasn't changed our view of the surrounding area; however, it has allowed us to engage more with the local community, including through the support we have made available due to Covid-19, for example, donating office equipment and food.”

### Emma Williams, Green and Fortune quote:

“King's Cross is increasingly becoming a leisure destination, not just a place to work, and attracting a social crowd looking to enjoy some good food and drink. In 2021, it will be key to continue to promote the local area as a great place to stay in for leisure time, supporting the wealth of great hotels, retail, venues and hospitality.”

## What positives can we take from 2020?

### Ben Olney, HS1:

“It has been great to see the increase in more sustainable forms of onward travel, whether it be more walking or cycling. We have also adopted two robotic cleaning assistants in the station. Our UVD robot Apollo is named after the Greek God of light & healing of disease, he kills 99.9999% of viruses and bacteria with UV-C light rays. Our Eco-Bot-50, who cleans and disinfects surfaces simultaneously with ultrasonic spraying and an automated scrubber dryer, is called Misty. The robots will supplement the work of our existing station cleaning staff to keep the station as clean as possible in these uncertain times.”

### Cat Lee, Ted Baker:

“This is a great opportunity for businesses to really engage their stakeholders, customers and internal teams on sustainability, employee wellbeing, and community engagement.”

### Emma Williams, Green and Fortune:

“Hospitality always has, and always will be about people. As well as getting closer to our customers (socially distanced of course) we are also working more closely with our suppliers. We have always valued personal relationships, and this is now more important than ever. We all need to see this as being in it together, stay close and work through it.”



## How do member's see Urban Partners supporting the local recovery in 2021?

### Mary Walsh, Eurostar:

“The priorities will be to support the local community, which will face considerable economic challenges post Covid-19, and to build and drive our sustainability programme which will be very important in light of both COP 26 and the ambitious target that the UK government has set for a 68% reduction in carbon emissions by 2030.”

### Cat Lee, Ted Baker:

“A continued focus on community development. The rise in unemployment, linked with the rise in homelessness will be key areas of focus for next year.”

### Thea Sherer, Springer Nature:

“Other employability and work experience programmes will play an important part in how Urban Partners can contribute to the economic recovery which is going to be vital over the next two to three years, and we will support where we can. In addition, ensuring that our employees can return to a vibrant and enjoyable place to work will be important as we return to a 'new normal' and so joining with other Urban Partners in directing colleagues towards local businesses will help with the local economic recovery.”

### Emma Williams, Green and Fortune:

“Homelessness has always been a priority for Urban Partners and big strides have been made to combat this in the local area, where homelessness is particularly high. An increase in homelessness is predicted as a result of the pandemic so tackling this will become even more important in 2021.”

### Ben Olney, HS1:

“The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated how we need, now more than ever, to work together as businesses and the local community to support each other and improve the local area for the benefit of all. Working together means we can pool resources and ideas and be much more than the sum of our parts. Having just moved house when lockdown commenced, I have benefitted immensely from a strong local community in my street, working together to support each other – it would be great if this could be replicated at an Urban Partners scale across businesses, local authorities, charities, community groups and places of education.”

## Our plans for 2021

Urban Partners will continue to work to benefit its member businesses, their employees and the area's Next Generation. With the hope that our focus throughout 2021 will be on recovery, our work will include:

- ▶ Boosting local employability and continuing to grow the Urban Partners Homework Club
- ▶ Helping to support the reduction of homelessness in the area
- ▶ Collaborating on sustainability at a local and wider level
- ▶ Expanding the Urban Partners Wellbeing Walk





## Board and Executive Members



GREEN & FORTUNE



**IOP** Institute of Physics

**King's Cross**

**KINGS PLACE**



**SPRINGER NATURE**



**TED BAKER**  
LONDON

**The  
Guardian**



Get in touch with UP

Visit [www.urbanpartners.london](http://www.urbanpartners.london)

Subscribe to our Newsletter by emailing  
[hello@urbanpartners.london](mailto:hello@urbanpartners.london)

Follow us on



For any other enquiry contact  
[hello@urbanpartners.london](mailto:hello@urbanpartners.london)