

# Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

**Making a transformational difference to the lives of the young people of Newham**

# Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders Annual Report 2017

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# Mission statement

We make a transformational difference to the lives of the young people of Newham through cheerleading, which keeps them fit, enhances their citizenship skills and contributes to community integration.



# Our journey

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Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders (AEC) was founded 21 years ago to help combat the lack of opportunities for young people in the London Borough of Newham, one of London's most economically challenged boroughs.

Shara Brice, AEC's patron and founder, started the programme to give young people an alternative to joining street gangs and becoming involved in crime, guiding them to a healthier lifestyle and - most importantly - positive social interaction.

Today, we give the young people of Newham and surrounding boroughs (aged 6 to 21 years) support and practical life skills to enable them to reach their full potential and make a positive contribution to their communities.

Competitive cheerleading gives our athletes an equal opportunity to succeed regardless of background, gender, race, religion or other factors.

We focus on teaching life and leadership skills which benefit our athletes beyond the gym. This is particularly

important for young girls, giving them greater self-confidence and a sense of empowerment.

Our aim is to provide our athletes with an understanding of what it means to be a part of a team; the opportunity to learn new skills; greater resilience and the confidence to face new challenges; and the commitment required to compete at an elite level.

AEC distinguishes itself from other cheerleading organisations by providing pastoral care and mentoring which helps our athletes to improve their academic performance too, not just their gymnastic abilities. For some of our athletes this includes the opportunity to participate in the Junior Leadership Team scheme (our personal and professional development programme for young people with high potential).

Ascension Eagles helps young people to develop into confident, successful members of the community, with greater self-esteem, good self-discipline and an understanding of the importance of helping others.



# Letter from the Director

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We believe that living and training in a diverse, multi-cultural environment like Newham, develops our athletes into fully rounded individuals and future leaders of their community.

However, Newham's residents and our athletes also face unique challenges. Newham has one of the highest rates of child poverty across the UK<sup>1</sup>.

Child poverty increases the risk of childhood obesity, causes a gap in educational attainment that widens as children progress through the school system and negatively impacts children's mental health.

AEC works to combat all of these effects.

According to a recent study<sup>2</sup>, poor children at age five are almost twice as likely to be obese than wealthy children. By the time children are 11, that gap has tripled.

The primary factors that contribute to this gap are the high prices of healthy food and the lack of opportunities for children living in poverty to engage in sport.

We use cheerleading to engage children in an active, athletic activity. Our cheerleaders train at the gym between two to four times days a week, meaning they receive two to eight hours of physical activity per week. In addition, we encourage them to train at home regularly so that they can complete some form of physical activity every day.

We focus on instilling our core values of confidence, teamwork and leadership into each athlete we work with. Child poverty and the challenges of a diverse community can leave children feeling lonely, powerless and frightened.

AEC gives athletes positive and empowering tools to transform their lives: the discipline of working together as a team, the ability to learn new and unique skills and the dedication required to compete at an elite level. Our training programs, academic support and athletic activities, give our athletes the skills they need to progress into adulthood and live successful lives.

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<sup>1</sup> London's Poverty Profile ([www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk](http://www.londonpovertyprofile.org.uk))

<sup>2</sup> NHS Statistics on Obesity, Physical Activity and Diet, England 2017

Director's report continued

# Letter from the Director

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The Talent Central Schools programme allows us to deliver championship level coaching through our qualified coaches to more children and young people in a weekly setting. Our instructors travel to the schools as part of an after school club to ensure that there are no barriers to participation for those wanting to take part.

In 2016/17 we celebrated our 21<sup>st</sup> year in service to the young people of our local community. When I think back across those years, it's incredible how far we have come and how much we have grown from the small church-based outreach programme that we started out as.

But, as we have grown, our commitment to making a transformational difference to the lives of young people has not changed.

## **Beyond cheerleading**

This year we focused specifically on the development of our educational mentoring programme. This has delivered great results, with athletes achieving improvements in their attainment levels and behaviour in their school environment.

We also saw programme-wide success, with a new initiative set to cultivate the celebration of success. This included not only the National cheerleading titles won this season and the individual athletes' new skills learnt, but the personal achievements that happened outside of the gym in other areas of these young people's lives.

## **Significant milestones**

The 2016/17 season was also an important one for the cheerleading industry. In December 2016, the International Olympic Committee formally granted cheerleading provisional status, putting competitive cheerleading on the path for possible inclusion in the 2024 Olympics.

Alongside this, Team England, our country's national team representation brought home its first gold medal and a silver medal from the World Cheerleading Championships in the USA.

These are significant milestones as we look to the future of the recognition of cheerleading in our country - and also for our athletes as they look for ways to maximise their own pathways in the sport.

Director's report continued

# Letter from the Director

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## Supporting over 7,000 young people

This year the Ascension Eagles worked with **142 young people** in the competitive cheerleading programme. All 142 athletes competed regionally and nationally and benefitted from our life skills and leadership initiatives, as well as the health benefits of bi-weekly training.

Through our Talent Central schools programme **1,167 local young people** took part in extracurricular cheerleading sessions, learning new skills and coming together to perform together three times at London's ExCel centre during the year.

In addition, our home base, the Talent Central gym, supported over **6,500 external participants** who used the gym for their development during the year.

## Looking ahead

Although this has been a particularly challenging year in terms of external funding, I'm extremely proud of all that our staff and young people have achieved.

As we look to the 2017/18 season I am excited to see the reintroduction of our Junior Leadership Team, the continued development of our mentoring programme and the opportunity to identify new, creative ways to grow our Talent Central project with the aim of reducing our reliance on external funding.

## Continued commitment

We are still as passionate about making the 'transformational difference' as we were over 20+ years ago, and this is something we will be continuing to develop over the next year to ensure the best possible outcomes for our young people.

Thank you to our supporters, donors and volunteers for their continued commitment to the Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders, its members and all that we are trying to achieve. It is your generosity which enables us to be a champion for the young people whom we are proud to serve.

**Angela Green**

*Director, Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders*

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Director's report continued

# Highlights of our year

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- In **December 2016** Talent Central hosted the Winter Cheer & Dance Showcase at the ExCeL Centre, London, where 446 young people from across 21 schools performed and earned recorded outcomes
- In **March 2017**, at the Spring Cheer & Dance Showcase 413 young people achieved recorded outcomes by performing at the showcase across the 18 schools attending
- In **July 2017**, at the Summer Cheer & Dance Showcase, 308 young people from 17 schools came together to compete for the prestigious bronze, silver and gold awards.

**We delivered**  
**560 hours of**  
**cheerleading classes**  
**through school clubs**

**1,167 young people**  
**achieved new skills,**  
**improved fitness**  
**and achieved a**  
**performance standard**

Director's report continued

# Our partnership with local schools

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This year we delivered weekly sessions for the following Schools:

**Primary classes:**

Portway  
Britannia Village  
Gallions  
Keir Hardie  
Hallsville  
Rosetta  
Lathom Road  
St Stephen's  
Scott Wilkie  
Vicarage  
Grange

**Secondary classes:**

Cumberland  
St Angela's  
Robert Clack  
Jo Richardson  
Bishop Challenor

**College Classes:**

New Vic Sixth Form  
College



The Grand Champions from our autumn Showcase at the ExCel centre

# Ascension Eagles: empowering young people

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Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders (AEC) provide a year-round schedule which keeps young people actively engaged and teaches them about resilience and collaboration, as they learn to deal with success and adversity.

Alongside training, members and their families are also given opportunities to work on education and employment skills-building, as well as performance and media experience.

Here at AEC our competitive cheer programme has proven to be successful in actively engaging young people outside of school hours. We know, however, that there is much work to be done around academic achievement.

Research, as mentioned earlier in this report, reveals substandard achievement in our Borough, and we believe that our young people can be equipped and encouraged to excel in the classroom, as they have seen through our programme.

## 2016-2017 season highlights:

- **142 athletes trained twice-weekly** contributing to their improved fitness, life-skills development and cheerleading skills (*cf 139 in 2015/16*)
- **24,808 people sessions\*** were held (*cf 24,600 in 2015/16*)
- All athletes received recorded outcomes.

*\* People sessions is calculated as athletes x hours x sessions*

# Ascension Eagles: empowering young people

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Our 21 years of work within Newham have demonstrated the need for our focus on this area. We have seen, over the past two decades, the detrimental impact that failure and under-achievement (or fear of both) can have on the athletes' self-esteem.

This is why we have placed so much emphasis within the cheerleading programme on **our mentoring scheme** and the creation of a culture that celebrates success outside of the gym.

## Case study: parental support and early intervention

Because we work with athletes from a very young age and we have a strong focus on pastoral care, we have the opportunity to intervene at an early stage when issues, such as anxiety, very first emerge.

The new educational curriculum and reporting system had been in place for just over a year and it was becoming apparent to us that some students were struggling to cope with the new curriculum.

Moreover, parents didn't really understand how the new grading system related to the previous levels. We were frequently being asked '*What does a level 5 look like now?*'.

Schools were failing to as explain the changes clearly enough, meaning that parents were often left upset and unduly concerned that their children were under-achieving.

We decided to help by meeting with parents to help them understand the new grading system, so they had a more accurate picture of their children's progress. At times, this was a lengthy process, but the benefits for parents – and children – were significant.

Once the new curriculum began, our analysis of the first term's school reports found that when the athletes were not doing as well at school this was often in literacy - particularly grammar - which has an increased expectation level in the new curriculum.

Director's report continued

# Ascension Eagles: empowering young people

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We were determined to tackle this issue, particularly at primary school age, because some of our athletes were beginning to exhibit early signs of anxiety; one of our athletes in particular had to see a school counsellor for support.

More children than ever are reported to be suffering with depression; the education system and the expectations it places on young people are frequently cited as contributory factors.

Having identified an emerging issue from our analysis of the athletes' school reports, we chose to intervene quickly, offering support to athletes and their families. This included reading and basic grammar exercises, but in a completely different and non-academic environment.

We are now exploring other ways to support our younger athletes more extensively and to identify opportunities for early intervention, to solve problems before they become major issues.

## Case study: recognising achievement

As part of a second year project running in the gym, we also continued with our wall of success for the gym, celebrating athlete's achievement outside the gym.

We have seen a real change in the gym since the introduction of the 'wall'; athletes and parents alike are sharing the young people's achievements on our private social media page and sending pictures and awards to the coaches.

This focus on recognition across the gym has created a broader performance culture, in which athletes are proud to share their 'outside' achievements with their team mates and coaches.

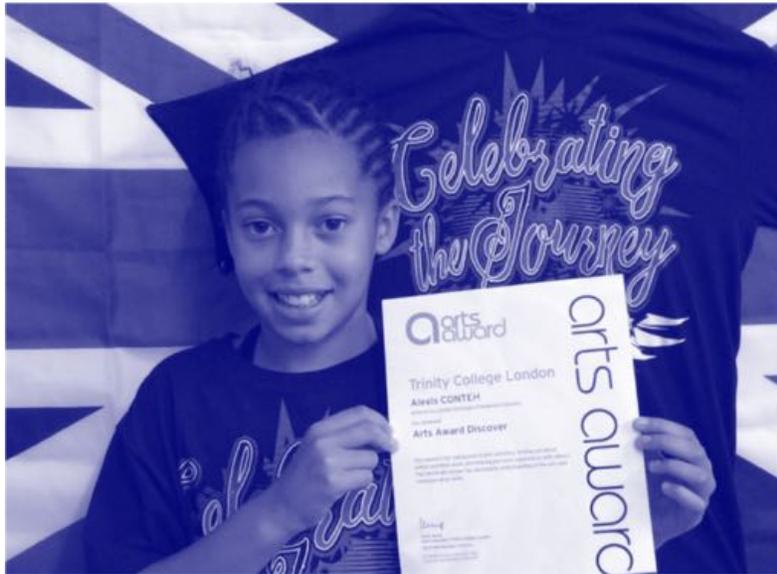
Director's report continued

# Ascension Eagles: empowering young people

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## Alexis Conteh achieved the Arts Award Discover from Trinity College London

*Words by Alexis Conteh*



Professional artists from the British Arts Council came into my school to teach and demonstrate an Art lesson; the lesson focussed on the techniques of using mirrors, paint and brushes in the correct way.

As a class, we were shown how to draw a self-portrait using mirrors to help with shape, symmetry and proportion as we moved the mirror around from one side of the face to the other- this technique is called the 'Butterfly.' I was able to use the mirror, brushes and the painting techniques to create my self-portrait.

It was really good and exciting to learn new techniques, and even better to know I was one of four selected to receive a certificate for my efforts. I received my certificate during the school assembly in front of my peers and it was presented to me by my Head Teacher. I was really happy and proud of myself.

I love to learn new things all of the time and hope to learn more in creative arts.

Director's report continued

# Ascension Eagles: feedback

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*“Charley’s first experience was just WOW! That morning I was unbelievably nervous but **I knew she was in safe hands** and she was taking it all in her stride. I need not have worried! Seeing her perform with her team, dancing their little hearts out and **loving every minute of it**, literally brought tears to all of our eyes. They performed with such professionalism and passion and it was absolutely amazing to watch. **I’ve never felt such an overwhelming sense of pride!**”*

*“I can’t thank the coaches enough; because of their hard work and dedication, **my daughter is part of something amazing** and doing something that she absolutely loves and **we’re all making memories that we’ll treasure forever along the way!**”*

**Sarah - parent to Charley who is a Mini 1 athlete**

*“I like going to cheerleading because it makes me **happy and joyful**. It makes me **exercise** and my muscles are growing.*

*“**Cheerleading teaches me I can be sporty** and it makes me faster at running.”*

**Matas, an SEN class member, aged 8**

*“AEC is important to my son as he loves a structured routine. He is also made to **feel included, responsible and an important part of a team.**”*

**Sam - parent to Ashley, who is an SEN class member**

Director's report continued

# Ascension Eagles: competition results

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## **Prodigy Mini Level 1 (aged 5-8)**

1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Regionals  
2<sup>nd</sup> FC Regionals  
2<sup>nd</sup> Legacy Nationals  
3<sup>rd</sup> FC Nationals

## **Harmony Youth Level 1 (aged 9-11)**

2<sup>nd</sup> Legacy Regionals  
3<sup>rd</sup> FC Regionals  
3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Nationals  
4<sup>th</sup> FC Nationals

## **Dynasty Youth Level 2 (aged 9-11)**

1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Regionals  
1<sup>st</sup> FC Regionals  
1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Nationals  
Grand Champions Legacy Nationals  
3<sup>rd</sup> FC Nationals

## **Destiny Junior Level 1 (aged 10-14)**

1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Regionals  
2<sup>nd</sup> FC Regionals  
3<sup>rd</sup> Legacy Nationals  
5<sup>th</sup> FC Nationals

## **Prophecy Junior Level 2 (aged 10-14)**

2<sup>nd</sup> Legacy Regionals  
3<sup>rd</sup> FC Regionals  
2<sup>nd</sup> Legacy Nationals  
3<sup>rd</sup> FC Nationals

## **Majesty Senior Level 3 (aged 11+)**

2<sup>nd</sup> Legacy Regionals  
2<sup>nd</sup> FC Regionals  
1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Nationals  
3<sup>rd</sup> FC Nationals

## **Eternity Senior Level 5 Restricted (aged 11+)**

1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Regionals  
1<sup>st</sup> FC Regionals  
2<sup>nd</sup> Legacy Nationals  
2<sup>nd</sup> FC Nationals

## **Serenity SEN Division**

1<sup>st</sup> Legacy Regionals  
1<sup>st</sup> FC Regionals

Director's report continued

# Talent Central: extending our reach

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As well as the Talent Central schools programme, we have also made a significant difference by helping to keep local children and young people fit through our Talent Central recreational classes.

The additional capacity that Talent Central creates enables us to reach more children in their schools and to bring more young people to the Talent Central gym, where their opportunities for development are multiplied.

The Talent Central gym is London's premier cheer gym. In our 6,000 square feet venue we have a full-size sprung floor, air tumble track, matted training area, mirrored walls & changing areas.

Talent Central is home to the British Champion Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders - but with our outreach in the local community and across the cheerleading industry for clubs without their own facility – Talent Central is considered a 'home' by so many more young athletes.

**We received this feedback on one of our Talent Central instructors for the autumn term:**

*“Seren has been great once again with the cheerleading group this autumn. Always on time and reliable, Seren potentially had a really challenging group this year, with girls who have behaviour difficulties and some who are SEN [special educational needs]. She united them all and conducted a great routine.”*

***Phil Walsh – Portway Primary School***

Director's report continued

# Talent Central: extending our reach

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Last year Talent Central provided seven classes per week which were dedicated to recreational cheerleading. In these sessions the gym is open to anyone from the local community – everyone is welcome to come and join a class.

We also provide one class specifically for local young people with special educational needs (SEN).

Talent Central classes open to the public were well-attended across the 2016/17 season, with **368 class hours** (up from 328 in 2015/16) provided to **more than 1,000 participants**. Sessions which were particularly popular were those aimed at 5-7 and 8-12 year olds.

Talent Central was also hired by other cheer and dance teams throughout the year. In total **6,553 participants** used the gym for **over 644 hours**.



*Two of our SEN members enjoying their class at Talent Central*

# Impact measurement consultation

## Understanding the difference we make for athletes

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One of our most significant projects is the work we are doing to map our **'theory of change'** – ie understanding, measuring and recording the extent to which what we do delivers the outcomes we are targeting.

To start this process we held a number of sessions to consult with the AEC athletes, parents, Junior Leadership Team (JLT) members and the staff team. In these sessions we posed a series of open questions to draw out multi-stakeholder perspectives on the benefits of AEC. We asked staff and JLT members for their views on how these benefits could be measured in the future, and we asked parents how their involvement in monitoring athletes' progress might involve them in the future. These questions were formatted to provide the opportunity for stakeholders to give us their views on potential changes or extensions to the existing AEC programmes we could make.

Using the insight from these sessions we will be taking the next steps to define our key principle outcomes, what we will measure and how they will be measured.

In our consultation sessions we asked:

### **Parents:**

- What benefits would you like your child to get from being part of AEC?
- Why do you think this is important for them?
- What would you like to do to keep up with your child's progress at AEC?

### **Athletes:**

- What do you like about being part of AEC?
- How do you think this helps you?

### **AEC staff and JLT:**

- What benefits do young people/athletes get from being part of AEC?
- How can you tell?

# Impact measurement consultation

## Feedback from our session with athletes

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### What do you like about being part of AEC?

A second home for everyone!!  
Can rely on coaches  
Can trust other athletes  
Coaches keep helping people when they cannot master a skill  
Coming home to a family and being able to trust everyone ♥  
Everyone cares about you not only in the sport but as a person too  
Family  
Fun  
Getting to know coaches  
I like that everyone in the team has to be able to do stuff before we move on  
It's welcoming  
Like cheerleading (especially tumbling)  
Like getting help like lifts for jumps and stunts  
Like learning new skills  
Like meeting new people/athletes  
Makes you happy  
Making new friends  
Meet life changing people  
Meeting other teams  
Opportunity to socialise  
Other athletes and coaches help you learn  
Other athletes are nice  
People in AEC are nice  
People who care about your school outside the gym  
Place to escape ☺  
Relieves stress – escape from problems  
Team bonding

The coaches are really helpful  
The gym is a place to escape from homework and tidying your room  
Travelling to other places  
We all help each other no matter what  
You can fly

### How do you think this helps you?

Builds confidence to not be scared to  
Can work with children easily  
Cheerleading may help you become a gymnast  
Develops your confidence team work and leadership  
Gets you prepared for future jobs  
Helps with priorities – balancing AEC with home work  
Helps you to be fit  
Inspire future generations  
It gives you life skills - caring and parenting  
JLT can be put on your CV and also you can carry on AEC's legacy (coaching)  
Keeps you active  
Makes you braver – to meet new people and how to act around them  
Makes you face your fears (e.g. of heights)  
People skills like communication  
Teamwork is helpful because it you can get on with people you work with  
You can have an impact on younger people

# Impact measurement consultation

## Insights so far

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In the parents' session everyone agreed that there were many benefits to their children from being part of AEC and that these are important in relation to the athletes' future education, employment and career prospects. They specifically identified the following benefits as valuable life skills for the athletes:

- Confidence
- Discipline
- Fitness/health
- Punctuality
- Responsibility
- Team work.

The parents were happy to be involved in monitoring their children's progress by whatever means were convenient.



*What benefits would you like your child to get from being part of AEC?*



# Looking ahead to 2018 and beyond

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In 2016-2017 we began to develop our theory of change and accompanying measurement tools so that we can better capture our impact. Completion of this project is our key focus for the first two quarters of 2017-2018.

## Priorities for 2017-18

Our number one priority is to ensure we continue to **make a transformational difference** in the lives of the young people we serve in Newham and the surrounding boroughs through cheerleading.

Over the next year we will be evaluating our current impact and also looking for new, effective and efficient ways to deliver our mission.

Alongside this we will also be revisiting, strengthening and updating our **business plan**.

**The development of Talent Central** will help to secure our long-term financial security – and therefore contribute to the sustainability of AEC, so that we can continue to make a transformational difference to the lives of young people and extend AEC's impact.

We believe that we can contribute to AEC's longevity and sustainability by making greater use of our existing Talent Central assets and resources. Therefore, over the next year we will be looking at ways that we can grow Talent Central to increase our delivery to the community.

Alongside this, we will continue to work on identifying **new sources of funding**.

The success of our **mentoring programme** in 2016-2017 is something we are really proud of and we will continue to develop this programme over the coming year.

We are planning to introduce a new initiative to support **the empowerment of girls** and the development of female leadership; the aim will be to positively impact the lives of our junior leaders by giving them self-confidence and enhanced life-skills.

The Trustees and management team continue to work on the challenge of **finding a permanent home** and gym facility for The Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders. Talent Central's lease is due for review in 2018 and it is our intention to open discussions with the landlord regarding potential longer-term options.

# Our supporters & fundraising

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We are immensely grateful to our supporters for their financial donations. Without their continued support we would not be able to make such a difference to so many young lives.

In addition to funding and gift-in-kind support we receive from the organisations shown below, we are also grateful for the support and commitment of our Trustees, our members and their families, who volunteer so many hours every year to help us achieve incredible results.

In 2017-2018 - and beyond - we anticipate that our funding will face potential cuts, as the economic situation and uncertainty caused by Brexit are likely to put grants and the availability of corporate funding under increased pressure.

We are therefore looking for ways to generate more revenue through our Talent Central gym facilities, to mitigate the impact of reduced external funding.



# Letter from the Chair of the Board of trustees

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The more I've become involved in AEC over the past two years – initially as a trustee and then latterly as Chair - the greater my appreciation of the impact and importance of the fantastic work that AEC does and the difference the charity makes to the lives of so many of the young people of East London.

I believe that the pastoral care and mentoring that AEC provide - to not only the athletes, but also their families and schools - is invaluable; this is what differentiates and distinguishes AEC – it makes our organisation stand out.

AEC faces challenging times – a need to support ever-broadening ethnic groups, constant reductions in funding and a growing need for educational support from cash-strapped local authorities who undoubtedly value the support AEC provides.

It's therefore imperative that we do all we can to ensure the sustainability of AEC and ensure that the legacy it has created over the past 20 years endures for the next 20 – and beyond.

In my submission for the position of chair I outlined my priorities for 2016-2017 as to:

- support the CEO in securing existing and new funding sources
- review the business plan to make sure it's appropriate and robust enough to ensure the future growth of AEC and drive renewed ownership of the business plan at Board level
- upgrade the Board's skills and capability to help us overcome the longer-term challenges facing AEC; I believe we need a Board which can use its network and rely upon its own skills to drive change and support the CEO and AEC leadership team in delivering the business plan
- raise the visibility of AEC outside of Newham.

Our principle focus for the past year has been to secure our existing funding sources and to identify potential new, sustainable sources of funding. We have also identified opportunities to increase revenue from Talent Central (with a view to becoming less dependent on external funding) and we've maintained a tight control on costs.

# Letter from the Chair of the Board of trustees

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## Over the past year we have:

- brought two new trustees onto the Board
- reviewed existing policies and put new ones in place to ensure we mitigate/manage risk appropriately
- introduced two additional Board meetings a year to make sure the pace of delivery is maintained
- created Board working groups to simplify and speed-up project delivery
- redrafted the AEC and Talent Central business plans – these will be finalised in 1Q 2018
- managed the impact of the transition of Gareth Green from employee to sessional staff
- reviewed the salary of the Director and business development manager/lead coach.

## In 2017-2018 our focus will be on:

- developing our impact measurement framework, which will support our bids for funding
- finalising the new business plans for AEC and Talent Central
- securing new sources of external funding and increase revenue from our Talent Central operation
- identifying and securing a permanent home for AEC (ie securing our current tenure at Talent Central or another appropriate location in the vicinity).

**Sue Winston**

*Chair of the Board of trustees, AEC*

# Our team: senior staff

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TEAM MEMBER	BIOGRAPHY
Angela Green (Director)	Angela has led the Ascension Eagles as Director for five years. She holds a Business and Marketing Degree and epitomises the spirit and ethos of the Ascension Eagles having joined as a team member at the age of 14 and winning numerous titles, before going on to coach the AEC teams for the past 20+ years. Her expertise in coaching and programme management have taken her across the world competing ,judging and speaking at conferences in places as far afield as Germany, France, Finland, Slovenia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and the USA. She is a co-founder and manager of the country’s national team who recently won a Gold Medal at the World Championships and she is heading up a team of people working towards a National Governing Body for cheerleading. She is responsible for the growth and development of the organisation and its staff and specific responsibility for the AEC Cheerleaders programme and its coaches.
Diane Harvey (Head of Finance)	Diane became involved in the AEC programme after her daughter joined in 1997. Diane originally volunteered to help us with our book keeping and has helped to lead our finances from the very first basic recording system through to today where she is responsible for all financial aspects of Talent Central and AEC. Outside of AEC Diane is PA to the Directors at GPS Food Group.
Robert Horton (Business Development Manager)	Rob became a full-time member of staff at AEC in 2016, taking on the role of business development manager and tumble coach. He works closely with athletes by motivating them to achieve excellence outside of the gym, as well as in it and heads up our mentoring programme and Junior Leadership Team initiative.

# Our team: trustees

TRUSTEE	BIOGRAPHY
Sue Winston (Chair)	Sue lives in East London and is head of corporate digital communications at a global financial services company in London. Sue chairs AEC's Board of Trustees and sits on the HR and investment sub-committees. She has been a trustee of AEC since May 2016 and describes herself as "extremely proud of the work that the AEC team does in helping to make such a tangible difference to the lives of the young people of East London".
David Robinson (Treasurer)	David is a retired Chartered Accountant having spent his career in the City and overseas with international companies and has been Treasurer since 2007. He works closely with the Finance Manager to provide regular financial reports to the trustees and management team and to liaise with the external auditors on the annual accounts. David is the Chair of the AEC property committee mandated to identify a new permanent home for AEC.
Johanna Collins-Wood	Johanna Collins-Wood is a corporate associate in the New York City office of Pepper Hamilton LLP. Prior to relocating to New York City, she practiced law in the London office of Davis Polk & Wardwell, LLP. Before joining the board of AEC, Ms. Collins-Wood volunteered with International Justice Mission, Amnesty International and the Make-A-Wish foundation. Johanna lived in East London prior to moving to New York.
Lorraine Hart	Lorraine was born in Canning Town and educated there. She is now a qualified town planner and business support consultant who works mainly with charities and not for profit organisations to help them use their buildings and run their organisations effectively for community benefit. On that basis she has over 30 years of experience of premises management, business planning, human resources and fundraising to bring to AEC. She is a member of the HR committee for AEC.
Susan Spiller	Susan works for a UK financial services firm in London where she is responsible for product development, strategy and sales support. She joined the firm in 2002. Over this period she has also worked extensively across the business and with external partners to establish the firm's successful volunteering and community programme. Prior to this she has built up a strong background in wide variety of sales, marketing, product development, and investment management activities for firm in the US.
Duncan Smith	Duncan was born in Johannesburg South Africa and relocated to the UK three years ago with a large international bank where he works as a Director – Sales and Relationship Management, Emerging Markets. He has worked in numerous locations including London, New York, South Africa and has extensive on the ground experience in a number of countries in Africa. He has volunteered extensively in South Africa and in Africa teaching English and financial literacy and fundraising for underprivileged children in South Africa as well as for an orphanage in Inhambane, northern Mozambique.

# Our approach to the Charity Governance Code

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The Board of trustees and the management team of Ascension Eagles fully support the aims of the Charity Commission's Charity Governance Code and are committed to upholding its principles of best practice.

We have provided all of our trustees with a link to the Charity Governance Code and require them to be familiar with their legal responsibilities as a trustee, as well as the aims and requirements of the Code.

While there are aspects of the Code with which AEC is not currently fully compliant, the Board is unanimous in its ambition to become fully compliant, as appropriate to the size and resources of AEC.

We understand that the seven principles outlined in the Code (ie leadership; integrity; decision making, risk and control; board effectiveness; diversity; openness and accountability) are key drivers of trust and confidence.

In 2016-2017 we took further steps to ensure that we are applying these principles at AEC - for example, we:

- began to refresh the Board and appointed two new trustees
- reviewed and updated all of our policies (eg health and safety, fairness and equality, child protection), and created new policies (eg conduit giving, ethics, corporate sponsorship)
- set up an email address for the trustees to enable athletes and parents to raise any concerns directly with the Board
- Introduced additional Board meetings to help monitor and drive the delivery of agreed actions.

In the following section we give examples of how we are adhering to the Charity Governance Code and areas in which we've identified opportunities for improvement.

# Seven principles of the Charity Governance Code

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## **1. Organisational purpose**

The AEC Board is clear about the charity's aims. In 2016-2017 we began a project to define and implement an impact measurement framework, including reviewing how we express AEC's mission. This work will continue in 2017-2018. The Board is reviewing AEC's business plan and regularly reviews expenditure and planned spend to ensure that AEC's aims are being delivered effectively and sustainably.

## **2. Leadership**

We reviewed the trustees' skills in 2016-2017 and identified a need for legal expertise, fundraising and business development skills. We have appointed a legal expert and also two new trustees from the financial services sector, whose experience in business development will be valuable in this area. We continue to look for a new treasurer so that David Robinson can step back from this role.

## **3. Integrity**

At least one member of the Board visits AEC monthly as an observer to show the Board's commitment to AEC's mission, and to give parents, athletes, coaches and staff the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns directly with the trustees. Regular discussions at Board meetings have confirmed that the Board is focused on delivery of AEC's mission and understands the importance of the public's confidence and trust in charities.

## **4. Decision-making, risk and control**

The AEC management team are regularly invited to attend Board meetings to ensure that the Board's decision-making processes are informed. The Chair and trustees are held to account for rigorous decision-making processes in particular by the legal and charity sector experts who sit as trustees on the Board. We have reviewed existing policies and introduced new policies to mitigate risk (eg safeguarding, conduit giving etc). All trustees are required to undergo an enhanced DBS check before their appointment is confirmed.

## **5. Board effectiveness**

We conduct an annual skills assessment to ensure that we have the appropriate balance of skills, experience, backgrounds and knowledge to make informed decisions. We are mindful of the Code's requirement for a rigorous review when reappointing trustees who have served for nine or more years and will take this into account at the 2017-2018 AGM. We have worked with the [East London Business Alliance](#) to find new trustees, so have not previously advertised widely – but will consider this option for future trustee appointments.

# Seven principles of the Charity Governance Code

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## **6. Diversity**

The Board has a diversity of experience/expertise and there is a diversity of age, but less so for gender, ethnicity and other factors. There is an opportunity for the Board to consider this balance in the appointment of new trustees. We have introduced two additional Board meetings a year, but have made these telephone calls, to help trustees manage their time commitments.

## **7. Openness and accountability**

The Board leads AEC in being transparent, open and accountable. For example, we have set up an email address which parents, athletes and supporters can use to ask the trustees questions. The Board supports and encourages the Director's commitment to annual AEC staff days which drive greater engagement in the planning process and greater sense of 'ownership' of the challenges and opportunities AEC faces.



# Reference and administrative details

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Unit 27a Gallions Reach Shopping Park  
3 Armada Way  
London  
E6 7ER

**Charity registered number:**

1106766

**Company registered number:**

04197666

**Management team:**

Angela Green, director  
Diane Harvey, secretary  
Robert Horton

**Contact:** [director@ascensioneagles.com](mailto:director@ascensioneagles.com)

07866 612610

**Board of trustees:**

Sue Winston, chair  
David Robinson, treasurer  
Lorraine Hart  
Johanna Collins-Wood  
Duncan Smith (appointed 13 July 2017)  
Susan Spiller (appointed 13 July 2017)

**Contact:** [trustees@ascensioneagles.com](mailto:trustees@ascensioneagles.com)

**Founder and Life President:**

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