



HCG

Haringey Community Gold Young Londoners' Fund

Impact of the COVID-19 'lockdown' upon the
Haringey Community Gold Programme (HCG)

June 2021

HGC Partners Covid-19 Follow-up Consultation/Review 2021

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the findings of a consultation and review exercise into the continuing impact of the UK-wide Covid-19 'lockdown' of 2020-2021 upon the Haringey Community Gold programme (HCG). HCG is a three-year programme of youth-facing service provision supported by the Mayor's Young Londoners' Fund, lasting from January 2019 to December 2021 and delivered by nine locally-based partner agencies in the London borough of Haringey.

The study took place in March-June 2021 and used a mixed methods research design, drawing on desk research, interviews and a focus group involving all HCG delivery partners. It followed an earlier review of the impact of Covid-19 on HCG, produced in August 2020, and its scope covered the impact of the continuing lockdown on project staff and young people, project services and resources as well as identification of key challenges and opportunities.



Main Findings

The HCG programme has faced over a year of challenges associated with the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and UK lockdown restrictions with considerable resilience. In response, the HCG partnership has demonstrated a striking capacity to achieve and/or exceed profiled performance targets for young people completing the programme.

An earlier review showed that the first phase of the Covid-19 lockdown from March to July 2020 had meant an immediate reduction in participants starting and completing the programme, but a negligible impact on the cumulative participant retention rate, which at 42% was still nearly 70% above its profiled level of 25%. Wider impacts had included a loss of delivery time and the emergence of unanticipated needs to engage directly with other stakeholders including families or participants and to provide ongoing support for participants who had completed the programme.

1. Impacts on participant numbers, August 2020 - March 2021

The third quarter of 2020 saw programme starts more than double, following the easing of lockdown restrictions over summer, but completions dipped by 18% due to a partial tightening of lockdown restrictions in mid-September. In the fourth quarter of 2020, starts and completions rose both absolutely and relative to profile, by respectively 42% and 62% against the previous quarter's levels, mainly due to expanded online delivery. However, face-to-face work was severely limited as national lockdown restrictions rose successively from early November to late December.

In the first quarter of 2021, completions rose fourfold relative to the previous quarter and both starts and completions

rose above profile. These were staggering achievements as lockdown restrictions in London were by now at 'Tier 5', the most severe level since March-May of 2020. By the end of March 2021, with 9 of 36 months of delivery time remaining, cumulative completions were 20% above their lifetime profile (1801/1500), starts were at 70.3% of their lifetime profile (4215/6000) and the cumulative retention rate was 42.7%, or 71% above its profile of 25%. These represent significant results for the HCG programme after a year of lockdown and in spite of the lasting impact of lockdown on participant recruitment.

Performance against additional, non-mandatory output targets was mixed. Cumulative numbers of training opportunities offered by month 27 were at 129% and 99% of their whole-programme profiles, but numbers of young people into jobs and numbers accessing mental health support were at below a quarter of their lifetime profiles. Job outcomes were unsurprising given the severe impact of the Covid-19 lockdown on employment rates of young people in London and across the UK, while the mental health data understated support provided as it counted referrals to statutory mental health services but omitted mental health aspects of HCG services.

2. Qualitative progress to date by the HCG programme

Deeper insight into the journey behind the performance data is obtained from analysis of the experiences of HCG delivery partners to date, which can be grouped into five thematic areas - Adaptation/innovation, health and wellbeing, collaboration, unexpected opportunities and persistent challenges.

- Continuing adaptation and innovation

by HCG delivery partners has been critical to their successful delivery. Agile approaches to online and/or blended delivery in response to lockdown restrictions have yielded benefits, although some benefits of face-to-face work have not been easy to replace.

- The health and wellbeing of young people and their families, both physical and mental, has presented ongoing challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, whilst also enabling deeper insights into their needs by HCG delivery partners, which in turn has informed service provision.
- Collaboration across the HCG partnership has continued effectively throughout this period, despite some resource-based limitations, whilst external collaboration with statutory services has been strengthened.
- Unexpected opportunities arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown have included deeper insight into needs of young people and families, added value from external collaborations, an expanded role for HCG's successful Youth Advisory Board and a legacy of innovative, agile services.

- Persistent challenges faced by the HCG programme throughout the period covered by this review have included the effects of the extra social and economic dislocation associated with Covid-19 on the target group, exemplified by 'digital poverty' of young people expected to engage with digital services. A wider challenge may be that the range of needs addressed by HCG cannot be 'solved' within the life of a three year programme. However, HCG delivery partners are convinced that empowering community-led services to support young people at risk from crime will ensure that needs that cannot be met by mainstream services will be addressed effectively.



Conclusions & Recommendations

The evidence makes clear that HCG programme has been able to provide an essential range of interventions to a vulnerable target group during a period of unprecedented social and economic hardship. Young people have been disproportionately affected by the economic and social effects of Covid-19 in general, while the risks associated with exposure of young people to violent crime are known to be more likely to affect those experiencing lower than average socio-economic conditions. It can be concluded that continuation of the work done by the HCG programme beyond the life of the GLA funding should be treated as a high priority for LBH and the HCG partnership.

Recommendations

- That all possible measures are taken to secure sufficient resources for the continuation of the HCG programme for a period of at least another three years.
- That the findings of this report are used to inform future programmes of youth-facing provision by LBH and the GLA.
- That the HCG partnership's model of service provision is recognised as an effective model of best practice in addressing the needs of young people at risk of involvement in crime and promoted more widely by LBH and the GLA.



The report impact of the COVID-19 'lockdown' upon the Haringey Community Gold Programme (HCG). HGC Partners Covid-19 follow-up Consultation/Review, June 2021 is published by CIRU – a division of NLPC Ltd.

ISBN 978-1-9162597-2-0

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