

HCCG

Haringey Community Gold Young Londoners' Fund

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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarises the findings of a study into the impact of the Covid-19 'lockdown' during 2020 upon the Haringey Community Gold programme (HCG), which is an innovative three-year programme of youth-facing service provision supported by the Mayor's Young Londoners' Fund (YLF), beginning in 2019 and delivered by ten locally-based partner agencies in the London borough of Haringey.

The study took place during July-September 2020 and used a mixed methods research design, drawing on desk research, interviews and a focus group involving all HCG delivery partners. Its scope covered the impact of the 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 is significant in its size and structure. It represents an increase of 65% in annual funds relative to existing youth services in Haringey and it was the largest project funded in the first round of YLF, whilst being 40% more cost effective per beneficiary than the median cost of all YLF projects in London. HCG is also significant in being a major programme developed and delivered by a mainly community based, third-sector consortium with a significant track record in working with disaffected young people in Haringey.

The wide range of interventions within HCG aims to match young people's needs and includes activities around promoting awareness of the impact of gangs, improving employability, pre-employment training, developing youth leadership, designing diversionary activities and enabling mental health well-being. Previous research has suggested that the UK-wide Covid-19 lockdown beginning in March 2020 would pose major challenges to young people and to organisations working with them around mental health, isolation, safety and increased risks around harmful behaviour. The families of HCG beneficiaries also represent an ethnically diverse demographic, for whom research has shown that the health risks associated with Covid-19 are above average.

Despite these challenges, the HCG programme was successful in its first 15 months prior to the 2020 lockdown, with 15% more beneficiaries completing the programme than had been profiled, although a late start had meant that numbers of beneficiaries starting the programme were 25% below profile. The conversion or retention rate of starters who went on to complete HCG activities was over 50% higher than had been profiled, which suggests that the programme was highly effective in engaging young people.

The immediate impact of the Covid-19 lockdown meant that numbers of programme starts and completions fell from being respectively 102% and 310% above profile during the January-March quarter of 2020 to only 15% and 44% of their profiles in April-June 2020.

However, the retention rate only fell by around 3% in the second quarter, indicating that levels of engagement of existing beneficiaries persisted despite the lockdown. Four themes emerged from responses of HCG delivery partners on the impact of lockdown, encompassing both challenges and opportunities. These were as follows:

Effects on services of losing face-to-face access to young people

The suspension of face-to-face services delivered by HCG affected all partners and meant a loss of rapport with young people on the programme and practical challenges around engaging, maintaining contact with and retaining the interest of beneficiaries.

Effects on health and well-being of young people, families and delivery teams

While some young people were 'traumatised' by lockdown, with anxieties about access, exclusion and progression in education, some staff of HCG partners experienced physical illness due to Covid-19, while others faced mental health challenges associated with illness of relatives and 'an overload of time online'.

Effects of transitioning to alternative modes of delivery, both phone and online

The transition to telephone or online based communications brought mixed results. Uneven access by young people to high quality devices and broadband connections meant that some partners relied more on telephone contact, although both types of remote communications – online and by telephone - also presented opportunities.

Emerging opportunities to deliver new or altered services to meet needs

For some HCG partners, increased telephone contact with beneficiaries meant deeper understanding of personal circumstances and more tailoring of services around individual needs. Others increased engagement by offering emergency food services to families of the most vulnerable beneficiaries, or used online delivery to extend services across a wider geographical area.

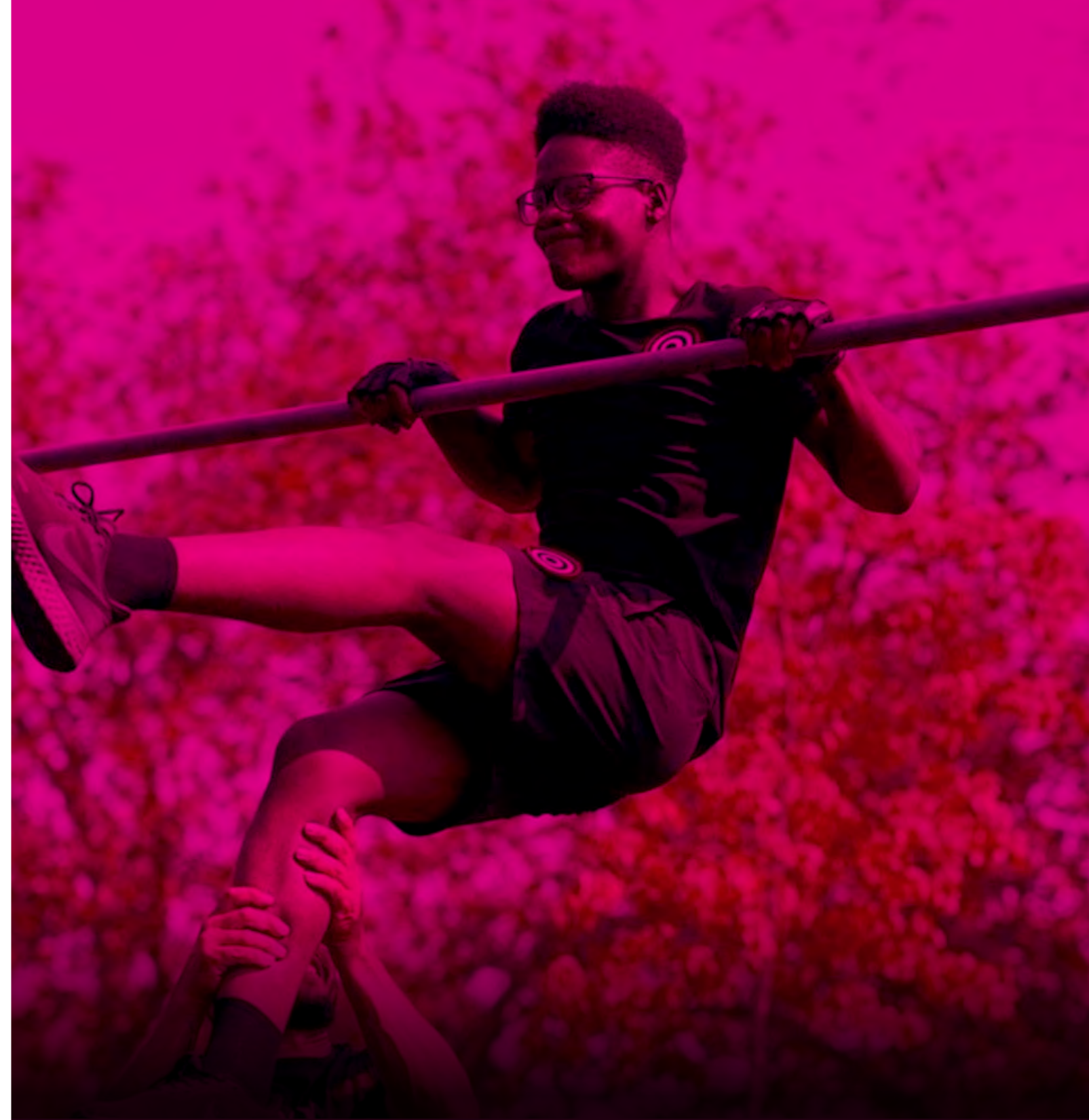
Conclusion

The positive impacts of the Covid-19 lockdown expressed by HCG partners have included greater collaborative working and mutual learning whilst the consortium has adapted to meet the new situation. The lockdown challenged the HCG delivery model and the health and well-being of HCG partners and beneficiaries whilst highlighting unanticipated needs. However, the lockdown also enabled the realisation of new opportunities around meeting existing and emerging needs with innovative services.

Recommendations

The findings of this study inform two recommendations:

- That the Greater London Authority (GLA) uses the expenditure and output reprofile agreed by HCG partners as a template to support the successful continuation and completion of the HCG programme.
- That the findings of this study are used to inform future programmes of youth-facing provision by the London Borough of Haringey and the GLA.



About the Consultation/Review

NLPC Ltd, through its Community Information and Research Unit (CIRU) on behalf of the Haringey Community Gold Partners delivering the Young Londoners' Fund programme, commissioned Dr Mike Medas to undertake a consultation / review on the impact of the COVID-19 'lockdown' upon the Haringey Community Gold programme (HCG).

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For further information

The full report Impact of the COVID-19 'lockdown' upon the Haringey Community Gold (HCG) programme (HGC Partners Covid-19 Consultation / Review, August 2020, is published by CIRU – a division of NLPC Ltd)

A copy of the full report is available as a free PDF - to request a copy, send an email to publications@nlpc Ltd.com

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