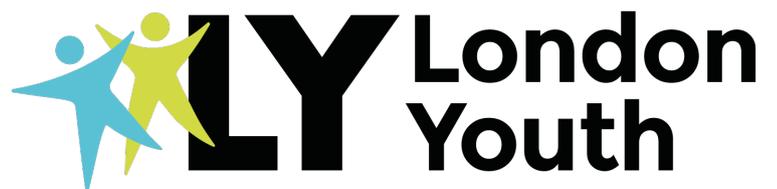


London Youth

# Good for Girls

Year 1 Evaluation Report October 2021



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## Introduction

London Youth have received funding from DCMS through the Tampon Tax Fund to deliver the Good for Girls project. This Fund is specifically for disadvantaged women and girls using the funds generated from VAT on sanitary products.

Good for Girls is an opportunity to directly improve the mental health of young women. The project is delivered by London Youth in partnership with member organisations. The project is a new approach for London Youth; both in terms of the focus on mental health and wellbeing, but also in terms of its delivery, with the programme incorporating elements of sports, mental health and youth action which has resulted in a cross-programme team approach to programme management.

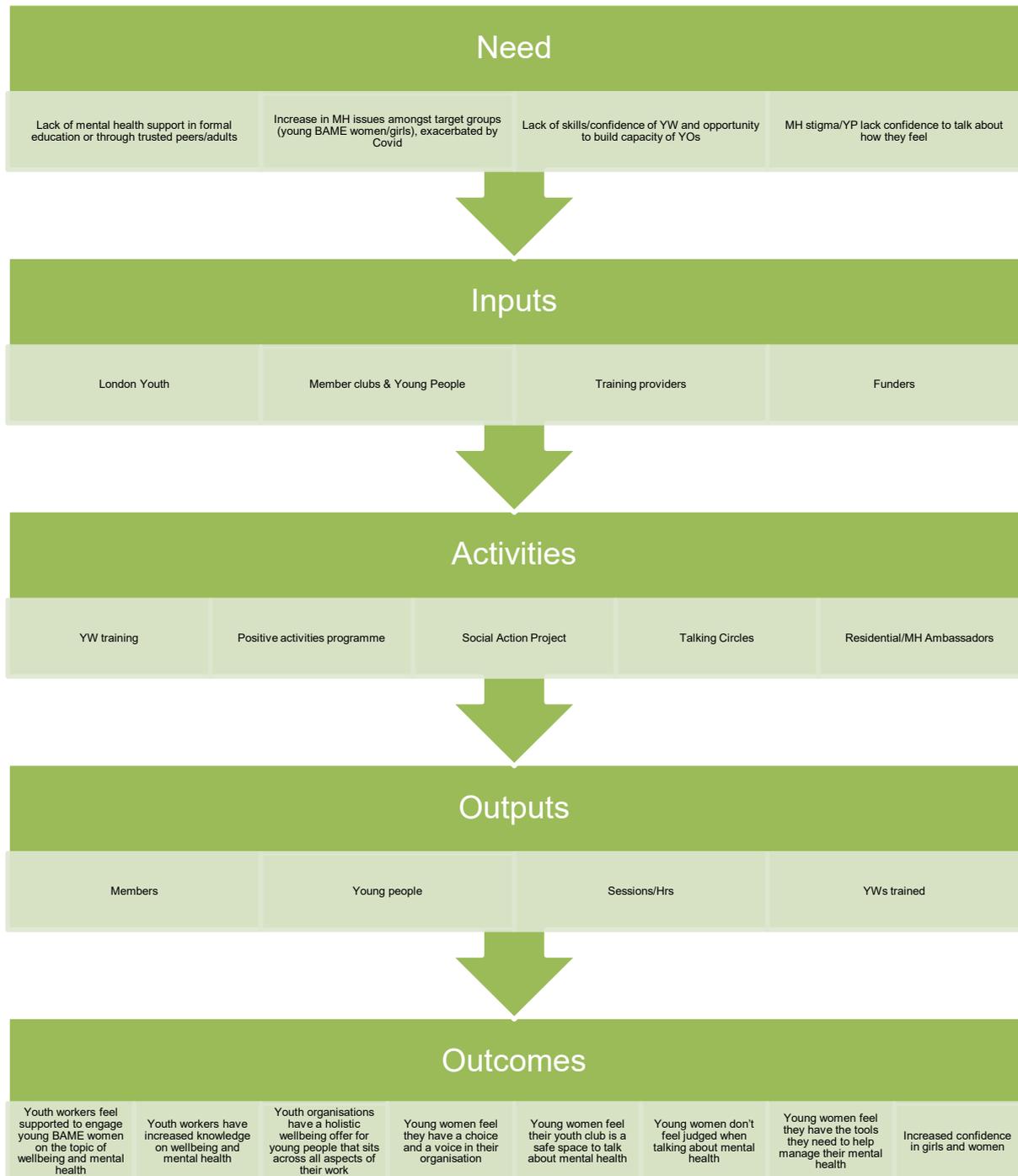
Shephard & Moyes Ltd has been appointed to evaluate the programme over the two years of funding. This is our first annual evaluation report and focuses on capturing learning to help inform year 2 of delivery.

## Evaluating Good for Girls

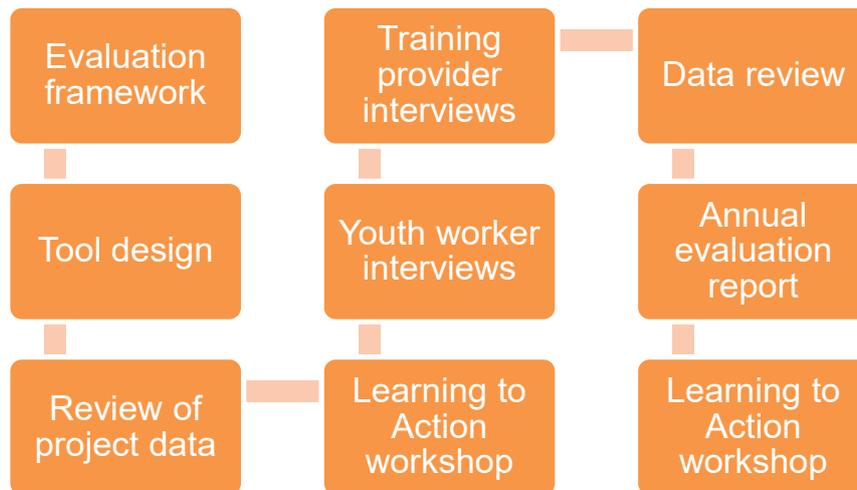
To evaluate Good for Girls, we combine self-evaluation support with independent evaluation to achieve the following objectives:

- Test the concept and explore what works and what doesn't
- Understand what was achieved through the training for youth workers and how this has helped influence and improve delivery at member organisations
- Understand how the different strands of the programme work together to deliver the outcomes
- Understand how well London Youth work across-programmes, and what could be improved
- Better understand the needs of the target group and the extent to which the programme meets their needs through using art or sport as the 'hook' to engagement

We developed an evaluation framework in early 2021 following a workshop with staff from London Youth. The purpose of the workshop was to explore with staff the desired outcomes for the project and consider what evaluation tools may be appropriate. The evaluation framework resulted in a Theory of Change for the project (diagram below), which was used to develop research questions, which guide our evaluation.



Our approach to evaluating the Good for Girls programme is shown in the diagram below.



For this first annual evaluation report we have collated and analysed data collected by members and London Youth. We have supplemented this with conversations with youth workers and training providers through one-to-one interviews. This report includes:

- Reach and participation/engagement data, taken from registration forms and registers
- Delivery data, taken from Upshot reports, conversations with youth workers and training providers and learning captured by the team
- Impact data taken from young people's surveys, youth worker surveys, organisational capacity tool, case studies produced by members and conversations with youth workers

The report provides an overview of what has been achieved over the year, who has been engaged in the programme (members and young people), what has been delivered and the impact of the programme on young people, youth workers and youth organisations.

## About Good for Girls

The Good for Girls programme aims to support young women and girls to access relevant, holistic early intervention mental health support in trusted community spaces. This includes support and guidance from trained youth professionals, and opportunities to develop relationships, skills, and tools to maintain positive mental health. The intention is that young women will get support earlier, meaning fewer require referral to specialist services.

The programme focuses on supporting young women of colour, aged 10-14. Over the course of the programme, the young women will take part in weekly activities of sports and/or arts in their youth organisation. This will promote positive mental health and challenge stigma; they will discuss emotional wellbeing and issues they care about. Finally, they will take leadership to promote wellbeing in their communities through a social action project.

Alongside this, each year a cohort of 30+ youth workers will receive a programme of high-quality training to become Wellbeing Leads and embed positive mental health practices into their delivery.

The diagram below summarises the timeline for the first year of the programme.



## Programme Design and Set-Up

### *Initial set up*

The biggest challenge for the Good for Girls team was to set up and deliver a programme that was initially designed by people who are no longer involved in the programme. This led to some assumptions being made about the original intentions of the programme, and which third party organisations would be involved. Despite this, the team have worked well; the programme manager and officer were recruited internally following the end of a previous programme, and this meant there was already a good understanding of London Youth, members and how programmes work. The team were also recruited prior to the start of the programme, which meant there was time to dedicate to the set-up before members were engaged.

### *Cross-programme working*

For London Youth, Good for Girls represents the first time a programme has been delivered across the Programmes Directorate, with a team created across the employability, sports and social action teams. This has been a learning curve for the organisation, and it took time to identify and clarify roles and responsibilities across the directorate. However, now this is in place the team are working well.

A member of the Sports Development team also joined the Good for Girls core team during programme set-up. This opened easy and accessible cross team working; for example, the register used by the Sports Development team could be adapted for Good for Girls. The knowledge and existing relationships the Sports Development team have with many members was also invaluable when setting up the programme and seeking applications.

The core team of Programme Manager and two officers (one part time secondment from Sports Development) are now working well, and have clear ownership of the model and programme, following consultation with the wider team; for example, the social action element of the programme was developed in full consultation with the Social Action team.

This collaboration across the wider programme team is also expected to result in wider benefits to London Youth as an organisation, as a result of sharing good practice, approaches and reducing the 'silo-working' that can happen when managing separate grant-funded programmes.

## Reach

This section of the report considers how youth organisations and young people were engaged in the programme, who is taking part and the extent to which the programme is reaching the target audiences. It is drawn from registration data collected by members and conversations with youth workers. It also draws on the learning captured at the June 2021 Learning to Action workshop, which focused on the set up of the programme.

### Engaging youth organisations

The first cohort of the Good for Girls programme consisted of 30 member organisations from 19 different London boroughs.

Despite the challenges of starting the programme during the Covid-19 lockdown, there were high levels of demand to take part in the programme, and a large number of applications submitted. The timing of starting a programme dedicated to mental health during the pandemic was extremely relevant to many organisations. However, some organisations keen to deliver the programme have decided to wait until the second cohort is recruited, in order to ensure they are able to deliver in-person rather than remotely.

Youth organisations chose to take part for three main reasons:

- The opportunity to create a 'girls only' group
- The opportunity to support the younger age category
- The focus on mental health and wellbeing

***“Mental health, especially during the lockdown blew up. And especially this age range; it’s such a confusing time, it’s a pivotal time that you need to hit where mental health is developing. Young people go through so much, but they don’t know how to navigate it.”***

***“We’ve often discussed the impact of the pandemic on the young people that we work with, it was evident that they needed extra mental health support. In sessions, what came out a lot were issues that have been amplified by the pandemic, such as things going on at home. It became obvious how young women were facing very unique challenges, especially around body image and being exposed to so much social media, and the impact that was having on confidence and friendships and all of these anxieties. It just made us realise that it would be great to have something that would be part of supporting mental health and creating that space for people to explore these specific issues. And especially because it gave us the flexibility to do that in a very creative way through art forms and accommodated what we do best”***

***“Because it was being targeted at an age group that we don’t necessarily work with. We normally work with 14s and above, so to work with a younger age group, it aligns with what we do in terms of the mental health and well being support”***

The knowledge and existing relationships between London Youth and members was useful for targeting organisations and encouraging applications from specific members. This requires time and resources. However, there was a short turnaround for targeted work to encourage applications, which meant that there wasn't much time to encourage members who are new to delivering London Youth programmes to apply.

Members that do not have a dedicated bid writer generally find it harder to meet the application requirements. However, the knowledge the team have of members is extremely useful at assessing applications, as it can be done based on the quality of the project (and past performance/ delivery), rather than quality of written application. This meant the team were able to challenge members that may be able to produce strong applications, but have known issues around compliance or quality of delivery from involvement in previous programmes.

The involvement of the Youth Board in appraising and assessing applications worked well.

The team were also surprised at the number of organisations who normally deliver sports programmes who chose to deliver arts-focused activities for Good for Girls. This has resulted in a good range of different activities across the programme.

Common issues with unsuccessful applications included: proposed delivery plans not meeting the requirements of the programme and lack of consultation with young people/mechanisms to involve young people in shaping the programme.

To support members with submitting applications that meet London Youth's requirements, the team included suggestions for maximum budgets for some elements (including MEL costs). This often led to members just including the suggested cost, rather than working out the specifics. There is a need to support smaller organisations by providing guidance about what costs they can include, and what would be appropriate, however there may be a risk of being too prescriptive.

The induction day for members was well attended and extremely useful at setting expectations from the start. Combining the induction day with a written handbook that included all guidance and reporting requirements has also been useful at ensuring all members are aware of the expectations from the start; this is particularly useful for organisations where the people responsible for delivering the programme are separate from the people who developed the application. However it was felt that two induction days would be useful; one for the organisation lead and one specifically for the youth workers receiving the training.

### ***Youth organisation capacity***

One of the main aims of Good for Girls is to increase the capacity of youth organisations to deliver mental health support to young people. In order to better understand the starting points of the organisations and youth workers involved in delivering the project, we developed two tools;

- Youth worker survey; to better understand individual youth workers' levels of skills and confidence before taking part in the programme
- Youth organisation capacity tool; to better understand the needs of the whole organisation

Prior to starting on the Good for Girls programme, the lead person from each member organisation, and the youth workers who would benefit from the mental health training were asked to complete these short baseline surveys. The same surveys were to be completed again at the end of the year, to determine the extent to which Good forGirls has helped increase capacity; the results of these are included in the impact chapter later in the report.

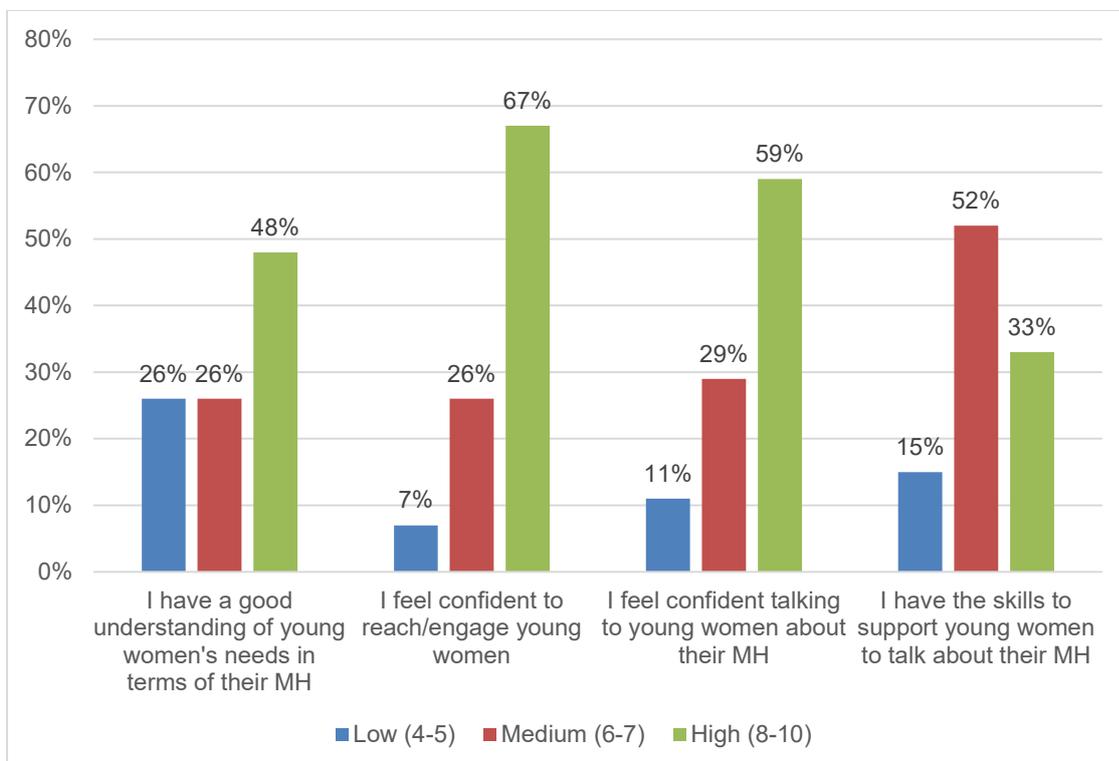
The diagram below shows the results of the organisational capacity baseline tool. The lead youth workers were asked to select one statement for each of the five topics which best described where they were prior to Good for Girls starting. It shows that there is a broad mix of organisations taking part; some have more experience of delivering this type of support to young people and others less so. The biggest areas of potential increase are around improving networks, methods of co-production and youth worker skills.

Topic	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Purpose and role</b>	We do not think we need to define our role in terms of delivering MH/wellbeing support to young people	We have not yet started to think about our role in terms of delivering mental health/wellbeing support to young people	We have started to think about our role in terms of what MH/wellbeing support we should or should not deliver but this is not yet clearly defined	We have a good understanding of our role internally, but this is not necessarily understood by all our staff, volunteers or young people	We have a clearly defined role in terms of delivering mental health or wellbeing support to our young people and this is understood by all our staff, volunteers and young people
	0%	0%	26%	48%	26%
<b>Delivery</b>	We do not deliver any mental health/ wellbeing support to our young people	We support and encourage young people to talk about their mental health/wellbeing but this is not a structured part of our delivery programme	Our delivery helps to improve young people's mental health or wellbeing, <u>or</u> helps to encourage young people to talk about their mental health, but indirectly as a consequence of what we do, rather than being the focus	We deliver some programmes which have a clear focus on young people's mental health/wellbeing, but this isn't embedded in all our delivery	The majority of our programmes have a clear focus on young people's mental health/ wellbeing
	0%	11%	37%	26%	26%
<b>Skills</b>	Our staff team are not skilled to support young people with their mental health/ wellbeing and this is not part of their role	Our staff have some skills at supporting young people with their MH/ wellbeing, but this is not their core role	Our staff are skilled at supporting young people with their MH/ wellbeing, but could benefit from additional training and support to improve what we do	Our staff and volunteer team are highly skilled at supporting young people with their MH/ wellbeing, but we lack the resources to provide ongoing CPD	Our staff and volunteer team are highly skilled at supporting young people with their MH/ wellbeing and we provide ongoing CPD
	4%	22%	48%	19%	7%

Topic	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Signposting and networks</b>	We do not know where to signpost our young people to for support with their mental health/ wellbeing	We have some links with other organisations that provide mental health/ wellbeing support but these are limited	We have links with other organisations that deliver mental health/wellbeing support but no clear referral pathways in place	We have clear referral pathways with a small number of other support services but could benefit from a greater range	We have strong networks and clear referral pathways with a broad range of other support services and these are understood and followed by our staff and volunteers
	7%	41%	11%	37%	4%
<b>Co-production</b>	We do not involve our young people in deciding what we deliver	We consult young people on activities they like/do not like which helps to shape what we deliver	We work in partnership with our young people to jointly decide what to deliver	Young people are involved in decision making around what our organisation delivers	Our programmes are entirely led/ delivered by young people
	0%	33%	7%	44%	15%

From our conversations with youth workers, many stated that this was the first time they have set up a girls only group, or a group that works with this particular age range.

The chart below shows the results of the youth worker baseline survey, where youth workers were asked to rate the four statements out of 1-10, with 1 being low and 10 being high. It was completed by the youth workers who took part in the training and led on delivery of the programme.



It shows that there is a mix of youth workers involved in the programme; some which have experience and some for which this is the first time they have led on a programme like this. As improving skills is one of the priorities of the programme, these results demonstrate the need for the significant investment in youth worker training.

Youth workers also identified specific areas that they would benefit from support:

- Outreach/how to engage YP/promote the project
- Social action ideas
- Partners/networking
- How to make YP feel comfortable talking about MH
- General info/knowledge about MH
- Practical advice that can be passed on to YP
- Increasing confidence to support YP with MH
- Supporting young people of colour specifically

### **Engaging young people**

Overall, a total of 600 young people were engaged in the first year of the programme. Discussions with members have identified some key learning around to effectively engage young people, including:

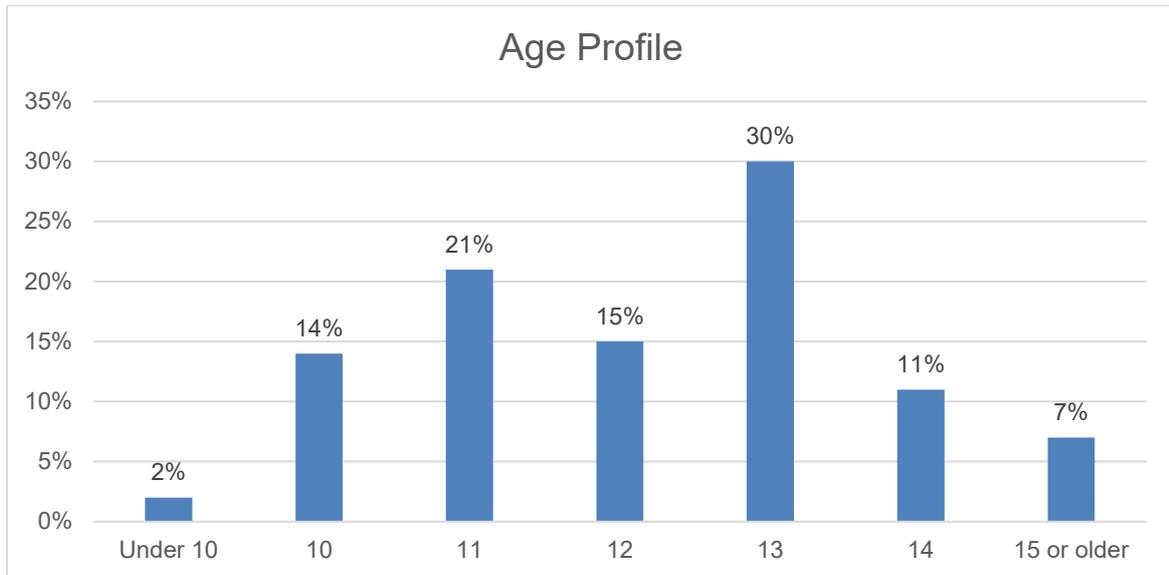
- The importance of working with parents, to ensure they understand the purpose of the programme and breakdown any concerns regarding mental health stigma
- The use of the positive activities (sport or art) as the 'hook' to engage young people, rather than promoting it as a 'mental health' programme
- The need for specific training for youth workers in promoting the programme; use of appropriate language, addressing cultural sensitivities, appropriate methods etc
- The importance of having strong female role models in the organisation; however if they are employed specifically to deliver the programme it will take time to develop rapport

### ***Young people profile***

Registration forms collected by members provide useful data on the demographic profile of young people, helping to understand who is involved in the programme and what groups of young women and girls are being reached.

#### ***Age***

The chart below shows the breakdown of the age\* of young people supported by Good for Girls. It shows that 90% of young people engaged were within the target age range of 10-14, with a third aged 13.



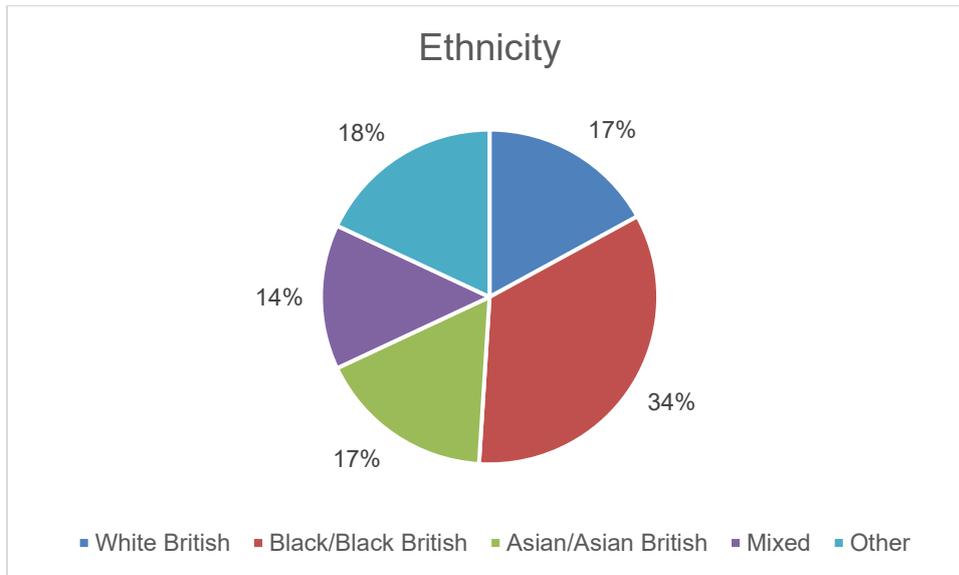
\* Note age has been calculated as age at 1st September 2021, so the age the young person was at the end of the programme year.

Some youth workers we spoke to commented on the relatively significant difference between 10 year olds and 14 year olds in terms of the issues they are facing at that stage in their lives, and this did lead to some challenges in delivering a programme across what is quite a large age range.

***“10-14yrs as an age group is not the best - the 14 year olds sometimes talk about things that the 10 year olds shouldn’t be there for- there is only 5 girls in the group so not enough if they are split in 2 groups. They do work well together and the younger ones are mature, but it can make conversations difficult sometimes”***

#### *Ethnicity*

The chart below shows the ethnicity of participants across the programme, showing that overall 83% were from non-white communities.



**Disability**

Overall, 7% of young people engaged had a disability or life-limiting health condition (including mental health). The majority of these were from one youth organisation that is a specialist in supporting SEN young people. Although the programme did not aim to target disabled young women and girls, it would be worth considering why only a relatively small proportion of young people with a disability took part and whether it would be appropriate to target this group in year 2.

**Socio-economic status**

Overall, 54% of young people live in the top 30% most deprived communities in England, using postcode data and mapping this to the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Overall, the demographic data collected for young people shows that the programme is successfully reaching people from the target groups; namely young women and girls of colour and/or who live in lower socio-economic communities, who are aged 10-14.

**Young people's needs and barriers**

Conversations with members delivering Good for Girls sought to explore the specific issues that young women and girls being supported by their organisation are with regard to their mental health and wellbeing. The main issues identified that are affecting young girls' wellbeing included:

- Body shaming
- Bullying
- Dealing with conflict
- Issues at school
- Issues with boys
- Friendship groups/peer pressure etc

- Covid-19; isolation from peers, but also dealing with grief
- Traumatic life experiences
- Caring responsibilities
- Parental pressures or issues at home
- Societal issues, such as climate change, LGBT+ rights etc

Our girls have collectively improved their strength to deal with self-worth, identity and motivation issues, and pressures caused by family, community and school through Art, Sports, Talking Circles sessions. Majority of our girls were refugees from Turkey. They had good life standards in their country and lost everything they had when the government oppressed their families due to their political or ideological view and criticism for the regime. They had some form of stability in their lives now but they are not over the impacts of the trauma they had experienced. They had identity and trust issues and some have lost the sense of purpose in life questioning everything. The parents said that the sessions helped them to focus on what they could do for their life rather than complaining about what has happened.

One big barrier identified by youth workers was in terms of understanding terminology and language around mental health and wellbeing. Most youth workers felt that the subject of mental health is relatively well-known, and that most young people did have a general understanding and appreciation. However, although mental health terms are in common use; for example depression, anxiety, stress etc, it was felt that some young people were unable to differentiate between mental health disorders and common feelings that all people (in particular adolescents') face. Helping young people to understand the difference between 'feeling anxious' and 'having anxiety', or that 'being depressed' is not the same thing as 'feeling a bit down' was something that some youth workers felt needed addressing through the programme.

***“We noticed that a lot of them talk about anxiety and that's like, totally fine. But we're conscious to tell them that anxiety goes all the way from butterflies in your tummy about the first day of secondary school or a driving test or whatever, all the way up to like crippling anxiety where you're having panic attacks and can't cope. I guess we wanted to have a space where we can talk about coping strategies with them and differentiate in those things without making them feel like they have to push emotions away. Like the default isn't always to be happy”***

Discussions held at the start of the programme helped understand the extent to which young people understood the concept of mental health and what it meant to them. Generally there are good levels of understanding, with lots of references to talking about it at school, although some said it's not talked about a lot, indicating differences in the way schools approach the topic. Young people understand mental health to be related to your state of mind and how you feel, and there were many references to stress, anxiety, depression and

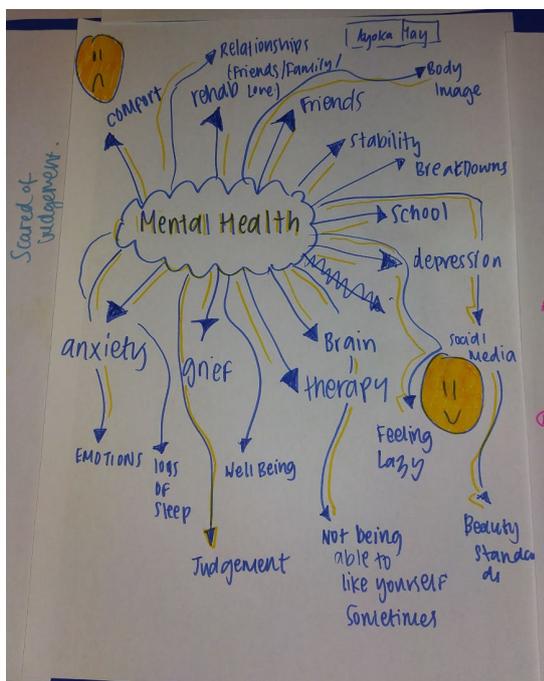
negative emotions. Body image was also mentioned, but not frequently. Most did not reference good mental health, however this may reflect how the topic was introduced.

The reflection sessions also considered how confident young people feel about talking about their mental health, prior to taking part in the programme. There were references to some people keeping it to themselves and generally this was mixed, with some feeling confident and others less so.

Finally, the sessions considered the extent to which young people know where to go for help with their mental health, and who they currently speak to if they are experiencing any issues. Family/friends were most common, along with talking to pets. There was some awareness of Childline, school support/ counsellors, but only one or two references to young people being able to talk to their youth worker.

***“I do not know much as Schools don’t talk about it, only time it is brought up is during Mental Health week. When they talk about kindness, depression and give us pamphlets and hand out materials. They don’t fully discuss the subject.” (young person)***

***“I don’t know what mental health is when it comes up, I think it may have something to do with someone being upset. I don’t think our community likes talking about this problem” (young person)***



What do you understand about Mental Health?

- Taking a break from technology
- Relax your brain
- Everyone has mental health
- Mindset
- Talking
- State of mind

How confident are you about talking about mental health?

- A lot of children do not talk about it and they keep it to themselves

If you were having a problem with your mental health, who would you talk to and what would you do?

- Diary
- Write it down
- Talk with siblings
- Childline
- Parents
- Sister
- Mum
- Grand
- Brother
- Well
- Dad
- Google
- Friends
- Physical activities
- Music
- Draw

## Delivery

This section of the report considers what has been delivered, what has worked well and the challenges faced by London Youth and member organisations since the start of the programme.

### Youth Worker training

Overall, 34 youth workers attended 11 core training sessions and 3 optional training sessions. The core training was a mandatory element of the programme, and as such on average youth workers attended 8 of the 11 sessions. Overall, youth workers benefited from 541 hours of training, an average of 18 hours per youth worker; representing a significant investment in skills development.

There were three different training providers recruited to provide a range of support:

- Haptivate delivered 7 sessions on: Understanding Mental Health, Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques, Understanding and Exploring Emotions, Identifying and tackling limiting beliefs, Building a resilient mindset, Keeping active and looking after your body and Accessing mental health resources and support services
- The Teen Yoga Foundation delivered two sessions on how to deliver Talking Circles
- Young Minds delivered a session on Introduction to Trauma, as well as an insight session which focused on capturing learning from across the training programme

Three additional, optional sessions were delivered by London Youth on how to deliver a social action project, Youth Mental Health First Aid training delivered by MHFA England, and a session focusing on youth work with young women, delivered by Vanessa Rogers.

This level of intensive training is new to London Youth; although most programmes include training and support, this is optional and open to all members.

The results from the youth worker surveys showed that overall, the training was extremely well-received and a valuable element of the programme:

- 100% of youth workers agreed that the training and support from London Youth met their needs
- 93% agreed that the training and support from the external training providers met their needs
- 89% agreed that the amount of training and support available was sufficient
- 96% agreed that they were able to apply what they learnt in the training to the delivery of the Good for Girls programme
- 93% agreed that the training and support has helped improve what they deliver

***“The training was really good, it has increased my knowledge and the knowledge across the organisation. I appreciated having the time to meet with other youth workers and get the best ideas and share problems we were having. I will keep in touch with them.”***

***“I benefited from the training because I always wanted to have a better understanding on the topic of Mental Health and Young people. I feel that the training covered a wide range of different areas within the Mental Health topic. I specifically really enjoyed being able to also hear scenarios and situations other professionals have encountered with young people in regards to this broad topic. The training also enabled me to gain skills such as being able to facilitate and create a safe space for young people to feel they can open up about Mental Health. The training made me understand that as professionals we will not always have all the answers and that is okay however it is important to educate ourselves through training.”***

The main learning from the training programme in year 1 was related to both the level of training required, and ensuring that it is scheduled appropriately to ensure it fits with the delivery of the programme. Although the feedback was extremely positive, many youth workers recognised that the training programme was intensive, and was a significant commitment for them.

***“The training was amazing and incredibly useful, however there were so many sessions, all very long. Some session content overlapped, e.g. Teen Yoga with Haptivate. If they could be shortened, I think it would be more accessible as many youth workers are stretched thin already”***

Youth workers felt that shorter or fewer sessions would have been more manageable, or perhaps having a shorter core/mandatory course, with more optional sessions. It was also felt that the scheduling could be improved; ensuring that sessions which related to certain elements of the programme were delivered in a timely fashion, giving youth workers time before delivery to plan the sessions. Overall, it was felt that the training programme should be delivered over a longer time frame, with shorter or fewer sessions. Training providers also felt that it would have been helpful to have more time during the delivery phase of the programme to provide follow-up sessions, to discuss issues and share progress and good practice.

***“I think just more time to prepare for the project in advanced because I felt as though it was quite a tight space of time to find girls to join and plan all the sessions.”***

There were also mixed views on remote versus in-person training; due to the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions all training was delivered online. People recognised that this does have significant benefits in terms of ability to access, particularly for an intensive training programme. However, some youth workers would have preferred more opportunities to meet in-person. It will be interesting to see if a hybrid model of training in year 2 has an impact on attendance or satisfaction.

***“More in-person and interactive training days would be great as when training is online it can sometimes feel a little tedious”***

***“I liked that it was online but I know some people would have like to be together.”***

Other recommendations to improve the training included:

- Clearer training on how the work can be translated into social action
- A resource drive would be great, followed by shorter monthly check-ins.
- Some more activities might be included
- Ensure training is on different days/times
- Building in a greater focus on the needs of young women from different cultures and backgrounds
- Homework
- Clear commitment to attend and participate; expectations set at the start

***“Having key speakers from the BAME communities to do some of the talks about mental health and speak to youth workers on why it is important especially in these communities to talk about Mental Health. The training felt like it covered more of a general outlook on how young people are affected by Mental Health but did not really touch on the fact that this project is focussing on the BAME community.”***

## **Young people’s sessions**

A total of 662 sessions with young people were delivered over the year.

- 393 sessions combined a positive activity (sport or art) with a talking circle
- 180 sessions were just a positive activity (sport or art)
- 89 sessions were just talking circles

On average each youth organisation delivered 24 sessions each, ranging from a minimum of 13 sessions to a maximum of 44. Overall there were 7,893 attendances, with the young people benefiting from 9,006 hours of support.

### ***Positive activities***

A range of positive activities were delivered, including:

Art	Sport/Physical activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● T-shirt design</li> <li>● Nail art</li> <li>● Dance</li> <li>● Photography</li> <li>● Stage management</li> <li>● Special effects makeup</li> <li>● Drawing</li> <li>● Tie dye</li> <li>● Craft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● General fitness sessions</li> <li>● Cooking sessions</li> <li>● Yoga sessions</li> <li>● Football</li> <li>● Table tennis</li> <li>● Breathing/meditation</li> <li>● Multi-sport</li> <li>● Dodgeball</li> <li>● Self-defence</li> </ul>

Art	Sport/Physical activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Origami</li> <li>• Music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dance</li> <li>• Volleyball</li> <li>• Basketball</li> <li>• Boxing</li> <li>• Climbing</li> <li>• Rounders</li> <li>• Skipping</li> <li>• Sports Days</li> </ul>

Youth workers reported that delivering successful positive activity sessions required:

- Exploring with the girls what they wanted to do
- Combining traditional (competitive) sports with ‘games’ and ‘play’ to ensure sessions were fun
- Explaining to the girls why being active is good for wellbeing/mental health, and how art can be used to express feelings
- Some groups incorporated a wide range of different activities, whereas others just focused on a single activity
- Having a fixed group meant that the girls supported each other and were more confident to try new things
- Using the funding to pay for professional coaches or artists to support the groups

***“Football has been a mechanism of expression for many of the girls during this programme. What many of the girls presented as anxiety and depression, they are now learning to use sports and social environment to remove them from isolation, whilst allowing the body and mind to release. This reduces pressure and presents overthinking and negativity. Football has turned anger into passion, upset into laughter, unsocial into social, as well as aiding participants physically.”***

***“The girls were asked at the start of the project what activities they would like to do. By giving the girls a voice, enabled them to feel part of the project, which created a more inclusive atmosphere”***

***“Some of the sporting activities that girls done are: Basketball, Netball, Hockey, Football, Tennis, Rounders and Cycling. All these activities have had a positive impact on the participants because it involved them being physically active as well as being mentally active. Some of the art activities the participants done: painting, creative writing, storytelling. All these activities had a positive impact because it helped the girls to explore their emotions and convey it in an artistic way which leads to them having a better understanding of their emotions.”***

***“During the Good for Girls project we played a variety of low impact sports that had an emphasis on fun and movement rather than competition or athletic ability”***

***“Physical activity sessions within the youth club are beneficial to wellbeing across multiple strands - physical, social and mental, but in an enjoyable and accessible manner which should then help to improve the girls relationship with sports and hopefully promote life-long physical activity. Providing creative outlets through arts enables the girls to relax and express themselves - which can open up conversations surrounding well-being etc. Self-defence provided the girls with important life-skills and the confidence to use them - and though some of the girls were reluctant at first they all actively engaged and appeared to enjoy it by the end of the session.”***

***“The football sessions were a huge hit for our young girls, especially when they met semi professional female footballers”***

***“The girls got to try different activities that they wouldn’t normally try at the youth club which helped to engage those that don’t normally want to take part in sports. The sports activities varied from dance and yoga to badminton, volleyball, basketball, dodgeball and more. The art sessions really allowed the girls to open up about their feelings and mental health whilst also trying new art disciplines and using this as a creative outlet for their emotions. One stand out art project that we completed was an “Understanding Mental Health through Photography” project where the girls outlined and discussed how mental health can display itself physically and took photos of themselves and each other to highlight different emotions and the perceptions of mental health.”***

### **Talking circles**

The inclusion of talking circles into the programme of positive activities has been hugely successful. Following the training, youth workers have been able to incorporate this element with relative ease, by either starting or ending sessions with a group discussion, or having standalone group discussions separately from the positive activities.

***“The Talking Circles were really good. In one of the sessions we invited the parents. Normally, as soon as the parents heard mental health they thought of negative connotations, they think it’s a bad sign for their child. The young people were able to explain to their parents what mental health is and that it can be positive as well as negative. They feel more comfortable talking about their mental health at home. It was a really good session and it brought them closer together.”***

***“The weekly talking circles helped them to express their emotions, they learned to communicate and to express themselves in a safe way. They lifted up and supported each other in a safe way. This was invaluable. They don’t want to finish the project and want the talking circles to keep on going.”***

Some groups found the Talking Circles challenging, particularly at the start, when young people were reluctant to open up about their feelings. And groups where the youth worker

was not already known to the young people needed to introduce these later in the programme. However, over time, as the groups bonded and felt more comfortable, they became easier to deliver. Some organisations also found that Talking Circles worked better with smaller groups, so had to split the group to ensure all girls were heard.

The talking circles covered a range of topics, and youth workers used a range of tools to support discussions, including emojis, journals, affirmations, role play, ice breakers etc.

***“At the beginning of each session the girls checked in using different tools (emoji cards, numbers, hand signs etc) they could then share why they felt like that if they wanted to share. At the end of the sessions where we had done sports/physical activity the girls scores were consistently higher then when they had arrived. The girls also became more skilled in naming their feelings and identifying where they were coming from as the programme went on.”***

***“They loved the fact that they were able to have individual journals to express themselves which was great to see, we are excited to see how they get on with their journaling over the weeks.”***

Youth workers were also able to see how the talking circles and positive activities elements complemented each other.

***“The major highlight from the sport activities were around seeing the girls applying what they learned and discussed in the talking circle into football. Every now and again, some participants demonstrated leadership and proactivity in calming their teammates down after a mistake and reaching out to others when they seemed down. Another important gain from these activities was helping the participants see how similar football can be to life and that the lessons around mental health (i.e., coping strategies) can be applied in both settings.”***

Many are keen to continue this approach with other groups and programmes; having a more structured approach to discussing what issues the young people are facing across the wider organisation.

***“We are going to keep doing talking circles in lots of the other groups that we have, not just the female ones. I think we now know a lot more about how we need to be putting this into all of the work that we do.”***

***“The school we are based in and us as an organisation have embedded Talking Circles into the wider offer at the school with different age groups”***

We had 31 girls and most of them came in with little to no ideas of how to make themselves feel better or deal with negative emotions. The talking circles were really beneficial. The young girls were able to share experiences and bounce ideas on how to look after their wellbeing. Bereavements coupled with not being allowed to go to funerals was a really big challenge faced by a lot of the kids. They expressed that they weren't allowed to take part in the family's grief. With the rituals of funerals removed, which often helps us with our grief, the girls used the talking circles to support each other through this process. They said, “We're in class together but we don't ever talk about these things.” Overall, the age range and programme were perfect for 11 year olds. It was great to be at the transition age to plant the seeds of how to take care of your mental health and wellbeing for secondary school. Maybe by 13 or 14 it might be too late, hopefully, we have set the girls up really well and as best as possible for the challenges ahead.

### ***Social action project***

A key element of the programme was the delivery of a social action project. The girls chose a range of different projects, all having a focus on mental health or wellbeing. Projects included:

- Self-care days/packages
- Cooking and healthy eating days
- Community walks
- Community planting days
- Sports days/open days
- Film-making
- Affirmation cards
- Leaflets on mental health
- Self-defence workshop
- Performances/shows
- Campaigns; e.g. body positive campaign
- Artwork

The social action projects gave the groups something to focus on, responsibility to plan and deliver their own project idea, and also provided a mechanism to showcase what they have learnt about mental health and wellbeing with other young people, their families and/or the wider community.

***“Our girls created personalised affirmation cards which they handed out to the community. This created a positive effect for others and spread love, happiness and joy. This further encouraged the topic of mental health within our community”***

***“The girls planned, organised and delivered a social action around an issue that matters to them. This was the fact they did not feel safe on the streets. As a result they came up with the idea to deliver a self-defence workshop for women in the local community. This proved to be a huge success with a lot of participants attending via word of mouth. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed the session and left with something new.”***

***“The final idea is to create a short film called 'The magic within' a short film covering the minds of young women, how young women deal with mental health, discussing and showing the problems that young women may face as a collective and individually, connecting to the audience on how to cope with certain social issues that young women face, mental health, family and community, expectations and world issue that have an impact on a young woman. The film is called 'The Magic within' as it a film revealing, showing and reminding young women the power that they hold when in this world and the unique magic that they have to deal with anything.”***

***“The final idea was a body positivity campaign. The young girls picked up that they and a lot of other young women struggled with body confidence. They designed t-shirts and boxes with different activities and or wellbeing things. We shared these with our community in the local area and the girls presented on the project and the importance of raising awareness and speaking about mental health. The girls knew it was for others but they reflected that they had learned a lot from it and they were nicer to each other and themselves in how they speak and see themselves, that stuff can be internalised heavily.”***

Learning from incorporating the social action element into the Good for Girls programme includes:

- The value of the pitch event; they can work well online, if external people are there to provide the experience of speaking to a panel of 'experts'
- Some youth organisations are more experienced at social action than others, and there was a range in terms of quality. It is important to set expectations at the start around what is meant by social action and what would be an appropriate activity
- Working with a younger age group makes social action more challenging, so youth organisations need to start planning this earlier
- The importance of the celebration event to enable young people to showcase the social action project

## Residential/Celebration event

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, two options were provided; a residential at Woodrow High House, which 44 young people attended, or a celebration event in Brixton, which 86 young people attended. There were a number of challenges experienced with these events, including:

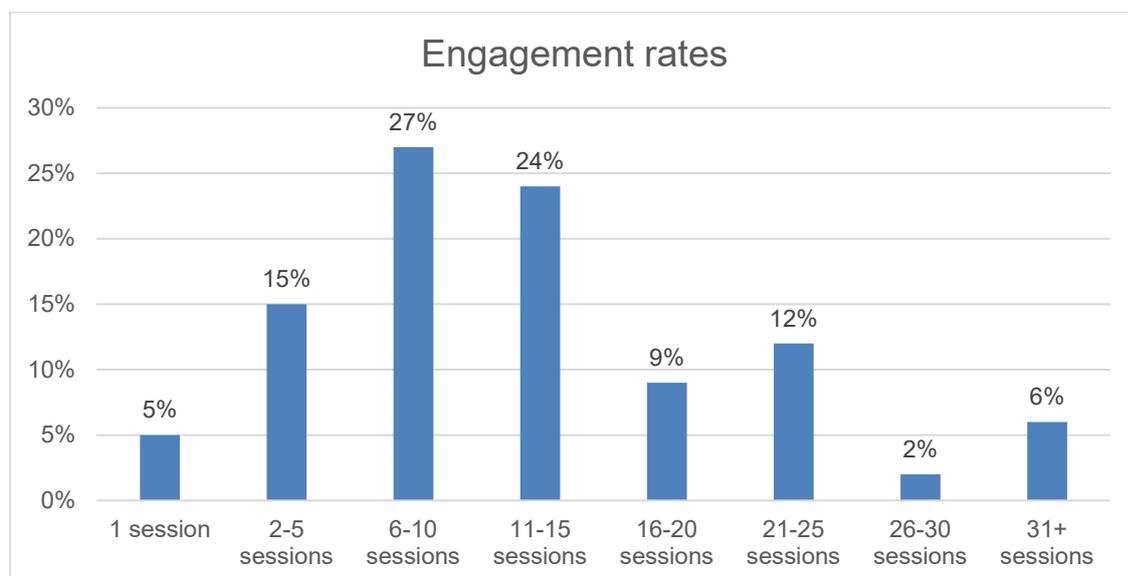
- **Venue;** some youth workers felt that the venue for the celebration event was not entirely suitable for a young persons' event, due to it being mixed use (people outside drinking, etc)
- **Location;** it took some groups a considerably long time to get to the venue for the celebration event, which led to them being late and tired when they arrived
- **Purpose;** some youth workers were a little unclear on the purpose of the events, in particular the role of 'Wellbeing Ambassador' and what that meant in reality

Despite these logistical challenges, which were primarily caused by ongoing Covid-19 restrictions, feedback on the day from young people was extremely positive and the events were a good way of enabling young people from the different organisations to come together to celebrate their achievements.

For year 2 of the programme, more careful planning around venues, locations and purpose of these events will help ensure they are more successful.

## Engagement rates

On average, young people attended 13 sessions each and received 15 hours of support. The chart below shows the engagement rates across the programme, showing that just over half of young people (51%) attended between 6 and 15 sessions.



Learning from youth workers suggests that setting up a dedicated girls group helped to keep young people engaged through the life of the programme, combined with the responsibility for delivering the social action project. There were challenges associated with retaining young people on the project; in particular related to delivering sessions online as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

***“Sometimes it was hard to get them there at the same time, because of other things that are going on their lives. But I do feel that they did bond as a group; even when they are about in the youth club or doing other things, they have that connection to each other from being part of the group. Where we do talk about our emotions, about what's happening, and we check in each week, they know each other on a slightly deeper level than they might, in another activity”***

## Impact

This chapter considers what difference the programme has made to young people, youth workers and youth organisations. It shows *what* outcomes have been achieved, taken from young people and youth worker surveys, along with insights into *how* youth organisations have achieved these outcomes, taken from conversations with youth workers and reports produced.

### Young people's outcomes

A total of 164 surveys were completed by young people taking part in the programme; a good response rate of 27%. To achieve the commonly accepted standard for a representative sample then 234 surveys would be needed, however the sample achieved still provides a confidence interval of 6.76 with a confidence level of 95%. Given the challenges of administering surveys with young people this result is excellent, and provides useful data to understand the impact of the programme.

Overall satisfaction rates with Good for Girls was extremely high, with 97% of young people enjoying taking part. Young people also felt involved in the design and delivery of the programme, with 85% feeling they had a choice over what they did or didn't do, and 87% felt their views and feelings were listened to.

Overall, 83% of young people felt comfortable talking about their mental health in their organisation, which demonstrates how the programme has helped create safe spaces within youth organisations for young people to talk about how they feel.

***“What I most enjoyed the most is that I could speak freely without getting embarrassed or feeling unsafe. I was in a community where I was around people I could easily relate with, and the teachers were amazing too.”***

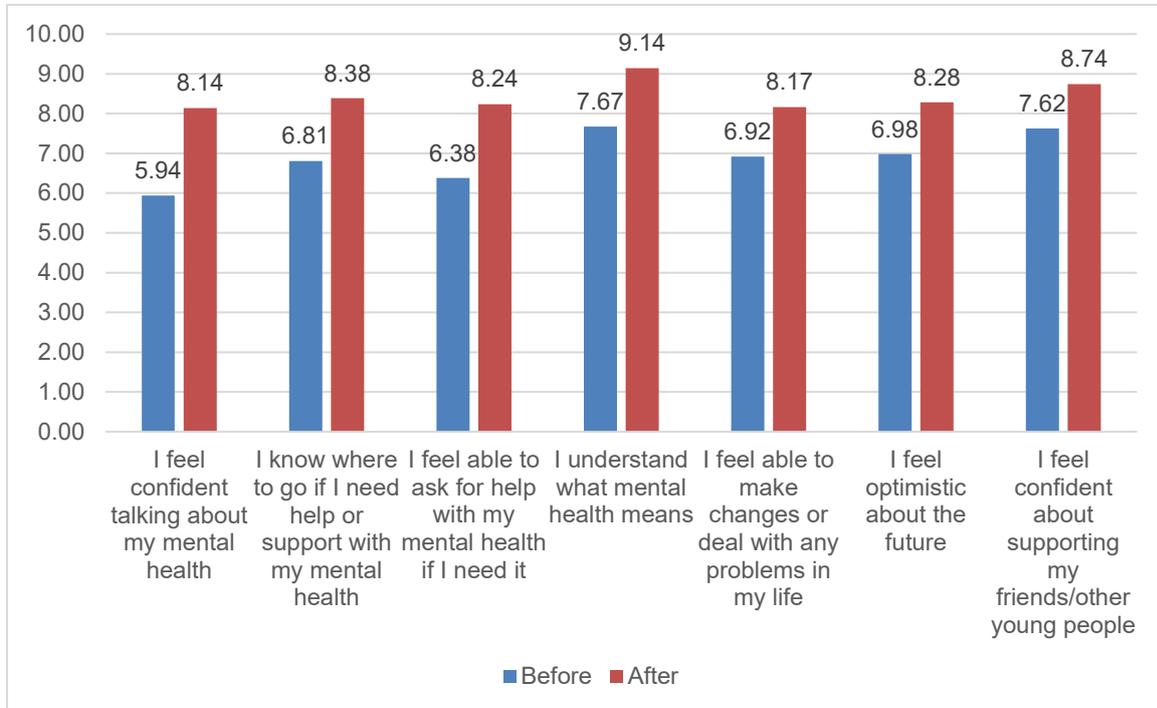
***It was nice to be able to express myself without being judged. I am able to speak to my mum about my mental health as well as asking for help if I needed it.***

The chart below shows how young people's thoughts and feelings related to their mental health have changed as a result of taking part in Good for Girls. The statements were rated on a scale of 1-10, with young people being asked to reflect on how they felt before taking part and how they feel now, as a result of taking part. It shows that the biggest change has been in young people's confidence levels, followed by the ability to ask for help with their mental health if they need it.

Overall:

- 72% feel more confident about talking about their mental health
- 51% have a greater understanding of where to go if they need help or support with their mental health
- 53% feel better able to ask for help with their mental health if they need it

- 42% have a better understanding of what mental health means
- 51% feel better able to make changes or deal with any problems in their life
- 51% feel more optimistic about the future
- 47% feel more confident about supporting their friends/other young people



The Good For Girls programme came at a time that one young person needed it most. Her friend had just been stabbed, she has a lot of issues at home with a broken relationship with her mother as well as looking after all her younger siblings and she had issues at school with behaviour. The group was a space where she could be herself outside of all the trouble and judgement she was getting and she didn't feel judged but understood. She learnt and is still learning that her reactions and behaviours are a result of what she was going through and so when something happens she is open to speak about it.

Since coming her attitude has changed where she makes effort to come regularly and helps look after young girls. She no longer wants to get in trouble at school and has been connected to a football opportunity after we heard her speak about it during the sessions.

***“It helped me realise I need to talk more about how I feel and share my opinions or ideas more.”***

***“It has helped me to grow as a person and make more friends”***

***“It had allowed me to remain optimistic about school even if I am nervous or stressed about something for example a school test.”***

***“It has helped me understand how other people think”***

***“It taught me about mental health and if you have bad day it not a bad thing its only for a short time”***

***“It has help me know if I have problems where to go to get help”***

***“I feel like I know how to express my emotions more and I can help with other people and my friends to talk more openly.”***

***“I like having something that is not school and after the covid it was good to meet and do fun activities together. I really liked that [youth worker] was always there for if you had a bad day. I think I learned a lot about how mental health is also good and now I can tell others and help them too.”***

***“I have learned about mental health meaning and how to tackle problems in life that affect my mental health. In addition to that, I can now even help my friends who have got mental health problems. Sometimes being an active listener solves some problems.”***

***“It has built good relationship with me and my mum in talking about my mental health.”***

Initially F was a very introverted and shy person who mostly kept to herself and did not speak up. Lockdown meant that F, among many other young people, missed out on school for months during Lockdown. This meant that F (who comes from an overcrowded family) was not able to see her friends - which made her feel even more isolated.

When first joining the G4G programme on Zoom, she would not show her face and she would barely engage with the conversations taking place. After introducing myself,

I encouraged her to take part in the quizzes online and allowed her to take time to adjust slowly, which motivated her to participate and communicate with her peers. First it started with small conversations which then developed into open discussions about personal and universal experiences. This helped with building positive relationships.

Now, it is evident that she is a lot more confident, as she is willing to socialise with other members and she is constantly voicing her opinion, suggesting ideas for the club and making the most out of the opportunities given to her.

*"I look forward to coming to the youth sessions. I had anger issues because and I don't trust people and liked being on my own. I have new friends now who are in different School, but I see them as my friends. We support each other!"*

As a result in taking part in Good for Girls, the impact on young people's mental health or wellbeing was:

- 55% reported it has improved a lot
- 35% reported that it has improved a little
- 10% reported that it hasn't improved, but it hasn't got worse

***"From what I noticed in myself is that my self-esteem has improved much more than before I joined this club. It also helped me with my mental health, like now I felt comfortable talking about my mental health and it has improved a lot."***

***"It has helped me in many different ways both physically and mentally. I am much happier now and enjoy life. I am also comfortable taking about my mental health."***

***"Helped me get over my social anxiety because I met new people and helped me be more confident"***

***"My mental health has gotten better as an outcome of this project. The talking helped improve my mental health as I was able to freely express myself. it also made improved my confidence as I was able to socialise more comfortably without having my usual fears."***

***“It has helped me with affirmations to see myself as pretty and as a nice person”***

As the weeks have gone by, the girls have blossomed and have really come out of their shells. They have increased confidence and communication skills. Young people are opening up to discussion. Culturally aware of the stigma attached to mental health. The new friendships that have formed are amazing to see, and has helped individuals to interact not only in the group but also outside. This has been a great help with the well being of the girls. Strength and skills exercise enabled the young people to identify what their strengths are and to identify and support skills development. The listening exercises during circle time improved their communication skills and working as part of a team.

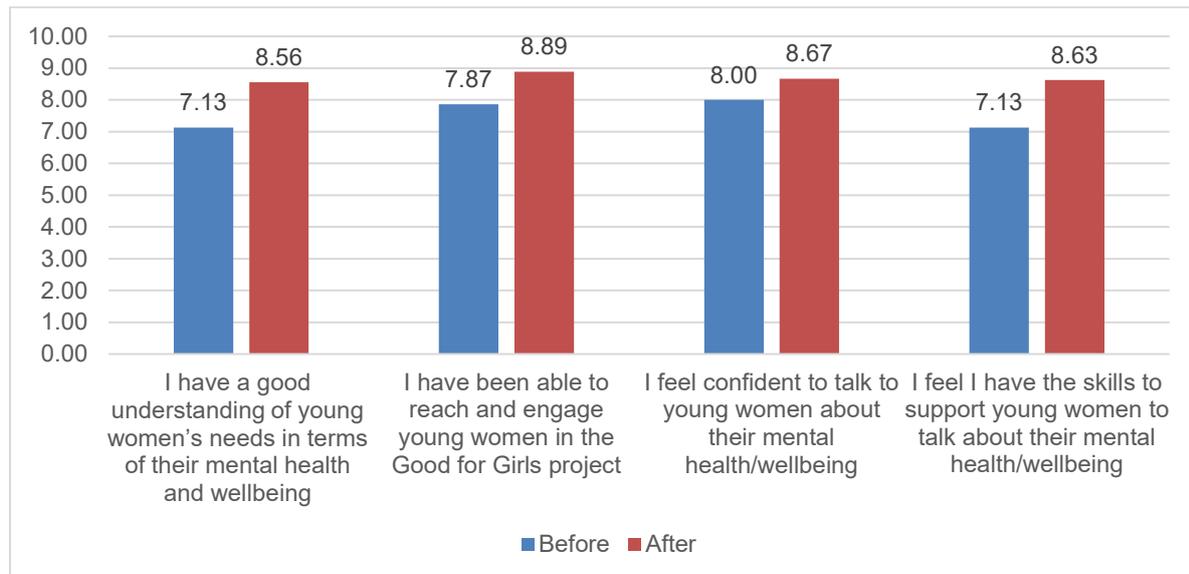
Repeating the reflection sessions at the end of the programme has also helped youth workers understand what has changed.

***“We completed the initial baseline question with our young females and felt that they are at the beginning stage of understanding about mental health. This gave us a lot more to work with so that by the end of the project the girls will have a bigger scope of understanding the topic and ways to get support. When we first completed the baseline question most girls did not know much about mental health. Now if you ask them they are able to tell you how to get support, how to look after and love yourself, and by doing so you are able to slowly start to feel better. These girls have come along way. Many had anxiety talking to the opposite gender now they are able to be in the same room and not feel nervous. They are able to carry themselves really well. They are oozing with confidence!” (youth worker)***

The major personal development we noticed was in relation to the girls' confidence - especially when sharing their experiences and opinions around mental health issues. Some participants went from being shy and quiet during the talking circles to leading activities and discussions. It was extremely satisfying to see the girls improve their communication ability and other leadership skills, such as proactivity, problem-solving, mentoring, organisation, and others. We believe that by participating in this project, the girls are able to carry the lessons they learned onto other settings of their life. A couple parents told us about the girls starting conversations around mental health at home and at school.

## Impact on youth workers

The chart below shows how the programme has built the skills and confidence of youth workers to deliver focused support around mental health and wellbeing. Despite the relatively high baseline scores, it shows that all areas have improved as a result, with the biggest impact being an increase in skills to support young people to talk about their mental health.



Youth workers were able to report how they have individually benefited from the training and support provided through Good for Girls, in terms of their knowledge, skills and confidence. There is also evidence that the programme has helped the youth workers with understanding and managing their own wellbeing:

***“I have benefitted from the Good For Girls training in many ways such as learning to be comfortable about discussing mental health and the issues with go along with it, with the children. I have also developed a greater understanding about my own mental health and ways in which to improve it.”***

***“I gained really practical skills to facilitate discussions around mental health for young girls including games and exercises. These in turn increased my confidence in how we as an organisation can support mental health of our young people.”***

***“I gained knowledge in how to better engage young women in group sessions and I feel more confident running groups with a big number of participants whereas I didn't before.”***

***“I felt that it was a more manageable task as I had skills to discuss important issues with the girls. (e.g., how to respond to crisis, how to approach big issues). Active listening.”***

***“It allowed me to understand how to discuss sensitive topic about mental health that can be touchy in a safe and no triggering manner”***

Youth workers were able to detail the changes they have made to the way in which they deliver support to young people, including;

- Including activities such as yoga and breathing to sessions
- Introducing more opportunities for group discussions around mental health
- Using different tools and techniques to talk about mental health
- Supporting young people to take the lead

***“I have made changes such as introducing yoga and breathing activities (Before and after sessions or activities). I have learnt how to become a better active listening, in a non judgement manner and I have also developed skills in para phasing and empathy.”***

***“Introduced more team talk, one to one talk and opened up our services for young girls to feel comfortable to discuss their issues and needs”***

***“I use more creative ways of explaining different aspects of mental health to young women now.”***

***“More group discussions on wellbeing and mental health rather than just 1:1.”***

***“Let them lead the conversation. Instead of following my session plan, allowing it to evolve depending on the girls needs that day.”***

***“Being more aware of the nuances of how young people express their feelings and allowing them room to navigate their thoughts and ideas themselves and coming to conclusions amongst their peers instead of taking the “giving them the answer” approach”***

***“All sessions now open with asking the girls how they feel and encouraging them to express their emotions.”***

## **Impact on youth organisations**

The youth organisation capacity tool considered how the programme has helped to improve the wider organisation’s approach to supporting young people’s mental health and wellbeing. The charts below show that across all five areas, average scores have increased, with a greater proportion of youth organisations rating themselves at 4 or 5 out of 5 than before the programme started. The biggest impact has been in terms of improving co-production and skills development. Although overall the programme has resulted in improved capacity

against all areas, there are still opportunities to further improve skills and signposting/networks.



Overall, as a result of Good for Girls:

- 100% of youth organisations agree that they have improved their youth offer to young women/girls
- 89% agree that they have improved their wellbeing offer to all young people
- 89% agree that their staff are more skilled and confident about providing mental health support
- 100% have a better understanding of what mental health support young people need and their role in providing this

- 89% feel able to embed what they have learnt in Good for Girls across other areas of delivery

Youth organisations were able to point to specific changes they have made in order to embed mental health and wellbeing support into their core offer, including:

- Incorporating wellbeing discussions within other programmes
- Extending all programmes to a younger age group
- Creating more girls-only groups

***“We have implemented well being discussions and activities within our programme, we have developed mindfulness activities as well as physical activities programmes.”***

***“We have extended our offering permanently to girls as young as 10 years old. As we have seen the benefits of doing so and how much this was well received by that age group.”***

***“We have never been able to offer support to young people under 11 before, so GfG enabled us to expand our current offer. Without continued funding we are unable to continue this support, however as members reach 11 years old we will be able to engage them through pre-existing relationships subsequent to the GfG project.”***

***“We have never focused on girls only sessions, all of our activities are mixed and open access. this project has allowed us to discover that there is a huge need for girls only provisions and this will be something that we will need to discuss, plan and see if this can be continued regularly.”***

***“Good for Girls allowed us to broach MH head on, which I think has had an impact for all the girls involved, even outside of the sessions. MH is a more conscious thought in our programmes than previously, although we could go further with it.”***

***“The Good for Girls project has made a huge improvement into how we deliver our wellbeing projects to young people. The weekly talking circles have been so beneficial and it has created a regular session for our mentor lead and young people and this regular contact has given the young people a safe and inspiring place to share their thoughts and feelings but also that it has created a group that offers connections, a sense of belonging and good communication on a weekly basis.”***

All youth organisations are keen to continue delivering elements of the Good for Girls programme; either through specific funded programmes or just as part of their core delivery. Many are in the process of seeking further funding to continue delivery.

***“We are looking into funding on mental health wellbeing for families. we want to have consistency around supporting the families we work with. while also trying to remove the stigma around mental health. we want to be able to offer the right help and support early on.”***

***“We are currently looking for funding to run similar projects perhaps even for young boys within our service as well as the young women”***

## Conclusions

Overall the first year of the Good for Girls programme has been a huge success. The programme has achieved its targets for engaging youth organisations, and exceeded the target for numbers of young people involved, and the evidence clearly demonstrates how the programme is helping young women and girls to feel more confident about talking about their mental health and wellbeing in a youth work environment. It has also demonstrated how the programme has helped build skills of youth workers, and the capacity of youth organisations; with many looking to incorporate elements of the programme across their wider service delivery.

The Good for Girls programme has been a new area of focus for London Youth, and the first year has generated significant learning around what works.

The strengths of the Good for Girls programme are:

- The focus on **mental health and wellbeing** is extremely timely and relevant to many youth organisations, who have seen first-hand the impact of Covid-19 on their young people's wellbeing, and are keen to support them with this
- The fact it is a dedicated **girls-only programme**; for many youth organisations this has been the first time they have created girls only groups, and most are keen for these to continue. The creation of the group has also helped keep young people engaged as they have a sense of belonging and ownership
- The importance of having **positive role models** for young women and girls; the majority of youth organisations had women youth workers leading delivery, however the most important element is making sure there is a good relationship and rapport developed as this is key to helping the young people feel safe and able to share their feelings.
- The programme **structure**; setting out expectations from the start around running weekly sessions and providing a structure for these sessions around combining sport or art activities with talking circles
- The **cross programme** approach; incorporating both sport, art and social action has helped to build capacity of youth organisations around delivering different activities, and has resulted in members who are new to art, sport or social action taking part in the programme
- The emphasis on **training** and building the skills of individual youth workers has been extremely valuable, and has led to youth organisations feeling like part of a programme, supporting their networking as well as building capacity
- The value of **talking circles**, and learning around how simple 'check-in' conversations at the start or end of sessions can help create a space for young people to share their feelings and support each other with their mental health and wellbeing

- The level of **funding** was sufficient to set expectations around the programme structure, outcomes and MEL expectations, as well as enabling the team to effectively manage the programme

Perhaps one of the biggest successes is the fact that many elements of the Good for Girls programme can be easily embedded or mainstreamed within youth organisations' current provision, and this combined with the significant investment in youth worker skills development means the approach can be sustainable.

Learning captured in year 1 of the programme is being used to help shape year 2. Key actions or changes for year 2 are:

- Making the Mental Health First Aid training compulsory and moving it to the start of the training programme
- Building in a training session on cultural sensitivities, also near to the start of the programme
- Training to be delivered predominantly online but with two in-person sessions to allow for face to face networking and a celebration for youth workers (to mirror the young person's celebration event)
- Having some training sessions delivered by specialist youth organisations (e.g. SEN group) to provide peer support
- Greater flexibility over training session times
- Building in two induction sessions; one dedicated just for youth workers attending the training
- The creation of a detailed session plan resource, to give youth workers a better understanding of what a Good for Girls session should look like
- Recommending that youth organisations work with either primary school age or secondary school age young people (rather than supporting a group consisting of all age ranges), or creating two separate groups
- Providing more examples of 'what works' from year 1 to year 2 groups; for example, example social action projects, different ways of incorporating talking circles etc
- Setting clearer expectations and feedback about what would be an acceptable social action project, with a greater focus on impacting the wider community, rather than just the youth organisation itself
- A more detailed programme timeline identifies when youth organisations should be starting elements of the programme; e.g. when they should start planning their social action project
- Being clear over the purpose of the residential and celebration events, and setting expectations from the start (particularly if using external facilitators)