

London Youth

# Good for Girls

Year 1 Evaluation Report 2025



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# Executive Summary

The Good for Girls programme aims to provide young women and girls access to relevant, holistic early intervention mental health support in trusted grassroots community youth spaces. Young people take part in a programme of sport/arts activities, talking circles and deliver a community social action project focusing on mental health. In addition, the programme provides training for youth workers to build skills around providing wellbeing support, as well as a peer mentoring element.

## Delivery

The key achievements for year 1 of the current programme were:

- 10 youth organisations and 195 young people engaged
- 77% were aged 10 (or under) to 14, and 23% were 15+, 97% were from Black, Asian or other ethnic minority community and 60% live in the top 30% most deprived communities in England
- 238 sessions delivered across the programme, with each young person taking part in an average of 12 sessions each
- 24 peer mentors attended training and supported sessions
- 12 training sessions were delivered by a range of providers. A total of 29 youth workers attended between 1 and 12 sessions each, with an average of 5 sessions per youth worker
- Extremely high levels of satisfaction; 98% of the core group of young people and 95% of peer mentors enjoyed taking part. 90% of youth workers were very or quite satisfied with the training sessions and 82% rated the training as an effective part of the programme
- The most effective parts of the programme were the sport/arts sessions, the talking circles and the social action projects. There were some challenges with delivering the peer mentoring aspect, along with ensuring the training programme met the needs of youth workers; learning from this will be used to inform the programme in year 2

## Impact

The Good for Girls programme delivered the following outcomes for young people, youth workers and youth organisations:

- **Increased access to positive activities and safe spaces to talk about wellbeing:** Good for Girls provides safe spaces for young women and girls to talk about their wellbeing in a trusted environment; 96% felt safe and comfortable talking about wellbeing at their youth organisation and 96% know where to go if they need help with their wellbeing

- **Improved confidence:** Creating strong bonds, working as a team and delivering the social action project helped improve young people's confidence and self-esteem: 90% of core young people and 95% of peer mentors feel more confident, 94% feel better able to ask for help if they need it and 92% agree their self-esteem has improved
- **Improved wellbeing:** As a result of taking part in Good for Girls 98% have a better understanding of what wellbeing means, 88% feel able to make changes or deal with any problems in their life, 83% feel more optimistic about the future, 89% report their wellbeing has improved a lot or a little bit and 57% of peer mentors agree their wellbeing has improved
- **Increased skills and knowledge of youth work professionals:** 88% have developed new skills, 88% have gained new knowledge, 88% have applied what they have learnt in their job and 94% feel more confident delivering wellbeing support
- **Increased capacity of youth organisations:** 88% have a better understanding of what wellbeing support young people need, 88% have a better understanding of what wellbeing support interventions work well and less well for their young people, 81% agree their organisation's skills in delivering wellbeing support have improved and 81% have reached new or more young people who can access other services

### Learning

Learning from both the successes and challenges of year 1 should be useful to inform the design of year 2. To support this we recommend that in year 2 London Youth:

- Consider ring-fencing funding to target young people with disabilities/ additional needs
- Build in more mechanisms to check and challenge youth organisations during the recruitment and set-up phase
- Spend time during the mobilisation phase co-curating a more bespoke training programme that meets individual youth worker needs and review how the training element is communicated
- Build in more opportunities to create a stronger community of practice for both youth workers and peer mentors
- Provide more guidance and support on the peer mentoring element of the programme

# Introduction

London Youth has received funding from The Duke's Foundation to deliver the Good for Girls programme. Building on the learning from the first iteration of the programme, Good for Girls 2.0 will recruit 10 youth organisations per year to support young women or girls aged 10-14 from Black, Asian and/or from minority ethnic communities. The programme aims to provide young women and girls access to relevant, holistic early intervention mental health support in trusted grassroots community youth spaces. The first year of this iteration of the programme ran from June 2024 to March 2025 and involved:

- A weekly programme of positive arts, sports or movement activities and regular talking circles which create safe spaces to talk about their feelings for around 15 young people
- A programme of training for youth workers to better support young people with their mental health and wellbeing
- Planning and delivery of a mental health-focused social action project
- An additional 5 older young women recruited and trained from each organisation to act as peer mentors, enabling them to offer ongoing guidance and mental health support to younger peers

London Youth has appointed Shephard & Moyes Ltd to carry out an external evaluation of the programme that will help London Youth understand what the project has achieved for young people and youth organisations and capture learning to inform future similar programmes.

Specific objectives for the evaluation are to:

- Understand what makes the programme unique in terms of its approach to working with young women and girls from Black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities
- Understand what is possible to achieve with fewer resources than the original pilot programme
- Understand the effectiveness of the new light-touch peer mentoring aspect of the programme and understand what is possible with minimal resources
- Understand the impact of the youth worker training on improving the quality of support to young people
- Understand the changing needs of young people around mental health support

To evaluate the impact of the year 1 programme, this report includes:

- Reach and participation/engagement data, taken from registration forms and registers collected by youth workers.

- Delivery data, taken from a focus group with a sample of youth workers involved in delivering the programme and a youth worker survey
- Impact data taken from young people's surveys collected by youth organisations (n=104), case studies and feedback from young people collected by Shephard & Moyes at three visits to youth organisations

We also facilitated a Learning to Action workshop with the London Youth team with the learning captured at this session incorporated into this report.

This annual evaluation report for year 1 of the programme provides an overview of who was involved, what was delivered and the resulting impact of the programme on young people, youth work professionals and youth organisations.

# About Good for Girls

The Good for Girls programme offers young women and girls from Black, Asian or other minority ethnic communities access to relevant, holistic early intervention mental health support in trusted grassroots community youth spaces. The programme aims to reduce the number of young people requiring specialist services, and instead feel able to turn to their youth worker for this vital, early intervention support.

Good for Girls aims to tackle the following issues:

- Lack of mental health support in formal education or through trusted peers/adults
- Long waiting lists for CAMHS referrals
- Increase in mental health issues amongst target groups (young women/girls from ethnic minority communities), exacerbated by Covid - complexity and severity of issues is increasing
- Lack of skills/confidence and capacity of youth workers to address increase in challenging MH issues young people are presenting with
- Opportunity to build capacity of youth organisations and create community of practice and support for youth workers
- Opportunity to recognise the value of peer mentoring in supporting wellbeing
- Mental health stigma is changing - opportunity to explore this and identify what support is needed

Each of the 10 youth organisations recruited each year receive up to £5,500 to deliver a weekly programme of positive sport, movement and arts activities to improve young people's wellbeing, and support them participate in regular 'talking circles' focused on creating a safe space for girls to talk about their feelings. Good for Girls also aims to empower young girls and women into leadership roles, as they engage in social action and peer mentoring to better support one another in their organisations and local communities.



The programme also includes a significant investment in upskilling youth work professionals to enable them to deliver early intervention wellbeing support to young people. Two youth workers from each organisation are required to take part in a programme of mental health support training.

# Reach

This section of the report considers how youth organisations and young people were engaged in the programme, who took part and their motivations for joining the programme.

## Programme management

It is important to note that in year 1 of the programme, Good for Girls was managed by two separate teams within London Youth, due to the original Programme Manager and Officer leaving their posts during the year. Detailed project plans were established by the original team as part of the programme set up phase, which was longer than what is often possible in other programmes. And the detailed project plans were useful as part of the handover to the new team.

Learning from the programme set up and management of Good for Girls can be summarised as:

- Longer set up phases means that programme timelines can be shaped around the needs of the youth organisations. However, there were still challenges with scheduling some elements of the programme, with some youth work practitioners being overly optimistic about what they could deliver
- Although project plans and other programme management documentation were detailed, London Youth lacks a consistent approach to programme set up. There was some missing information when the programme was handed over which would have been helpful to the new team, and a more consistent approach to documenting agreements made with funders and decisions made would have eased the handover process
- Some aspects of the delivery model adapted from the first iteration of the Good for Girls programme were mis-interpreted, leading to some aspects of the programme not working as well as they could have done. Although detailed learning was captured from the pilot programme's evaluation, more time to check assumptions and plans with the original Good for Girls team would have prevented some of these challenges

## Engaging youth organisations

10 youth organisations were recruited to year 1 of the programme. This was a smaller cohort than in the pilot, due to a reduction in funding. Although a smaller cohort was easier to manage, it did make it difficult to create a strong community of practice amongst organisations, which was a considerable benefit of the pilot

programme and intended to be repeated. This is discussed in more detail in the Delivery chapter below.

Some organisations had delivered Good for Girls during the pilot programme, whereas others were new to this space. Although it is beneficial to have a mix of more and less experienced youth organisations delivering the programme, this did result in some resistance amongst some youth workers to attend the mandatory training, as they had already done this previously. This is discussed in more detail in the following chapter, however more time spent understanding the capacity needs of each youth work professional/youth organisation and designing the subsequent training programme based on their individual needs would help reduce this challenge.

### **Reasons for taking part**

Youth organisations chose to take part in the programme for a range of reasons:

- Targeted support for young women and girls, in particular younger age groups
- The opportunity to deliver a structured programme of positive activities combined with a social action programme
- The opportunity to build partnerships with local schools and attract new young people to the youth organisation
- The focus on providing wellbeing support

*‘We wanted to give girls an actual focus... something that was very tailored to them... to give them actual support. In our organisation, girls usually end up with less opportunity compared to boys, so this programme offered a dedicated space’ (youth worker)*

*‘It was an “opportunity to tie all three elements of peer mentoring, social action and movement together in one... to see what happens when we could do all three of these things with intention and structure.’ (youth worker)*

*‘We wanted to build a better kind of partnership with the school and engage girls who typically wouldn’t attend youth club.’ (youth worker)*

Youth workers reflected on the fact that young women and girls they support face a number of challenges that have the potential to impact their wellbeing. They include: conflicts within friendship groups, peer pressure, feelings of isolation, low confidence and difficulties expressing how they feel, feeling overwhelmed in mixed-gender environments and a lack of safe spaces to discuss personal issues. Youth workers saw the opportunity that Good for Girls provides to tackle some of these challenges by creating girls-only safe spaces,

providing mentoring support from older young people, offering creative and active engagement methods and encouraging leadership and self-expression.

## Engaging young people

Overall a total of 195 young people took part in the Good for Girls programme. Of these 24 were peer mentors and 171 were part of the core Good for Girls group. The original targets were to engage 150 core young people, which has been exceeded, along with 50 peer mentors. Although originally 44 peer mentors signed up to take part in the programme, only 24 progressed to the training.

The table below shows the number of young people each youth organisation recruited to the programme, showing that 6 out of the 10 organisations were successful at achieving the target of recruiting 15 young people to the core group, with three significantly exceeding this target. Only one organisation struggled to engage young people.

Youth organisation	Peer mentors	Core group
Ambition Aspire Achieve	0	7
Ansar Youth Project	0	13
Barking and Dagenham Youth Dance	5	15
Ekota Academy	2	15
Play Place Innov8 CIC	2	11
Project Zero WF CIC	0	14
Reaching Higher	4	16
St Marys Islington Community Partnership	5	30
Start Easy	6	27
The Winchester Project	0	27

Young people were either recruited from within the youth organisation and were already engaged in other programmes, or youth organisations partnered with local schools who led on the recruitment, and these young people were largely unknown to the youth organisation. Although it was beneficial to partner with local schools as this provided a mechanism to engage new young people, it also presented recruitment challenges as youth workers were dependent on the teaching staff to identify suitable young people for the programme.

Some youth organisations experienced challenges recruiting young people, particularly peer mentors, with only 6 youth organisations successfully recruiting to the peer mentor role. Specific challenges experienced included:

- Selecting young people who fit the target groups from within an open-access/mixed youth club setting, which meant some young people were not eligible to join

- Local schools being unwilling to support recruitment efforts
- Some parents being unwilling to allow their children to join the programme
- Existing friendship group dynamics
- Older young people had other commitments which led to challenges recruiting peer mentors amongst the 16+ age group

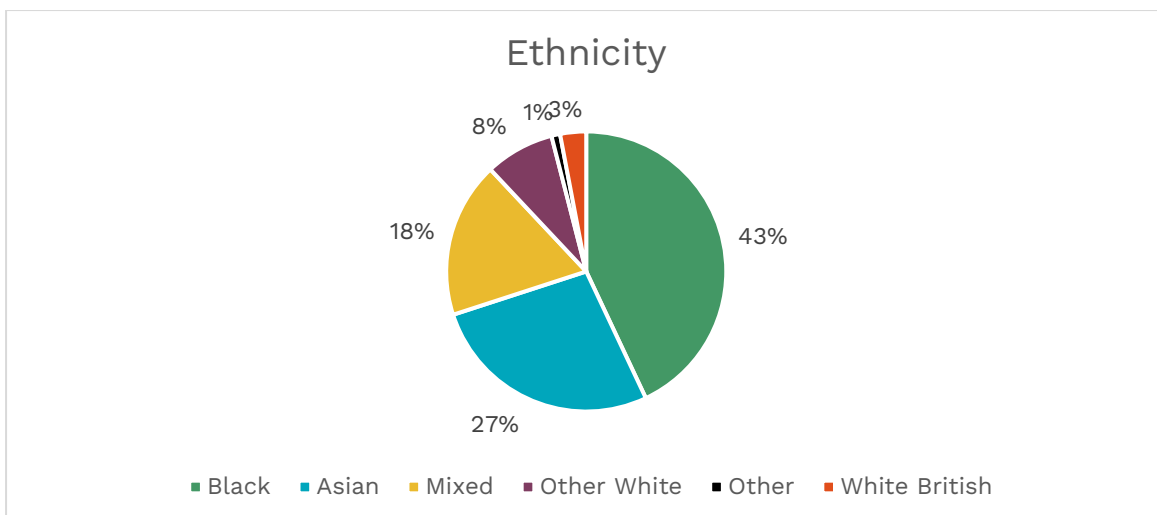
The main ‘hooks’ used to engage young people were the social action project and the opportunity to spend time and socialise with other girls of a similar age. Although wellbeing was a strong theme embedded across all aspects of delivery, Good for Girls was not explicitly labelled a ‘mental health support’ programme.

*‘The reason they came was because they enjoyed having the space to just hang out with each other’ (youth worker)*

### Young people profile

Registration forms collected by youth organisations provide useful data on the demographic profile of young people, helping to understand who is involved in the programme and what groups of young people have been reached. The data shows that overall, the programme engaged:

- 77% were aged 10 (or under) to 14, and 23% were 15+ (see table below). Although it was assumed that peer mentors would be aged 16+, nearly a quarter were younger (13-15), indicating that a more flexible age range for peer mentors may be needed.
- 97% from Black, Asian or other ethnic minority community (see chart below)
- 60% live in the top 30% most deprived communities in England, and
- 4% have a disability



Age	Core group	Peer mentors	All young people
Under 10	2%		2%
10	6%		5%
11	20%		18%
12	17%		16%
13	29%	6%	26%
14	10%	6%	10%
15	10%	12%	10%
16	6%	6%	6%
17	1%	29%	3%
18	0%	41%	4%

Overall, the programme was successful at reaching the target groups, by working with youth organisations that have an existing reach into these communities. Although the programme did not aim to target young people with disabilities, we know from wider datasets that around 9% of young people supported by London Youth programmes have a disability, with around 7% of young people in London have a disability<sup>1</sup>. Learning from other programmes suggests that unless there are targets or intentionality to reach young people with disabilities, a representative sample is unlikely to be reached. If London Youth is keen to reach more disabled young people on future similar programmes, then ring-fencing part of the funding towards youth organisations that specialise in supporting young people with disabilities is the most effective approach.

### Why young people took part

Young people chose to take part in the programme for a number of reasons:

- To meet other girls and connect with people of similar ages and interests
- To learn new skills, particularly interpersonal skills and gain confidence
- To have an opportunity to take part in positive activities
- To have a safe space to talk and share experiences without judgment
- To take part in the social action project and have the opportunity to help others in their community

*'My mum thought it would be good to attend to make new friends' (young person)*

*'I just always wanted to help the community, and I know this will be helpful for my future. Just impacts society and not like just doing something for the*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/disabilities-in-children-and-young-people-in-london/80290270>

*sake of doing it. It's also good for my mental health stuff as it's like, Oh, I feel good about something I've done, I'm doing something that helps, and just not just doing it for fun.'* (young person)

*'I wanted to take part in Good for Girls because I noticed that Good for Girls was actually a project where you could help people in the community feel more safe and you get to connect with people. I think that's a really important thing if we want to, like, change the world someday, because we all have to agree and have a social bond. We can't just change the world and then the other person you're sitting next to is your enemy. So I really think that before we can make a difference we should connect and bond and get to know each other'* (young person)

*'Because it's a project where we get to discuss stuff that we maybe wouldn't discuss with our parents'* (young person)

We also discussed motivations for becoming peer mentors with two young people. They chose to take part as they were keen to provide support to younger pupils at their school, and were keen to build their skills in mentoring support. They saw it as a work experience opportunity and something to put on their personal statements/CVs in future.

*'I like the idea of helping people and being someone others could come to for support. I also wanted to challenge myself by working with a different group of students'* (peer mentor)

# Delivery

This section of the report considers what was delivered, what worked well and the learning captured by youth workers, young people and London Youth that will be useful for designing year 2 of the programme.

## Core delivery

The table below shows the number of sessions delivered, unique young people attending and total attendance for each of the different elements of the core delivery model. Note that these include sessions that peer mentors attended in their role. It shows that the majority of young people attended the sport/arts and talking circles aspects of the project and just over half (55%) attended the social action pitch. The expectation was that a smaller cohort of the wider group would lead on the social action project, with youth organisations given a target of engaging a minimum of 5 young people in this element. In reality more young people chose to take part in this aspect of the project.

Activity	Sessions delivered	Unique young people	Total attendance
Social action pitch	7	109	109
Sports/arts sessions	206	175	2,099
Talking circles	195	175	1,980

It is important to note that for the majority of youth organisations, the sports and arts sessions were combined with the talking circle sessions, however these were reported separately on registers. Taking this double counting into account, youth organisations delivered a total of 238 sessions across the programme, with youth organisations delivering between 15 and 48 sessions each. The expectation was that each youth organisation would deliver 24 weekly sessions, however only four organisations achieved this. Four organisations delivered between 20 and 23 sessions and three delivered less than 20 sessions. On average, each young person took part in 12 sessions each.

Although there was variation between different youth organisations, the social action projects and positive activities were cited as particular strengths of the programme. 100% found the sport/art sessions valuable in terms of building in enjoyable activities which kept the group motivated and engaged. Youth workers and young people also reported that creative activities helped give them a means by which they could express themselves.

*‘Sometimes a young person will talk to us through the way they dance, and if there is energy pouring out of a young person... we might go, ‘Everything all right?’ (youth worker)*

87% of youth workers found the social action projects valuable. In particular, youth organisations and young people highly valued the opportunity to turn ideas into tangible actions, something that many young people had not had the opportunity to do before.

*‘What comes to mind in terms of a highlight or success was the social action pitch that the girls delivered to the panel. The prep leading up to the actual pitch, the excitement and nervousness, and then the support that they gave each other and doing what most of them found to be an anxiety causing effort. It went really, really well and was a positive experience, and just kind of deepened the relationship they had, because they kind of came through a challenge together and felt really good about the outcome’ (youth worker)*

*‘They actually got some money and were able to do the idea rather than just talk about it theoretically’ (youth worker)*

*‘The young people wanted to challenge the idea of coffee mornings, and so designed their own cocoa afternoons. That just put a really big smile on my face. I just thought there was something quite nice about young people wanting to come together over a nice, hot drink and a little snack, and, you know, hopefully away from their phones’ (youth worker)*

*‘I think the most rewarding part for the young people, because they haven’t stopped talking about it, is the social action element where they cooked hot meals to feed the homeless. And, they are a young group, and at first I didn’t think there’d be that much of an impact. But the first gentleman we served, he cried because the girls gave him food. And then they got emotional. And even last night, we had our last session and they were still talking about it, and how much it impacted them’ (youth worker)*

*‘Feeding the homeless was really rewarding, I enjoyed shopping for the ingredients, preparing the food, making the parcels and then giving them out to the homeless on the streets. They were so happy with the food.’ (young person)*

### **Talking circles**

Youth organisations used a range of methods to incorporate talking circles into the programme delivery. For some, it was a structured part of the session, with

the group encouraged to answer specific questions, with young people also coming up with their own questions.

Others used a more organic approach, and rather than the group sitting in a circle discussing particular topics, instead youth workers integrated conversations into delivery.

*'We're always really reluctant to create a specific space for people to talk, because then it becomes that's the only space that you can talk. You have to really care for how you manage that. Even if you come to a dance class, if you come for a social action workshop, whatever it is, there's always a trusted adult for you to be able to talk to.'* (youth worker)

This worked well for some younger members, who struggled to have more 'serious' conversations in a more structured group environment but were happy to have conversations during the positive activities.

*'Because we had predominantly 10 to 12-year-olds, there was some immaturity, not being able to talk about their feelings, and we'd have a lot of giggling. So it was quite challenging. So we made it a bit more organic. As opposed to putting them in a circle, because it just didn't work, they felt pressured. Whereas just sitting around the table doing an activity, I'll ask them about school today, and they'll tell me about having an argument with a friend'* (youth worker)

One group also incorporated non-verbal ways to support young people to express how they felt, using different coloured hearts to represent different emotional states.

*'Just before we began any session, whatever it was, we'd have a mental health check-in, and it was literally just a small piece of paper with different coloured hearts, with each heart represented, 'I'm doing okay', 'I'm doing great', 'I'm in a dark place', 'I wouldn't mind if someone reached out to me', and that kind of helped. They would do it. They'll just come, they'll take it off us, they'll give it back to us. And that kind of gave us the indication, okay, this is someone that we need to pull aside, have a conversation with them. And that was really, really helpful'*

The key learning from youth workers was that talking circles should be flexible, responsive to the group's needs, and not feel forced. Although some youth organisations experienced challenges with getting the talking circles right, 100% found them an effective element of the programme. The different approaches used also illustrate the importance of London Youth having conversations with youth organisations prior to delivery, to ensure they are using an approach that works for their young people.

## Keeping young people engaged

Youth workers were able to detail what worked to encourage young people to retain their engagement throughout the programme:

- Food incentives
- Fun activities that the young people already enjoy doing
- Providing leadership opportunities through the social action project which built in ownership
- Keeping it relevant and giving young people a choice
- Providing opportunities for building social connections which built a strong sense of belonging
- Having a specific project to deliver with a fixed end date
- Building trust and a safe space to connect and talk

*'Having the activities attached... dance class... is a bit of a deal breaker for young people' (youth worker)*

*'They took the lead on what they wanted to do, when they wanted to do it... they felt like this was our project' (youth worker)*

*'I liked the arts session and the movement sessions, doing Tik Tok dances was really good' (young person)*

*'There's always a trusted adult for you to be able to talk to... we needed to be in a space with them on a regular basis where they feel that it's safe, that they can respond to whatever had happened in the week' (youth worker)*

Overall, creating a dedicated space for girls of a similar age and background to come together, socialise, talk about their feelings and plan projects together creates an incredibly strong sense of belonging, which motivates them to stay engaged.

*'It's just nice to see the girls just really bonding. Even when we have other things within our community happening, they're still holding on to that sisterhood, and it's just nice to just see them encouraging each other, just being there for one another.'* (youth worker)

## Peer mentoring

In addition to the core delivery, peer mentors attended a separate training session. Although 40 peer mentors were initially recruited, only 24 attended the training, which enabled them to act as peer mentors going forwards. Data on peer mentor attendance at sessions wasn't captured in year 1, but will be in year 2 in order to

better understand the extent to which peer mentors supported sessions following the training.

Some youth organisations found the peer mentoring element a significant challenge, with four unable to implement this aspect of the programme. Some found it hard to recruit to the role (as discussed above), whereas others found it hard to incorporate the older age group with the younger. And almost half of those initially recruited did not attend the training.

*'We really struggled... we went externally, sent leaflets to all the schools. We just didn't get a response at all' (youth worker)*

Despite these challenges, 76% of youth workers found the peer mentoring element of the programme an effective part of the programme and for some it was a particular highlight.

*'Probably the biggest success on this project was engaging the peer mentors. It was really great to have them, and they played such an important role in building the relationship with the girls that we worked on on this project, because we delivered in a school. It was a bit strange for them, because as a youth worker, you're still kind of perceived as an adult in the space, and there's this kind of almost like a fear of engagement with the adult in the space. However, three of our peer mentors were alumni from the same school. That's where they did their secondary school, so they bonded a lot over talking about different teachers and sharing kind of coping mechanisms, and it was really great to see them build that relationship with the peer mentors'*

Suggestions to improve the peer mentoring element going forward included:

- Greater flexibility over the age range
- Recognising it as a work experience role – potentially including some recognition or reward for their commitment
- Integrate peer mentors from the start of the programme
- Provide a clearer structure and expectations
- More opportunities for peer mentors to network and connect following the training
- Sharing learning from other youth organisations' experiences, particularly around how to recruit peer mentors

*'It would be really great if, in the future, we would have the possibility to also pay peer mentors... even if it's some kind of voucher or something that's built into the project'*

## Youth worker training and support

Good for Girls differs from most London Youth programmes in that it includes a significant investment in youth worker skills, through a mandatory training programme. In the pilot programme the training programme was refined each year in order to better meet youth worker needs, however an ideal solution to the timing and scheduling of the programme was difficult to find. In the second year of the pilot programme the training changed from all mandatory, to a mix of core mandatory modules and additional optional modules, which was well received. Unfortunately, this learning was not taken through to this iteration of the programme, which in year 1 included a significant mandatory training element of around 40 hours.

Overall, 12 training sessions were delivered by a range of providers. A total of 29 youth workers attended between 1 and 12 sessions each, with an average of 5 sessions per youth worker. This demonstrates the significant challenge of mandating training; with mostly part time and some voluntary members of staff (who have full time jobs outside of their youth worker role) being unable to commit to the whole programme. A different approach is needed for youth workers who have previously delivered the programme (and attended the training). For example, the Young Culture Makers programme delivered previously deliberately reduced the training for youth workers who continued from year 1 to year 2 of the programme in order to test the sustainability of the programme.

Despite these challenges, 90% of youth workers were very or quite satisfied with the individual training sessions they attended and 82% rated the training as an effective part of the programme. Although 77% said the training met their needs, this is lower than you would normally expect when training is optional; as people are able to select which courses meet their own individual needs.

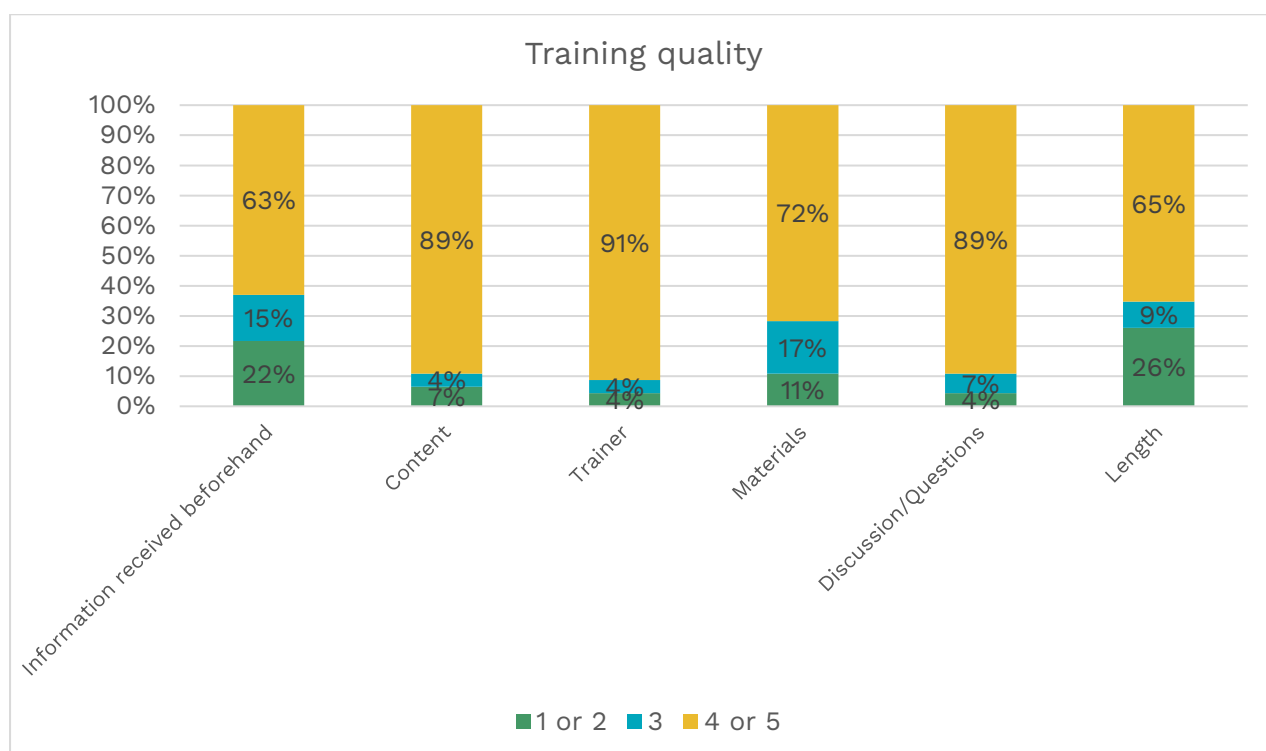
91% said that they will be able to use what they learnt at the training course. Only 59% agreed that they had learnt new skills, which is more evidence of the challenge of mandating training, as some people will already possess the skills being developed.

The chart below shows the results of feedback provided by youth workers at the end of each training session. It shows that while 91% rated the trainer and 89% rated the delivery and opportunity for questions and discussions as 4 or 5 out of 5, some other aspects of the sessions could be improved; including the information sent out beforehand, the length of the session (some were felt to be too long) and the materials provided. Feedback from youth workers also suggested some duplication between sessions delivered by different trainers, and a strong desire for more tools and handouts they could take away from the sessions to use with young people. Youth workers reported feeling overwhelmed by the quantity of training, the sessions were time consuming and online sessions felt too impersonal and did not provide opportunities for networking and peer support.

*'The training looked really good on paper, but when it was actually rolled out, I think there were lots of little niggly bits' (youth worker)*

*'I would have preferred more condensed sessions, fewer days of actual training' (youth worker)*

*'Online training was very distant, very unsocial' (youth worker)*



To improve the training, youth workers wanted more:

- Condensed training
- In-person sessions
- Clearer structure
- Meaningful content
- Networking opportunities

Overall, the training aspect of the programme should be seen as a significant benefit of the programme in terms of supporting CPD of youth work professionals. However, more work needs to be done for it to be perceived in this way by all. Language around 'compulsory' training can make it seem like a tick box exercise rather than an opportunity, and a one size fits all approach does not work.

We would recommend that the training programme be more bespoke to the needs of each individual youth organisation or youth worker. The sessions themselves can remain the same, however, work can be done as part of the set up of the programme to diagnose specifically which sessions would be most relevant and beneficial to each youth worker involved, and an individual programme curated with them. This is likely to achieve a greater sense of buy-in to the training programme, as well as it better meeting their needs. However, this will require additional resources to achieve.

In addition to the training, Good for Girls also aimed to create a strong community of practice amongst the youth work professionals delivering the programme. Due to the relatively small number of youth organisations involved and limited resources to build in networking opportunities outside of the training, the success of this aspect of the programme was limited in year 1. Although youth workers valued the training as opportunities to connect to each other, more support to network and offer peer support was desired.

*‘Having that space where we’re constantly meeting... discussing what’s happening... was really beneficial’ (youth worker)*

Overall, 69% of youth workers rated the opportunities to connect and network with each other as an effective part of the programme, demonstrating there is room to improve this aspect of Good for Girls in year 2.

# Impact

This chapter considers what difference the programme has made to young people, youth workers and youth organisations.

## Impact on young people

The young person's survey, case studies produced by youth workers, as well as conversations with youth workers and young people have helped us to understand the difference the programme has made to young people.

### Increased access to positive activities and safe spaces to talk about wellbeing

Results of the end of the programme survey demonstrate the high levels of satisfaction young people had with the programme:

- 98% of the core group and 95% of peer mentors enjoyed taking part
- 93% agreed they had a choice over what they did or didn't do
- 98% felt their views and feelings were listened to without being judged

*'[I enjoyed] making the t shirts about friends because it shows how important friends are' (young person)*

*'I enjoyed when we were doing our social action because I got more close to my friends' (young person)*

*'I enjoyed the music because I love dancing' (young person)*

*'I enjoyed meeting new people and making new friends, I liked all the arts sessions, the theatre trip and feeding the homeless. Learning about mental health and wellbeing was also good.' (young person)*

It is clear that Good for Girls is providing safe spaces for young women and girls to talk about their wellbeing in a trusted environment:

- 96% felt safe and comfortable talking about wellbeing at their YO
- 96% know where to go if they need help with their wellbeing

Young people talked about feeling part of a family or sisterhood, which along with the trusted relationship they have with their youth worker provides them with the confidence to talk about how they feel. Young people also feel able to be themselves with the group.

*'I feel safe to talk about anything.' (young person)*

*'In here, I feel like I've known everyone for like, so long I could just trust everyone with what I say. Because instead of it being like, a teacher or other students [at school], here it's more like a family' (young person)*

*'I think being in this group has helped me really understand that we can discuss [how we feel] and not be judged' (young person)*

*'I would say that you guys are like my sisters. Because, when I was in here two years ago, I wouldn't... I know I'm a very, like, kind of weird person, and [before] I wouldn't feel comfortable, but now I do.' (young person)*

Being a 'girls only' group was also important to creating this safe space.

*'Because when you're in the same gender, you're more comfortable to say things without feeling like you're being judged. The boys sometimes, because not everyone's the same, but sometimes they'll judge you for the smallest things, and you don't really feel comfortable saying things which can lead you to that [judgement]'* (young person)

#### **Case study**

She is a 12 years old, school year 8 and a mainstream student. She was experiencing low energy levels, a lack of motivation and irregular sleeping patterns. She also struggled with anxiety, which affects her social interactions and school performance.

Her mum recommended her to the Good for Girls programme to help improve her physical and mental health. Initially she was hesitant to participate in group activities and talking circle due to her social anxiety. She also struggled with maintaining a healthy diet due to family financial issues.

Six weeks into the programme she started to make friends, participate in group activities and occasionally share in talking circle sessions. She also started to feel more energetic due to her getting more exercise as she was now doing regular Tic Tok dance routines at home as well as at the sessions. By week eleven she became much more confident in group activities and group discussions, she had also built close friendships.

As we come towards the end of the programme, she has reported improved sleep, reduced anxiety and a greater sense of self-confidence, which has been witnessed by the attending members of staff. She has successfully incorporated more healthy eating habits she learned by sharing her challenges in a small circle session. She now exercises regularly, doing her dance routines and is considering joining a dance school/group. Using mindful techniques she learned at sessions, she can manage stress better and she plans to continue to look after her mental health and wellbeing after the programme has ended.

### Improved confidence

Creating strong bonds, working as a team and delivering the social action project has also helped improve young people's confidence and self-esteem:

- 90% of core young people and 95% of peer mentors feel more confident
- 94% feel better able to ask for help if they need it
- 92% agree their self-esteem has improved

*'At first it was really nerve wracking. But then you started to, like, develop your confidence more, and then you actually thought, like all these people are sharing their ideas, so like, why can't I share mine? And after I shared my views, I felt like I could express myself without you know, putting myself down' (young person)*

The inclusion of peer mentors has also helped the younger age groups feel more confident, as they have developed experience of talking to older young people.

*'I am more confident as I can share more of myself, it really brought out my self esteem. Something about me is I don't really like talking to new people. So I like the fact that I've been able to talk to new people, and I opened up myself, and I've gotten closer to people outside of my age range a little bit.'* (young person)

And conversely, being a peer mentor has helped the older age groups build their own confidence:

*'I feel like it's built my self esteem. I'm more confident' (peer mentor)*

### **Case study: Ayesha's Voice (name changed for anonymity)**

When Ayesha first joined the Good for Girls programme, she barely spoke. At 12 years old, she was quiet, withdrawn, and rarely made eye contact. Her teachers described her as “present but disconnected,” and she often sat at the edge of activities, unsure of how to take part. At home, she kept her feelings to herself, and when asked how she was doing, her most common reply was, “I’m fine.”

Everything began to shift slowly first through the sports sessions. Football and basketball became more than just games; they were gateways. “I liked running and playing,” Ayesha shared quietly after one session. “It made me feel free like I could forget everything for a bit.” These moments helped her connect with the group and gave her the confidence to show up physically and emotionally.

The Talking Circles were a turning point. At first, she listened, nodding gently, but week by week, she found her voice. One day she said, “Sometimes I feel really overwhelmed, but I don’t know how to explain it.”

That small sentence was a breakthrough. From there, Ayesha began to open up in the circle and life. She started asking for help, reaching out to mentors, and encouraging others to speak up.

The peer mentors became her role models. “They’ve been through stuff too, so they actually get it,” she said. She stayed behind after sessions to ask questions, not because she had to, but because she wanted to learn how to support others like they supported her.

By the end of the programme, Ayesha was no longer the quiet girl in the corner. She had built friendships, grown in confidence, and expressed an interest in becoming a peer mentor herself. “I didn’t think I’d ever talk like this,” she said with a smile, “but now I want to help other girls find their voice too.”

Good for Girls didn’t just support Ayesha’s wellbeing it transformed it. It gave her a space to feel seen, a team to grow with, and a voice she now proudly uses to lift others.

### **Improved wellbeing**

Overall, the programme has helped young people better understand wellbeing, talk about their lives and challenges and improve their wellbeing. Many young people also spoke about how much they valued the opportunity to help other people’s wellbeing through the social action project.

As a result of taking part in Good for Girls:

- 98% have a better understanding of what wellbeing means

- 88% feel able to make changes or deal with any problems in their life
- 83% feel more optimistic about the future
- 92% have made new friends or strengthened existing relationships
- 89% report their wellbeing has improved a lot or a little bit and 57% of peer mentors agree their wellbeing has improved

*'Helped me realise that I'm not the only girl who struggles with certain issues.'* (young person)

*'It has helped me gain more of an understanding of life'* (young person)

*'It has helped me by understanding my feelings and how I can talk about them.'* (young person)

*'It has helped my mental health, self esteem and happiness.'* (young person)

*'Being able to talk through our feelings in talking circle was really helpful'* (young person)

### **Improved leadership and peer mentoring skills**

The programme has also supported the development of young people's leadership and peer mentoring skills. Feedback from the peer mentors shows that:

- 95% feel more confident talking to other young people about wellbeing
- 86% agree that being a peer mentor has helped them better understand what wellbeing means
- 76% have learnt more about themselves and other young people
- 90% feel they have been able to help or support other young people with their wellbeing
- 81% agree their communication skills have improved
- 86% agree their leadership skills have improved
- 100% would like to continue being a peer mentor

*'It has taught me others feelings and why they may act a certain way.'* (peer mentor)

*'Being a peer mentor has helped mentally and has made me more confident when speaking around people about these type of conversations'* (peer mentor)

*'I've become more confident as a leader'* (peer mentor)

*'It made me more confident to talk about things that I won't really talk about to others' (peer mentor)*

#### **Case study: Peer mentor**

This young person has been involved in different Winch offerings over the years. In the past six months, however, she has been clear in setting skill-building goals. More specifically, she has sought to develop public speaking skills, peer mentoring skills and relationship building skills.

With support from staff, this young person positioned herself to engage and contribute to activities and initiatives that challenged her to speak in group settings and with partner organisations and funders, complete an intensive peer mentoring training and try new things that she otherwise would not have.

She joined the Good for Girls peer mentoring and social action group in September and has been a consistent voice and presence. One milestone for the group and for her is having delivered a social action pitch to panellists from London Youth. After weeks of planning and preparation, they gave a compelling project pitch to address sexual harassment in public spaces. She volunteered to both open and close the pitch and made important contributions to the content and presentation style. The panellists gave glowing reviews and useful suggestions. Within the same provision, she completed an intensive peer mentoring training delivered by London Youth and Fitzrovia In Action.

Most recently, she was fully involved in hip hop dance despite having said that she "really doesn't like to dance." She dove right into the exercises and enjoyed the session.

As a result of her engagement she is making strides in her goals as named above and, in doing so, has become more confident, vocal and aspirational. She shows greater ease in trying new things, contributing in group settings and taking initiative in and outside of the Winch. She was successful in applying for a work-experience project and has been proud in the way she describes her responsibilities and schedule.

## **Impact on youth organisations**

Surveys and conversations with youth workers have helped to understand the impact of the programme on youth work professionals and youth organisations.

### **Youth workers**

Despite the challenges with delivering a relevant training programme, Good for Girls has been successful at building skills and knowledge of youth work professionals, to enable them to effectively support young people with their wellbeing. The results of the youth worker survey show that:

- 88% have developed new skills
- 88% have gained new knowledge

- 88% have applied what they have learnt in their job
- 94% feel more confident delivering wellbeing support
- 81% feel better supported in providing wellbeing support

*‘Having the opportunity to participate in training centred on mental health and wellbeing was so beneficial to supporting the delivery of the Good for Girls programme. The knowledge, skills and professional development I gained through the training opportunities, allowed me to be a better worker for the young people. The resources we had access too from the training sessions also benefitted both myself and the young people.’ (youth worker)*

*‘I’ve learnt new tools in how to deliver and work with young people in different ways. Looking at my own mental health first helps to provide support to the young people’s mental health.’ (youth worker)*

*‘I’ve had discussions with people and networking with other organisations has been a big help. I have agoraphobia and coming to trainings has helped me come out of the shell. I’ve learned a lot about mental health when it comes to the more science based knowledge i.e. hormones and developmental stages in life which has allowed me to access new styles of approaching young people and their needs’ (youth worker)*

*‘Taking part in Good for Girls has benefited me in the following ways: honed my practice in planning and facilitating social action sessions designed specifically for girls and young women, deepened my appreciation for youth-led social action. Listening to the girls in exploring issues of sexual harassment and supporting their ideas to address the issues were truly inspiring.’ (youth worker)*

Although the majority of youth workers felt supported to manage their own wellbeing, only 69% agreed with this, suggesting that more could be done to facilitate this type of support. London Youth are exploring how, as part of their wider membership offer they can build in more opportunities for youth work professionals to benefit from peer to peer support, professional supervision via 1-1 coaching from more senior youth workers, as well as access counselling services if required.

### **Impact on the youth organisation**

As well as building individual youth worker skills and knowledge, Good for Girls is also building the capacity of youth organisations more broadly, helping them to develop more effective approaches to supporting young people’s wellbeing. As a result of the programme:

- 88% have a better understanding of what wellbeing support young people need
- 88% have a better understanding of what wellbeing support interventions work well and less well for their young people
- 81% agree their organisation's skills in delivering wellbeing support have improved
- 81% have reached new or more young people who can access other services

As discussed in the previous chapter, this year of the Good for Girls programme had limited opportunities for peer support. This is reflected in the results of the youth work survey, which showed that:

- 69% have built or strengthened relationships with partner organisations, and
- 69% are better connected to other youth organisations

Although still positive results, more could be done to facilitate greater networking between organisations. Dedicated networking events (outside the formal training programme) may help to support this outcome in year 2.

*'Our organisation has benefited from being a part of the Good for Girls programme in the following ways: broadened our understanding of issues that impact girls and young women. Deepened our understanding of how gender-specific programming impacts wellbeing. Consequently, our organisation is better positioned to plan and deliver programmes specifically for girls and young women, particularly towards increasing wellbeing and co-design/ delivering social action projects.'* (youth worker)

*'We were able to put on a great targeted session for young females, as well as give our youth workers an opportunity to take part in exceptional training. We will be embedding some of the structure into Reaching Higher space moving forward, and look forward to embedding the learnings.'* (youth worker)

*'Being part of the Good for Girls programme has significantly strengthened our organisation's ability to support young people's wellbeing. It improved our understanding of the most effective interventions, upskilled our team, and expanded our reach. We also developed stronger partnerships and networks to benefit future programmes and collaboration. Overall, it has enhanced our offer and confidence in delivering meaningful, youth-focused support.'* (youth worker)

# Conclusions

The Good for Girls programme in 2024/25 engaged 10 youth organisations and 195 young people in an early intervention wellbeing support programme aimed at young women and girls from ethnic minority or deprived communities. Young people aged 10-14 took part in a total of 228 weekly sessions that involved sport/arts activities, talking circles and the planning and delivery of a community social action project focusing on mental health. In addition, the programme provided training for 29 youth workers to build skills around providing wellbeing support, as well as a peer mentoring element that provided training for 24 older young people (13+) to support the younger core group.

As a result of the programme, young people have a better understanding of what wellbeing means, know where to go and feel better able to ask for help if they need it. They feel more confident, more optimistic, their self-esteem has improved and they now feel better able to deal with any problems in their lives. 89% report that their wellbeing has improved as a result of taking part. In addition to the outcomes for young people, youth workers have improved knowledge and skills around delivering early intervention wellbeing support, and youth organisations have improved their offer.

## **Key learning: Successes**

The key strengths and successes of year 1 of the current iteration of Good for Girls can be summarised as follows:

- The ability of youth organisations to build trusted relationships and create safe spaces for young people to share their feelings and discuss their wellbeing
- The ability of grassroots community-based organisations to reach young people from marginalised or underserved communities
- The structure of the programme, mixing positive activities with a social action element which keeps young people engaged and motivated
- Creating a safe space for young girls of a similar age and background to come together, socialise, talk about their feelings and plan projects together creates an incredibly strong sense of belonging
- Using creative arts as a way to support young people to express how they feel
- The flexible approach to delivery, particularly talking circles, that can meet the needs of individual groups
- The focus on wellbeing targeted at young women and girls that helps them deal with challenges such as conflicts in friendship groups, peer pressure, low confidence, feeling overwhelmed in mixed-gender environments and difficulties expressing how they feel

- The inclusion of the social action project was a big motivator for young people to get involved; having responsibility for designing and delivering a project that supported their community was a big motivator, as well as helping to develop team working and leadership skills
- A more structured peer mentoring programme than in the first iteration of the programme, where young people receive training and a clear role in terms of supporting the younger cohort, providing useful work experience and skills development
- Overall high levels of satisfaction with the programme from young people and youth workers

### **Key learning: Challenges**

Challenges experienced in year 1 included:

- Some youth organisations struggled to recruit young people, although 6 out of 10 achieved the target of 15 for the core group
- Having a relatively large age range was a challenge for some organisations, with 10 year olds experiencing different issues than 14 year olds
- Recruiting peer mentors was a bigger challenge for more youth organisations, with older young people having more commitments than the younger cohort
- Ensuring the training programme met the needs of youth organisations; although a significant investment in building the capacity of youth work professionals, the training programme required a large commitment of time, limited ability to be flexible to the needs of individual youth workers (in terms of their existing skill sets and availability) and some duplication in content with a number of providers delivering sessions. Mandating a relatively fixed training programme resulted in some dissatisfaction, although the majority still found it valuable
- Limited opportunities for peer support between youth work professionals; caused by a smaller cohort and fewer resources at London Youth to facilitate this. The desire to create a strong community of practice that was seen in the first iteration of the programme had limited success, and there are opportunities to build on this in year 2

### **Recommendations**

Learning from both the successes and challenges of year 1 should be useful to inform the design of year 2. To support this, we recommend that London Youth:

- Consider ring-fencing funding to target young people with disabilities/additional needs and/or discussing with youth organisations how they could reach more disabled young people

- Build in more mechanisms to check and challenge youth organisations around their ability to recruit and engage young people from the target age groups
- Spend time during the mobilisation phase co-curating a more bespoke training programme that meets individual youth organisation/youth worker needs – ensure there are sufficient resources for London Youth to facilitate this
- Review/revise messaging around the training aspect of the programme in order to generate more buy-in
- Increase resources for the team to attend a sample of training workshops, in order to ensure content isn't duplicated and provide a quality assurance role
- Consider creation of online learning (that people can access in their own time) alongside live training
- Ensure a mix of in-person and remote training/networking opportunities
- Build in more resources/handouts into the training programme
- Build in more opportunities to create a stronger community of practice amongst the year 2 cohort
- Provide more guidance and support on the peer mentoring element of the programme and consider building this in from the start and providing incentives or rewards for taking part
- Consider building in more opportunities for peer mentors to create their own community of practice
- Amend registers to ensure sessions delivered on the same day are not double counted
- Amend registers to ensure sessions peer mentors attend/support are also captured
- Ensure enough time to plan and promote Celebration events in order to maximise attendance and ensure adequately resourced in terms of staff attendance

# Appendix 1: Theory of Change

