

London Youth

Good for Girls

Year 2 Evaluation Report 2026



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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 across the two years of the programme were:

- 19 youth organisations and 391 young women and girls engaged
- 78% were aged 10-14, 96% were from Black, Asian or other minority ethnic communities and 55% lived in the top 30% most deprived communities in England
- 468 sport, arts and talking circle sessions delivered, with each young person taking part in an average of 12 sessions
- 48 peer mentors trained and supported to act as role models for younger participants
- 19 youth worker training sessions delivered, with 52 youth workers trained
- Extremely high levels of satisfaction throughout the programme; 98% of the core group and 95% of peer mentors enjoyed taking part
- The most effective elements of the programme were consistently identified as the core programme activities: sport and arts activities, talking circles and youth-led social action projects
- Learning from Year 1 was successfully used to strengthen delivery in Year 2, including improvements to the peer mentoring model, youth worker training, programme induction and opportunities for youth organisations to connect and share learning.

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 trusted girls-only spaces where young women and girls feel comfortable discussing their wellbeing. 91% 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 and sense of belonging:** Building friendships, working together and delivering youth-led social action projects increased confidence, self-esteem and leadership skills. 86% feel more confident talking about how they feel, 92% feel better able to ask for help if they need it and 88% report improved self-esteem.
- **Improved wellbeing:** The programme helped young people better understand wellbeing, develop stronger friendships and improve their mental wellbeing. 94% have a better understanding of wellbeing, 87% feel better able to deal with challenges in their lives, 90% have made new friends or strengthened existing relationships and 86% report that their wellbeing has improved.
- **Increased skills and confidence of youth workers:** The programme strengthened youth workers' ability to provide wellbeing support. 85% developed new skills, 93% gained new knowledge, 89% applied what they learnt in their role and 89% feel more confident supporting young people's wellbeing.
- **Increased capacity of youth organisations:** Youth organisations strengthened their wellbeing offer, improved understanding of effective approaches and developed stronger partnerships. 89% have a better understanding of young people's wellbeing needs, 85% report improved organisational skills in delivering wellbeing support and 81% have reached new or more young people who can access additional services.

Learning

The evaluation demonstrates that Good for Girls provides an effective model for supporting the wellbeing of young women and girls through trusted community youth organisations. The combination of positive activities, talking circles, social action and peer mentoring creates safe spaces where young people develop confidence, build friendships and improve their wellbeing, while the programme also strengthens the skills and capacity of youth workers and organisations.

A particular strength of the programme has been London Youth's commitment to continuous improvement. Learning from Year 1 informed a number of changes to delivery in Year 2, resulting in improvements to the peer mentoring model, training programme, programme support and opportunities for networking between organisations.

Future programmes should continue to build on these strengths by developing a more personalised approach to youth worker training, providing additional support for recruiting and retaining peer mentors and investing further in communities of practice for youth workers and peer mentors.

Introduction

London Youth has received funding from The Duke's Foundation and Kate Spade New York's Global Fund for Women's Mental Health to deliver the Good for Girls programme. The programme was delivered over two years; 2024/25 and 2025/26. 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 and girls or marginalised genders¹ 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. Both years of the programme 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
- For each organisation, 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 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 were 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

¹ This decision is taken by the youth workers according to context

- Understand the changing needs of young people around mental health support

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

- Reach and participation/engagement data, taken from registration forms and registers collected by youth workers.
- Delivery data, taken from focus groups with a sample of youth workers involved in delivering the programme and annual youth worker surveys
- Impact data taken from young people's surveys collected by youth organisations each year (n=144), case studies and feedback from young people collected by Shephard & Moyes at visits to youth organisations

We also facilitated two annual Learning to Action workshops with the London Youth team with the learning captured at these sessions incorporated into this report.

This evaluation report 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. It includes data and learning from both years of the programme.

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 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 over the two years of the programme, Good for Girls was managed by two separate teams and three different Programme Officers within London Youth, due to the original Programme Manager and Officer leaving their posts during year 1 and another Programme Officer leaving during year 2. 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. However, staff turnover resulted in some issues ensuring consistent communication and continuity with building and maintaining relationships with youth work professionals.

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 lacked a consistent approach to programme set up during year 1 of the programme. 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. Work has since been done to build a more consistent approach, processes and templates across the organisation.
- Some aspects of the delivery model adapted from the first iteration of the Good for Girls programme were mis-interpreted in year 1, 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 effort to check assumptions and plans with the original Good for Girls team would have prevented some of these challenges
- A well planned and structured induction in year 2, attended by all youth organisations and external trainers resulted in a good level of understanding

of the programme expectations as well as opportunities for youth work professionals to start building connections between organisations

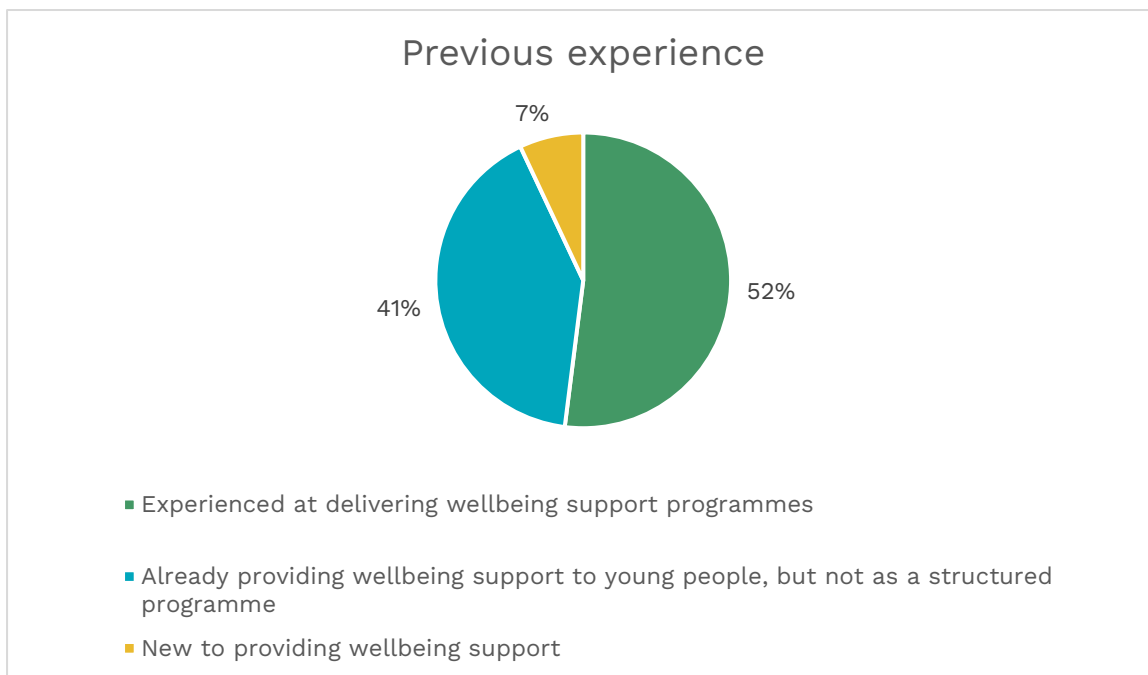
- Simplifying the handbook by focusing on key messages and removing lots of detail has meant it has been well used in year 2

Engaging youth organisations

10 youth organisations were recruited to year 1 of the programme and 10 originally recruited in year 2, with one organisation subsequently withdrawing before delivery started. 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.

Demand for the programme was high, with 48 applications received in year 2. While the quality of applications varied, selecting only 10 organisations was a challenge with not much to choose from in some cases with the quality generally being high. The better applications were from organisations that fully understood the purpose of the programme; in particular the need to deliver a structured programme rather than resources to support groups of young people in a more open access environment. In year 2, recruitment of youth organisations took place over the summer which was an additional challenge as this is one of the busiest times of the year for youth organisations, so response times were slow.

Across both years, some organisations had delivered Good for Girls before, whereas others were new to this space. Of the youth workers who completed the surveys across both years of the programme, just over half (52%) were experienced at delivering structured wellbeing support programmes, 41% were providing wellbeing support to young people, but not as a structured programme and 7% were new to providing wellbeing support.



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. That said, organisations that had delivered before were able to produce high quality applications and in the majority of cases delivered the programme well.

'It's the third time we've run Good for Girls... but for us it's always an opportunity to try something new... this time we used it as an opportunity to bring the younger girls in...' (youth worker)

In year 2, one organisation originally engaged experienced significant problems recruiting young people and subsequently dropped out of the programme. While the application form was strong, it soon became clear that the people tasked with delivery did not have a good level of understanding of the programme's requirements; something that London Youth could not have foreseen. London Youth is always keen to support organisations without extensive experience of delivering structured programme as part of its ethos of building the capacity of grassroots youth organisations; sometimes giving organisations a chance pays off, but sometimes it doesn't.

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
- Strong alignment with their existing provision and values
- The focus on youth-led activities (in particular the peer mentoring and social action project)

'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)

'For us, we [only] work with girls first of all, so it was very on brand. And a lot of the components of this programme just overlapped with what we did anyway, so like the talking circles, creating that safe space, providing creative activities, physical activities, and we also have been wanting to push our youth-led provision, so the peer mentoring was a really nice aspect, and the social action project as well. So it just was really complementary to what we already do and what we would like to continue to do' (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 or family pressure, feelings of isolation, low confidence and difficulties expressing how they feel, school pressures, feeling overwhelmed in mixed-gender environments and a lack of safe spaces to discuss personal issues. Youth workers are also reporting a rise in violence against young women and girls and an increase in reports of sexual assault. 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.

'We saw the numbers of violence against women and girls rise in our borough. So, the one reason why we wanted to go for the Good for Girls programme was to have something focused on our females and to really let them have that programme to themselves to talk about these challenges that they face and give them that space' (youth worker)

'I've actually just been having conversations this morning around the rise of sexual assaults in our borough at the moment, a lot of our female young people are disclosing that they've been victims of sexual assault' (youth worker)

'I think it's important to create a more flexible environment where they are safe, they can come, they can talk, and without the pressure of school. I think that affects a lot of the mental health that sometimes we don't notice' (youth worker)

'The school referred these young girls to us, and they are the unseen and unheard in their classes. They are so meek. When they came in, I'd start off like an okay, get to know you... They didn't speak, literally' (youth worker)

'The girls that I worked with in this particular programme, it was more about having space away from the family. Not the restrictions of mum or dad, but giving the young people the autonomy, the choices, making these decisions themselves' (youth worker)

Engaging young people

The table below shows the total number of young people taking part in the programme over the two years with a total of 391 young woman and girls engaged.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Core group	171	172	343
Peer mentors	24	24	48
Total	195	187	391

The original targets were to engage 150 core young people and 50 peer mentors each year. While more peer mentors were originally recruited each year (44 in year 1 for example), only around half were able to attend the training and therefore undertake the role. In year 1, only 7 of the 10 organisations were able to recruit

peer mentors; this increased to all 9 organisations in year 2 (however note that not all the peer mentors were included in the reports returned).

Each year of the programme saw a large variation in the number of young people recruited to the programme between organisations, as shown in the table below. Despite some organisations struggling, on average 17.6 young people were recruited to the core group, exceeding the target of 15 per organisation, whereas only 2.5 peer mentors were recruited against a target of 5 per organisation.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Core group – average number recruited (mean)	17.5	18.1	17.6
Core group – range	7-30	3-40	
Peer mentors – average number recruited (mean)	2.4	2.6	2.5
Peer mentors – range	0-6	1-7	

In year 1, 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. In year 2, 5 of the 9 organisations achieved the target. Only 1 organisation in year 2 was successful at achieving the target of recruiting 5 peer mentors; suggesting that if the programme were repeated, reducing this target may be required.

Who took part

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. 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

‘Some parents were like, “why is it only girls? What’s going on”, and that took a lot of my time, just having conversation with parents, and telling

parents I'm a youth worker... [and hearing] "no, my child doesn't go to youth centres"... So that was actually a new concept... for our young people, and the parents, and just those stigmas that are attached... kids hanging around the streets, going to youth centres...' (youth worker)

'With the sixth formers, they've got a lot more responsibility with their studies and things like that. So, getting them out of their lessons, being able to actually facilitate some of the sessions was actually quite difficult' (youth worker)

Some organisations also struggled to recruit peer mentees from the core group of young people, with younger girls not always understanding why this might be beneficial to them.

'We had resistance from mentees, being like, "what have they got to teach me, like they're just a couple years older than me... why would I do that?"' (youth worker)

'The demand just isn't necessarily there immediately for year 8s to be mentored by older girls... with peer mentors, it's a lot more easier to explain the benefits... but at the start it was more challenging to try and explain it to peer mentees' (youth worker)

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 table below compares the demographic profile of all young people engaged over the two years of the programme.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Age: 10-14	77%	79%	78%
Age: 15+	23%	21%	22%
Ethnic minority community	97%	94%	96%

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Live in top 30% most deprived communities in England	60%	50%	55%
Have a (self-reported) disability	4%	1%	3%

Overall, the programme was successful at reaching the target groups, by working with youth organisations that have an existing reach into these communities.

It is important to note that one youth organisation in year 2 worked exclusively with young people with autism, however the majority did not consider themselves to have a disability. It may be worth changing or adding in an additional question to the register to identify young people with additional needs, as well as disabilities.

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, and around 7% of young people in London have a disability². 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
- To have fun with their friends

² <https://www.slideshare.net/slideshow/disabilities-in-children-and-young-people-in-london/80290270>

'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 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)

'I like coming to spend time with my friends and have fun playing with everyone' (young person)

'I wanted to take part because I just felt like [it] would be really really fun... I've been wanting to do after school clubs and there weren't many about... or none that sounded fun. So this sounded like a good thing to do' (young person)

We also discussed motivations for becoming peer mentors with two young people who took part in year 1 of the programme and one peer mentor in year 2 of the programme. They chose to take part as they were keen to provide support to younger girls, 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)

'I feel like it's really important to make sure people have somebody to talk to... for me when I was like going from primary school to secondary school, I feel like it was much easier to talk to people around my age, in comparison

to my mum or family members, because they're kind of biased...So I feel like it's really important to be that person for other people that don't feel comfortable with talking about certain topics' (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 future similar programmes.

Core delivery

The table below shows the number of sessions delivered and total attendance for each of the different elements of the core delivery model over the two years of the programme.

For the activities led by youth organisations (sport/art/talking circles sessions) it shows relatively consistent numbers of sessions delivered and attendance over the two years of the programme; in year 1 youth organisations delivered an average of 23 sessions each and in year 2 this increased slightly to 25 sessions per organisation. However, as with numbers of young people, there was considerable variation between organisations. The expectation was that each youth organisation would deliver 24 sessions each; in year 1, 4 of the 10 (40%) organisations achieved this and in year 2, 4 of the 9 (44%) organisations achieved this. In year 2 there was a slight improvement, with only 1 organisation delivering fewer than 20 sessions, compared to 4 organisations in year 1.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Social action pitch – sessions	7	1	8
Social action pitch – total attendance	109	52	161
Sport/art/talking circles - sessions	238 ³	230	468
Sport/art/talking circles – total attendance	2,099	2,214	4,313
Celebration event – attendance	59	47	106

Across both years on average, each young person took part in 12 sessions each.

Social action pitch

In year 1, youth organisations delivered their social action pitches at their youth organisations; either in person or remotely. In year 2, this changed back to the original model used during the programme pilot, with a central event delivered by London Youth for all youth organisations to attend. While the data in the table above shows that the pitch days delivered at youth organisations resulted in more

³ Note that in year 1 the sport/art sessions and talking circles were recorded as separate sessions, however in many cases were delivered at the same time – therefore this includes some double counting. This was rectified in year 2.

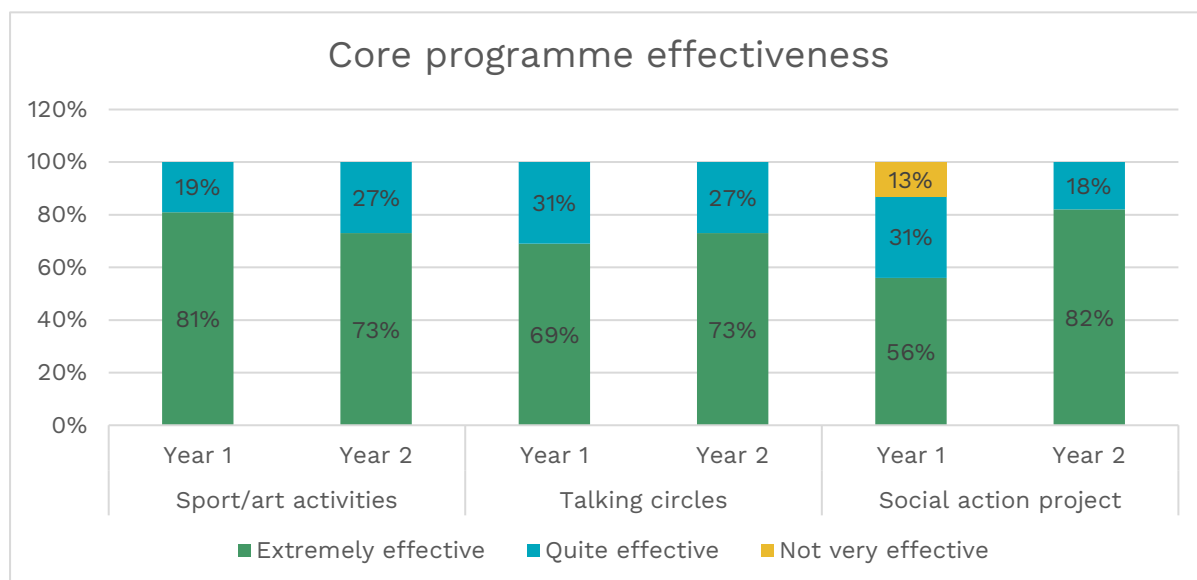
young people taking part, centrally delivered events have additional benefits in terms of bringing young people from different organisations together and providing opportunities for youth workers to connect. The event in year 2 was also attended by representatives from Kate Spade (London Youth's corporate partner for the programme) who sat on the panel and provided goodie bags for the young people. This has an additional benefit in terms of connecting corporate partners to young people.

'It's our DNA as a brand that we support women and girls and support mental health. So it was a really nice partnership. When we were initially looking for a partner in the UK, all of the work that the Good for Girls programme does in supporting young women and girls, supporting their mental health, supporting them through arts and sports therapies-it just seemed like a really natural kind of partnership. So it's really important to us as a brand, and we spent quite a long time looking for a partner that could align with both of those things, and that really provided practical support for young folks across youth groups, that we could really get our teams involved with, they could come and see some of the work in action. It's just really nice for them [members of the Kate Spade team] to meet young people in person and really see the work because we can talk about all of the great work that you're doing, but it's very different to see it in person.' (Kate Spade representative)

While there will always be challenges enabling young people to attend centrally organised events, it is felt that the added value of these events outweighs these challenges. London Youth also offer alternatives; with two organisations from year 2 submitting their pitches via video. One organisation chose not to attend the pitch day due to the needs of the young people, however as their confidence built through the programme they then felt able to attend the celebration event at the end; a significant success that also demonstrates the value of centrally led events.

Effectiveness

The chart below shows that overall, youth workers felt that the three elements of the core model were highly effective. There was a slight increase in the percentage of youth workers who felt that the sport/art activities and talking circles were extremely effective in year 2 compared to year 1, and a larger increase in those that felt the social action project was extremely effective.



The sport/art activities provided opportunities for youth organisations to deliver a range of different activities that engaged different personalities and confidence levels. Sport acted as an accessible ‘hook’ to build relationships early on, and variety kept sessions inclusive and allowed multiple ways to participate.

‘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)

‘Sports activities were most effective as football sessions built confidence, teamwork and a sense of belonging’ (youth worker)

The talking circles created a safe, consistent space to build trust and relationships. They were extremely effective at supporting wellbeing and confidence, with young people increasingly prioritising them over the sport and art activities. They were particularly effective for those who struggle to express themselves in other formats.

‘They just need that space where they can talk, and they can kind of bring whatever it is. We have a lot of drop-in sessions, and they do kind of congregate for a lot of the time, but they do still need that space to be just

girls, and just talk about things. In some capacity, they liked the talking circles more than they liked the arts, which was surprising to me' (youth worker)

'The talking [was my favourite part]... talking about how our week has been... we get to hear about everyone's experiences, and because like we're all different, we get to see what everyone else has done, not just ourselves... it's more fun to talk with people that don't go to my school and people I don't really hang out with' (young person)

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' (youth worker)

The key learning from youth workers was that talking circles should be flexible, responsive to the group's needs, and not feel forced. 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.

The social action projects gave young people ownership and agency. They built pride, teamwork, leadership and a sense of achievement. The youth-led model was also effective at increasing motivation and relevance. 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)

‘The social action project - the girls just really, really enjoyed putting that together. They had so much energy towards it, they put a lot of effort the planning of it. It was just really good to see, and it was actually an eye opener to see how engaged they were with taking the lead on something, and the social action pitch day was a boost for their confidence as well, and they enjoyed pitching’ (youth worker)

Youth workers were also able to identify a number of challenges they experienced with delivering the core programme. These challenges are specific to individual organisations and not necessarily an issue with the delivery model itself, but may be helpful to include in the handbook or induction in future iterations of the programme to share learning with other organisations. They included:

- **Limited time for talking circles:** Restricted depth of discussion and reflection. Reduced potential impact compared to settings where they were given dedicated time.
- **Repetition in activities:** Limited variation reduced engagement over time. Suggests need for more progression or diversification.
- **Social action process clarity and pace:** Long timelines reduced momentum and engagement. Young people didn’t always understand the wider purpose, affecting buy-in.
- **Practical delivery challenges** (group needs): Higher or more complex needs within groups required adult facilitation. Peer mentors needed carefully managed roles to avoid overwhelm.
- **Retention and competing activities:** New term schedules and alternative activities affected attendance for some

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)

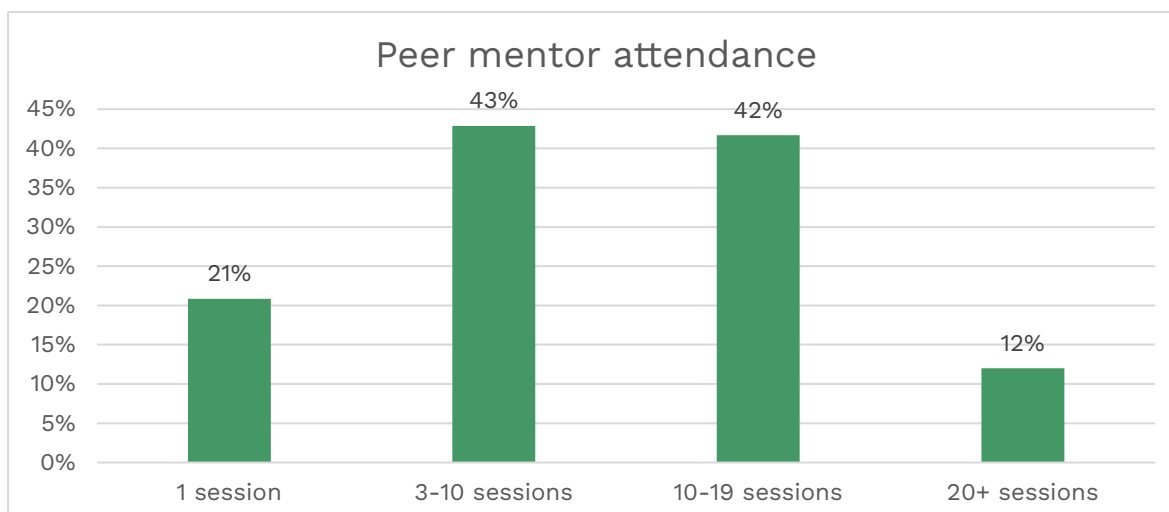
Overall, creating a dedicated space for girls of a similar age and background to come together, socialise, talk about their feelings and plan projects together creates an incredibly strong sense of belonging, which motivates them to stay engaged.

'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 separate training sessions. In year 1 peer mentors attended one training session. In year 2 the peer mentoring training was changed; a new provider was recruited and three training sessions were delivered, preceded by a session for youth workers to enable them to support the peer mentors following their training. Additional training sessions meant more young people could take part; with 39 young people attending the peer mentoring training in year 2 compared to only 24 in year 1.

Data on peer mentor attendance at sessions wasn't captured in year 1, but in year 2 the system was changed. There were 236 total attendances by 24 peer mentors, an average of 10 sessions per peer mentor. While attendance varied between peer mentors, only 5 attended 1 session and 13 attended more than 10, showing good levels of engagement.



Some youth organisations found the peer mentoring element a significant challenge, with four organisations in year 1 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)

This improved in year 2, with all organisations able to recruit peer mentors and changes to the training meaning more could attend. However, there were still some challenges with inconsistent attendance of peer mentors. Older girls had competing commitments (exams, apprenticeships etc) which reduced overall impact, even though delivery was strong when mentors were present. The focus group also identified that while some organisations were using a peer mentor/mentee model, others were taking more of a young leader role within sessions. Both models were felt to be effective at enabling older young people to support younger. Greater clarity over the role and/or the ability to be more flexible may be needed in future programmes.

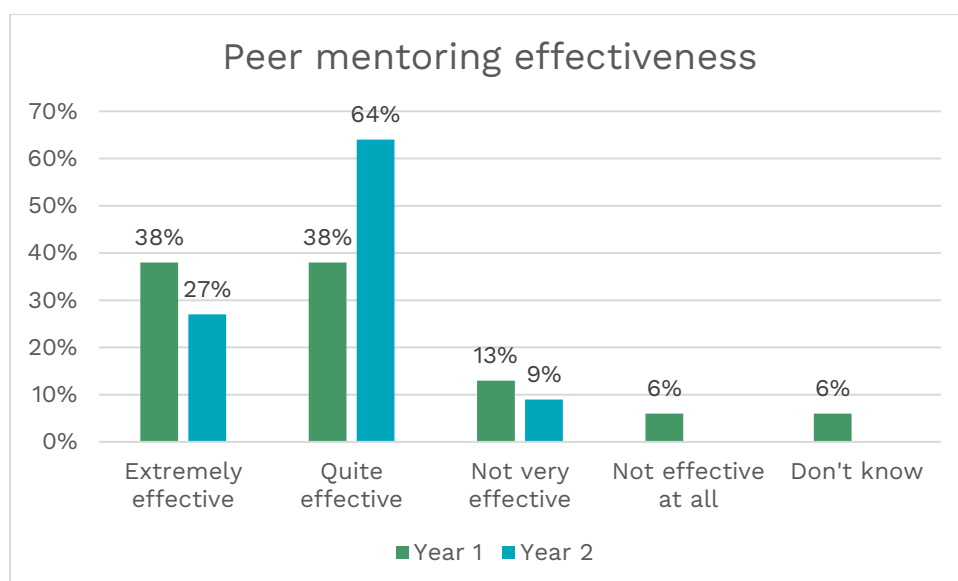
Despite these challenges, youth workers found the peer mentoring element of the programme an effective part of the programme and for some it was a particular highlight. Peer mentoring created role models and strengthened group cohesion, supported a more youth-led and inclusive environment and built strong relationships and rapport across age groups.

'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 with 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' (youth worker)

'The peer mentoring was the major highlight for me. Every aspect of it, from when we were planning and seeing them get kind of excited, and then how they interacted with each other, how the group dynamic developed, and of course, how seeing them mentor the young people, and really deal with everything so maturely... it's something I'd want to be a permanent feature of our programme.' (youth worker)

The changes to the peer mentoring model in year 2 based on learning from year 1 resulted in an increase in its effectiveness, as shown in the chart below. While three quarters of youth workers (76%) rated it as effective in year 1, this increased to 91% in year 2.



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. This was rectified in year 2, changing back to a mix of mandatory and optional training, and an overall reduction in sessions delivered, thus reducing the ‘ask’ on youth workers and ensuring the training responded to their needs.

The table below shows the number of training sessions provided and attendance over the two years of the programme. Broadly speaking the training content itself stayed the same, with one new provider recruited from London Youth’s Rise Up programme in year 2 to deliver cultural sensitivity training. It shows that despite reducing the number of sessions, total attendance and average attendance each year remained the same.

	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Sessions	12	7	19
Total attendance	97	99	196
Average attendance	5	4.3	4.7
No. youth workers trained	29	23	52

In year 1, feedback forms were completed at the end of sessions in order to capture satisfaction with the training. This was not repeated in year 2, with just one survey completed at the end of year 2 instead. The results show that in year 1, 90% of youth workers were very or quite satisfied with the individual training sessions they attended and 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.

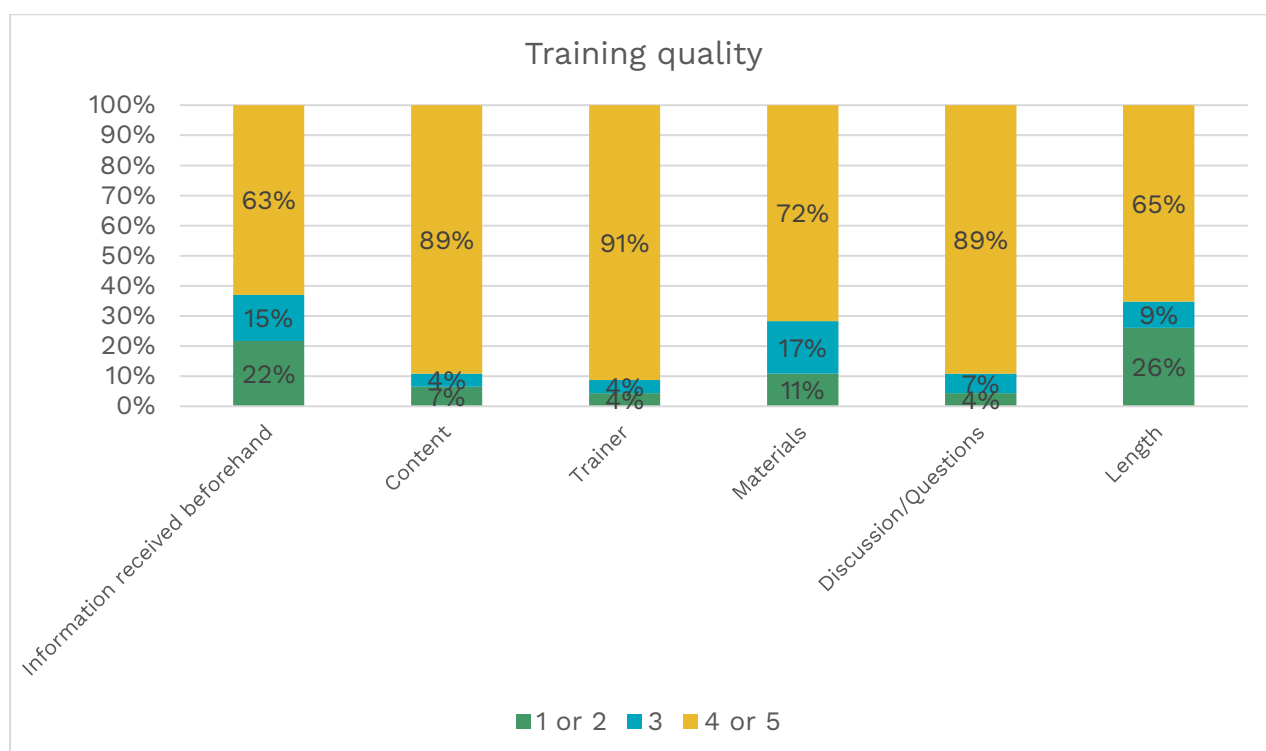
91% said that they will be able to use what they learnt at the training course. However, only 59% agreed that they had learnt new skills, which is more evidence of the challenge of mandating training, as some people will already possess the skills being developed.

The chart below shows the results of feedback provided by youth workers at the end of each training session in year 1. 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. Meeting took place with all training providers in year 2 to ensure this duplication did not happen again. 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)



In year 1, to improve the training, youth workers wanted more:

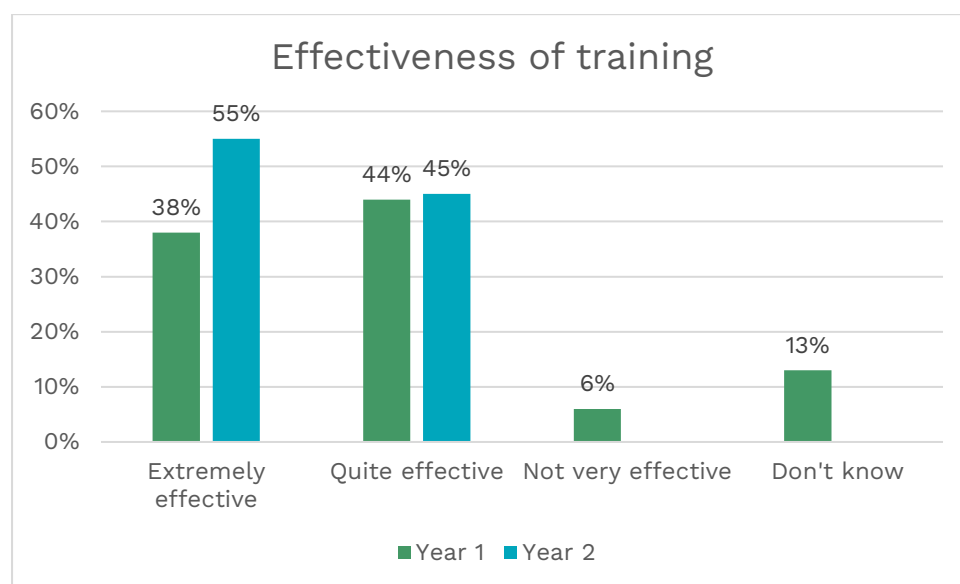
- Condensed training
- In-person sessions
- Clearer structure
- Meaningful content
- Networking opportunities

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 used in year 1 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.

While changes were made in year 2 by reducing the number of training sessions, youth workers still reported challenges. A high time commitment during programme delivery created additional pressure with youth workers feeling that it would have been more manageable if more training occurred upfront. Training also needs to be tailored for youth workers that have delivered the programme previously, with some finding it repetitive. That said, overall youth workers did find the training an effective element of the programme reporting that it improved youth worker confidence and skills, especially around wellbeing, provided practical strategies that could be directly applied and enabled higher-quality delivery and adaptability to young people's needs.

The staff changes in the team during year 2 also created challenges for London Youth as the team were unable to deliver consistent support to youth workers to lead them through the training programme as desired; mirroring the support youth workers provide young people. It is also important that the team attend the training sessions in order to build and maintain relationships with youth workers, which was not always possible.

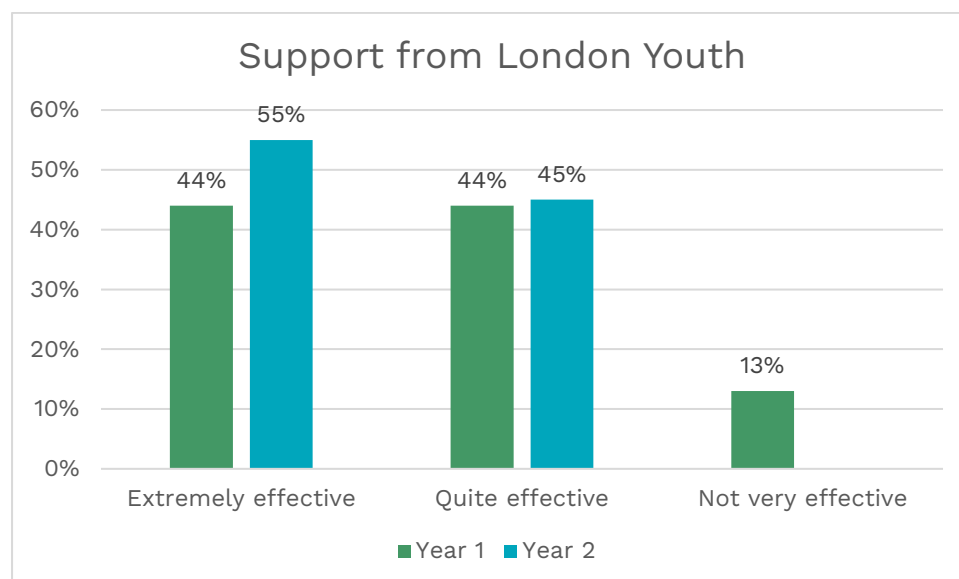
Despite ongoing challenges, the effectiveness of the training improved from year 1 to year 2 (see chart below) with the proportion of youth workers finding this aspect of the programme to be effective increasing from 82% to 100%.



We would recommend that the training programme be more bespoke to the needs of each individual youth organisation or youth worker, wherever possible. 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 (if youth workers attending are known in advance), 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 and won't always be possible.

Overall, youth workers also felt that the support from London Youth improved from year 1 to year 2, despite the challenges of staff turnover during the year. The chart below shows that 88% of youth workers rated this as effective in year 1, increasing to 100% in year 2.



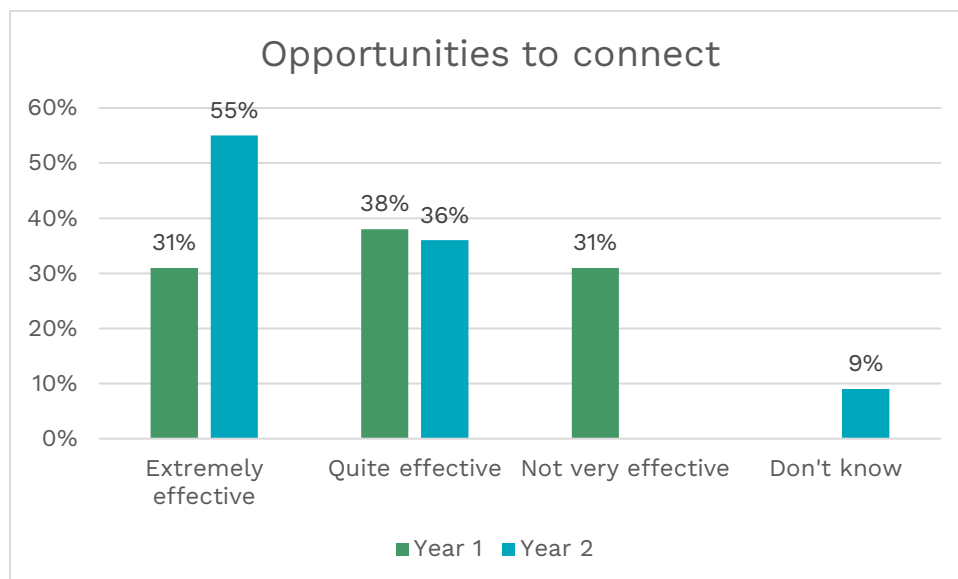
Community of Practice

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)

Changes were made in year 2 of the programme to address this. While capacity was still limited, space was provided for managers (who did not attend the training) to come together and share learning. Two sessions were delivered, with feedback showing that these were helpful for youth work professionals to exchange views on managing the programme rather than delivering. Delivering the sessions at Kate Spade’s offices was also successful. While more capacity at London Youth to facilitate these sessions would be needed in future, this is a clear example of how London Youth programmes add value to youth organisations and should therefore be prioritised and resourced going forwards.

The chart below shows that while 69% of youth workers rated the opportunities to connect to each other as effective in year 1, this increased to 91% in year 2.



‘Opportunities to connect with other youth organisations added value through shared learning and wider perspectives.’ (youth worker)

Case study: CHIPS Peace

The girls' group at CHIPS Peace is a weekly after-school session designed to provide a safe, fun space for girls to build friendships, express their feelings, and improve their wellbeing. Sessions include creative activities, trips, and a structured talking circle 'check-in' led by youth workers. We spoke to the group to capture their feedback on what they enjoyed and what being part of the group meant to them. For many of the girls, the group fills a gap in after-school provision and offers something different.

"I like coming to spend time with my friends and have fun playing with everyone."

The girls described taking part in a wide variety of activities that combined fun, creativity, and wellbeing support.

'We go on trips... last week we made squishies and stuff to take out our stress... normally we come here [and] just have fun.'

'My favourite part was when we went to the park and just screamed...to let all the stress out'

Several girls described how the group gives them space to talk about their feelings.

'Sometimes... it was easy, sometimes it was hard because... you don't want to share what's happening... to other people because you don't know what [will] happen...but if you say it to the people that you trust... maybe nothing that bad will happen'.

'It's easy for us to express ourselves because [the youth workers], they always listen to what we have to say'

For their social action project, the girls co-designed and delivered a 'Calming Corner' in the park, demonstrating leadership, empathy, and peer support.

'We went around the park and showed people our posters... each one of us made affirmations... and posters that encourage other people'

'We had a worry box and someone wrote their worry, and we answered it, and we ripped it so they wouldn't have to worry about it'

'[We wanted] to make girls know that they're not alone in tough situations, and that they can always have problems [but] they're not alone'

The girls were clear about why these groups are important and how they have benefited.

'Because girls go through a lot...bullying...peer pressure...not having anyone to talk to'

'Every time I go to school, I can't wait for Wednesday... when it's Wednesday... I just brush it off because I know that after school I can come here'

'It helped us know that we're not alone in tough situations'

'I feel like this is a place where we can express our feelings.'

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 across both years of the programme 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
- 90% agreed they had a choice over what they did or didn't do
- 96% 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)

'The Monday session because I felt comfortable to talk about private things' (young person)

'Deciding what we shall do with the funding given to us, it was fun using my imagination as well as planning with my friends' (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:

- 91% felt safe and comfortable talking about wellbeing at their youth organisation

- 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)

'I felt like there was someone who could listen to me, and like even if it was something that was my fault, they would help me and give me advice to do better next time. It just feels like you have someone that you can actually trust and talk to' (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

One young person who particularly benefited from the programme was a participant with autism and a history of self-harm, who initially presented as very quiet, withdrawn, and more comfortable remaining isolated from others.

At the beginning of the programme, she appeared hesitant to fully engage socially and often preferred observing rather than participating in group conversations. However, over the course of the programme, we observed a significant positive change in her confidence, participation, and sense of belonging within the group. She attended consistently from the beginning to the end of the project and became increasingly engaged in the sessions and activities. Although she continued to prefer quieter interactions at times, she regularly surprised staff by being one of the first participants to volunteer during activities and challenges.

Through the supportive and non-judgemental environment created within Good for Girls, she gradually developed a stronger voice within the group and became more comfortable expressing her opinions and ideas. During several activities, particularly the social action project and outdoor experiences, she naturally took leadership roles and actively encouraged other girls to participate.

The combination of creative activities, talking circles, peer support, and movement-based sessions appeared to have a very positive impact on her emotional wellbeing and confidence. Staff noticed clear progress in her willingness to communicate, collaborate, and take initiative throughout the programme. For our team, seeing her transformation was one of the most meaningful outcomes of the project and highlighted the importance of providing safe, inclusive, and wellbeing-focused spaces where young people can feel valued, heard, and empowered.

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:

- 86% of core young people feel more confident talking about how they feel
- 89% of peer mentors feel more confident
- 92% feel better able to ask for help if they need it
- 88% 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)

'I started to feel more confident in speaking and greeting new people without being scared. I started to understand that the future can be easily shaped if as a group we all unite and try to make a change. And lastly I've learnt that as a women we should help other women who might be scared to open up to the school/community/ society, but with optimism, one smaller difference could make change' (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: Parent of young person who took part

'Programmes like this [are] important because honest to God, her confidence has gone through the roof. I used to send her to martial arts to help her with her confidence... at school, she's very quiet... she can defend herself, but I just find that being amongst girls that she can actually speak to... she will come home saying, 'Mummy, guess what? We did this... I can't wait to go back next week.' I think the support, being amongst other peers, gives her that confidence, so she feels like... stuff that she wouldn't feel confident doing in school... she would actually do it here... it's almost like an escape for her as well... It's more than just an after-school activity. It's a community for her. It's a safe space for her. She feels confident. She feels comfortable. She feels seen.

She used to go martial arts on a Tuesday and a Thursday... I've now cancelled Thursdays because she comes here. Even the way she speaks, the way she articulates her words, it's almost like she thinks she's all grown up... There's a suggestion box... the worry box they made... I said, 'T, you can tell me as well.' She's like, 'No, mum. I want to speak to my girls.'... If there's no club, she'll say, 'Mum, are we having girls' club?'... she gets really upset about it... when I said, you know, this is the last one [this term]... she was quite upset about it... It's definitely something that I think is amazing.'

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:

- 94% have a better understanding of what wellbeing means
- 87% feel able to make changes or deal with any problems in their life
- 83% feel more optimistic about the future
- 90% have made new friends or strengthened existing relationships
- 86% report their wellbeing has improved a lot or a little bit and 58% 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)

'It has helped by making me happier and helps me express myself just like other girls.' (young person)

'It's been very fun and has taught me a deeper understanding of wellbeing alongside how we can come together as a community to help those around us' (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 Tik 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 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:

- 87% feel more confident talking to other young people about wellbeing
- 87% agree that being a peer mentor has helped them better understand what wellbeing means
- 82% have learnt more about themselves and other young people
- 87% feel they have been able to help or support other young people with their wellbeing
- 87% agree their communication skills have improved
- 82% agree their leadership skills have improved
- 92% 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)

'Being a peer mentor has helped me grow both personally and professionally. It improved my confidence, communication, and leadership skills, and taught me how to be more patient, supportive, and understanding of others. I also learned how rewarding it is to help someone feel more comfortable and confident in their own journey. The experience allowed me to build stronger connections with people, develop teamwork skills, and become more confident in taking initiative and offering support when needed.' (peer mentor)

Case study: Peer mentor

'I feel like it's really important to make sure people have somebody to talk to, and especially for me when I was going from primary school to secondary school, I feel like it was much easier to talk to people around my age, in comparison to my mum or family members, because they're kind of biased. So I feel it's really important to be that person for other people that don't feel comfortable with talking to people about certain topics.

It's been really fun, meeting new people, it's an experience I recommend for everybody. When I went to the training, it was fun. I really liked carrying out the sessions, and it gave me some ideas of stuff to do here as well.. And even if I didn't get to use them all, I can still use them in the future. It was really enjoyable.

I really enjoy being able to give other people advice because even if I've made mistakes, I can help them as much as I can to not make that same mistake. And it's nice to hear about their experiences because obviously everybody walks down their own different path.

I look forward to coming on Thursdays because as much as I'm helping them, it's also enjoyable for me because I can just relax away from doing my own schoolwork. I get to play sports, games, and it's nice to compare everybody's ups and downs. And it's like, oh, maybe this has happened, but something worse has happened. So it's like it's not the worst thing in the whole world. Obviously we can get around it.'

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 over the two years show that:

- 85% have developed new skills
- 93% have gained new knowledge

- 89% have applied what they have learnt in their job
- 89% 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 helped to develop my confidence and practice as a Youth Practitioner. The London Youth training equipped me with practical tools to better understand and manage my own wellbeing, which in turn has helped me remain grounded and consistent when supporting young people.’ (youth worker)

‘Taking part in Good for Girls strengthened my understanding of structured wellbeing support and gave me new tools and approaches for working with girls and young people in a more intentional way. The programme reinforced the importance of combining emotional support with creative, movement-based, and youth-led activities.’ (youth worker)

In addition, 74% of youth workers felt supported to manage their own wellbeing, demonstrating the value of facilitating connections between youth organisations. 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 to counselling services if required. This worked well in the Mentoring Support Programme delivered in 2025/26. For a programme like Good for Girls, this would help increase the proportion of youth workers who feel supported to manage their own wellbeing.

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:

- 89% have a better understanding of what wellbeing support young people need
- 89% have a better understanding of what wellbeing support interventions work well and less well for their young people
- 85% 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, due to limited resources this iteration of the Good for Girls programme had limited opportunities for peer support outside of the training programme. This was increased in year 2 with the addition of facilitated space for managers to come together. This is reflected in the results of the youth work survey, which showed that:

- 74% have built or strengthened relationships with partner organisations (and increase from 69% in year 1), and
- 70% are better connected to other youth organisations (a slight increase from 69% in year 1)

Although still positive results, more could be done to facilitate greater networking between organisations.

'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)

'The Good for Girls programme has helped our organisation widen access for girls, improve facilities and create more consistent opportunities for participation. It has strengthened our focus on mental health and wellbeing through reflective practice like talking circles, and increased youth voice through peer mentoring and social action. Overall, it has enhanced the quality of our provision and supported girls to build confidence, leadership skills and a stronger sense of belonging.' (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)

‘Our organisation has benefited significantly. We have built stronger relationships with families, who have engaged with us on a deeper level beyond sport, increasing trust and long-term engagement.’ (youth worker)

Conclusions

The Good for Girls programme engaged 19 youth organisations and 391 young women and girls over two years, delivering an early intervention wellbeing support programme aimed primarily at young women and girls from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities. Across the programme, 468 sport, arts and talking circle sessions were delivered, with each young person taking part in an average of 12 sessions. Young people also planned and delivered community social action projects focused on mental health and wellbeing. In addition, the programme provided a training programme for youth workers to build skills around providing wellbeing support, alongside a peer mentoring element that trained and supported 48 older young people to support younger participants.

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 talking about their feelings, have improved self-esteem, stronger friendships and a greater sense of belonging. Young people also report feeling more optimistic about the future and better able to manage challenges in their lives, with 86% reporting that their wellbeing has improved as a result of taking part. In addition to the outcomes for young people, youth workers have developed greater knowledge, skills and confidence in delivering early intervention wellbeing support, while youth organisations have strengthened their wellbeing offer and increased their capacity to support young women and girls.

Key learning: Successes

The key strengths and successes 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 women and girls 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, combining positive activities, talking circles and youth-led social action, which successfully engaged and retained young people
- Creating dedicated girls-only spaces enabled young women and girls to develop strong friendships, a sense of belonging and the confidence to discuss issues affecting their wellbeing
- The flexibility of the delivery model enabled youth organisations to tailor talking circles and activities to the needs of different groups while maintaining the core principles of the programme

- The focus on wellbeing specifically for young women and girls helped participants address challenges including friendship issues, peer pressure, low confidence, violence against women and girls, and difficulties expressing their feelings
- The social action projects were consistently identified as one of the most rewarding aspects of the programme, helping young people develop confidence, leadership skills, teamwork and a sense of achievement while making a positive contribution to their communities
- The revised peer mentoring model introduced in Year 2 strengthened delivery, providing valuable leadership opportunities for older young people while supporting younger participants and increasing the youth-led nature of the programme
- The programme made a significant contribution to building the skills, confidence and wellbeing practice of youth workers, with practical training that could be applied directly within their organisations
- London Youth demonstrated a strong commitment to continuous improvement by responding to evaluation findings throughout the programme, resulting in improvements across a number of aspects of delivery
- Overall, satisfaction with the programme remained extremely high amongst young people, peer mentors and youth workers throughout both years

Key learning: Challenges

Challenges experienced over the two years of the programme were:

- Some youth organisations continued to experience challenges recruiting young people, particularly where they relied on schools or where programmes targeted specific age groups
- Recruiting and retaining peer mentors remained challenging due to competing commitments amongst older young people, although changes introduced in Year 2 improved recruitment and participation
- The broad age range of participants required different approaches to delivery, with younger girls often benefiting from more informal and activity-based discussions around wellbeing
- Although improvements were made in Year 2, designing a training programme that met the differing experience levels, capacity and learning needs of all youth workers remained challenging. A more personalised approach would further improve engagement and perceived value
- While opportunities for networking and peer support improved during Year 2, there remains scope to invest further in developing a stronger community of practice for both youth workers and peer mentors beyond the formal training programme
- Staff turnover within the London Youth team created challenges in maintaining continuity of communication and relationships with youth

organisations. Despite this, improvements introduced during the programme ensured that delivery quality continued to strengthen over time

Recommendations

Learning from the Good for Girls programme should be used to inform the design of future wellbeing programmes. Based on the evidence gathered across both years, we recommend that London Youth:

- **Continue investing in trusted grassroots youth organisations** to deliver early intervention wellbeing support. The programme demonstrates that community-based organisations are well placed to engage young people who may not otherwise access mental health support, while creating trusted relationships and safe spaces for conversations about wellbeing.
- **Retain the core Good for Girls delivery model**, combining positive activities, talking circles, youth-led social action and peer mentoring. The combination of these elements was consistently identified as the greatest strength of the programme, with each element contributing to young people's confidence, wellbeing and sense of belonging.
- **Retain flexibility within the delivery model**, recognising that different groups engage in different ways. Allowing youth organisations to tailor activities, approaches to talking circles and the balance between structured and informal wellbeing conversations helps ensure delivery reflects the needs of their young people whilst maintaining the core principles of the programme.
- **Develop a more personalised training offer for youth workers.** Rather than requiring all participants to complete the same programme, training should be tailored to existing knowledge, experience and organisational need. Maintaining a balance of core mandatory content alongside optional specialist modules is likely to improve engagement whilst making the best use of limited staff time.
- **Continue investing in peer mentoring, while allowing flexibility in how the role is implemented.** The changes made in Year 2 was more effective, however organisations benefited from adapting the approach to suit their context. Future programmes should provide clear guidance, whilst considering allowing organisations to use peer mentors as mentors, youth leaders or a combination of both.
- **Build communities of practice into programme design from the outset.** Dedicated opportunities for youth workers and managers to share learning, discuss challenges and support one another added considerable value beyond the training itself and should be considered a core element of future programmes rather than an additional activity.
- **Strengthen mobilisation and programme set-up.** Investing time at the start of programmes to clarify expectations, review recruitment plans,

understand organisational capacity and establish shared understanding of delivery requirements helps prevent implementation challenges later.

- **Consider targeted approaches to improve inclusion.** Future programmes should explore opportunities to engage more young people with disabilities and additional needs, for example by working with specialist organisations or ring-fencing a proportion of funding where appropriate.
- **Ensure sufficient programme management capacity.** Staff continuity, relationship-building and ongoing support to youth organisations were all important contributors to programme quality. Future programmes should ensure adequate staffing is available to support mobilisation, training, quality assurance and partnership development throughout delivery

Appendix 1: Theory of Change

