

About Hackney CVS and its work to support young people's futures

Hackney CVS is the umbrella body for the 1000s of voluntary and community organisations in the borough. Since being established in 1997 we have been the key community development organisation providing training, development support, grants, and leading large consortia of local organisations to deliver programmes of work around key issues such as: youth unemployment; gang intervention and diversion; loneliness and isolation amongst the over 50s; domestic violence; and mental health. Essentially, we help to empower communities to deliver the solutions to the problems they face.

As an important local organisation and umbrella body for the sector we are committed to making Hackney a fairer place because we believe everyone should have the best start in life and the best opportunities to succeed regardless of their background, race, social class, gender, sexuality or disability.

We see our role interchangeably as *enablers, facilitators, champions and servants to local communities*.

Supporting young peoples' leadership potential – an introduction



For the last 10 years we have been developing a range of approaches which have helped to empower young people and more recently have developed some new initiatives which have improved young people's mental health.

According to the Mental Health Foundation, nearly one in 10 children and young people are affected by a mental health problem. Hackney CVS's young clients dispute this; growing up in a deprived area in Hackney, London, they would say it is closer to 50%. They agree, however, that very few young people get appropriate support. Using

a peer-to-peer methodology, Hackney CVS is helping young people normalise discussion around well-being and provides concrete tools to support young people to maintain a positive mental outlook.

We have recruited young people age 18-24 primarily from BAME backgrounds to deliver a series of youth-led workshops that resonate with their experiences as well as provide direct interventions such as Tree of Life, working alongside the local mental health Trust, East London Foundation Trust and Mind. These young people are trained and paid sessionally as youth leaders, acting as mental health ambassadors, using the a variety of tools to enhance mental awareness among their peers in schools and youth clubs.

We are effecting system change in many ways and co-founded a large programme with the Council and partners called the [Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men programme](#) which is taking a long term approach to support young black men's educational attainment, safety, health & wellbeing and voice across

the public sector system. The work we are doing around mental health is making a real difference and is a key focus of the programme.

Our Youth Leadership Approach

The Hackney CVS Youth Leadership programme challenges young people's perceptions and fosters self-awareness. These youth leaders are trained and employed to lead action in their communities – gaining status from the positive activities they promote and the legitimate money they earn. Youth leaders are recruited to undertake a variety of tasks, from putting on regular youth-friendly events, delivering health and wellbeing workshops to their younger peers as well as providing policy guidance in statutory settings.

From a personal development perspective these peer leaders are exposed to a wide range of people (funders, employers, partner organisations, other young people) and situations (delivering a workshop to peers, public speaking, attending stakeholder meetings) which broaden their mind and provide them with additional opportunities that they never thought they would have. Their exposure to employers and positive role models in an informal setting makes them more likely to be successful in finding employment. This informal immersive experience helps to break down barriers but also serves as a form of networking and confidence builder for the young people. This approach works. Since 2014 we have worked with 63 youth leaders. 52% have moved on into employment and 43% sustained their employment for six months.

Working with corporate companies and employers

Through our Talentmatch employment programme we have worked with a range of employers such as Transport For London, Broadgate estates and the BBC to help them think through how attract young people into their respective workforce, co-producing events with the young leaders. We have also sent young people over to Atlanta in the US to learn more about how businesses support young people into jobs and entrepreneurship. This trip was paid for by a local Hackney business.

Historically since 2013 we have worked with a number of corporate partners to channel resources into local community projects, raising over £300k from UBS, State Street, Societe Generale and Linklaters through Hackney Giving www.hackneygiving.org.uk



Influencing and working with public bodies

Lots of our work involves bringing key local agencies together to make services better for local residents. This is particularly relevant to our work with young people. We are members of Mayor Khan's Violence Reduction Unit Partnership Board, the local Community Safety Partnership and Safeguarding Boards, a member of the Youth Offending Team Board as well as work with the local Met and Integrated Gangs Unit in diverting young people away from crime. We work with East London Foundation Trust around better mental health outcomes for young people as well as are funded by the City & Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group to support parents to improve their children's emotional health & wellbeing.

Our mental health approach with young people

Hackney CVS provides an ongoing space for focused mindfulness practice for young people age 18-24, most of whom are from BAME background. Many face a number of barriers to achieving their potential. Many

of these young people are held back by low confidence, low key skills, drugs/alcohol misuse, offending histories and difficult family life, and are at risk of developing mental health issues. Most are suspicious of well-being interventions and are put off by practices considered “flaky” by their peers.

Mindfulness involves paying attention to what is going on in the present moment in the mind, body, and external environment with an attitude of curiosity and kindness. Structured meditational practices aim to improve awareness of thinking, feeling, and patterns of behaviour with the aim of learning to manage these aspects of human experience with greater skill and compassion. These outcomes are obtained through exposure to psycho-educational materials, and consistent meditational practices taught in structured classes with experienced Mindfulness Instructors.

We provide a range of mental health interventions for young people which can be summarised as follows:

1. **It's Okay discussion forums:** These workshops are aimed at reducing stigma around mental health by bringing mental health professionals and young people together to explore and discuss mental health matters in Hackney. The forum helps peers access support, share stories, understand how to navigate the system and to discuss how to break the stigma of mental health in their communities.
2. **Well-being workshops:** These sessions explore the five ways to well-being: take notice, learn something, be active, give and connect using creative arts (drama, music and spoken word). The workshops introduce well-being concepts such as the three-circle model of Threat, Drive and Soothing.
3. **Inspirational Recipe for Success workshops:** This programme supports young people to develop the ability of being totally aware and in control of their own actions. They are encouraged to adopt an empowering psychology/philosophy about themselves and their future, and know the correct formula for achieving personal goals. This programme's key principles are delivered by the youth leaders with a Lead Peer, Ace Reule, over an 8 week period.
4. **Tree of Life workshops:** We deliver Tree of Life (TOL) workshops to BAME young people age 18-24. TOL is a narrative therapy that emphasises strengths and resilience developed through adversity, while drawing on support embedded within individuals' social and cultural histories. It moves away from stories of disempowerment and problems towards stories of hope and empowerment. TOL has been shown to be beneficial for BAME individuals, with participants reporting improved self-confidence and increased capacity to cope with day-to-day struggles.

Some of our work has been externally evaluated. Please see the following reports attached:

- Tree of Life Evaluation 2016
- Youth Leadership Report
- Strength and Resilience Evaluation Summary

We are keen to expand our approach and to work with local youth organisations to embed youth leadership as a tool to empower young people, parents and the wider black communities. We are working to create a business plan which will secure the investment to realise this. We welcome the opportunity to work with potential funders and sponsors in this regard and to further share our learning.