

# Responding to the Pandemic, Black Lives Matter and local inequalities

An impact report about the work of Hackney CVS during this time

## Executive Summary

**When the COVID-19 pandemic struck in 2020, Hackney's voluntary and community organisations sprang into action.**

Going far beyond what they were funded to deliver, they responded rapidly to unprecedented changes, adapting their expertise to meet urgent and changing needs. Embedded in communities, and identifying with residents, the expertise and reach of these organisations brought critical services to those that need them most.

At Hackney CVS we also sprang into action. We dug deep, focussed and pivoted our many services to adapt to what our communities and local organisations needed. We brought in over £1 million in new funding for our local organisations and created new spaces for people to come together at a Neighbourhood level. Building on our strong relationships, we collaborated across all sectors and across our diverse communities to meet needs and influence services, from the vaccination programme to responding to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Never has the work of Hackney CVS, and the role we play, been so critical.

### Because of Hackney CVS:

- The council, NHS and other public sector partners accessed rich insight from our diverse communities and improved their services and communication as a result
- A trusted channel existed for residents and local businesses to give money to support their communities
- The Clinical Commissioning Group, Hackney Council and Central Government had a trusted partner and intermediary to channel much needed funds to local groups
- All local voluntary organisations, from the largest to the smallest, could access support and regularly updated information about what was happening
- Spaces existed and new spaces were created for organisations to come together
- Organisations collaborated more easily and signposted to each other's services more effectively
- The effective communication of public health information by diverse and trusted organisations, including to address concerns about vaccines, was resourced.

**This is the story of our work over the last 15 months – the most remarkable of periods.**



**JAKE FERGUSON**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,  
HACKNEY CVS – AUGUST 2021



**£1,892,000**

funding brought into our local sector



**76**  
local organisations funded



**189** people at the first VCSE Assembly event to discuss emotional wellbeing



**43** Neighbourhood Conversations



and **16** training sessions



**14** lunch clubs supported to provide vital food and support



Over **200** people contributed to a recovery and resilience strategy



hosted across **8** Neighbourhoods



Nearly **600** people attended network meetings



Essential public health information shared in over **30** languages



**24** projects supported to address social isolation and loneliness for people aged 50 and over



**45** paid youth leaders



**4800+** older people reached through the Connect Hackney programme



**18** young leaders supported with **£4,300** hardship funding



**1300+** young people reached through sessions, outreach work and social media



# Our work through COVID-19

## We brought in nearly £2 million of new funding for our community

When the pandemic hit, there was an urgent need to channel funds to community groups caring for Hackney's diverse communities through the crisis. We quickly spun up and adapted our existing community giving programme (Hackney Giving) to meet this need. We secured funding from the local Clinical Commissioning Group, the City and Hackney Public Health department and central Government and provided a trusted channel for local residents and businesses to give money to support their communities. Over the last 17 months, we have distributed over £1,100,000 in 131 grants, ranging from £749 to £30,000, to 93 local organisations, with another £100,000 to be distributed soon. We also led an alliance of youth organisations to secure £750,000 over two years from MOPAC's MyEnds programme to create a partnership in the Hackney Wick area support a number of youth projects in delivering violence reduction work in the area.

Early in the pandemic, local groups used the funding mostly to provide food and other necessities, to provide advice and ensure continued contact with residents during lockdown.

As the pandemic continued, several rounds of funding distributed through Hackney Giving supported organisations to help keep local people safe, by making sure that everyone had access to accurate and up to date public health information, and to support engagement at vaccine pop up clinics and the vaccine bus. Through our funding, essential public health information has been shared across our community in over 30 languages.

The impact of the pandemic on mental health for all ages, across communities, has been a constant concern. Existing mental health issues have been exacerbated and new mental health inequalities have emerged. As society begins to reopen, funding is increasingly being used to make a positive difference to people's wellbeing, reduce isolation and loneliness and help people living with mental health issues.

## We showed leadership following the murder of George Floyd



2020 will be remembered not only for coronavirus but for the racist murder of George Floyd.

We drafted an anti-racism manifesto for our local public sector partners, which Hackney Council included in their own anti-racism strategy.

We supported Hackney's voluntary and community sector to process and respond to the death of George Floyd by hosting sessions for the community on what it meant for Hackney. We supported the creation of a community accountability board overseeing Hackney Council's programme to improve outcomes for young black men.

“Hackney’s incredible community and voluntary sector organisations, networks and volunteers have helped us respond to COVID-19 and are a key part of how we got our borough through the last 18 months. Without the tireless work of Hackney CVS supporting this effort, people in real need of help and support would have been left wanting.



“I am so proud of the close partnership, passion and dedication shown by our voluntary sector, and Council officers throughout the pandemic – whether coordinating our Community Champions programme to get trusted messages to those that need to hear them; fundraising through Hackney Giving; delivering food, essentials and welfare support to thousands of vulnerable residents, or helping the digitally excluded stay connected.

“We have also, in a year rightly shaped by our response to disproportionality, racism and inequality, seen HCVS help coordinate conversations and debates across Hackney – challenging the sector, partners and the Council to do more to tackle injustice.

“We have learned so much from our voluntary sector over the last year that will be vital to ensure a fair recovery from coronavirus for everyone in Hackney, and this report demonstrates the impact made by HCVS and why its leadership will be at the heart of how we rebuild.”

**PHILIP GLANVILLE, MAYOR OF HACKNEY**

“It’s been a privilege to work alongside Hackney CVS and its members over the past 18 months, while we have faced the most critical public health emergency of our lives. As trusted messengers communicating about the virus itself, the symptoms and effects of COVID-19, to when and how to get a test or a vaccine, our community and voluntary sector partners have been key to keeping our community safe and helping to stop or slow the spread of infection. Our public health information grants (administered by Hackney CVS) and the community champions programmes (administered by VCH) have not only been crucial to our pandemic response, but have supported us in developing new ways of working between Public Health and the community and voluntary sector – hopefully, leaving a lasting legacy of a new, more productive relationship.”



**DR SANDRA HUSBANDS, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH,  
CITY OF LONDON & LONDON BOROUGH OF HACKNEY**