Responding to the Pandemic, Black Lives Matter and local inequalities

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

#FairerHackney

hackney cvs

"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

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Introduction

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.

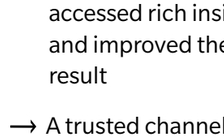
At Hackney CVS we also sprang into action. We dug deep, focussed and pivoted our many services to adapt to what our communities and local organisations needed. We brought in over £1 million in new funding for our local organisations and created new spaces for people to come together at a Neighbourhood 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.

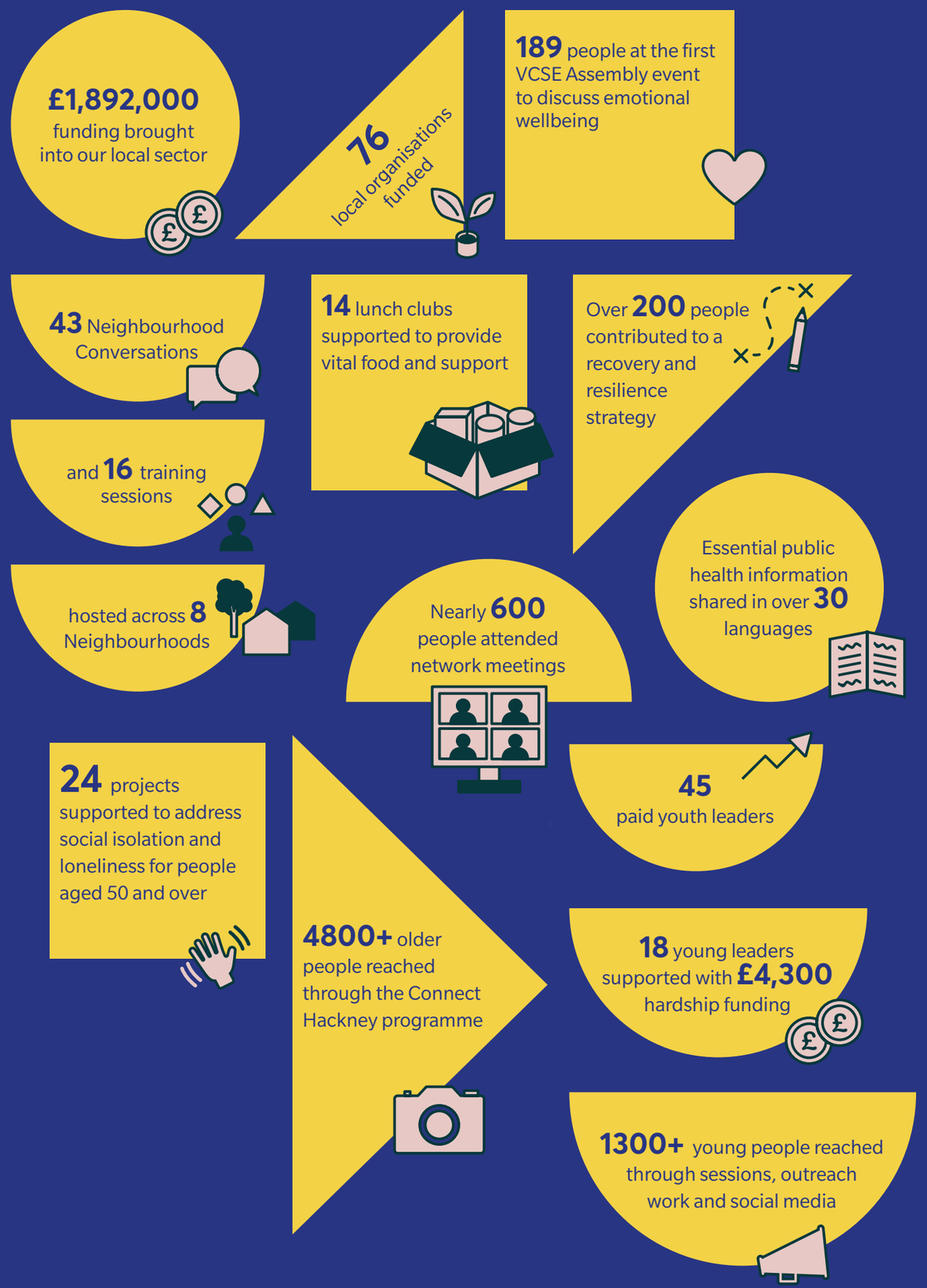
Because of Hackney CVS:

- → 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



Members of the Connect Hackney media group on a visit to St Mary's Secret Garden. This was the first time the group had met face to face since the pandemic began.

Working for a fairer Hackney

We work for a fairer Hackney.

For over two decades we have supported the voluntary and community sector to be at the heart of providing solutions to Hackney's problems.

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, age, sexuality or disability.

We see our role interchangeably as enabler, facilitator, champion and servant to local communities.

Our relationships are our greatest strength. We are trusted by local organisations and by public sector partners because we reflect the diversity of Hackney and because we have consistently delivered over many years. Our diverse local communities respect us and have high expectations of us.

We pride ourselves on our approach to partnership, whether that is working with public bodies or subcontracting local voluntary and community organisations. We work to foster a culture of collaboration in all our work.

We believe in the power of Hackney's communities and local organisations. We create spaces where people can be heard, and advocate for those that don't have a seat at the table.

> **You would have done a great job in a normal year but to do what you have in a very "abnormal" year is really impressive – well done and thank you!**
>
> Ciaran Rafferty, City Bridge Trust – core funder of Hackney Giving

> **Hackney CVS plays a really pivotal role in being that space where all of Hackney's diversity comes together. It's one of the strongest infrastructure bodies in the country**
>
> Chaya Spitz, CEO, Interlink Foundation

> **Hackney CVS has amazing reach into every part of our borough and so sometimes they give us really important feedback. I certainly can think of times when I've made different decisions because of the information, the intelligence that HCVS have brought to me.**
>
> Jonathan McShane, a previous Cabinet member for Health and Social Care, Hackney Council

> **Our organisation benefited from the support offered by Hackney CVS to the local Hackney-based organisations and grass-root charities. Especially the type of support and expertise that the small organisations operating on limited resources can't afford but is vital for their development.**
>
> Makbule Gunes,
> Director, Roj Women's Association

A growing and diverse borough...

Hackney is a growing borough of over 280,000 people[1] with over 100 languages spoken and a diverse range of people and communities.

Hackney is a relatively young borough with a quarter of its population under 20. The proportion of residents between 20-29 years has grown in the last ten years and now stands at just under 25%. People aged over 55 make up only 18% of the population.

Hackney is a culturally diverse area, with significant 'Other White', Black and Turkish/Kurdish communities. A large Charedi Jewish community is concentrated in the North East of the borough and is growing.

Hackney was the 22nd most deprived local authority overall in England in the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation, in 2015, it was ranked eleventh, and in 2010 it was ranked second. Hackney has been changed by regeneration and gentrification with communities that were already here now living alongside a Hackney that's emerging and developing. Hackney is relatively more deprived in relation to barriers to housing and services. income and living environment than its overall rank suggests, but generally less deprived than its overall ranking for crime, employment and health and significantly less deprived for education.

1. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JZLZFzNUSO40l7-vCA_dy9Dk08e6jXa_/view

Before the pandemic:

→ The proportion of adults in work had been increasing to close to the London average, but the unemployment rate was still 7%

→ Hackney had an above average number of disabled people and residents in poor health. 58% of residents were in good health, however a significant number of people, 13%, experienced bad health

→ A tenth of Hackney's adults experienced depression, and 1.2% of residents had severe conditions like schizophrenia. There was a particularly high prevalence of severe mental health conditions in the Black population.

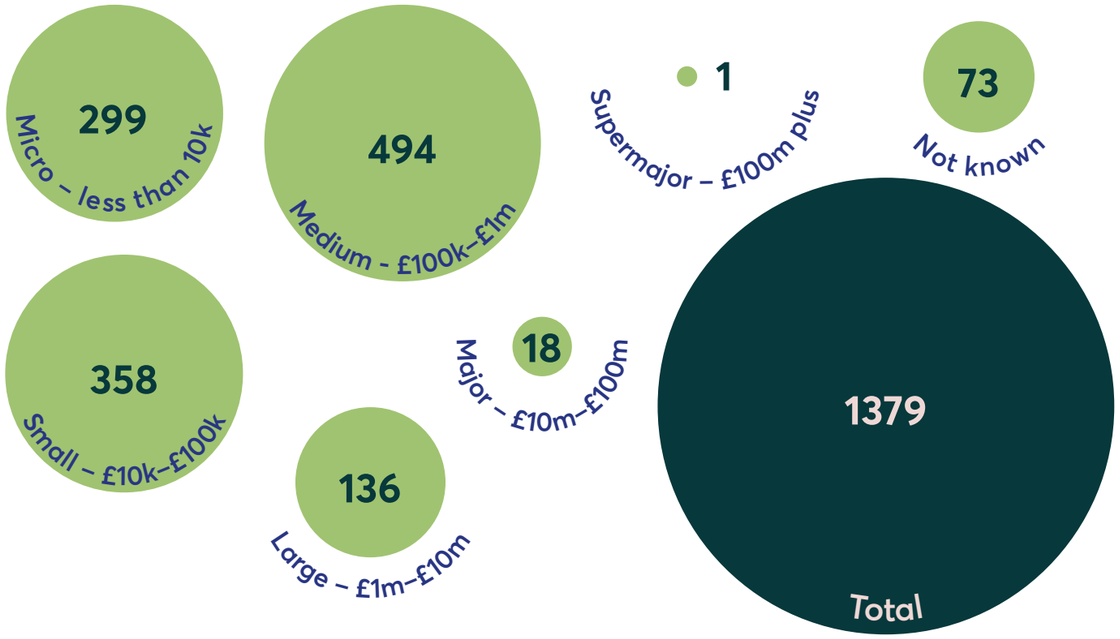
→ Older people in Hackney were much poorer than older people in England as a whole

...with a rich, diverse and strong voluntary and community sector

Hackney has a well-developed, rich and diverse voluntary and community sector, encompassing a range of organisations from micro resident-run community groups, small, borough wide, long established charities that help make the identity and community feel of Hackney, and larger local charities that deliver a range of contracts on behalf of the system. Many of these organisations, especially those most embedded in the fabric of Hackney, are reaching people furthest from mainstream services, whether due to poverty, lack of trust in statutory services, or cultural/language barriers.

There are 1379 charities in Hackney, though this includes many large national and international charities with their headquarters here.

Annual income	Number of organisations
Micro (less than £10k)	299
Small (£10k – 100k)	358
Medium (£100k – £1m)	494
Large (£1m– £10m)	136
Major (£10m–£100m)	18
Super Major (£100m +)	1
Not known	73
Total	1379



The impact of COVID-19

8,544 confirmed cases of coronavirus were reported in City and Hackney up to 8 January 2021.

As of 18 January, Hackney Council registrars had registered 349 COVID-related deaths. Deaths from COVID disproportionately affected certain ethnically diverse groups, older people, men, people with underlying health conditions, adults with learning disabilities, care home residents and staff, those working in other public facing occupations, as well as individuals and families living in social deprivation.

Lockdown and social distancing increased financial insecurity with many losing paid work. The pre-existing 'digital divide' (lack of access to devices and/or to data or WiFi) made it difficult for many people to access services, support, education, work and to keep in touch with friends and family. 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.

The indirect impacts of lockdown, social distancing and the longer-term economic consequences of the pandemic are impacting those already disadvantaged most and will continue to do so for a long time to come. The greatest impact has been on those already impacted by poverty, children and young people, carers, certain faith communities, LGBTQI+ people, disabled people and those with no recourse to public funds.

We have set up a Community COVID Helpline which provides advice, information and support. We have a Volunteering and Befriending service including shopping, and collecting prescriptions. Our helpline also offers Emotional Support and our IAPT service has been extended to provide single sessions of therapy for people who are suffering from Anxiety and Depression related to COVID. We have also provided Psycho-Educational Telephone conferences on timely topics e.g. Post Trauma following giving birth during COVID. We are working with Hackney Council on a Kosher Food box offer and our volunteers are packing and delivering 120 Kosher food boxes weekly for vulnerable older people. We also set up a Post Discharge Care Facility – for people recovering from COVID requiring additional support and care.

Bikur Cholim, 'Beyond Duty', June 2020

Women have been more likely to be furloughed or made redundant following the lockdown. The longer-term social and economic impacts on already disadvantaged children and young people are also expected to be significant.

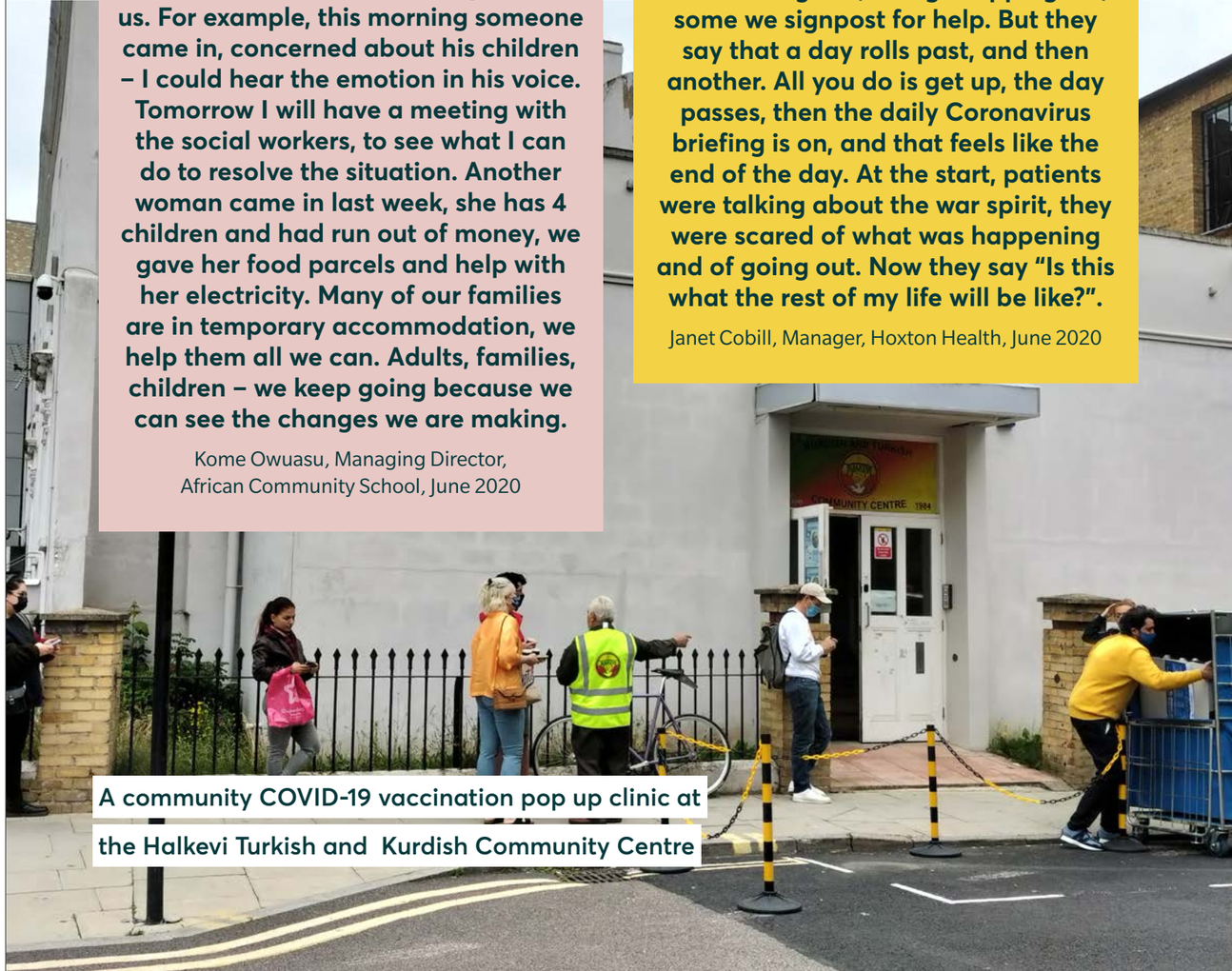
Hackney's voluntary and community sector, including the staff of Hackney CVS, stepped up and rapidly adapted their services. However, we must recognise the immense personal impact on staff and volunteers. Those of us in the VCS have supported others while facing our own grief, trauma and isolation. Many of us have grappled with our own illness and recovery from COVID-19, while working through high levels of uncertainty, rapid change and constant worry for our colleagues, friends, family and the people we support.

We have been working with families in Hackney since 2000, and now work with about 150 families a year, as well as all the adults on our education courses. With lockdown, we had to suspend our courses. We are supporting families with multiple needs. Two days a week we deliver food parcels, for example to those who are not entitled to free school meals because they have no recourse to public funds. We are helping families in any way we can – with sourcing laptops for children to do schoolwork, and with emotional support. We have a commitment to the families we work with because of the trust they have in us. For example, this morning someone came in, concerned about his children – I could hear the emotion in his voice. Tomorrow I will have a meeting with the social workers, to see what I can do to resolve the situation. Another woman came in last week, she has 4 children and had run out of money, we gave her food parcels and help with her electricity. Many of our families are in temporary accommodation, we help them all we can. Adults, families, children – we keep going because we can see the changes we are making.

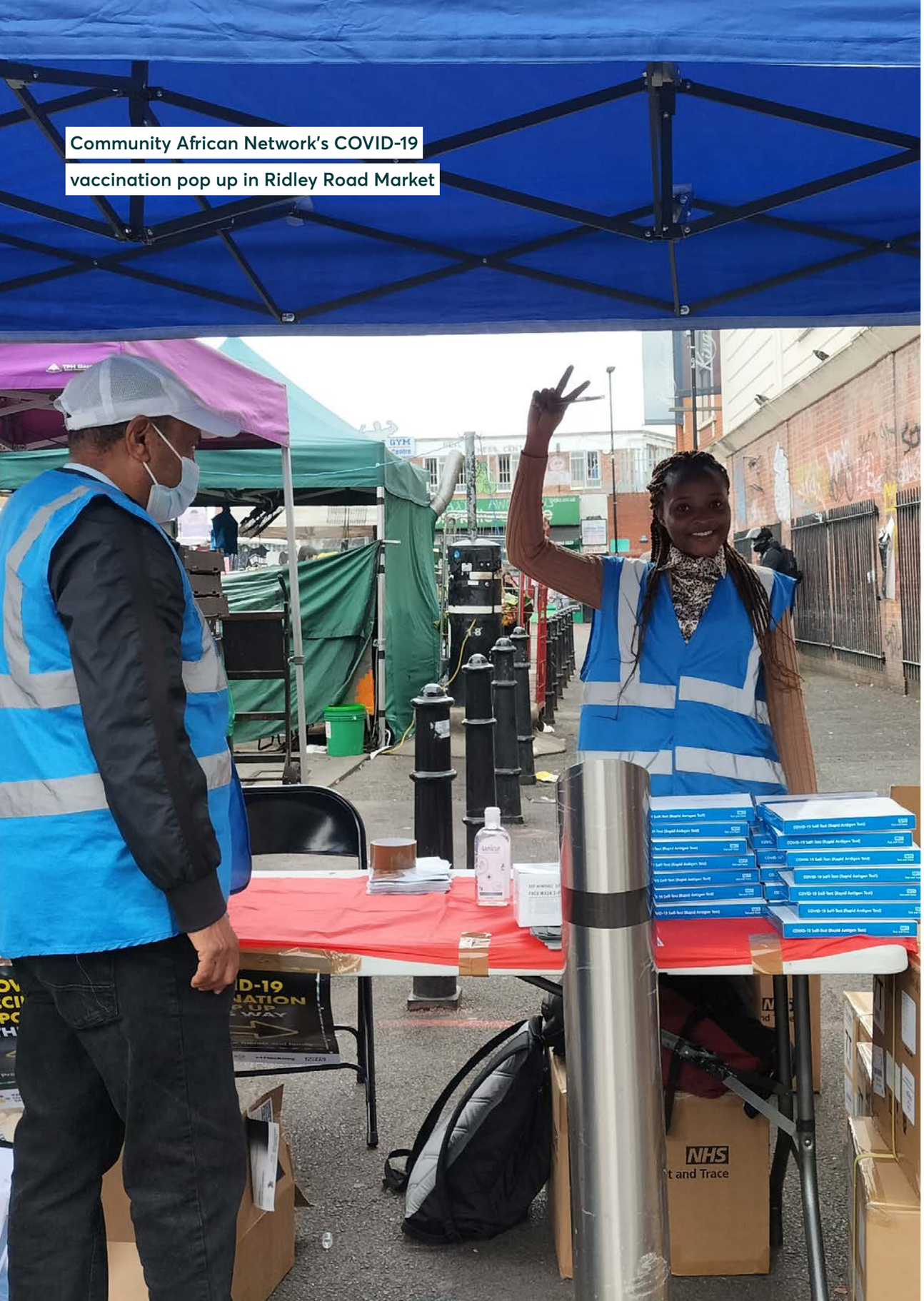
Kome Owuasu, Managing Director, African Community School, June 2020

We have had to close since the lockdown because of the 1:1 nature of all the therapies. Volunteers are calling around all the patients to listen to their concerns, and signpost them to the help they need. It's been horrible, heart-wrenching, what is happening. Many patients live alone, and just want to talk. They are deteriorating, many missing acupuncture and osteopathy particularly – pain is the biggest issue, and then mobility, often as a result of pain. They say they will do anything to come back, wear masks, have practitioners in full PPE. It's the loneliness – some say their neighbours have been great, doing shopping etc, some we signpost for help. But they say that a day rolls past, and then another. All you do is get up, the day passes, then the daily Coronavirus briefing is on, and that feels like the end of the day. At the start, patients were talking about the war spirit, they were scared of what was happening and of going out. Now they say "Is this what the rest of my life will be like?".

Janet Cobill, Manager, Hoxton Health, June 2020



A community COVID-19 vaccination pop up clinic at the Halkevi Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre



Community African Network's COVID-19 vaccination pop up in Ridley Road Market

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.

The project [Hackney City Farm Garden Therapy project] has been very refreshing and innovating for me in these challenging times. It has helped me to express myself, hear other people's stories, speak on mine and get out to be surrounded by beautiful nature. I really love and enjoy the way the project is running and wish it was a bit longer.

Without Coffee Afrik and Abdi, my family would not have survived. I had suicidal thoughts, no food and lost my job during COVID-19, they are like our family. Nobody else is helping like Coffee Afrik, they are the only Somali support.

I am extending my endless thanks for all that you have done for me ever since and all the Filipinos whom you have helped through Kanlungan … You have saved my life … and I am sure you will continue to do so for other Filipinos who need help in their most critical times.

My 15 year old son would not come out of his room during the lockdown and I didn't know what he was doing, he would isolate himself and be on social media for long hours. London Saz School's online lessons made him make new friends, he learnt how to play guitar and not only during lesson hours, he would rehearse good 5 hours a day and would spend his time with us and was always excited to make us listen his music.

We brought the community together to respond to COVID…

We have a long history of investing in networks, which are at the heart of our work. Our networks bring organisations together to share community insight, raise issues with statutory organisations and work together to improve the lives of local residents. These networks were critical when the pandemic hit.

For example:

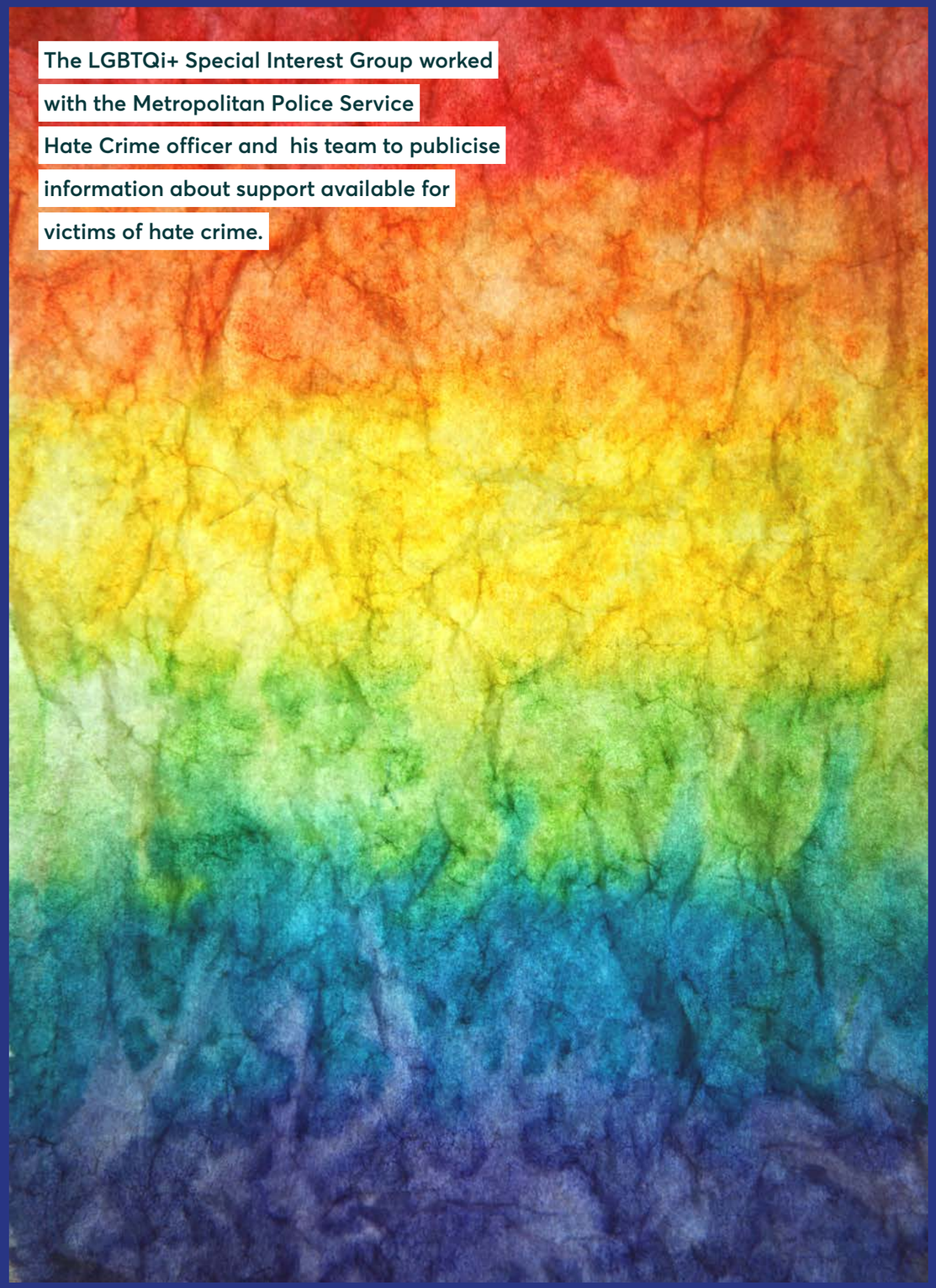
→ Hackney Refugee and Migrant Forum became a key partner for the statutory sector to reach refugee and migrant communities. Member organisations held and supported vaccine pop-up clinics and worked with St Georges University to produce research on concerns about vaccines.

→ LGBTQi+ Special Interest Group reported a rise in hate crime, and then worked with the Metropolitan Police Service Hate Crime officer and his team to publicise information about support available.

→ Hackney Advice Forum, with its close relationship with the Department for Work and Pensions, kept member organisations updated with regular news and information items, with some issues for residents addressed instantly with the DWP in meetings.

→ Learning Disabled Special Interest Group looked at the impact of the digital divide on people with a Learning Disability, issues with DNR ('do not resuscitate') orders at Homerton Hospital and publicised the designated vaccine services for people with learning disabilities, their carers and families.

→ Mental Health Special Interest Group shared information and referral pathways. The group was extremely grateful for the North East London Health and Care Partnership's offer of free emotional wellbeing sessions from MIND, reduced rate alternative health sessions, and support for our health care professional colleagues.



Learning Disabled Special Interest Group publicised the designated vaccine services for people with learning disabilities, their carers and families.

▼ Hackney Giving distributed grants to frontline community grants to support vaccine uptake at pop up clinics

When the pandemic hit, we were nine months into a pilot programme in the Well Street Common Neighbourhood to develop a new, Neighbourhood-based approach to working with health and social care providers. We could see that the strong connections being developed in this Neighbourhood would be critical. We adapted our plans and rapidly rolled out a Neighbourhood approach across all eight Neighbourhoods in Hackney, with Neighbourhood Conversations running quarterly in each area.

Particularly in the early, uncertain, and fast changing days of the pandemic, they were trusted spaces for local groups to come together to share what they were finding, to connect to public sector partners to find out what was going on, and to work out the best ways to signpost people to the help they needed. Through these Neighbourhood meetings, we identified the challenge of the digital divide (lack of access to devices and/or to data or WiFi) before this became a well understood issue.

Through this work, we've been able to develop better, more equal, more productive relationships between local groups and public health bodies across Hackney. By having public sector partners involved locally, issues have been recognised and addressed. For example, through Neighbourhood Conversations partners heard concerns about people who were not registered with GP practices. Healthwatch Hackney then worked with the GP Confederation and the vaccine programme to set up an open vaccination programme for unregistered residents. We also learned very early on that signposting wasn't working. As a result, Hackney Council produced a clear guide that could be used locally to make sure that people were being signposted to the right places. We have also funded 11 organisations with small project grants of around £1,000 each to deliver activities and projects addressing key themes identified in Neighbourhood Conversations.

Really encouraging to see a forum for different professionals and community groups to come together to support people in need of different types of support.

Very useful meeting, good to find out more about different services. Thank you!

Great meeting, Long-COVID info very helpful!

...and set the agenda for recovery

In autumn 2020, we brought people together from across our diverse communities, to shape a recovery and resilience strategy. The pandemic has highlighted the vast inequalities present in Hackney's diverse communities. If we are to bounce back, we will all need to work together. Over 200 people contributed their experience and perspectives, their hopes and demands. We ensured that these experiences and views were heard, brought together, and amplified. We will continue to work with our public sector partners to address issues and challenges so that we can recover as a community.

◀ Abdi Hassan from Coffee Afrik with Diane Abbott MP

£3m funding for local public health

£750,000 channelled to local community groups

We transformed the relationship between the voluntary and community sector in Hackney and public health bodies

Voluntary and community groups are closest to the issues being faced by Hackney's diverse communities, so we believe that these organisations should be resourced to lead change.

Building on the strength of our networks, we designed a grant programme with our Public Health partners to address the need for accurate and up to date information and to address concerns about contact tracing and vaccines. We worked alongside Volunteer Centre Hackney to create a network of community champions and organisations who could provide up to date messaging around COVID. Of £3m funding for local public health, we negotiated that £750,000 would be channelled to our local community groups covering the majority of Hackney's diverse communities. These organisations then came together through monthly forums, working collectively to support residents, forming what could become a new public health community infrastructure. The close working relationship between Public Health, Hackney CVS and Volunteer Centre Hackney and the many small organisations who are working on the programme enabled this to be developed fast, and delivered in way that prioritised what residents needed.

Collaborations like this led to us securing funding to set up a ground-breaking new partnership (The VCSE Enabler) to solve public health challenges together. We have supported a group of local voluntary sector leaders (the VCS Leadership Group) to broaden its membership to include chairs of networks and, in future, of Neighbourhood forums. Acting as an executive for the new Assembly, the VCS Leadership Group will take soundings from networks and statutory sector partners to prioritise issues to be explored through our new VCSE Assembly meetings. Assembly meetings bring together the local sector with health and social care systems partners so that issues can be explored by a wide and diverse group. Critically, whereas in the past these kinds of meetings would have led to recommendations, the new Assembly meetings will lead to development of proposals and a business case to unlock funding and partnerships from the Integrated Care System. 189 people attended the first Assembly meeting on emotional wellbeing in June 2021.

189 people attended the first emotional wellbeing meeting

This demonstrates how much the relationships between voluntary organisations and the public sector have matured in City and Hackney, accelerated by the trust built through the pandemic. The value of the relationships many organisations hold with local residents, particularly those from diverse communities, has proved invaluable. And in needing to reach some of those previously outside many health care systems, for example people who are homeless or have no recourse to public funds, the healthcare system has needed the partnership with the voluntary and community sector like never before.

▼ The Irish Elderly Advice Network ran a pop up clinic at St Thomas More Catholic Church

We supported local organisations with regular and up to date information

This period has been characterised by high levels of uncertainty and constant change. We communicated with local organisations throughout, ensuring that they received time-critical and accurate information about the pandemic, changing guidance and restrictions, and how they could respond and adapt. In the early, most uncertain, days of the pandemic we sent four or five newsletters per week to over 1400 people on our mailing list, getting important message out more quickly than others. We quickly set up a COVID-19 support section on our website and shared this resource widely through social media. This information has been critical to organisations and to the local residents that they support.

We modified our organisational development support during this time to support organisations to adapt and react while also thinking about what they need to remain sustainable in the longer term. We ran webinars on emerging issues including 'COVID-19 Guidance for VCS organisations' and 'Risk Management for community centres'. We adapted our full day training sessions to shorter sessions more suited to online learning.

The training we attended have helped [us] to network with similar agencies and gain knowledge and experiences of best practice. Moreover, the training opportunities provided us the chance to upgrade and update ourselves and live up to the organisation's expectations.

The training that I attended reaffirmed that we are on the right direction.

▼ Members of the Hackney CVS youth team

We combatted isolation and loneliness among our older people

When the pandemic hit, we had already been working for five years with a fantastic range of organisations and projects supporting older people to combat isolation and loneliness (through our Connect Hackney programme and the Hackney Lunch Club Network).

Over the last year, face to face activities stopped completely several times due to lockdowns. Groups shifted their focus to providing emergency support, providing food and medical supplies as well as emotional support, using every channel possible to get key messages out and reach residents.

We supported our network of 14 lunch clubs and the 25 projects funded through Connect Hackney to continue services through incredibly challenging circumstances. 93% of members felt that the lunch clubs supported them well through the pandemic. We also continued to train older people in computers, photography, interviewing and writing skills (though our Connect Hackney media group), swiftly moving all sessions onto Zoom. Throughout the pandemic we continued to publish our quarterly Hackney Senior magazine. We worked with our local food banks to distribute 5,000 copies (a 25% increase on our usual print run) with food parcels, and published phone numbers for local support organisations so that older residents who could not easily get online could still access critical services.

We brought organisations together to share learning and influence change. Our Connect Hackney partners told us they have gained confidence, skills and connections to be able to represent, reflect and magnify the needs of the communities they serve; they feel more able to influence policymakers and bring valuable insight to the table to affect real change.

My family lives far away, so I rely strongly on the lunch clubs for social and nutritional needs. Only the lunch club manager asked how we are.
(Lunch club member)

Before lockdown I had a very sort of strict routine which kept me, I suppose like balanced … so when lockdown happened it really threw me … like just a terrible panic, it was like my whole life, all that routine that kept me mentally well just stopped … But then with [the project] it's been a life saver.

I have never used a computer, so for me this is the first time I'm enjoying my days. So I'm doing several activities, cultural, information, wellbeing activities too.

I truly believe they did more than they should have for all of us. The club is really great to all of us and they couldn't support us any more if they tried.
(Lunch club member)

They have been a lifeline for me as I don't see anyone else during the day. I have a hot dinner every day – and I get to see a friendly face.
(Lunch club member)

We supported young people through the challenges of the last year

We have an innovative youth leadership approach focussed around helping young people to have a voice and influence. We pay the young people we work with as part time leaders (London Living Wage). Our programmes are therefore genuinely youth led and our leaders design and coordinate their own activities. Through the pandemic we worked with 45 youth leaders through three main projects: Politically Black, Account, and Cool Down Café. All of our young leaders faced considerable challenges, including losing other paid work, isolation, grief, mental health issues, interactions with the police who clamped down on young black people in groups during the first lockdown, and difficulty in getting online due to lack of devices or reliable WiFi/data. By providing equipment, hardship grants and training, we supported youth leaders to continue to develop as our community leaders of the future.

We used this youth leadership approach to develop the Open Minds digital platform to support young black experiencing mental health problems. Designed with them at its heart the platform and associated online programming events in Mental Health week reached 10,000s of people, with people watching the sessions from Africa, North America and other parts of the world. Watch more here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwQ32pB9vDw

When the pandemic hit, we opened our network of organisations funded by City Hall to other organisations working with young people, so that we could respond to COVID together. Through monthly meetings we supported practitioners to share learning and address challenges like online safeguarding and delivering face-to-face work safely when possible. As a network we were then able to secure funding (My Ends) to address youth violence, young people's mental health and relationships with the police in Hackney Wick, which is the most deprived ward in the borough and a hot spot for youth violence.

▲ Young leaders at Hackney CVS worked in partnership during the pandemic

It has been amazing, a life saver to be honest. I personally would not have been able to be as involved with work if it wasn't for the mac and WiFi dongle. I was doing everything off my phone. Which some things felt next to impossible beforehand. Also having the equipment has helped me to become more professional and organised. It's also less stressful when you don't have to rely on your phone to do all your work, which would make things very limited.

(Youth leader)

Extremely grateful for the laptop. I am able to do an array of things such as attend meetings, create CVs, do extensive research and a place for thorough documentation with the security and safety of it being in one central space.

(Youth leader)

Financially things for me are a struggle as it is, being in debts. … before the hardship funds existed, I found it very hard to get by. But the hardship fund has been a life saver. Making sure I at least have money for food shopping for the month. So once the bills are paid. I still have a small amount to try and get through the month with. Though it's small, it's more than I would have had without the hardship fund.

(Youth leader)

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 showed immediate leadership. Building on our work with young black leaders, our Chief Executive, Jake Ferguson, drafted an anti-racism manifesto for our local public sector partners, which Hackney Council included in their own anti-racism strategy. As a result of our leadership, the council recognised that it needed to provide stronger leadership. They developed their own Black Lives Matter motion, which was passed by the full Council.

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. We are delighted that three of our young leaders have joined this board. We also hosted a group of volunteers which looked at the correct terms to use when talking about people of African and Caribbean descent. The group has now created a consultancy to provide training in this area.

> **Hackney Council recognises the systemic racism and inequalities that still exist in the UK today, and that the murder of George Floyd on 25th May in Minneapolis, at the hand of the Police, resonated with Black communities in Hackney. Hackney Council stands in solidarity with Black communities in Hackney, the UK, and across the world who face systemic racism every day. Hackney Council states unequivocally that Black Lives Matter.**
>
> – Extract from Hackney Council's BLM motion

◀ Black Lives Matter

Our key projects

Networks

We convene the following networks under the umbrella of the City and Hackney Health and Social Care Forum:

Network	Number of people and organisations
Hackney Advice Forum	430
Learning Disability Special Interest Group	28
LGBTQ+ Special interest Group	32
Mental Health Special Interest Group	59
Older People's Special Interest Group	23
Sexual Health Special Interest Group	33

We also convene:

Network	Number of people and organisations
Children and Families Forum	476
Connect Hackney, Ageing Better	(see below)
Faith Community Network	361
Mental Health Special Interest Group	59
Hackney Lunch Clubs Network	(see below)
Hackney Refugee & Migrant Forum	401, with 24 in steering group
Safer Young Hackney/Young Londoners Fund network	70
Supported Employment Network	50

Many of these networks meet together as the VCS Leadership Group, also supported by Hackney CVS, which brings together network chairs, infrastructure groups and system reps to collaborate on an approach to involvement in the Integrated Care system, as well as overseeing the Assembly and the Neighbourhoods programmes, see below.
www.hcvs.org.uk/networks

▲ The Connect Hackney Media group

VCS Neighbourhood Programme

We co-ordinate this programme on behalf of the VCS Leadership Group. This programme piloted local infrastructure for the voluntary and community sector in one Neighbourhood, looking at mapping, building connections between organisations, and developing partnership arrangements. The aim of the programme is to facilitate local voluntary and community organisations to be able to engage with the new NHS Neighbourhood delivery model. The pilot was extended out across all 8 Neighbourhoods as a response to the pandemic.

www.hcvs.org.uk/neighbourhoods

Hackney Lunch Clubs Network

We run the Hackney Lunch Clubs Network on behalf of Hackney Council. The network provides lunches and reduces isolation for older people by providing leisure and health activities, regular meeting places and opportunities to make new friends. Whilst some Hackney Lunch Clubs are tailored to meet the needs of specific Ethnically Diverse communities, all lunch clubs are open to all Hackney residents aged 55 and over, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, faith or religion, and residents are free to choose whichever club they feel best meets their individual needs.

www.hcvs.org.uk/lunch-clubs

Connect Hackney

Connect Hackney, Ageing Better aims to improve the wellbeing of Hackney residents aged 50 and over by reducing or preventing loneliness and isolation. The £5.8m six-year programme (2015 – 2021) is one of 14 programmes across England funded by The National Lottery Community Fund's 'Fulfilling Lives, Ageing Better programme. The programme is led by a cohort of c.20 older people which make up the Older People's Committee, helping to coproduce the programme, informing commissioning priorities, sitting on assessment panels, as well as contributing to the dissemination of programme learning, and influencing activities. The programme was extended until March 2022, following a successful bid to The National Lottery Community Fund, acknowledging the impact of COVID-19 on programme delivery.

www.connecthackney.org.uk

Connect Hackney senior media group

The Connect Hackney senior media group is made up of Hackney residents aged 50+, with many aged in their 70s and 80s. Currently we have 48 active participants (3 groups) and we have approximately 200 members - former participants who still join us for special events, talks and trips. Media group members receive training in computers, photography, interviewing and writing skills and produce stories, photos, and audio for the Connect Hackney website and Hackney Senior magazine. Hackney Senior has a print run of 5,000 copies.

www.connecthackney.org.uk/senior-media

▼ Keeping connected on zoom

◀ Hackney Giving funded groups to put together food packages for residents during the pandemic

Hackney Refugee and Migrant Forum

The forum's main purposes are to raise awareness of the issues refugees and migrants living and working in Hackney face and to campaign on their behalf.

hcvs.org.uk/hackney-refugee-forum

Hackney Giving

Hackney Giving, hosted by Hackney CVS, is a single point of giving that supports grassroots organisations in Hackney. It strengthens the borough by bringing together individuals and businesses that want to give funding, time or skills with organisations that are delivering projects and services in the area. Organisations funded through Hackney Giving must have a turnover less than £300,000 per year and apply for a specified project or piece of work within the borough.

www.hackneygiving.org.uk

VCSE Enabler and VCSE Assembly

Overseen by the VCS Leadership Group, the VCSE Enabler is an innovative new vehicle and infrastructure to put VCSE organisations at the heart of the City and Hackney health and care system with a focus on early intervention and primary wellbeing activities, offering resident/community focussed services to those most in need and providing preventative interventions which reduce pressures on other parts of the system.

The Enabler is centred around a large VCSE Assembly, with the VCS Leadership Group acting as its executive, and a range of sector networks. System project sponsors will work with the Executive to shape plans and solutions based on solid evidence and community insight. The Enabler will

- → increase co-production with the voluntary and community sector, particularly black and ethnic minority communities, by working with those grassroots community organisations that represent and are led by them
- → provide a mechanism for the Integrated Care Partnership to invest directly in activities led by local organisations that are based on co-produced solutions to problems co-identified by the local communities and the public sector
- → through this investment, also provide development support and capacity building for local organisations.

The first VCSE Assembly meeting took place in June 2021, looking at Emotional Wellbeing. A proposal and business case based on the discussions should be ready in September 2021.

www.hcvs.org.uk/vcs-assembly-meeting

Organisational Development and training

Our organisational development team provide support on fundraising, governance, policies and procedures, safeguarding, DBS checks, monitoring and evaluation, media and marketing, and setting up new community groups.

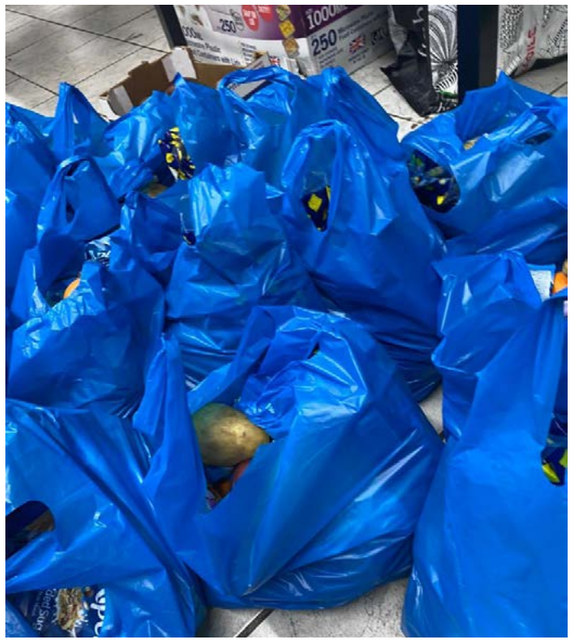
We design our organisational development offer to respond to the needs of our local organisations. Our comprehensive training programme offers high-quality training to develop core competencies in key areas of:

- → Finance and Fundraising
- → Strategy
- → Good Governance
- → Monitoring and Evaluation
- → Safeguarding
- → Developing and Managing people
- → Marketing
- → Equality and Diversity.

www.hcvs.org.uk/organisational-development-during-covid-19/

www.hcvs.org.uk/training-and-events/

Lunch clubs continued to offer support during the pandemic. They were able to assist with food and medicine supplies and some clubs were able to provide regular hot meals. Many community groups provided food packages for residents shielding at home.



Projects with youth leaders

We have an innovative youth leadership approach focussed around helping young people to have a voice and influence. We pay the young people we work with as part time leaders (London Living Wage). Our programmes are therefore genuinely youth led and our leaders design and coordinate their own activities. We work with youth leaders through three main projects:

Account group

Our young people's police monitoring group that has an independent Advisory function but is very much separate of Hackney and Tower Hamlets police.

www.accounthackney.org

Politically Black

Our young black men's group that is about developing leadership and representation skills and ensuring that their voices are heard.

Cool Down Café

A peer-to-peer mental health and wellbeing service delivered in partnership with Pembury Community Centre.

www.hcvs.org.uk/cool-down-cafe

My Ends

A new project, with funding secured in March 2021 from City Hall's Violence Reduction Unit. The My Ends programme has been developed to put communities at the forefront of tackling violence by giving them the support they need to deliver locally designed interventions in areas of the capital that are affected by high and sustained levels of violence. Hackney CVS has secured funding to work in Hackney Wick.

Growing Minds

Another asset-based community focused programme focused on supporting African / Caribbean families. Growing Minds aims to improve children and young people's emotional health and wellbeing in City & Hackney during the important transition years from primary to secondary school and secondary school to adulthood.

The project, which supports children and young people aged 9 to 25 of African, Caribbean and mixed heritage (ACH), is funded by the Department of Health, Hackney Council and City & Hackney CCG. Hackney CVS works in partnership with Family Action, African Community School, Father to Father and the Black Parents Community Forum

The Open Minds Alliance

A 1 year asset-based community development project, this initiative established a African / Caribbean digital platform for local young black people to engage around their mental health. The platform is now being led by SWIM and Irie Mind. We also created a new national Open Minds Alliance which brings together black-led community organisations and professionals to develop access to culturally rooted mental health support and space for dialogue using digital platforms at its heart. Coproduced with young people, this work was funded by City & Hackney CCG.

With thanks to Megan Gray for compiling this report and to Alice Haworth-Booth for designing the report.

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