

Community Links: Our Social Impact in London Communities

2019

COMMUNITY
LINKS



Community Champion's event, Help Through Crisis

ABOUT COMMUNITY LINKS

Social impact

Definition: A significant, positive change, that addresses a pressing social challenge, as a result of a deliberate set of activities, with a goal around generating social impact and social change. (University of Michigan, Centre for Social Impact).

Our mission

Community Links is a community charity, rooted in East London, providing support and opportunities to thousands of people every year. With advice programmes, employability, health awareness and community initiatives we have been transforming lives for over 40 years and are founded on two principles: to find innovative solutions and to deliver them with the whole community.

Community Links joined Catch22 in 2017, a national not-for-profit business with a social mission. We share an ambition to build an evidence base to drive positive change, including government adoption of better public services.

Our vision and Values

Our Vision is of Ready for Everything Communities: people who support each other to overcome problems, prevent them from occurring again and help each other to thrive and achieve their goals.

Community Links works to a set of values shared by staff and partners:

We are compassionate and we are thoughtful

We are open

We are collaborative

We believe in relationships

We are innovative

We want to make a difference

We are proud of our diversity

We stand for equality

Our Impact

This is a selective summary of our annual impact.

Advice: an increased perception of life satisfaction

Our Advice team assisted more than 3 000 people last year. In 2018-2019, the social work team of the **Help Through Crisis** programme helped 85 people facing severe difficulties for up to 12 weeks. 86 % of the service users surveyed, reported that they were no longer in crisis at the end of the intervention and it had improved their life satisfaction perception from 3.1 to 5.4 on a scale from 0 to 10.

In 2018, based on the evidence of need for **food support**, Community Links decided to create an emergency food support service, available one evening a week. Over the year, 843 families accessed dried food packages. A survey conducted 6 months after its creation showed that 38% of people surveyed, said that issues to do with their benefits was the main reason for them needing food and attending the food support service. Our volunteers also reported that beneficiaries needed to talk and to break their isolation.

The Appeals service met with 48 people to help them appeal legal decisions about their Employment Support or Personal Independence Payments. 99% of these appeals were successful. The Advice Service also achieved the Advice Quality Standard.

A better sense of well-being for youth in East London's schools

833 young mentors and mentees participated in our mental health peer-to-peer **mentoring programme, More than Mentors**. Our youth workers delivered training sessions in schools in Haringey

and Barking and Dagenham and will begin in Havering and Redbridge in 2020. The programme is supported and evaluated by the Anna Freud Centre for Children and Families.

Community Links developed a new programme in partnership with Catch22 for the Home Office, the **Community Advocates programme**, to address knife crime and promote safety for young people.

Black and minority ethnic women getting closer to the workplace

The **Create Your Future** programme aims to bring black and minority ethnic (BAME) women closer to employment and has helped 631 women.

Community Links' team of advisors organised workshops on **job search, money management, confidence building** and developed partnerships with potential employers. Remembering that 74 % of these women were economically inactive at the beginning of the project, the interim evaluation already demonstrates that many are feeling less lonely and isolated and more confident about accessing childcare and their benefit entitlements.

The programme is funded by the National Lottery Community Fund and evaluated by the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University.

Health and cancer awareness: an expanded geographical impact in London

With the main objective of **reducing health inequalities and improving cancer screening**, our health facilitators called 57,911 patients living across London to encourage uptake of bowel and breast cancer screening. All health facilitators are trained in cancer awareness and many are bilingual. This programme is supported by local Clinical Commissioning Groups and Cancer Alliances and is delivered working with GP practices.

In 2019, the Enhanced Patient Experience Survey was launched with One Newham, a network of voluntary and community organisations. The project aims **to improve the patient experience** in Newham by gaining valuable information from a wide demographic of GP Practice users.

Growing support to innovative projects in arts, gardening, parenting or teaching

Last year, Community Links awarded 18 **community grants** to residents of South Canning Town. Funded by Clarion Futures, these grants help residents to deliver innovative and sustainable projects for example, green spaces, parenting support, art classes, and contributions to community history within their neighbourhoods.

A constant ambition: to contribute to local and national policies and share learning

Community Links published 8 **original research papers** supported by The Hadley Trust, the National Lottery Community Fund, Trust for London and The Barrow Cadbury Trust.

Based on an extensive literature review and local knowledge, each publication allowed us to identify policy drivers and to make recommendations.

Community Conversations was extensive research about youth violence engaging with over 200 people. It identified 3 structural factors: inequality and austerity, the lack of positive opportunities for young people and a gap between the rhetoric around youth violence and the reality in the lived experience of local young people.

In April 2019, Community Links took part in the **Newham Civil Society Youth Commission**, we interviewed several young people and produced a joint report on reducing youth violence with a Public health approach.

Public events are a key part of engaging with our communities in a way that stretches and challenges audiences. 22 events were organised in our main offices at 105 Barking Road. We hosted the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights**, Philip Alston as he completed his work on extreme poverty. He visited 9 cities in the UK and Community Links hosted the session to gather testimony for London residents.

"14 million people, a fifth of the population, live in poverty. Four million of these are more than 50% below the poverty line, and 1.5 million are destitute and unable to afford basic essentials. For almost one in every two children to be poor in twenty-first century Britain is not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster, all rolled into one." Stated Dr. Philip Alston after his Visit to the United Kingdom.

Community Links was honoured to host meetings with Local Councillors, Local Government Officers, MPs and a Royal visit by HRH the Princess Anne.

ASTA and Rokeby: our local hubs

ASTA, our community hub based in Silvertown, close to London City Airport welcomed young people and families from the community in a particularly deprived and isolated neighbourhood.

Youth workers or advisors delivered dance classes, youth workshops and debt advice sessions on a weekly basis.

The **Rokeby** hub in Stratford is currently hosts a nursery.

Our people: diversity and a great sense of commitment

Community Links is a **London Living Wage Employer** and has supported London’s Citizens UK branch for Newham (TELCO) in their recent campaigning work.

129 new volunteers gave their time, expertise and energy to Community Links in 2018-2019. The Charity’s volunteers come from all walks of life.

Our staff survey conducted in September 2019 with 58 members of staff showed that:



of our staff felt motivated to work at Community Links to help people and improve society



34% of staff grew up in our East London community, and 39% currently live there.

Securing volunteers involvement and co-producing programmes and services will become more important to our capacity as we drive programme innovation. We are grateful to all our volunteers for their contribution.

Community Links regularly hosts researchers and interns on active learning programmes. They assist us to develop new policy ideas and ideas for programme development.

LES: a social enterprise model

Links Events Solutions (LES) is Community Links’ **social enterprise company** delivering event management and self-storage services across London. It gives 100% of its profit to Community Links. LES’ social impact is measured through yearly surveys and shows that 50% of the staff have been previously unemployed and 80% of staff have improved confidence through working at LES.

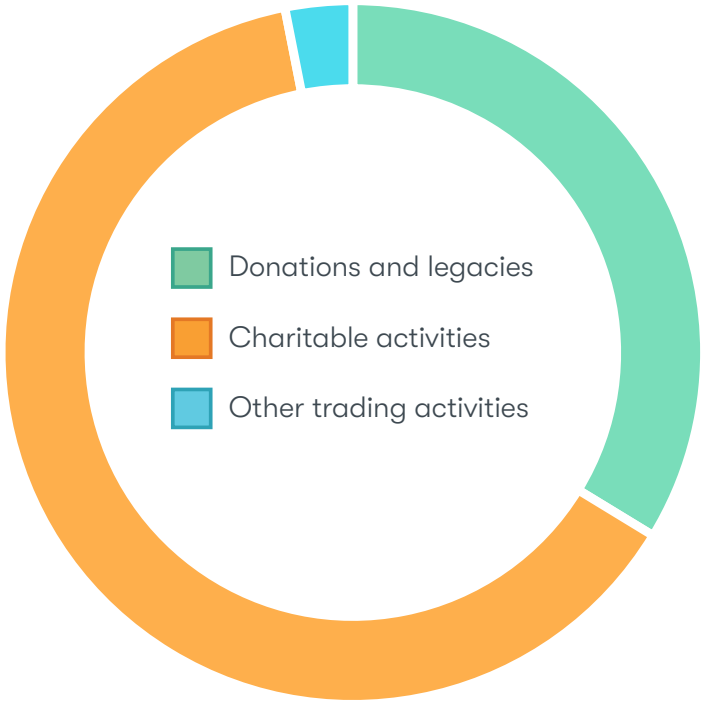


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CREATE YOUR FUTURE

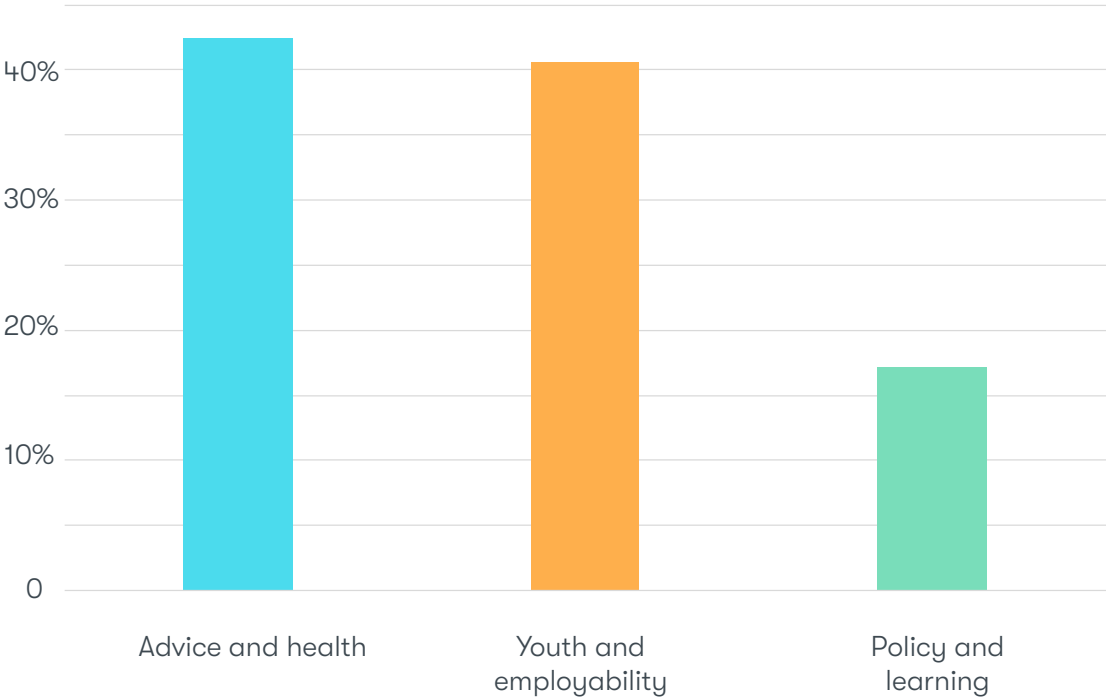
OUR BUDGET

In this year our expenditure was slightly less than our income. Our income is a mix of restricted and unrestricted funds. Our planning figure for contribution to overheads is up to 15% depending on the nature of the programme involved. We completed the expenditure of 'transition funds' linked to the new partnership with Catch22 which will assist with our longer term sustainability.

Income 2019



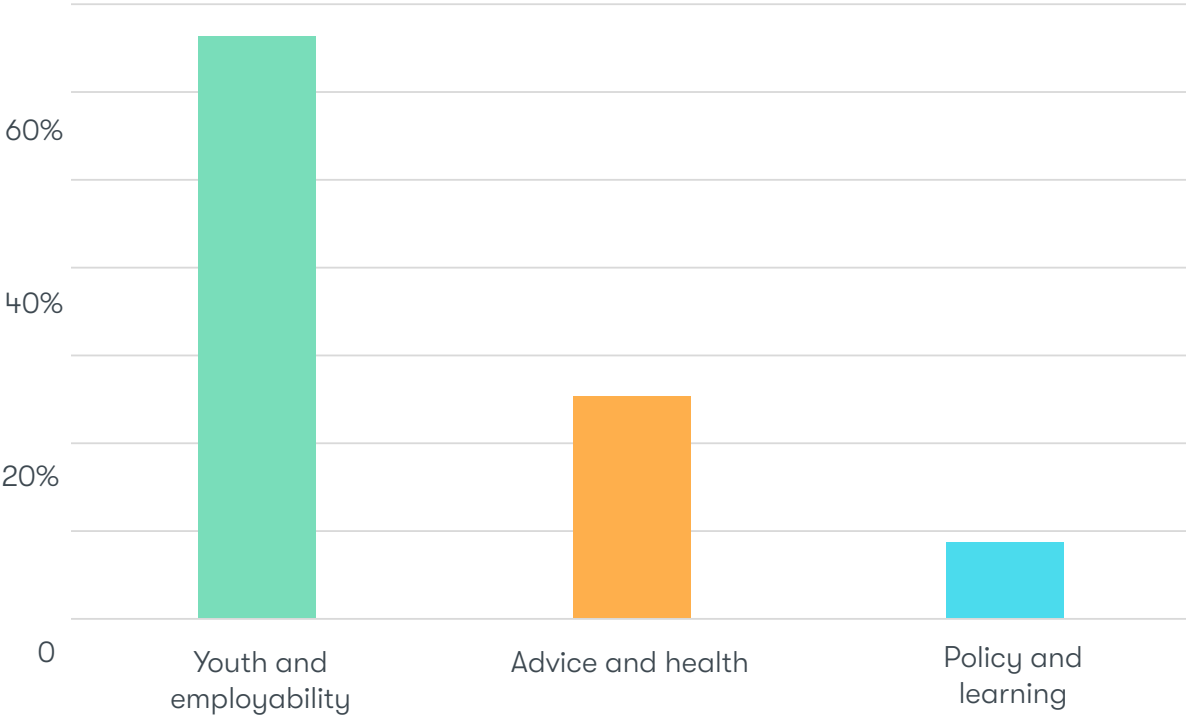
Charitable activities by programmes



Expenditure 2019



Charitable activities by programmes



Our perspectives for 2020-2021

- In 2020, our Board of Trustees will work with staff to build our new strategy for 2021-2023
- We will continue our work with young people to promote safety for all; and
- We will organise the restoration of our historical building in Barking Road, Newham.

CASE STUDIES

Create your Future: a story of confidence building and emotional support

Z came to Community Links in 2018 as a young care leaver and it was immediately evident that she had complex issues. Over a series of one-on-one discussions, building her confidence and soft skills and providing her with the emotional support she needed, we were able to generate significant change to her behaviour, motivation and to her mental health.

Z was referred to Create your Future (CYF) through an external organisation where she was studying Fashion. Her punctuality and attendance was poor and she would often make inappropriate comments, be disruptive in sessions, tearful or extremely agitated. Z was going through an identity crisis which led to feelings of confusion and leaving her unsure of where she fitted into the world or what she wanted to do with her life. Her lack of social awareness made it difficult for her to make friends and drove her further into isolation.

CYF Advisors began a support plan for Z by having a number of informal discussions on a one-to-one basis to gain her trust and establish a relationship with her. She began opening up about her past and experiences, including issues surrounding race and heritage, body dysmorphia, low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. During the CYF programme we led her through a series of confidence and character-building exercises. We made daily phone calls to ensure she woke up and left home on time for sessions. As she began to make friends her outlook and attitude began to change and she seemed

happier and more confident. We organised for her to attend a professional photoshoot and to take part in a short video documentary which involved her being interviewed on camera. This was a fundamental stage in her strengthening process as her issues with her appearance formed a large part of her anxiety.

We recruited Z onto a Creative Career and Business course where she began addressing her professional challenges. She attended all sessions and was on time, and told us that she felt happier within herself and that she had realised that she needed to figure out what she wanted to do with her life and not to waste it.

Z still probably has a long way to go to be able to enter and sustain any form of employment. She is still learning to deal with her issues and has good and bad days. Sometimes she needs a break before we can engage her again. We will continue to engage with her and invite her to join courses that we feel will be beneficial to her while she evaluates herself.

Increasing the uptake of bowel cancer screening but also about saving lives through early diagnosis.

Patient X had not responded to his bowel cancer screening invitation and therefore he was contacted via telephone by one of the Community Links' Health Facilitators. The aim of the call was to find out the reason behind his non-attendance and to encourage him to take part. During the phone call X initially showed unwillingness to be screened because he felt healthy and did not feel the need. However, as the Health Facilitator provided information about bowel cancer and its signs and symptoms, the patient realised that he had some of the symptoms mentioned and decided to take part in the bowel cancer screening. Our Health Facilitator requested a test kit for the patient which he completed and sent back to the screening hub.

Community Links' Health team later received a letter from the consultant that was treating X at the hospital. "This gentleman (Patient X) was recently found to have a carcinoma, thanks to attending the screening centres' programme. He was slightly symptomatic but he decided to ignore his symptoms until the screening prompt arrived. I think the other person who needs thanking is probably your receptionist (Health Facilitator from

Community Links) who encouraged him to take part in the Bowel Screening Programme and thankfully a treatable cancer has been found. Please pass on my thanks and congratulations to her." Dr. P. Consultant General and Colorectal Surgeon

This story shows that prevention and health education of patients is key to early diagnosis of cancer.

Community Links works with local organisations to recruit health facilitators according to the demographics of the patients in the local area. The health facilitators are bilingual which helps overcome language barriers that may prevent people from accessing health services. They are also trained alongside NHS, Cancer Research UK and Macmillan staff on cancer awareness, how to do self-examination, signs and symptoms of cancer and the different screening programmes.



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