

Model City London

Lessons and evidence of what works

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Executive Summary

Model City London is a place-based approach to achieving social change and integration through sport and physical activity which is being piloted in three locations in London: Bedfont, Feltham and Hanworth in Hounslow, Haringey (East) and Barking. It has taken the learning from similar initiatives in the USA developed by Laureus Sport for Good and applied this to London, where there is a close fit with both the Mayor of London's Sports Unites Strategy and Nike's Made to Play initiative.

Over the past five years, Laureus has pioneered and tested the Model City approach to creating positive change through sport in a number of major cities around the world. The journey began in New Orleans and Atlanta in the USA, has been piloted in London, and has recently kicked off in Paris and New Delhi. Further Model City locations are also currently being explored.

Model City London (MCL) began in earnest over the summer and autumn of 2018, with an initial scoping exercise that helped to identify suitable locations to implement and test the approach in the English capital. Development work with Generations Active Bedfont, Feltham & Hanworth (in Hounslow), Active Change Haringey and Barking Sports 4 Change began in late 2018 and continued as a pilot programme until March 2021. Coalitions have been established with plans in place to continue in each location; and Sport for Development activities are both ongoing and diversifying, building on the experiences and impacts of the pilot Programme.

This final evaluation and learning report shares the cumulative findings and lessons from the three year pilot Programme, with the aim of sharing what has been learned about “what works, for whom, in which circumstances, how and why”.

Practical and factual information about the approach, the MCL locations, as well as detailed findings and lessons can be found in the main report. This summary focuses on the overarching lessons and key messages about “what works” and the key impacts achieved between 2018 and 2021.

This report is the **final in a series of four evaluation and learning papers** that capture the evidence and shares the learning of what works in the pilot of the Model City approach in London. Previous reports and summaries can be found [here](#).

Overarching Lessons and Messages – What Works in Model City London?

From its early days, when MCL was being explored with various partners and community groups in potential areas in London, it was regarded as an exciting concept and opportunity for bottom up, place-based Sport for Development that could harness the talents of local communities to address their priorities for change. It has excited and energised people and partners at all levels ever since, uniting a diverse range of players around a shared vision for change through sport and physical activity. Whilst being much more than grant funding, the additional resource and the ways in which it has been awarded, with a concurrent focus on capacity building, have underpinned the Programme's achievements, as we explore later in this Summary. The main report goes into much more detail, but here we share some important highlights, key messages and Programme wide lessons about what has worked, for whom and how this has come about.

Over the last three years there has been significant movement towards the overarching MCL Vision and Outcomes.

Figure 1: MCL Facts and figures

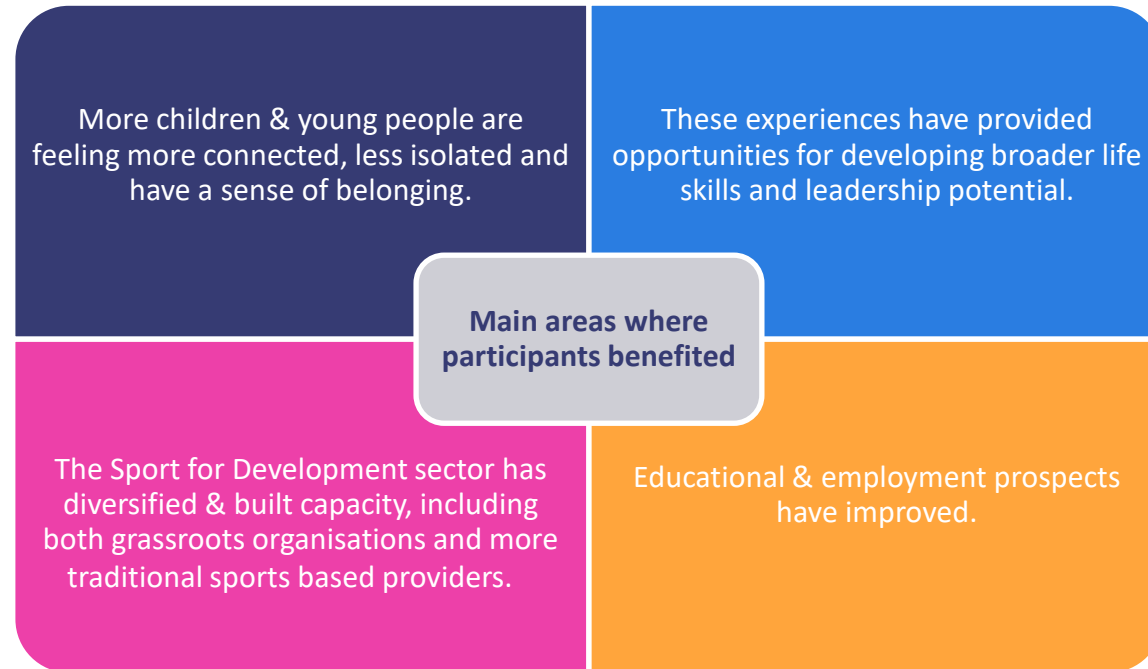


A total of 25 project grants were awarded across the three Coalition areas, amounting to a total investment of £409,784 in the delivery of new opportunities for sport and physical activity as a means to effect social change.

23 of these grants have been completed (with the remaining two extended to run into June 2021). The sum of their evidence combined with that generated by the [evaluation team at the National Development Team for Inclusion \(NDTi\)](#) has provided rich insights, data and learning. This evidence base illustrates that significant progress has been made in achieving each Coalition's local vision and outcomes, as well as contributing valuable lessons for the Programme as a whole.

Over 5,200 people have benefited from diverse, funded opportunities for sport and physical activities delivered through these 23 grants across the three Coalition areas. Of these, the majority of participants have benefited from changes in **four main areas**, as illustrated below.

Figure 2: Main areas where project participants benefited



In addition to Coalition evidence and lessons, MCL has generated important learning about what works in enabling communities to work together for a common purpose and achieve change through sport and physical development.

Four overarching messages are shared below, summarising the achievements, impacts and success factors drawn from all the evidence and learning from MCL over the last three years. We follow this with **seven key lessons** outlining the features of Model City approaches that can be used to sustain these achievements in London and inform ongoing developments.

Four key messages stand out when looking across all sources of evidence and lessons at both Coalition and Programme level in London.

1

Model City London is having a significant impact on people, organisations and communities – in exceptionally challenging times.

- Grantees, wider Coalition members and the MCL Programme team have adapted to ensure responsive, flexible delivery as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Delivery has been maintained, and in some cases diversified (e.g. through digital delivery), with over 5,200 people taking part in MCL projects;
- Around 70% of participants are more active and feel more confident and happier as a result of taking part.

2

The programme is acting as a catalyst for local ‘sport for good’ developments - supporting new initiatives, raising the bar for local organisations, and boosting the aspirations and confidence of emerging community leaders.

- There are many examples of new initiatives, spin-offs and opportunities created, based on priorities identified and valued by local communities;
- MCL has nurtured a new generation of community leaders – both young mentors and people now leading new organisations and acting as a force for good in their neighbourhoods and boroughs.

3

These achievements would not be possible without the solid foundations created by positive partnerships and relationships.

- MCL has provided a platform for all key players to have a voice and to make a valued contribution, including very small organisations;
- A range of key roles make this happen, including Community Coordinators, Chairs and Vice chairs, steering and sub group members, grantees, participants, funders, the Laureus Programme Team and some strategic partners;
- At the heart of these relationships and partnerships is a solid base of mutual respect and trust. Confidence in each other has grown over time, in some places steadily and in other places rapidly.
- These positive relationships enabled all three Coalitions to adapt and support each other to continue delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4

The Model City approach, style and funding model has enabled change, development and growth to happen for local people.

- This place-based approach is genuinely rooted in local communities and the knowledge and aspirations of local people;
- Scaffolding provided through Laureus has enabled local networks to grow and take root; three Coalitions are in place and plan to be for some time to come;
- A key feature valued by all has been the flexibility to enable growth at local pace, rather than focusing on top-down performance-managed delivery;
- Throughout all of this, the central importance of shared vision and values and a common purpose is evident.

Seven MCL Lessons

1. The idea and concept of Model City, with its **emphasis on bottom up, place-based development, was exciting** to those who became involved. Translating this into practice sometimes felt like a slow process, particularly in the early stages, although many people saw this phase as invaluable in **building relationships and a shared vision**. The facilitative approach, embodied by the Community Coordinators, was appreciated by all.
2. Model City successfully **united an unusually diverse and broad range of local players around a shared vision, and where everyone's contribution is valued**. Coalition members saw this **diversity as the most valuable aspect of MCL**, as it enabled rich collaborative working, with members drawing on each other's complementary skills and networks. This in turn improved delivery to local communities.
3. **Trusting relationships lie at the heart of Model City** – within Coalitions, with the Laureus team, GLA, Nike and increasingly with other, locally based funders. This matters, because **relationships have enabled delivery to happen in different and creative ways**, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. These relationships could not have grown without careful and sensitive attention, both from the local leaders who brought their own values and working style, and from the Laureus team. Modelling positive relationships has been important at every level. Shared values and a common vision have provided a rallying point around which Coalition members can coalesce. **Trust also developed through doing things together**, whether working on a joint funding bid or trying out a new sport.
4. Model City is about much **more than grant funding**, but the additional resource and the way it was awarded have underpinned the programme's achievements. **Grant-making was rooted in the Coalitions' coproduced outcomes**, with Coalition steering groups scrutinising applications alongside Community Coordinators, and decision-making reflecting **a best practice, open process**. Feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants was transparent and helpful, with detailed suggestions of how to adapt and where else to apply if unsuccessful. Whilst the experience of the process was generally regarded as positive, **for some it was disproportionate and slow**.
5. Each of the MCL Coalition areas is different, with their own unique histories, communities and priorities. These are reflected in their Vision & Outcomes Maps shared in [Part 1](#). As noted earlier, the diversity of Coalition members was a key strength, with both **larger, established organisations and small grass-roots groups benefiting in different ways**.

Model City importantly offered a **platform for people who are a force for good in the community** to develop their skills, focus and voice. There are **certain features and characteristics that influence success at a local level**, which relate to the local context and could be emphasised for place-based, social change programmes led by local communities.

- 6. MCL has been working at multiple levels simultaneously to build local capacity - individual, project, Coalition, wider community and the Programme as a whole.** The following elements of infrastructure seem to matter the most: **coordinating and 'welding' roles; coproduction and collaborative networks** which need facilitation to enable previously unheard voices to be heard; **information and communication style and methods**, with professional communications guidance and capacity at both Coalition and Programme levels; **digital inclusion and fluency** have become increasingly important, so may need a greater focus for future MC locations; **Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) that is embedded throughout, alongside support for Coalitions in evidencing change** that makes sense to local people and organisations.
- 7. The COVID-19 pandemic was a huge blow to London communities and to the MCL Programme, its partners and Coalition communities.** In spite of this massive challenge, **most projects delivered something to benefit local people and Coalitions have survived with plans for the future.** Having a secure partnership in place before the pandemic has enabled **a coordinated response, mobilising resources and encouraging mutual support** to keep going and in some cases keep afloat. The MCL partnerships gave organisations **resilience to help them weather the pandemic**, to continue to deliver, learn new skills and embrace new ways of working even in the most difficult of times.

