

Model City London - Phase Two Evaluation Report: Sharing the mid-point of the MCL Journey Summary and Insights #2

September 2020, NDTi Evaluation Team



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Overview

In this summary paper we share the highlights from the second major round-up of evidence and learning from Model City London (MCL), focusing on the important signs of change from MCL Coalitions and the Programme as a whole. It marks the half-way point of the Model City journey in London, covering the period from October 2019 to the end of March 2020 (**Step 3 of the Model City process, Invest and Demonstrate**), building on lessons shared in the [Phase 1 evaluation report](#) which covered the first year of establishing the Programme from 2018 to 2019.

In this paper we share five key messages about making change happen with and for local people and Coalitions, and what these mean for the near and longer term future of Model City in London and beyond. You can read the full report of these findings [here](#).

Summary of activities and achievements from the last six months

During this period (October 2019 - March 2020), a total of **26 project grants were awarded across the 3 Coalition areas, amounting to a total investment of £427,696** in the delivery of sport and physical activity as a means to effect social change. This investment was distributed as follows:

Barking Sports 4 Change

8 grants totalling
£141,085

Generations Active BFH

8 grants totalling
£142,623

Active Change Haringey

10 grants totalling
£143,988

Summary of activities and achievements from the last six months



Engagement levels across the Coalitions have increased since the Phase 1 report (at end September 2019), as follows:

- 19% increase in individuals engaged, from 388 to 465
- 11% increase in organisations engaged, from 273 to 302
- 10.5% increase in number of non-traditional sports based organisations, from 123 to 136
- 10.5% increase in number of traditional sports based organisations, from 150 to 166

Since October, projects have been busy getting up and running, recruiting staff and volunteers, sorting out governance arrangements and delivering opportunities with and for local communities.

Since the middle of March 2020, of course, many of these activities had to be halted, deferred or adapted to be delivered virtually due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

It is therefore all the more impressive that during this time, a total of **1,464 people have benefited from a wide range of sports related opportunities across 20 of the 26 projects¹** during this period.

This total number of participants breaks downs as follows:

Barking Sports 4 Change

426 participants

Generations Active BFH

386 participants

Active Change Haringey

652 participants

¹ The following Active Change Haringey projects did not submit a mid-term report as their projects were delayed for various reasons: PHASCA, BEH Mental Health and St. Francis at the Engine Room. A further three projects were given an extension for their submissions, which meant we were not able to include their data in this report: Age UK Hounslow in Generations Active BFH; and Barking Rugby Club and Muslim Sports Association in Barking Sports 4 Change.

In addition to these numbers, significant achievements also include the following:

- MCL grantees, Coalition Steering Group members, Community Coordinators who are place-based and Programme Managers at Laureus have mobilised resources and enabled a **smooth transition from project set up to delivery** in one of the most difficult times in recent history.
- **Programme engagement** with an increasingly diverse range of organisations and individuals **continues to grow**, both at a local and pan London level.
- As well as enabling the majority of funded projects to get up and running, the MCL team at Laureus has supported these projects to record what they are doing and **share a range of data sources to monitor progress** and importantly understand what is helping people to access and experience new opportunities for sport, physical activity and community connections. [Appendix 1](#) in the full report summarises this information for each grantee.
- From these sources of evidence, we have been able to share early findings and lessons about **positive stories of change**, which is all the more remarkable given the unprecedented time of uncertainty faced during 2020 - with massive implications for the way we work, live our lives and relate to each other in local communities where Model Cities are rooted and in partnerships designed to improve people's life chances.



Signs of change from Model City London

This mid-point evaluation has found many positive signs of change for people participating in MCL projects, for individual grantees, Coalitions and for Laureus and its partners.

The change stories included in [Chapter 3](#) in the full report show that **participants** in MCL projects are experiencing:

- Increased confidence;
- Improved health and wellbeing;
- New or rediscovered passions and skills;
- Fun, friendship and connection;
- A sense of purpose from being a role model for peers.

Using Beyoncé as a reference point, (she) was motivated to learn the dance, others in the group responded to her looking like Beyoncé and she now take great pride in this, changing her hair and make-up reflecting her new confidence. (Haringey)

For participants

...while in my room, I could hear little bits of the meeting and I just wanted to say it was Sooooo Good. I could hear how confident he has grown, on how he communicates his ideas, which was something he used to really struggle with. S you are so good at keeping them engaged as well as giving them the time to express them self. Thank you, G, so much for giving them this opportunity and S for supporting them. (Barking)

I slept well after the last class for the first time in ages. The classes make me feel tired, a similar feeling to visiting a chiropractor. (Participant in Shintai-do programme – based on Japanese sword movement) (Hounslow)

Grantees are:

- Getting known in their community by becoming part of a wider network of local opportunities and groups;
- Connecting with their local council and politicians;
- Accessing mutual support and resources, and as a result becoming less isolated;
- Building their confidence in evidencing the difference they are making;
- Starting to coproduce their activities with local communities;
- Accessing support from Laureus that goes beyond funding, especially those organisations and groups who were not awarded grants. This includes advice on dealing with the coronavirus pandemic, improving governance and Board/Trustee development to reflect the communities that projects work in. The role of Community Coordinators (CC) has been central to making this happen.

For grantees

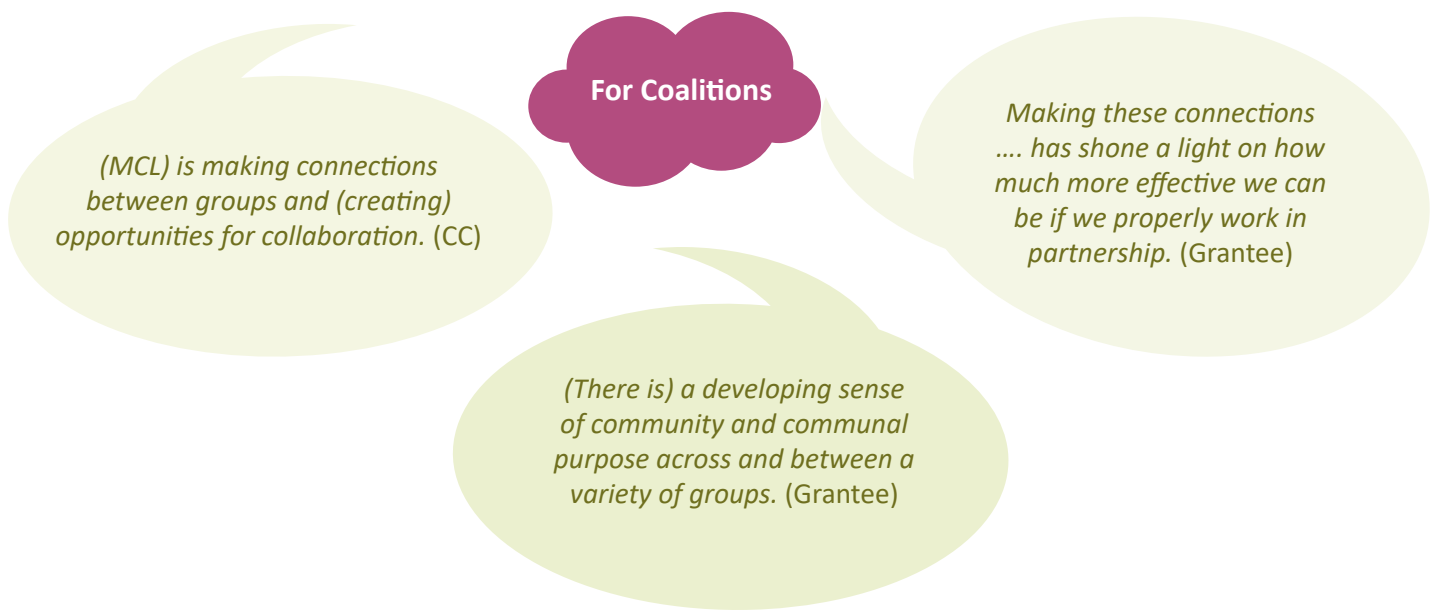
It is good to be around people who are excited about getting things done and are willing to share skills and expertise. (Grantee)

Having Laureus & peer support to adapt to new models of delivery...the most significant change has been learning to adapt to the unexpected pandemic. This was made easier with the support of the Model City team. (Grantee)

Signs of change from Model City London

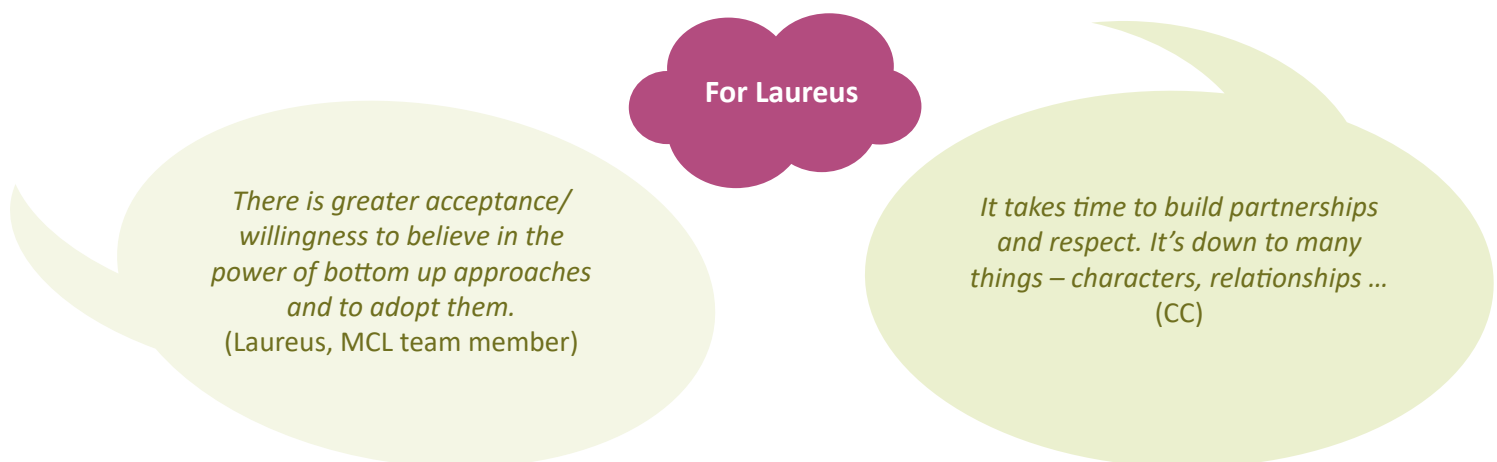
Through working together collaboratively, **Coalitions** are:

- Finding other local organisations with shared interests and concerns;
- Successfully bidding for funding in partnership with others;
- Enabling grantees to make links with wider, pan-London networks;
- Developing a sense of pride and purpose, through being part of a shared journey that is being shaped from the bottom up.



For the MCL team within **Laureus**, colleagues have reflected:

- On their own personal development including the growth of new as well as existing skill-sets, for example in relation to Coalition building and coproduction
- On the development of new partnerships, alliances and networks that MCL has helped to initiate or strengthen, for example with the GLA and Nike.



Coalitions' Progress towards Local Outcomes

For each MCL Coalition, there are important highlights and insights to share and build on to continually develop the local approaches to place-based sports for change initiatives.

For Sports 4 Change Barking:

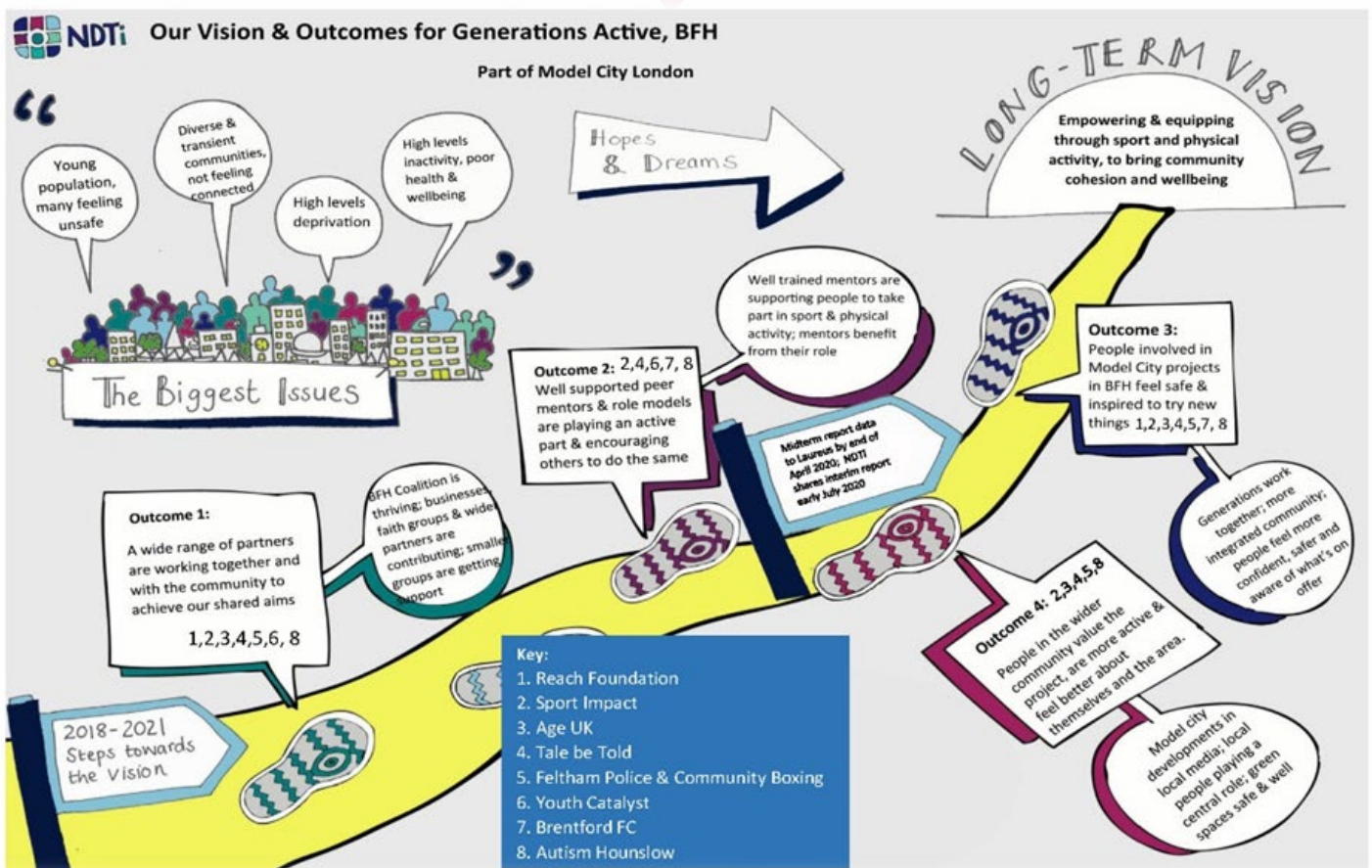
- The regular engagement and actions of the Steering Group has enabled the Barking Sports 4 Change Coalition to create a strong identity and sense of purpose.
- Grantees are starting to understand the power in their work, by getting the opportunity to showcase their work across London and at a global level through MCL and Laureus.
- Grantees are thinking more strategically about bid creation, collaboration and evaluation.
- Some grantees have been effective in approaching other organisations to work with them: e.g. Thames Ward Community Project approached Steering Group colleagues from Right Development Foundation to deliver an in-school basketball leadership programme as part of a locally funded multi-activity programme.
- Coalition members are learning about how best to use the resources available to them.



Coalitions' Progress towards Local Outcomes

For Generations Active BFH:

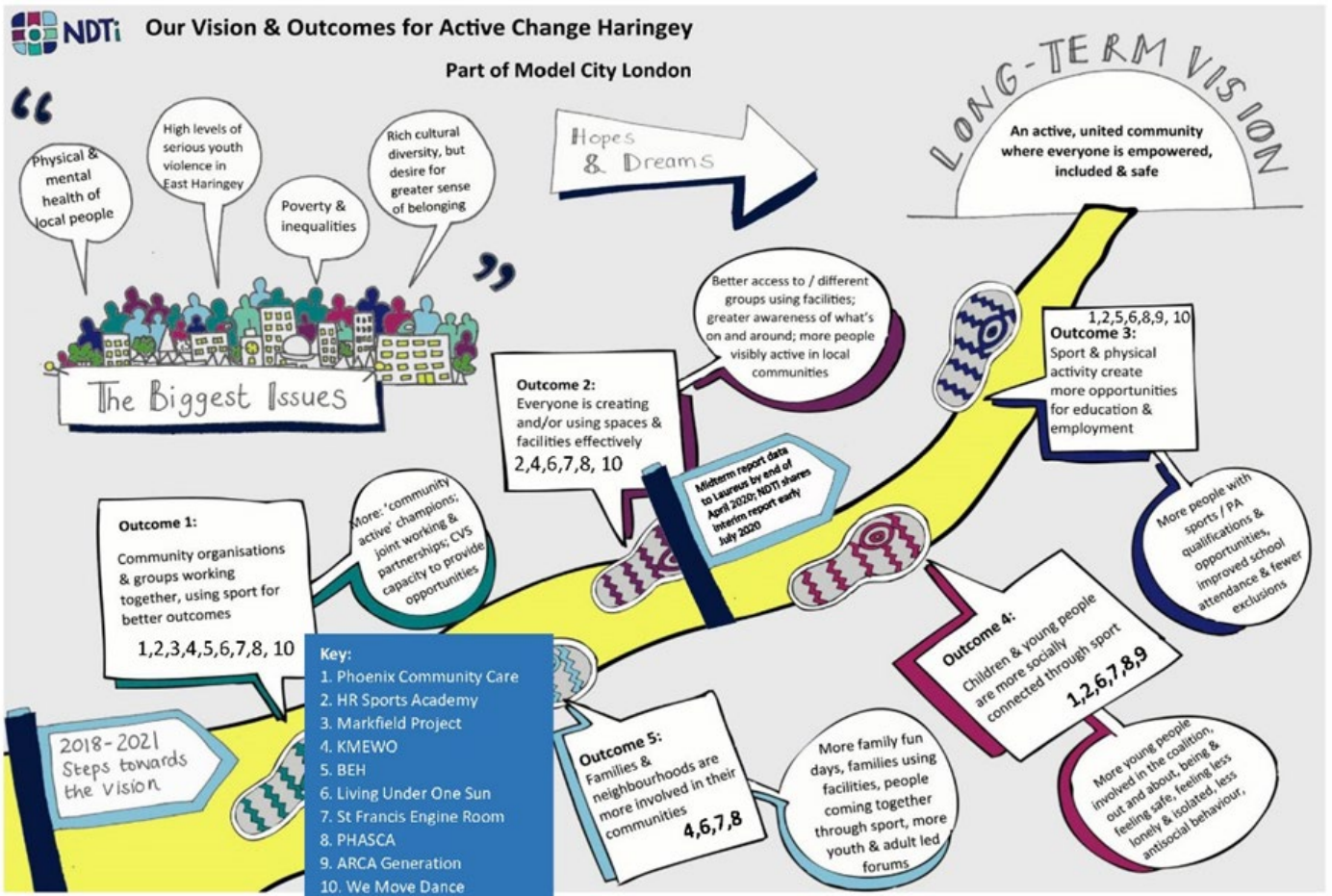
- Members have organised themselves quickly, for example by setting up a funding sub-group which has been successful in jointly bidding for additional resources.
- Grantees have approached other organisations through Coalition networks to secure new funding for initiatives: e.g. Reach Academy Foundation is exploring opportunities with Hanworth Community Centre / No Shame in Running to deliver online sessions to stay active at home and mentoring opportunities for young people.
- Excellent collaborative relationships are in place, including with local politicians; for example, the London Borough of Hounslow has brokered links between MCL and Hounslow Community Sport and Activity Network (CSPAN); Sport Impact asked MCL to be part of their annual schools seminar; the voluntary sector is engaging with the Coalition to participate in their community open days.
- The MCL approach is influencing other local initiatives, such as the plans for the proposed development of the Feltham Sporting Hub.



Coalitions' Progress towards Local Outcomes

For Active Change Haringey:

- Feedback from individuals participating in the funded projects shows that their involvement is already making a difference to their confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing.
- Organisations and communities are growing their networks and creating new partnerships. This is increasing awareness of what they do in the community and improving what they offer.
- The Coalition and Steering Group are making decisions together, developing a sense of community and communal purpose across and between a variety of groups.



Five Main Messages (and what they mean for the future)

From all the different sources of evidence gathered across all MCL Coalitions and grantees, and the Programme as a whole, we have identified 5 main messages from this point in the journey – which can be used to inform ongoing developments.

1

MCL's values, approach and working style make a key contribution.

MCL's distinctive working style is based on an enabling, supportive approach to local development that builds on the assets of people and communities from the bottom up. This is modelled by the MCL team and was commented on by many of the people we spoke to within the Coalition areas.

What this means for the future ...

We feel that in order to consolidate and share important learning about the importance of these underpinning values, the Programme would benefit from an explicit articulation of the MCL principles (based on these values) and what these mean in practice. This would form part of the blueprint for MCL as it evolves and potentially expands into other parts of London (and UK cities).

2

The right people, in the right role can make an enormous difference.

It is important to select the right people for key roles, with the values, qualities and life experience needed to build the trusting relationships on which MCL relies at all levels (Coalition, Steering Group and within Laureus). The Programme has been extraordinarily successful in doing so, and at all levels.

What this means for the future ...

A clear message is to hold on to these people, continuing to support and develop them, while at the same time to consider how best to carry out succession planning for the future leadership and growth of MCL.

3

Collaboration is power.

Collaborative working has already opened many doors, from access to additional funding to links with wider networks and greater influence. Grantees and Steering Groups believe that this kind of collaboration will result in wider benefits for the whole community, as a result of this more coherent and co-ordinated local response.

What this means for the future ...

Over time and as Coalitions develop, it will be important to continue to extend the benefits described by grantees more widely. Sharing learning across Coalitions and evidencing the impact of collaboration will continue to be important evidence and learning priorities in the next phase of work.

4

The coronavirus pandemic presents opportunities, not just difficulties, for MCL

[Chapter 2](#) and [Chapter 3](#) of the main report refer to the challenges experienced as well as the opportunities that have been grasped as part of the local responses to Covid-19. This message focuses on the positive responses and unexpected possibilities that the pandemic has presented. With the support of the Laureus team, many grantees have responded with great flexibility and creativity in finding ways to deliver their projects whilst managing the risks posed by the coronavirus. For example, some have found that online delivery has opened up new possibilities and connected them with people they would not otherwise have reached.

What this means for the future ...

It will be important to learn from these many impressive grantee and wider MCL team responses to the pandemic. A key question is how to hold onto and/or how to develop agility in a time of crisis, particularly given there may well be further periods of local, or national, lockdown to come.

5

Evaluation, evidence and learning are integral components of MCL

It is very rare for a complex programme such as MCL to integrate evidence and learning from the outset, and to do this in a way that involves local people in designing the evaluation at an early stage, as well as building the skills and capacity of the team. Building evidence and sharing learning has already become a key feature of the collaborative nature of MCL.

What this means for the future ...

It will be crucial to maintain this focus on evaluation and learning, continuing to build skills and confidence in this aspect of the model. As too will be ensuring that we continue to embed reflection in MCL activities, not only within but also across Coalition areas, to share lessons more widely.

The Next Part of the MCL Journey

There are two contextual features highlighted in the full report which form the backdrop to the delivery of MCL over the coming months. The first of these is the ongoing and adapting response to the **impact of Covid-19 and subsequent lockdown measures**. The Grantees' mid-term reports highlighted many activities that were halted or deferred whilst others were re-designed to enable a different form of delivery to take place (online yoga, Instagram live dance sessions, keeping connected through WhatsApp and twitter, Zoom calls, web based activity challenges and so on).

As well as supporting grantees to adapt their delivery methods and styles, the MCL team have facilitated links between different organisations with similar activities to share ideas around how they are adapting. Community Coordinators and Coalition chairs are keeping connected and providing ongoing support through virtual means, including the set-up of virtual Steering Group meetings and weekly check-ins for members/grantees. Examples are wide ranging and creative, for example:



- Online training for parents to become cricket activator leaders to then deliver sessions to their children (and eventually to local schools when lockdown eases).



- Delivering a wider range of activities online to compensate for loss of face to face sport opportunities (e.g. art and craft, music and cookery as well as yoga).
- Providing a call centre hotline to support people most in need and running regular challenges online to help keep young people engaged and motivated.



- Surveying partners, families and young people to ask them what they need/want and how this can be accessed by them during this period.



- Supporting staff and volunteers to keep connected, hearing their fears and anxieties about loss of income, concern for local communities, securing resources to enable projects to continue in the longer term, redirecting funds to focus on strengthening infrastructure, team skills and undertake research and consultation with local residents.

The second major contextual feature which has gathered momentum over the last 5-6 months, is the ongoing delivery of the [London Mayor's Sport Unites Strategy](#) and the implementation of the Strategy's Programme Evaluation being delivered by In-Focus. A key aspect here is the final Theory of Change evaluation framework published in November 2019 highlighting six outcome areas and pathways being tested and evaluated until March 2021, as follows:

1. Reduced Inactivity Levels
2. Reduced serious youth violence
3. Improved mental health
4. Decreased Social Isolation & Improved Social Mixing
5. Increased Capacity of Community Sport Organisations / Actors
6. Increased Capacity of Community Infrastructure and Systems.

SPORT UNITES
LEARNING COMMUNITY

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The Next Part of the MCL Journey

The outcome areas being progressed by each MCL Coalition clearly connect to the outcome pathways associated with the above outcomes. Evidence being generated and gathered by MCL grantees and the Programme team will therefore contribute to this broader evaluation as well as informing ongoing development and demonstrating what does and doesn't work in relation to MCL and beyond. A key activity for Community Coordinators and Coalitions now is to consolidate the various measures in place, to ensure these are fit for purpose now (especially given the issues outlined above) and reflect the delivery activities taking place over the coming months.

What next for evidencing what works in Model City London?

The evaluation team are coming to the end of Phase 2 of the evaluation strand for MCL, with the remaining activities planned to take place over the late Summer months and into early Autumn, as outlined below:

Remaining Phase 2 activities (June- September 2020):

- A series of virtual debrief workshops to share the findings and lessons from the full report and explore implications for ongoing developments and delivery
- The second round of 6 monthly structured conversations with members of the Laureus MCL team, and also with MCL Partners
- Quarterly and next 6 monthly data returns from grantees and Coalitions

Phase 3 – What's Changing for whom & how? (July-November 2020):

- Ongoing support to Coalitions and the Laureus team
- Virtual fieldwork visits to each Coalition area exploring the experience of delivery and impact at a local level.
- The second internal reporting round of routine monitoring data and change stories, for the period April -September 2020, with the Phase 3 report due in November 2020
- The first of two learning events in October or November 2020

Phase 4 Sharing Impacts, Learning about What works (December 2020 – May 2021):

- Ongoing support to Coalitions and the Laureus team
- The third internal reporting round of routine monitoring data and change stories for the period October 2020-March 2021
- Further fieldwork visits focusing on experiences and outcomes for local people in January-February 2021 (which may or may not be virtual)
- Analysis and synthesis of all data sources within and across the 3 boroughs, during April 2021
- Final Learning event and a suite of summary "reports"/briefings, across April 2020 and May 2021 (including the final Phase 4 Evaluation Report at the end of May 2021).

Further Reading

The full report can be read [here](#).

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