

# **YOUNG CAMDEN FOUNDATION**



## **HEADS UP FUND**

**REPORT 2020**

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

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The mental health and wellbeing of whole societies have been severely impacted by the pandemic and lockdowns. Young people in particular have been adversely affected with disruptions to school education, exams, loss of socialisation, and access to positive activities. We know from listening to young people that they have been experiencing increased pressures at home, and online. They have also been worried about the impact of COVID-19 on their family and friends, and their inability to access virtual support.

From speaking to youth work practitioners we know that not seeing the young people has left some feeling detached and anxious. Sadly we know that spotting symptoms of mental health issues can be especially challenging during lockdowns.

The Heads Up - Mental Health Fund supported local community organisations with safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and youth workers during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. With support from Shaftesbury, Derwent, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, and London Borough of Camden YCF was able to invest over £40,000 in mental health projects and services. Over 170 children and young people, and 39 youth workers directly benefited from the Fund.

We don't yet know how long this pandemic will last, but we do know that without access to more support we could be seeing another pandemic related to mental health and wellbeing. We are pleased that through this Fund we supported so many children and young people during this most difficult period.



**KEITH MORGAN**  
Chief Executive Officer

# INTRODUCTION

Mental health is the way we think and feel and the ability to deal with ups and downs. Good mental health gives us a sense of purpose and strength to deal with what life brings. However, when our mental health is fragile, we can find it difficult to deal with life: work, study, relations, leisure.

In early 2020 the COVID-19 related health emergency affected the mental health and wellbeing of whole societies. Research has identified significant and sustained increases in symptoms of depression and anxiety related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Young people have been particularly affected by the crisis.

Young Minds surveyed over 2,000 young people nationally at the end of March and found that 83% agreed that the pandemic had made their mental health worse. Young Minds conducted the same survey in September and found that although the same percentage of respondents agreed that the coronavirus pandemic had made their mental health worse. 41% said it had made their mental health “much worse”, up from 32% in March.

It is important to acknowledge that the mental wellbeing of youth work practitioners has also been affected by the pandemic. The feedback from YCF’s COVID-19 members survey showed that youth work practitioners had been affected by the loss of connection with each other and young people, anxiety about adjusting to a ‘new normal,’ and job insecurity.

YCF designed the Heads Up Mental Health Fund to support Camden’s Children and Young People sector with safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and youth workers.

# HEADS UP - MENTAL HEALTH FUND

## OBJECTIVES

1. Support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing remotely or face-to-face in compliance with government guidelines.

2. Support children and young people's mental wellbeing to deal with transitions positively (i.e. transitioning from primary to secondary school, transitioning from school to further/higher education and transitioning from/to employment and training).

3. Set up and/or build on organisational systems that support youth work practitioners' mental health and wellbeing.

4. Help youth work practitioners to acquire or expand their knowledge and skills to recognise mental health issues in young people and children and identify appropriate referral pathways.

5. Collaborate and partner with existing projects and organisations to enhance or grow an organisations' mental health-wellbeing offer for young people and children and/or staff.

# APPLICATIONS AND DISBURSEMENT

In June 2020, Young Camden Foundation (YCF) launched the Heads Up Mental Health Fund sponsored by our business and community partners - Shaftesbury Plc, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Camden Council and Derwent London.

Organisations received grants of between £1,800 and £5,000 to deliver community based projects and services that focused on safeguarding the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people. In addition, the fund supported youth work practitioners to access support for their own mental health and wellbeing during this difficult period. The support included: training; one-to-one supervision; and mental health first aid.

***YCF received 12 applications requesting total £50,598.  
11 of those applications were successful,  
YCF disbursed £43,833***

Most of the successful projects focused on two of the objectives set out by the fund:

- Support children and young people's mental health wellbeing remotely or to comply with government guidelines.
- Help youth work practitioners to acquire or expand their knowledge and skills to recognise mental health issues in young people and children and identify appropriate referral pathways.

Grant recipients collaborated with other organisations to enhance their mental health offer both children and young people and their staff.

Three of the funded organisations focused on Setting systems that support youth work practitioners' mental health and wellbeing

# THE ACTIVITIES

A total of 210 people benefited from a variety of projects which included:

- 01 Online and face to face (when possible) activities to create the space for children and young people to talk about feelings and emotions. Particularly those feelings related to the pandemic and lockdown
- 02 Mental health awareness for youth practitioners and how to identify referral pathways
- 03 Art activity packs delivered to young people in their homes for them to have access to an activity other than on screen, and support their creativity
- 04 Physical and sports activities outdoors to keep active and uplift the spirits
- 05 Activities designed to improve the wellbeing of youth practitioners such as: fun activities as a team, access to professional one to one support, a wellbeing toolkit that can be used on oneself or applied to others



# OUTCOMES

- Children and young people reported improvement in their wellbeing and awareness of their mental health
- Children and young people had access to a new activity
- Staff reported improved understanding of how to identify mental health issues in children and young people
- Staff reported improved confidence in dealing with their own mental health or that of others



“An unexpected outcome from the project [was that] young people have seemed open on the topic of mental health and have...been open to gaining more knowledge on the topic. Prior to the project staff believed young people would be reluctant to talk or engage on ... mental health as there sometimes seems to be a stigma around mental health issues.”

Youth practitioner.

## **FEEDBACK FROM YOUNG PEOPLE**

**“I have really enjoyed this experience as well as learning a lot...” Young person**

**“Engaging with others has helped me”  
Young person**

**“...One of the main things that made me happy is, knowing that I will be gaining AQA qualification at the end of this project.”  
Young Person**

## **FEEDBACK FROM STAFF**

**“The grant has been used to support practitioners learning in supporting young people as well as supporting the wellbeing of practitioners themselves...”  
Youth Practitioner**

**“...it is important to remind team members that they can take time to look after their wellbeing needs”  
Youth Practitioner**





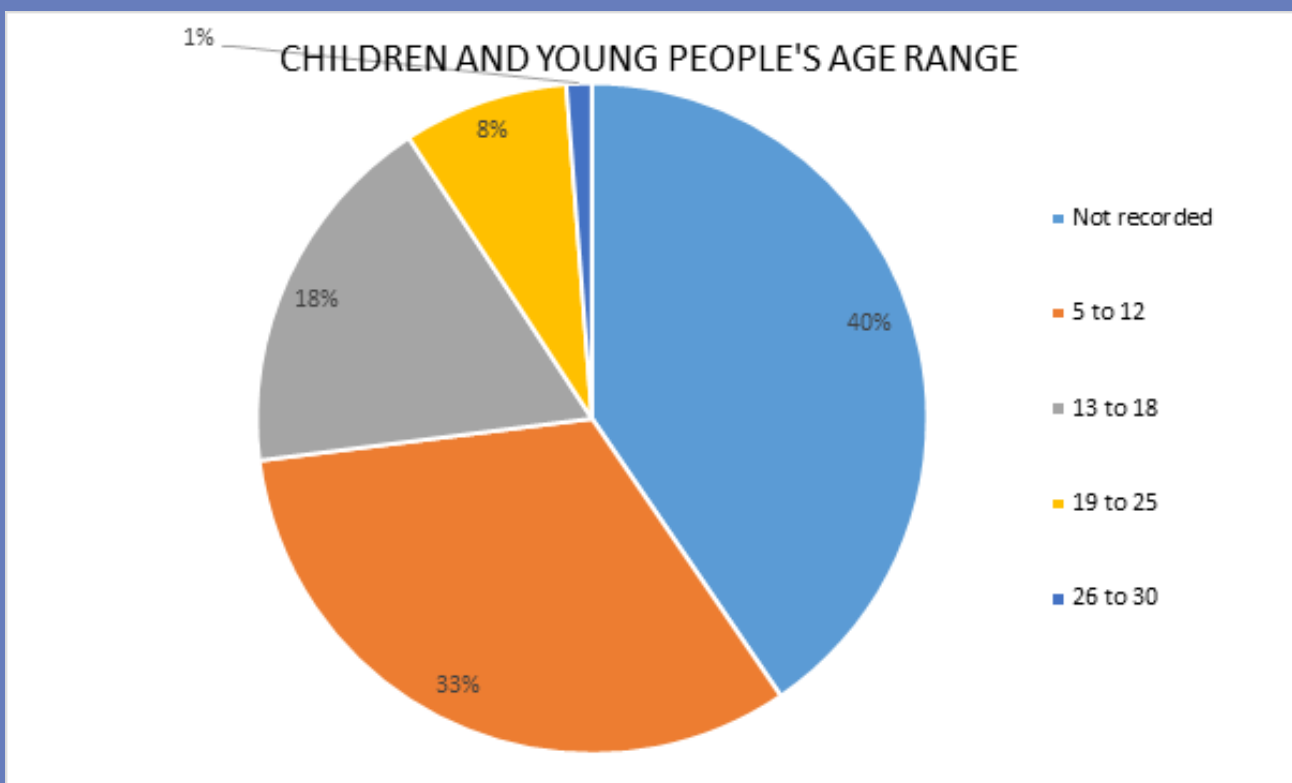
# PARTICIPANTS

59% of children and young people that participated identified as male

41% of children and young people that participated identified as female

Most of the children and young people that participated were aged between 5 and 12 years.

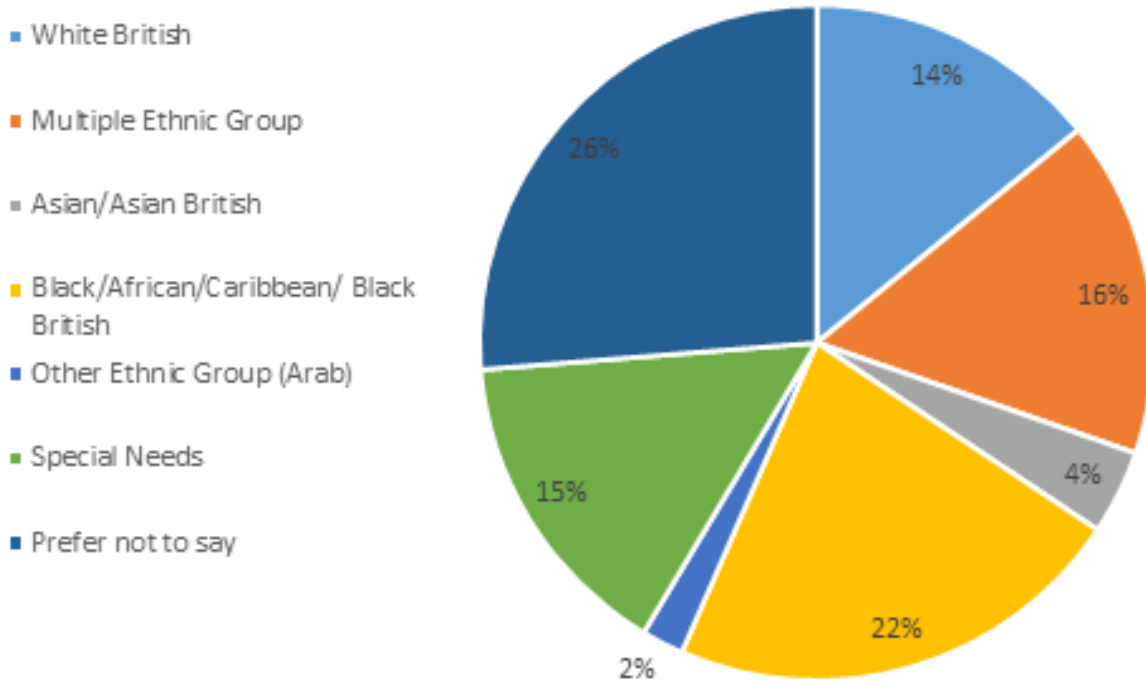
The age of participants in percentage



# ETHNICITY

As the chart below shows the participants of the projects reflect the current ethnical composition of Camden. The mental health projects catered for children and young people from a variety of backgrounds: Black background, mixed ethnicity, white British and those with special needs.

## ETHNICITY & SPECIAL NEEDS



# THE GRANTEES & THEIR PROJECTS

## Heath Hands

### The Project

Heath Hands made use of this grant for recruiting new session leaders to run additional youth sessions and to train staff to improve the mental health training of their staff.

### Impact

“Everyone found [the mental health training] very useful in gaining greater understanding of mental health issues and who to turn to.” Youth Practitioner

90% of staff reported to have amplified their knowledge and understanding of mental health for young people. Staff also felt more confident not only dealing with the mental health of others, but also their own.

This grant enabled the organization to create links with several local schools and organisations such as Camden’s Department of Education to make young people aware of Heath Hands’ outdoor activities offer. The outdoor activities for children and young people will take place in the summer 2021.



## The Project

This project aimed to develop staff mental health awareness through both training opportunities and the creation of a space in which the sharing of challenges. Staff had access to six wellbeing sessions and The Educational Psychology Services provided staff with SEND specific training, which was used to gain further insight into children and young people's mental health needs and interact with them in the necessary way.

Over the Summer Holidays, staff engaged with SEND children and young people via zoom activities and phone calls. This allowed the young people to talk about their worries concerning the pandemic.

Wac Arts also partnered with FYA for an online peer education programme. In these sessions, young people produced short films on their experiences of lockdown, allowing them to voice their emotions through a creative outlet. The young people involved in this programme gained AQA certificates in peer education, mental health, and content creation.

## Impact

The videos encouraged pride amongst the young people as they were shared with the community and have been watched over 150 times so far. The effects of this project have led Wac Arts to become a registered AQA centre so that they can influence young people in similar ways. The certificate gave young people the motivation to participate and do something fun.

This partnership has led to two young participants joining the Wac Arts Voice Programme, to develop their leadership skills.

“This project has enabled us to develop our staff's approach to mental health awareness not only for those young people we support, but also for themselves. We have organised training opportunities, as well providing a safe space for tutors/staff to come together, connect and share challenges and learnings.” Youth work Practitioner



## The project

This project provided support for the mental health wellbeing of young people, through the provision of a safe space for socialising and sharing their thoughts. This allowed the young people to express themselves openly and uplift one another through their encouragement and support. A practitioner was also available to provide professional advice, further cultivating a protected environment for young people to share their thoughts.

## Impact

100% of participants reported improvements in their wellbeing. Partakers of this project were at the forefront of the decisions around its layout, due to their ability to develop the topics by deciding on 'trending topics' for discussion. Partnerships with Avatar therapists and social workers enabled the project to truly focus on connecting with the mental health of young people, this backed by providing handbooks with a clear plan and end goal.



## The CarAf Centre

### The project

This venture mobilised singing and acting lessons as positive activities which allowed young people to share, learn and have fun. These classes experienced great popularity, leading to an extension of the project, as well as a collaborative trip to a recording studio – inspiring young people to think about professionalism and sensibility in the mind.

### Impact

Two thirds of the young people involved in this project experienced an increase in confidence – in part due to the provision of many sessions, allowing them to feel more connected.



# Sidings Community Centre

## The project

Sidings Community Centre used their project to give young people a break from technology; this has been of critical importance throughout the COVID period. Their art therapy packs provided a range of activities: painting, drawing, puzzles, sensory items, healthy snacks and more.

## Impact

Engagement with these activities allowed young people to forget about their anxieties regarding the pandemic. Social media promotion for the packs led to the organisation welcoming new families and members. This was so successful that the project was repeated for Christmas, using Christmas stockings instead of canvas bags. Children decided on the contents of packs and every child was able to access a new activity/opportunity.

# Elfrida Rathbone Camden

## The Project

The grant was used by Elfrida Rathbone towards empowering young people with learning disabilities. They aimed to return opportunities to young people that had been lost due to their requirement to shield during the March to July 2020 lockdown. Therefore, activities were mainly in the form of physical education and personal development.

They also used the provisions at Leighton College to carry out a multitude of events: arts and crafts, indoor cinema viewings, delivering food parcels and preparing snacks.

## Impact

This engagement allowed members of the SEND community to transition back to normality, after facing the barriers of learning at home. Those members who were on transition years were provided with closure, allowing them to end school-life on an optimistic note.

Young people were able to propose activities of their choice, with many children experiencing great development in their communication skills and forming new friendships.



## The Project

FYA offered group sessions in the form of peer mentoring – positive activities which allowed young people to engage with one another and enjoy themselves. Many of their classes experienced regular attendance; particularly ‘Body and Soul’, which permitted young girls to voice their thoughts and opinions in a nurturing atmosphere. This group was regularly attended and popular.

The ‘Hang Out’, Mixed gender activity, was not as popular as expected. The feedback showed that the timing of this group was perhaps not as accessible as others. Also some YP did not have access to personal space at home to take part.

## Impact

85% of the participants reported an improvement on their wellbeing by attending the weekly activities by FYA.

100% of the attendees expressed improved confidence.

A great deal of collaborative partnerships were formed over the course of this programme, with: Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust, Mind Camden, Camden Detached Team, the Youth Offending Service and New Horizons. These partnerships enhanced the mental health-wellbeing offer of FYA by allowing them to reach and support targeted groups and vulnerable individuals, mainly via referrals.

*"The Peer Mentoring Sessions makes me feel more proactive but also allows me to talk to and support other young people which is important to me as I am someone who thrives on social interaction! And the online groups have allowed me to meet new young people as well as see the ones I'm familiar with already!"*

A , Peer Mentor

*"During lockdown it's been up and down. It's been mentally challenging, and I have definitely needed support. I'm glad to be a part of the peer mentoring programme to gain support and support others. It's definitely helped me a lot."*

E , Peer Mentor



How could you help a friend  
through a difficult time?  
Call them, speak to them  
and be a source of comfort.  
Let's stick together!



# Kentish Town Community Centre (KTCC)

## The Project

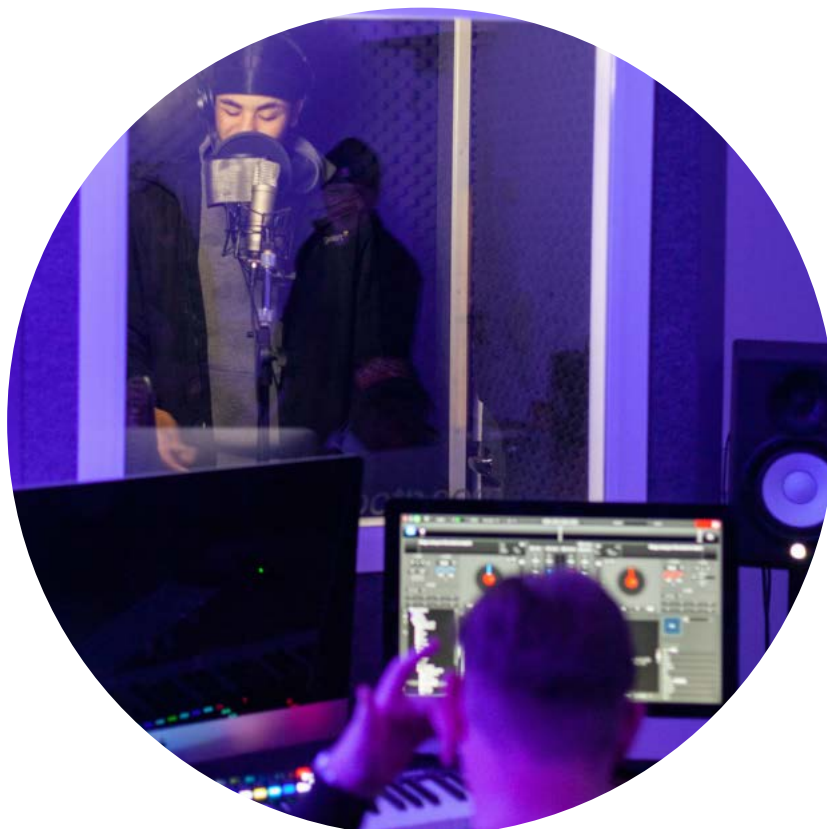
KTCC set out to help youth work practitioners to expand their knowledge and skills to recognise mental health issues in young people and children and identify appropriate referral pathways.

Four members of staff attended Mental Health Awareness training specifically designed for the needs of children and young people.

## Impact

The youth team have achieved a greater knowledge on the subject of mental health and have expressed the desire to keep learning and take on more courses. The staff have also expressed that they felt more comfortable to be able to listen and speak to young people on the subject of mental health.

An unexpected outcome from the project so far is that the young people seemed more open on the topic of mental health and have themselves been open to gaining more knowledge about managing their own mental health. Prior to the project staff believed young people would be reluctant to talk or engage on the topic of mental health as there sometimes seems to be a stigma around such issues.



Two more organisations are still running their projects and will submit a report by Sept 2021.

# YOUNG CAMDEN FOUNDATION

[www.youngcamdenfoundation.org.uk](http://www.youngcamdenfoundation.org.uk)

Shaftesbury

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