



BIG ALLIANCE

Businesses creating social
change for Islington

Annual Impact Digest 2021-22



FOREWORD FROM THE CEO

East London Business Alliance (ELBA) has been working with the business community to tackle inequality and poverty and to promote social mobility for over 30 years. Every year, well over 10,000 business volunteers give back to the community through ELBA – an awesome commitment. Our promise to them is that everything they do is needed by the community and is relevant to the most pressing issues of the day.

Over time we have developed methods for assessing our impact so we can show our partners and supporters the value of what they do. ELBA has a broad agenda, so there is no one single measure of impact. This Impact Digest brings together a sample

since 2021 to give an overall picture, and also sets out our Theory of Change – how we know that what we do will make the change that we intend.

ELBA aims to publish an Impact Digest periodically to summarise what has been achieved and to highlight particular evaluation exercises and case studies. Our website (elba-1.org.uk) is a live repository of our work and includes many stories of the daily impact our businesses and volunteers are making in the community.

Ian M.

Ian Parkes,
ELBA Chief Executive

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

ELBA is a social mobility and regeneration charity. For 30 years we have been building the connection between businesses and local communities. We bring the time, skills and resources of the business sector to address social mobility, regeneration, poverty and inequality in east London and beyond. ELBA's strategic goals are to open up access to good jobs with higher earnings and better career prospects to young people from disadvantaged backgrounds; to work with employers to increase diversity in sectors with

poor track record of gender, Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic pay gaps; to support career and earnings progression; and to deliver a major programme of corporate community investment which build and sustain wellbeing in the communities we serve.

The BIG Alliance is our partnership with Islington Giving and Macquarie Group Foundation to support the residents of Islington.



RESPONDING TO THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC IN EAST LONDON

The Coronavirus pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for individuals and organisations. Poverty rates were already high in London before the pandemic, where 35% of people were living below the Minimum Income Standard. Estimates show that figure has now risen to 38%, meaning that 3.6 million Londoners are living below the minimum needed for a basic standard of living.

To top it all, [The London Poverty Profile 2022](#) report revealed a stark increase in anxiety and a decrease

in life satisfaction throughout 2020 and 2021, while in 2022 real wages have been dropping amid rising inflation.

In economic terms, growth is down and inflation is up. In human terms, people's incomes are down and hardship is up. We are facing crises on top of crises, two of which being particularly amplified in east London.

Cost of living crisis

People in east London's most deprived boroughs are putting food back at the checkout, worrying about the weight of their children, and opting for spaghetti over fresh vegetables, just to stay full.

- Foodbank use in London has more than doubled in the past five years alone, going from 137,248 visits in 2017/18 to 283,563 in 2021/22 ([Trussell Trust, 2022](#)).

- In Barking and Dagenham, one of the most deprived areas in the country, nearly half of its children live in poverty ([Trust for London, 2022](#)), and nearly half of households are 'fuel poor' ([End Fuel Poverty, 2022](#)).

- Newham's fuel poverty is second highest in London, with 18% of residents (nearly 20,000 households) living in fuel poverty in 2020 ([GOV. UK, 2022](#)).

Digital poverty crisis

The transition towards hybrid work and more remote public care has highlighted the consequential impact of digital poverty on everyday life.

- An estimated 270,000 Londoners are completely offline, with 2 million having very low engagement (i.e. those without their own device to get online, or those who can get online but have difficulty accessing online forms or internet banking) ([Lloyds Consumer Digital Index, 2021](#)).

- In 2021, approx. 50,000 east London homes lacked access to the internet, creating a barrier to accessing education, employment opportunities and vital services ([East End Community Foundation, 2022](#)).

- Tower Hamlets has the highest number of digital exclusion risk hotspots as public services move online ([Digital Exclusion Risk Index, 2021](#)).

As a charity, one of ELBA's main purposes is to tackle inequality in east London and beyond, and we work with a wide range of business partners and supporters who share the same aim. During lockdowns, we focused on meeting immediate needs: food; social contact for the lonely and isolated; help for those who have lost their jobs; professional support for hard pressed community organisations and small businesses; and help for schools, students and families.

As we move beyond the COVID crisis, we want to reflect not only on what we have done as an

organisation in east London and Islington, but also on the impact of our work. Despite the constraints and restrictions, we believe that the need for accountability and learning remained relevant and the role of evidence in policy and programming became even more imperative during a crisis. To identify areas to adjust or ways to respond and adapt, ELBA utilises a robust impact evaluation strategy, which will be further detailed in this report. The knowledge the organisation gets from these evaluations has proven crucial either for scaling up interventions, revising them, or halting them completely.

How We Work



THEORY OF CHANGE

Our Theory of Change: defining, deconstructing, and evaluating impact in east London



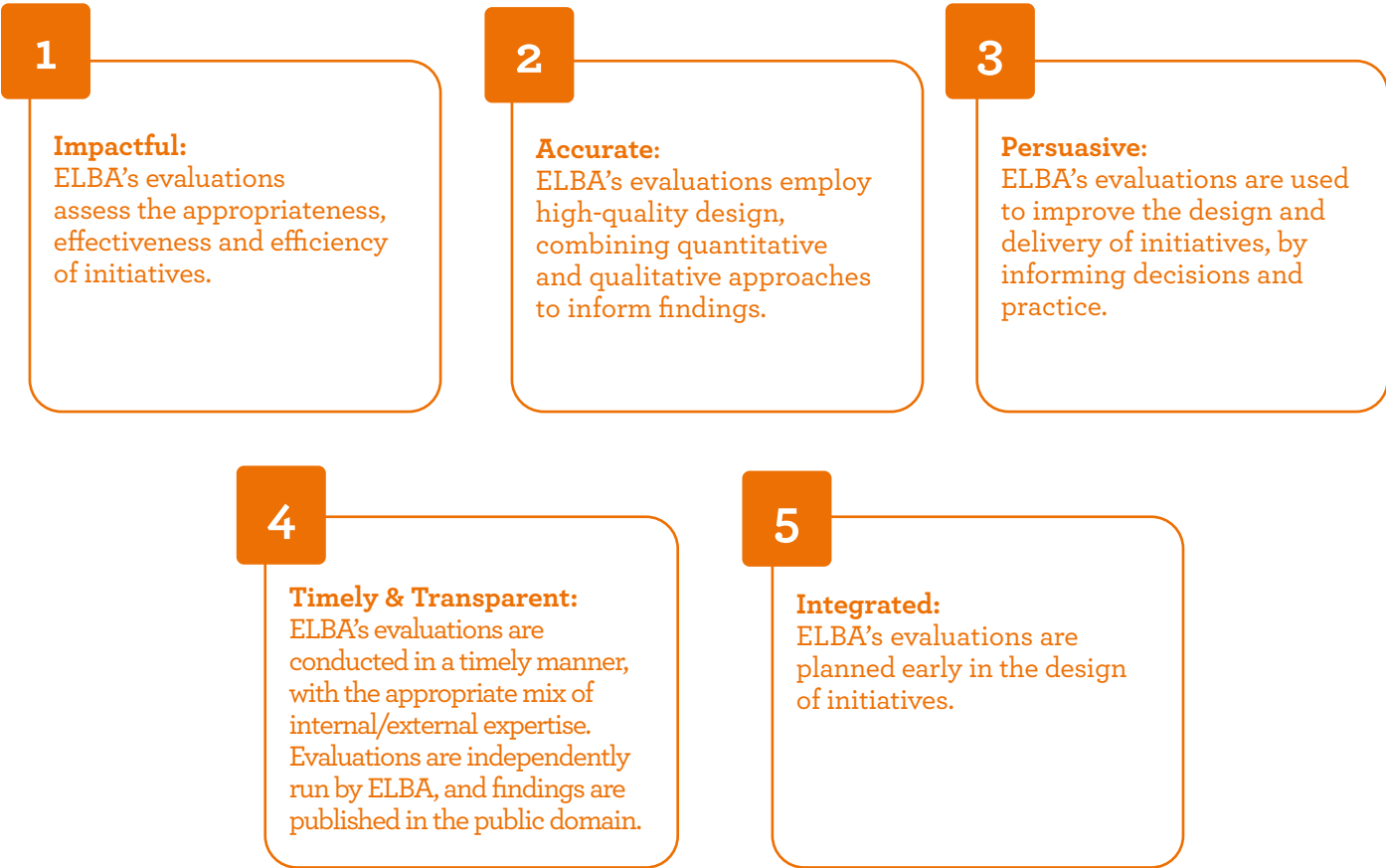
How We Measure Impact



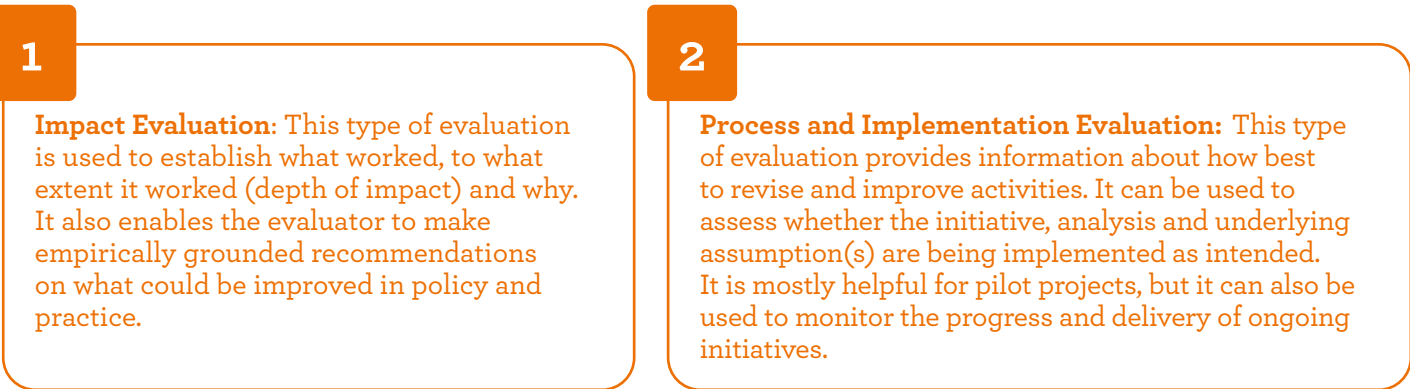
HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT

OUR IMPACT EVALUATION APPROACH

At ELBA and BIG Alliance, we engage in an ongoing monitoring and evaluation process that helps us understand how each intervention is working, what effect it is having, and how it is influenced by internal and external factors. Operating independently from delivery teams, ELBA’s Head of Research and Impact leads the organisation’s impact measurement strategy on the basis of five core principles:



We have expertise in conducting two types of evaluation:



HOW WE MEASURE IMPACT

OUR ANCHOR FRAMEWORKS

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In light of COP26 (2021), ELBA has set out to measure the positive impact that our community-based, hyper-local actions have on carbon reduction, supporting nature and building resilience. Whilst ELBA works at a hyper-local level, we believe that these ‘small scale’ actions can have a global impact when corporations pull in the same direction, which is why we use the SDGs as an anchor framework for positive change.

SDGs are a set of 17 targets established by the United Nations (UN). These targets act as a framework for achieving growth that not only benefits the people and the planet now, but ensures that growth and impact is maintained in the future.



The Skills Builder Universal Framework

The Skills Builder Universal Skills Framework is a tool designed to assess and build a variety of essential skills in education and employment. Back in 2020, ELBA was part of the Trailblazer partnership which pioneered the use of the new framework. Today, we use the Skills Builder within all corners of our work.

This new framework supports ELBA in explaining the value of our programmes to key stakeholders, including current and prospective programme participants, funders and supporters. We use the framework to identify how programmes can be optimised to further develop the essential skills of our beneficiaries. In addition to this, Skills Builder represents a reliable measure for the effectiveness of our programmes.



Business for Societal Impact (B4SI) Framework

B4SI is the globally recognised methodology used by hundreds of the world’s leading companies to articulate and measure the positive impact they have in the world. At its heart, the B4SI Framework is a simple input output model, enabling any social impact activity to be assessed consistently in terms of the resources committed and the results achieved.

As our corporate partners apply the B4SI Framework to understand the difference their contributions make to their business and society, so do we utilise it as one of our anchor frameworks that enable us to align our evaluation practice with our funders’ needs.

	INPUTS	OUTPUTS	IMPACTS
Community Investment Route <small>Divestments and partnerships with community organisations</small>	How, Why, What, Where	Social Output Business Output Leverage	Social Impact Business Impact
Business Innovation for Social Impact Route <small>Developing or adapting core business activities to deliver social impact</small>	Financial Investment Additional Resources	Social Output Business Output Leverage	Social Impact Commercial Return
Procurement for Social Impact Route <small>Procuring procurement spend to suppliers that aim to have a social impact</small>	Spend, Time, In-kind, Management Costs	Social Output Business Output Leverage	Social Impact Organisational (supplier) Impact Business Impact

Achievements and Impact



COMMUNITY OUTPUTS

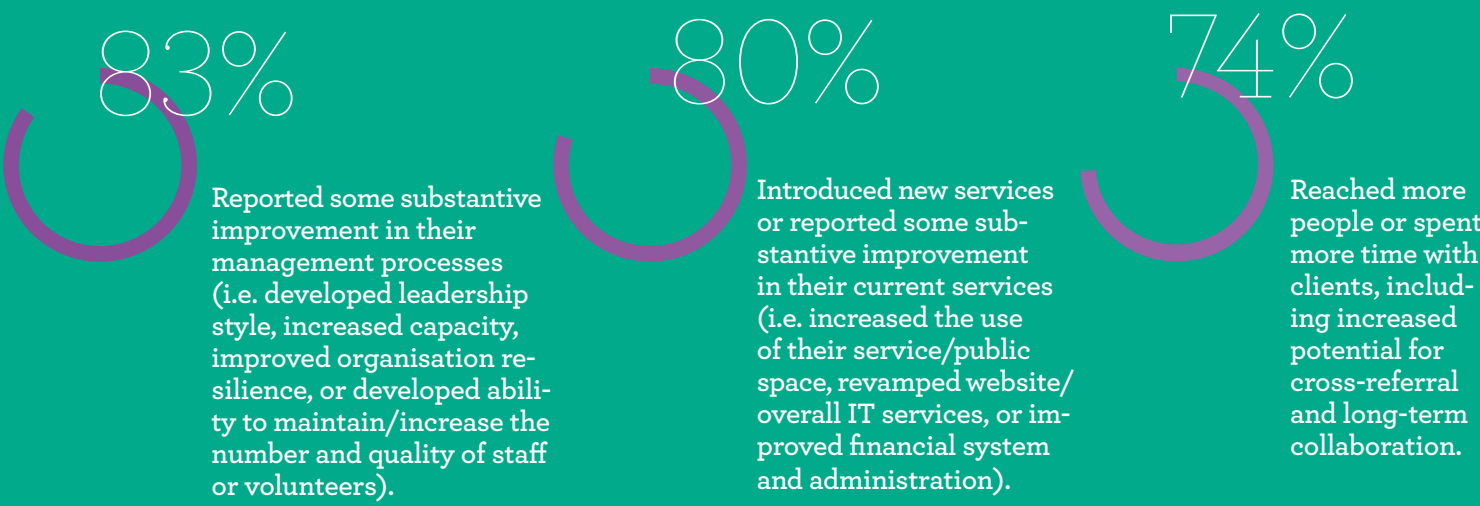


BUSINESS OUTPUTS



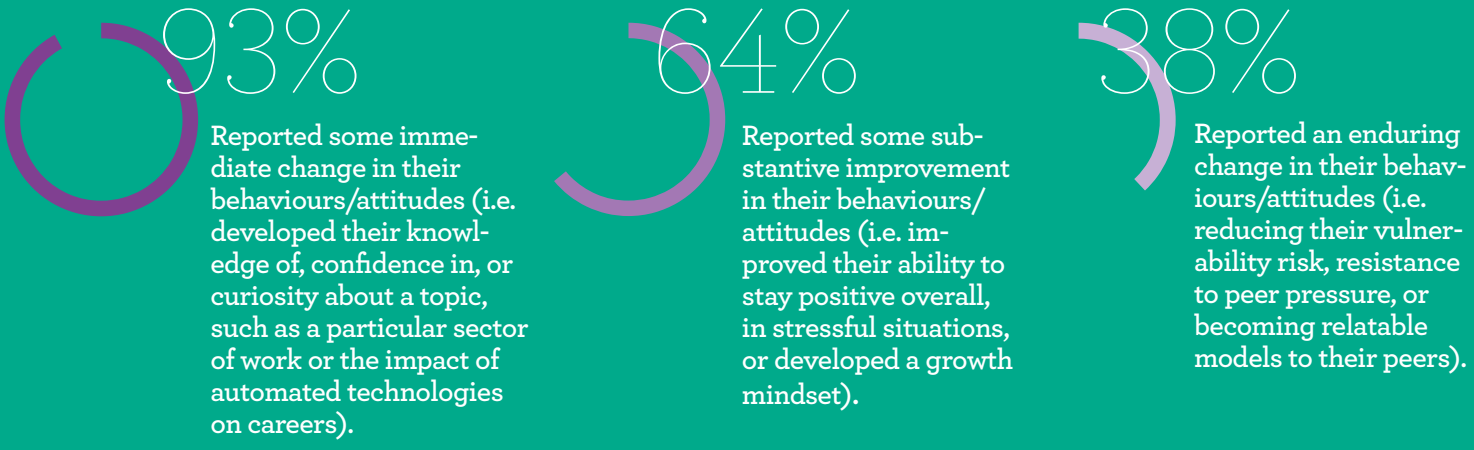
THE DEPTH OF OUR IMPACT

Impact on community organisations



Impact on beneficiaries

Behaviour/Attitude change



Skills development/confidence change



Impact on employee volunteers

Behaviour/Attitude change Skills development/confidence change Quality-of-life/well-being improvement



Deep Dive – Our impact on Serious Youth Violence



OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

Everyone's Business project was designed to follow the public health approach in addressing serious youth violence (SYV) and in doing so, give central prominence to the business sector in responding to the sharp rise in knife related crime and violence in London. The lead partner organisation - ELBA - has been engaging the world of business in the significant issues faced by the communities of east London for 30 years. SYV is an issue of magnitude and urgency in which the business sector has a significant role to play.

Through the expertise of three key delivery partners - Spark2Life, REIN and Streets of Growth - the project engaged young people aged 16–25 from disadvantaged or marginalised communities in east London, across four boroughs: Newham, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest, and Barking and Dagenham. These young people were either at risk of getting involved/already involved in SYV, or at risk of exploitation/grooming.

Around 500 young people engaged meaningfully in the programme and were supported in personal development and improving their employability competencies by 236 business people. Just over 100 completed a full journey through the entire pathway the programme offered. Across the two years, 290 young people were supported into employment from across the whole partnership.

The project also facilitated capacity building support and training for grass-roots organisations involved in working with young people in four boroughs in east London, as well as the development of borough-based networks for these organisations to build on and tap into peer-to-peer support. 40 grassroots organisations were engaged and there were 170 engagements between community practitioners and business people. Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets and Barking and Dagenham Giving were additional partners for this element of the programme.

OVERVIEW OF THE IMPACT EVALUATION APPROACH

The project was designed to answer the following research question: 'To what extent does the collaborative work between business and voluntary sectors lead to reduction in young people's involvement in serious youth violence (SYV)?' The outcome evaluation has been designed to provide information about the outcomes generated by the collaboration between business and voluntary sector in addressing the problem of SYV. The primary method of assessing the project's outcomes was 'before' and 'after' in-depth interviews exploring the extent of change experienced by young people referred onto the employability stage of the project, as well as by representatives of grass-roots organisations engaged in one of the four borough networks. In addition to this, the evaluator also collected youth workers' reflections concerning young people's development through a questionnaire that was completed by youth workers at the end of the project.



KEY FINDINGS: YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

Outcome 1

Improved employability competencies

83% improved their speaking skills compared to baseline, 56% improved their ability to stay positive, 50% aimed higher than at the start of the programme, and 44% reported progress made in their listening and problem-solving skills.

Outcome 5

Improved resistance to peer pressure

51% were reported to have successfully maintained their relatively strong resistance to peer pressure, and further 32% improved their resistance to peer pressure further, as a direct result of their engagement in the project.

Outcome 2

Increased confidence in reaching career goals

85% experienced an increase in their confidence in reaching their career goals in the near future.

Outcome 6

Increased network of contacts and influence

85% completed the programme feeling more confident in engaging with corporates and generally less intimidated by corporate professionals.

70% stated that their professional network has developed and has become much more focused on the type of careers they are interested in pursuing.

Outcome 3

Increased resilience

54% were reported by youth workers to appear to be much more resilient as a direct result of their engagement in the project.

41% showed overall positive development throughout the project and were moved to a lower risk category (concerning risk of involvement in SYV) as a result.

Outcome 7

Increased potential for becoming role models in their communities

56% were reported by youth workers to have great potential to become relatable role models in the near future, whilst further 27% have already become relatable role models to their peers throughout the life of this project, showing that their past does not have to dictate their future.

Outcome 4

Improved conflict resolution skills

66% improved their ability to express themselves and their needs clearly.

57% improved their ability to empathise with others, their open-mindedness, and their ability to de-escalate a situation.

KEY FINDINGS: NETWORK AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Outcome 8

Developed collaboration between organisations

62% reported that they were either in conversations about, or were already engaged in, collaborative work with other network members.

Outcome 9

Improved practice with young people

Safeguarding training: All organisations in attendance agreed on the importance of the information provided and have already made changes in their safeguarding policies as a result of this training.

Shared best practice during network meetings: 44% of organisations detailed how group discussions during network meetings increased their awareness of challenges in practice and improved their capacity to adjust their delivery where needed, especially given the adjustments to online delivery.

Outcome 10

Increased potential for cross-referral

80% stated that their engagement in the relevant borough network increased their awareness of each other, which also initiated the possibility for cross-referral in the near future.

Outcome 11

Improved organisation resilience

Despite the fact that 39% of organisations furloughed staff and 44% of organisations had to either partially or completely shut down their operations during 2020-2021 pandemic lockdowns, all organisations confirmed that they were able to open their doors again as restrictions eased in April 2021.

72% of organisations associated elements of their capacity for recovery from lockdowns to the network engagement, which has been described to have provided a 'safe space to talk and share challenges'.

Outcome 12

Improved governance and leadership

71% of organisations stated that the 'Leaders in Partnership' coaching programme has provided them with the exact support they needed from corporate leaders, during these unprecedented times: a combination of empathetic and professional advice which impacted community leaders in a range of leadership and governance areas.

5 grass-roots organisations successfully placed a total of 13 trustees through the programme, describing the experience to have brought positive change in leadership and governance across the organisations.

LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

At the final reporting stage for Everyone's Business project 2020-2022, there was clear evidence showing that, despite the pandemic and multiple national lockdowns, the project had made progress towards all its intended outcomes. These findings demonstrated that the collaborative work between the corporate and voluntary sectors in east London has the potential to lead towards a reduction in young people's involvement in SYV in the long term. This was further supported by the fact that

91% of active beneficiaries had not been involved in SYV during their engagement in the programme, strengthening the potential of this partnership to generate longitudinal change.

To maintain the continuity and sustainability of the support, and work efficiently with both groups of beneficiaries (young people and grass-roots organisations), the partnership has reflected on six key learnings which have implications for practice:

1

Relationships of trust need to be fostered over long-time periods, and should take priority over other outcomes.

4

Focus on 1-2-1 bespoke support for small, grass-roots organisations, instead of group workshops.

2

Longitudinal methodology for impact measurement embedded in long-term programmes (5-10 years) required to enable and measure change in serious youth violence.

5

Embed financial remuneration for grass-roots organisations' representatives meeting time into project budget.

3

Further work needed to clearly define the role employers have in the reduction of serious youth violence.

6

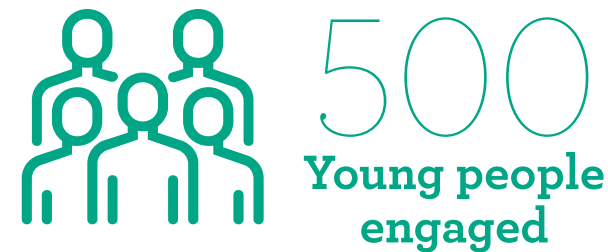
The impact of the provision of digital support towards reducing digital poverty amongst vulnerable young people and small grass-roots organisations should be embedded in longitudinal methodology.

EVERYONE'S BUSINESS IN NUMBERS

This section gives a picture of the scale of the programme, highlighting the outputs for both beneficiaries and grass-roots organisations across two years of delivery.



Over 200 businesses engaged with the programme in some way to support young people and 236 business people personally gave their time and expertise to support leadership development, and employability skills training. 37 business mentors were involved, alongside 48 community mentors.



Between April 2020 and March 2022, over 1,400 young people were approached through detached work by the three local partners – Streets of Growth, Rights and Equalities in Newham (REIN) and Spark2Life. Through this route, and via other referrals and direct outreach, around 500 young people engaged in the programme in a meaningful way, and 103 completed the full pathway of Stages 1 and 2.

Of the 500 young people who engaged with the programme:



Age

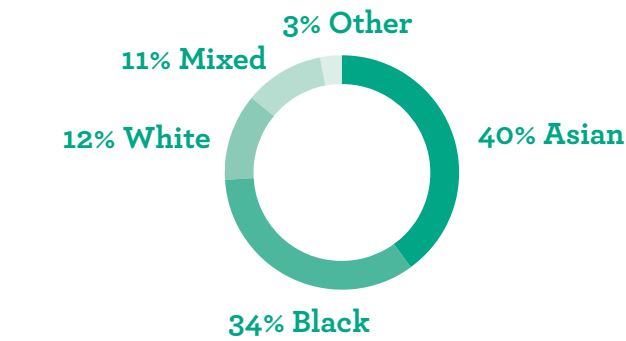
Young people engaged in personal development



Young people engaged in employability



Ethnicity



The ethnicity of the young people varied according to the activity, but for the main development and employability pathways, approximately 40% were Asian, 34% were Black, 12% white, 11% mixed, and 3% from other groups.

Gender



The balance between male and female participants varied according to the activity undertaken but for the main pathways of personal development and improved employability, the split was roughly 60% male, 40% female.

Capacity Building Grassroots Organisations



40 grassroots organisations were engaged over the two years of the programme. There were 90 development activities, attended by 219 business people and 174 local practitioners (there will be some double counting in those figures as some people attended more than one activity).

Quick Looks



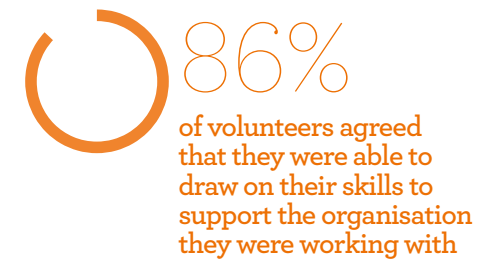
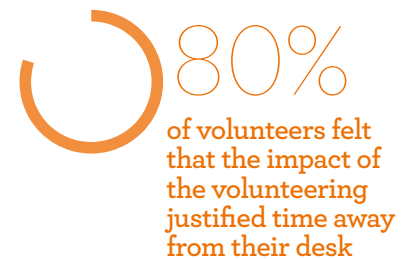
QUICK LOOKS

MACQUARIE CONSULTANCY SPRINT CHALLENGE



In the summer of 2022, BIG Alliance partnered with Macquarie to deliver the Macquarie Consultancy Sprint Challenge series. During four workshops, teams of Macquarie's Summer Interns were joined by Macquarie employees to provide fresh ideas which addressed strategic challenges posed by a selection of local community organisations. Teams of five-six interns and business volunteers worked

together over one afternoon to come up with the best solutions to a real problem faced by Islington-based non-profits. This year, four community organisations and 56 volunteers took part in the programme. The challenges were all focused on raising funds and generating additional income which is a reflection of the current climate and the competition for funds in the charity sector.



“The volunteers came up with an original set of ideas to diversify our income. We’re so energised and inspired and will be using the session to springboard new resource generation initiatives at Cubitt!” - Saffi Jones, Operations and Development Manager, Cubitt Artists

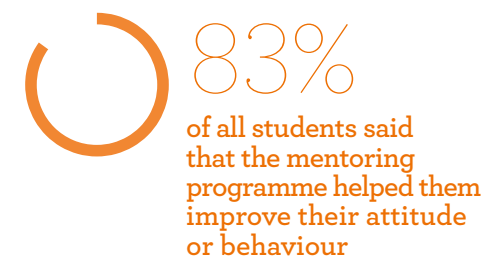
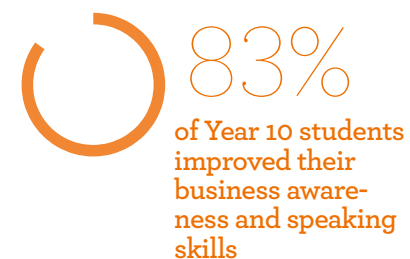


“I was totally blown away by the standard of the presentations and the information given by the participants. We will definitely take the advice onboard and action it.” - Tash Alexander, Founder and Director, Head Held High

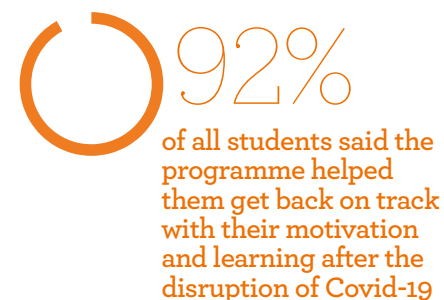
MENTORING WORKS

BIG Alliance has delivered the Mentoring Works programme in the London Borough of Islington since 2013. The programme pairs students with business mentors, providing them with the opportunity to gain insight into the world of work and develop key skills.

In 2021-22, 88 Year 10/Sixth Form/Post-16 students from six Islington secondary schools/colleges and one SEN school were supported by 71 mentors across four BIG Alliance corporate partners. The relationship focused on the development of the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for future life.



“My mentor was patient, offering guidance and always helping me to improve and be the best version of myself. I think she is and will be a great mentor to other people and I'm glad that I had the chance to get to know her. It was a pleasure to have someone like her to discuss subjects that we both were interested in. Thank you for creating this programme, it really changes people and guides them to do better!” - Mentee



“Every session with my mentee has been full of energy and commitment, leaving me feeling uplifted and rewarded each time.” - Mentor

In the Pipeline



IN THE PIPELINE

YOUNG INFLUENCERS PROGRAMME

In October 2021, ELBA partnered with Société Générale to support them in the delivery of their flagship initiative: Young Influencers Programme. The initiative was designed to increase students' employability skills, so they have the confidence and ability to make a positive social impact and build successful careers. It consists of seven workshops, exploring the financial sector and the positive impact it can have on society, and culminates in an exciting pitch day in which students have the chance to pitch their solutions to community problems to a panel of esteemed Société Générale employees (including the CEO).

Now in its second year, the programme has already been implementing the learnings from its pilot phase which set the foundation for scale-up. A longitudinal evaluation strategy has been designed by ELBA to capture the outcomes and impacts experienced by these young people as a direct result of their engagement in the programme, with the view to sharing these results in 2023.

EVOLVE

The Evolve Project is a partnership between Linklaters, UBS, Société Générale and the Société Générale UK Foundation, delivered by ELBA. It aims to build the capacity of community organisations in Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Haringey, particularly in response to the effects of COVID-19. The project was piloted in 2021 to include seven types of activities, from Reflection & Planning workshops, Funding Application and Website Reviews, to pairing community leaders with senior volunteers for a 10-month, coaching-style partnership, and placing employee volunteers as trustees of community organisations.

In late 2021, as COVID priorities continued to develop, ELBA launched a consultation to learn more about the support-needs of community organisations. In line with findings, we have altered our 2022 programme to include more practical, hands-on support and training across some key areas. As part of this, we launched 'Compass' a programme designed to help community organisations navigate business challenges through three months of high impact, intensive-volunteer support. We aim to conduct an in-depth evaluation of these developments in 2023.

NET ZERO AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

ELBA's business and community partners have been working together to maintain and improve the environment in east London for over 30 years. However, the increasing urgency to respond to the climate crisis and to support wildlife and ecology has led to a strong interest in trying to do more.

To step up our efforts we have been working closely with sustainability and environmental experts from our business and community partners and we have gathered together our environmental work into four new workstreams:

1

Land and Carbon: Planting trees and hedge-rows helps sequester carbon, but the work we do in the greenspaces of east London also helps support the habitats and bio-diversity of our urban environment.

3

Education and Debate: Everyone has an interest in climate and environment response and ELBA will be bringing young people and the business community together for debates, discussion and joint projects.

2

Plastic and Water: We have been picking up plastic waste in east London for three decades – but we have some new ideas. Firstly, about how to recycle plastic film into eco bricks which can be used for small community landscaping projects.

4

Environmental Capacity and Resilience: We want to help build the capacity of local organisations to develop their response plans, and to support them in engaging local communities to strengthen their resilience to climate change.





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