Final | Confidential

London's VRU

MyEnds evaluation. Thematic report 5: Lessons and implications for future programmes

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CordisBright

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1   Introduction

1.1   MyEnds' contribution to learning

MyEnds is an ambitious programme funded by London's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). It promotes highly local, place based approaches to reducing violence in eight London neighbourhoods which have experienced high and sustained levels of violence. The MyEnds model is outlined in *MyEnds extension evaluation. Thematic report 1: MyEnds model*.

Through MyEnds, London's VRU has committed to exploring the potential of a programme devolving funding and decision-making power to local voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations to develop and implement community-based approaches to reducing violence in their local area.

> *"We have succeeded in what we set out to do: to empower communities to lead in a collaborative way, and to indicate the value of doing so."*
>
> VRU stakeholder

The VRU has catalysed the development of local consortiums and injected funding through commissioning the programme. It has also provided further resource to consortium partners in the form of capacity-building and programme management support.

Equally, local consortiums and wider partners in the local areas involved in MyEnds have shown their own appetite to deliver programmes of this nature. This is reflected in their initial applications to the VRU to participate in the programme, and in their continued collaboration with the VRU, with each other and with their local communities throughout the implementation period.

In implementing and evaluating the programme, the VRU, local consortiums and wider partners have generated evidence and learning about *how* to implement programmes like MyEnds successfully. The VRU has already built on some of this learning when developing the second round of MyEnds and will continue to work with local sites to apply and produce further learning during implementation, through cross-site practice surgeries, networking events and forums.

1.2   Focus of this report

This report summarises key aspects of the "how to" learning generated by MyEnds. It considers how the VRU and sites have applied the MyEnds model in practice, and the successes and challenges in doing so.

The report also suggests areas for future focus for a second round of My Ends, and for future similar programmes. In addition, it explores the extent to which the VRU and sites have been able to use MyEnds to promote sustainable networks and activities which can continue beyond the programme.

The findings in this report are based on:

- Extensive qualitative consultation with a range of stakeholders throughout the three years of MyEnds programme delivery in 2021-24,

- Analysis of responses to an e-survey shared with stakeholders in local sites over three time points (Spring 2022, 2023, and 2024).

- A review of the final monitoring data submissions covering the extension period (April 2023 to March 2024 inclusive).

Please see annex 1 for more information on the evaluation methodology and research questions.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part in consultation activity or shared information with us to support the evaluation. Without your input, we could not have gained the insights and learning included in our reports.

1.3   Complementary evaluation reports

This report focuses on learning at an overarching programme level. Separate thematic reports summarise the most important evaluation findings relating to the different activity strands delivering as part of MyEnds.

- **Thematic report 2: Strengthening community networks**. This describes the collaboration that has taken place between local VCS organisations, with communities and young people, and with statutory organisations. It indicates that this has contributed to increased involvement in decision making and trust from the community and young people in local MyEnds areas; a stronger foundation for coordinating efforts to reduce violence and responding to critical incidents; and increased status of the VCS among statutory partners.

- **Thematic report 3: Onwards grants**. This highlights the effectiveness of onwards grants programmes as mechanisms for engaging community members and young people in decision making; increasing the array of organisations and activities involved in MyEnds; broadening engagement with target community members; and building capacity of grassroots organisations in local areas. It also elucidates how onwards grants programmes have promoted systems change in MyEnds areas in favour of the grassroots sector.

- **Thematic report 4: Interventions**. This outlines the approaches sites have taken to developing their profile of interventions, namely informal identification of need and gaps in existing provision, and building on existing local assets. This has expanded existing interventions and contributed to the development of new ones, allowing them to reach high numbers of community members and young people, some of whom are newly identified. It notes that the majority of MyEnds interventions have responded to primary and secondary need, and as such have largely focused on protective factors, although some sites have delivered new tertiary interventions.

2 Overview of key findings

Approaches	Key findings	Future focus
Showing collective approaches in action	• The collaborative consortium approach has shown the value of collective action in producing stronger local networks and community-based interventions to prevent and address violence • MyEnds activities and the VRU's support and promotion of this way of working has begun to increase the presence and status of VCS partners in planning and delivering violence reduction approaches • The injection of resource and energy into MyEnds has produced some sustainable relationships and activities, and supported the sustainability of organisations involved	
Partnership working by consortiums and key partner organisations	• Pre-established relationships; investing time in building trust and honesty; aligned vision and values; and complementary skills and experience are supportive of collaborative consortiums • A strong understanding of consortium partners' strengths and areas for development enables strategic planning for implementation • Statutory organisations and housing associations are key partners in a collaborative approach to violence reduction	• Produce an example job description for a site PM • Encourage sites to strategise according to existing skills and resources, including sequencing delivery as appropriate • Require sites to incorporate engagement with housing associations on target estates into strengthening community networks strategies
Engaging communities and understanding need	• Cultural competence and networking with leaders of cultural groups can increase engagement with target local populations • Sites' knowledge of and relationships with their communities have helped them to understand local need, priorities and preferences • Sites may need support to take a more strategic approach to understanding need, and to respond when local need cannot be met by local provision	• Early implementation of Equality Impact Assessments and identification of suitable delivery partners for the local population through community needs assessments
Central programme management	• The VRU's enabling, supportive approach to programme management has built trust and encouraged local innovation • It has sometimes been difficult to strike a balance between taking an enabling approach and intervening when needed	• Develop pathway for onboarding new staff in sites
Tailored, needs led and strengths based capacity building	• The commissioning organisation providing direct capacity building support has instilled trust and understanding, enabled tailoring and increased quality of support • Tailored support is resource intensive, but efficiency and effectiveness could be increased through robust needs assessment • Cross-site networking and relationship building has enabled sites to harness their strengths to support one another	• Identify capacity building needs and appropriate approaches to programme management via capacity building needs assessments
Developing and using data to strategise according to local need	• Aligning commissioner monitoring requirements with consortiums and providers monitoring approaches and resources proved challenging • Thorough onboarding, context setting and relationship management supports buy-in to monitoring and evaluation • Further programme level support is required to enable sites to make the most of monitoring data • Mechanisms for collecting monitoring data could be made more accessible for delivery partners • Programme level networks and relationships could be harnessed to support strategic use of statutory data	• Identify priorities for strategic use of data at programme and site level • Use grant management meetings as a mechanism for data collection and review • Work with sites to determine suitable mechanisms for collecting data from delivery partners • Support sites to engage statutory partners in providing data to identify need and strategically plan a response to violence
Sustaining MyEnds networks and activities	• Delivery of some MyEnds interventions is expected to continue beyond the current programme • New events, partnerships and relationships developed to strengthen community networks in MyEnds areas are likely to be sustained • The VRU have provided a varied support offer in the extension year to aid sites' sustainability • The VRU could support sites to embed mechanisms in support of sustainability at an early stage of programme development	• Support sites to integrate into the VRU's networks and identify and engage with corresponding funding opportunities

3   Showing collective approaches in action

3.1   Key finding 1: The collaborative consortium approach has shown the value of collective action in producing stronger local networks and community-based interventions to prevent and address violence

MyEnds is an example of investing in and empowering VCS organisations to take collective, collaborative action to prevent and reduce violence. Collaboration is woven throughout the MyEnds programme, through the consortium structure and each of its key strands. By working in this way to plan and implement MyEnds, sites and the VRU have shown its value.

3.1.1   Tapping into potential within the local community

MyEnds builds local knowledge and experience into the programme from the outset, by requiring a consortium of local VCS organisations to jointly bid for funding and to lead programme delivery. It then furthers planning and delivery by and with the local community through its principles of community co-design, promoting delivery by local grassroots organisations, and tailoring the programme to local strengths, opportunities, needs and challenges. This has enabled local VCS organisations and community members to demonstrate their skills and abilities, often related to their lived experience of issues related to violence and bolstered by their passion for their communities.

3.1.2   Reducing competition; avoiding duplication; and increasing the cohesiveness of support in local areas through collaborative consortiums

Consortium partners have invested time, effort and communication in the development and implementation of the consortium structure. In doing so, they have generated a strong understanding and trust of one another, how to play to each other's strengths and support each other in their work. The positive relationships consortium partners have developed are expected to continue beyond MyEnds, and have contributed to the following positive outcomes:

- **A reduction in longstanding competition between consortium organisations**. This has included partners enabling one another's engagement with young people they had previously felt protective over, thereby supporting young people to access a wider array of interventions.

- **Avoiding duplication.** Organisations have had a stronger understanding of existing provision and where this overlaps, and have been able to direct resources to filling gaps rather than duplicating similar services.

- **Providing a more holistic and cohesive support offer**, through combining skills, reach and resources within the consortium and with wider delivery partners and grassroots grantees, and increasing local understanding of provision available and referral pathways.

MyEnds systems change e-survey findings

- In 2024, 91% (96/106) of respondents in operational/operational management roles strongly agreed/agreed that they felt confident in knowing what other services and initiatives are going on in the area, compared to 81% in 2023 (117/144) and 72% in 2022 (100/138).

- In 2024, 90% (94/105) of respondents in operational/operational management roles strongly agreed/agreed that they felt confident in referring to other organisations in the area, compared to 77% (111/144) in 2023 and 78% (106/136) in 2022.

- In 2024, 88% (184/208) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that in local MyEnds areas organisations had the skills and knowledge they need to make change, compared to 77% in 2023 (187/242) and 73% in 2022 (155/213).

3.1.3   Building partnerships with statutory organisations

Consortium partners have combined their understanding of their local systems and shared access to their local networks to further their collaborative efforts and enhance their presence and impact in their communities. This has included developing working relationships with statutory organisations, bringing them under a shared aim and interest in violence reduction. This has worked best where statutory organisations have been able to invest the time needed for collective action, allowing everyone involved to understand how they can support one another in their work.

> *"A big change I've seen since MyEnds started is the working relationships with statutory services. Metropolitan police, local councillors, working with the consortium, young people, grassroots organisations as a collective. Everyone was independently doing their own work before. Now that common understanding and aim and interest in violence reduction has helped bring everyone together, along with their knowledge and skills."*
>
> Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

3.1.4   Identifying and developing new opportunities for collective action

In some cases, collaboration through MyEnds has inspired new avenues for collective action that are continuing beyond the programme. For example, some sites have created new consortiums focusing on issues identified through the MyEnds programme, that are collectively understood as priority areas for local action. This was the case with the Hackney Reducing Exclusions Partnership, which arose from local partners collaborating on the Rise Up East programme. Partners are now channelling resources into this partnership, which is expected to continue beyond MyEnds as a result.

3.2 Key finding 2: MyEnds activities and the VRU's support and promotion of this way of working has begun to increase the presence and status of VCS partners in planning and delivering violence reduction approaches

Empowering VCS organisations to lead MyEnds has cemented the importance of their involvement in violence reduction efforts, and built up their presence and status in MyEnds areas.

> *"For communities really affected by violence and where prevention is more like enforcement, the shift to recognising that communities have the solutions to their problems has been powerful."*
>
> VRU stakeholder

The growth in the presence and status of grassroots organisations has been particularly notable. By funding and supporting grassroots organisations through onwards grants programmes or as delivery partners, MyEnds has enabled these organisations to be part of the solution to violence reduction in a way that may not have been possible without this investment.

Their delivery of support and activities in MyEnds areas has demonstrated grassroots organisations' skills and ability to engage communities affected by violence. Sites have used this evidence to communicate their value and contribution to wider funders, including local authorities. This has led to an increased respect of the grassroots sector in MyEnds areas, and in some cases further funding for their activities. This has taken place in Southwark, where Gamechangers have taken an advocacy and networking role on behalf of grassroots organisations. This has developed local funders' understanding of the strengths of grassroots organisations and how they might align with opportunities local funders have available, thereby increasing local funders' willingness to consider grassroots organisations as safe investments (see thematic report 3 for more detail).

3.3 Key finding 3: The injection of resource and energy into MyEnds has produced some sustainable relationships and activities, and supported the sustainability of organisations involved

All MyEnds sites indicated a desire to continue with the MyEnds programme in their local areas. Elements of MyEnds are set to continue in all sites, regardless of further VRU funding. This includes the delivery of some interventions; community events and partnerships within the VCS; and collaborative relationships with statutory organisations.

The sustainability of organisations involved in MyEnds is also likely to have increased. As noted above, capacity building and onwards grants programmes have increased the appeal of grassroots organisations to wider funders, and their ability to engage with wider funding opportunities. This supports the sustainability of these organisations and activities in the longer term.

This increase in skills and assets also applies to consortium and delivery partners. The MyEnds programme has been designed to increase the skills and

assets of those involved. This has included building up programme management skills of consortium partners and monitoring and evaluation capabilities of consortium and delivery partners. In doing so, these organisations are now arguably better placed to engage with and secure further funding, either as consortiums or for their individual activities.

> **MyEnds systems change e-survey findings**
>
> In 2024, 81% (176/216) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that the organisations and people working in local MyEnds areas who have a role to play in reducing violence had plans and approaches for reducing violence that are sustainable. This has increased from 76% in 2023 (189/248) and 65% in 2022 (141/216).

4 Partnership working by consortiums and key partner organisations

4.1 Key finding 4: Pre-established relationships; investing time in building trust and honesty; aligned vision and values; and complementary skills and experience are supportive of collaborative consortiums

The consortium structure is a key element of the MyEnds programme and has developed successfully in MyEnds areas. Several factors supported consortiums to collaborate effectively.

4.1.1 Investing time in building new relationships between consortium partners

Bringing together multiple organisations with different cultures and ways of working, systems, policies, and priorities was a complex process. It took time to build the kind of strong and trusting relationships needed to collaborate successfully, especially where consortium partners were relatively new to one another. In particular, historical territorialism related to competition for funding was highlighted as an initial barrier. This prevented partners from being honest about their vulnerabilities, where they might need support, and seeking this from other partners. However, consortium partners have embraced this challenge, and over time have opened up in a way that has enabled them to understand how best to support one another towards the successful delivery of MyEnds.

> *"It takes a long time to build relationships with people you haven't worked with before. Previously organisations had overemphasised their successes and didn't want to be honest about areas they could develop. That took time, to come to know each other's vulnerabilities and where we could support one another."*
>
> Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

4.1.2 Pre-established strong relationships between consortium partners

Consortium partners who had positive pre-existing relationships already understood where one another's strengths lay, and trust in one another's ability and dedication to follow through on commitments. This enabled them to hit the ground running and progress with programme delivery quickly.

4.1.3 An alignment of values and vision among consortium partners

Aligned values and vision between consortium partners aided collaboration, particularly with regards to aspirations of systems change. It was important for partners to have a shared vision for MyEnds as something beyond a programme of interventions. Gearing the MyEnds programme towards achieving systems change through collective impact required consortium partners to be aligned with and to have bought into this goal. This was the case in Gamechangers, where sustainability was prioritised from the outset.

"We knew consortium partners were bought into the idea of a collective voice towards systems change. For us, MyEnds was about quality delivery for young people, but we wanted to sustain this to have a bigger impact, through lobbying the local authority, funders – everyone was on board with that."

Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

4.1.4   Strategic selection of partners with diverse skills and experience

Some lead consortium partners reflected on their own strengths and areas for development, and sought to identify partners that could add to or complement these. For example, ACT-AS-1 purposely selected partners able to deliver a range of primary, secondary and tertiary interventions. Strong engagement with young people and parents and an understanding of the requirements of large contracts were also highlighted as important qualities for consortium partners.

4.1.5   Ability to adapt consortium membership if needed

In some cases, sites found that original consortium partners were not working together effectively, and it was necessary to change roles or membership to respond to this. For example, in Rise Up East, the lead consortium partner changed part-way through the programme, with the role being taken over by an organisation that was felt to be better embedded into the community.

4.1.6   A highly skilled and committed PM, supplemented by strong understanding and skills of wider consortium partners

Site PMs and wider consortium partners should have a strong understanding of each of the key elements of the MyEnds programme. Importantly, they also require the skillset and network needed to take these forward, achieve buy-in and maintain momentum with community members and VCS and statutory partners. Whilst the PM role is vital, the consortium should have the necessary skillset to step-in should the PM become unavailable, so that the success of the programme is not dependent on one individual.

Future focus: Produce an example job description for a site PM

A site PM with a strong skillset in relation to each of the key elements of the MyEnds programme is pivotal. Future MyEnds sites may benefit from further guidance to support the recruitment of an appropriate site PM. This may include an example job description and person specification, which should be adaptable according to the context of local MyEnds areas.

4.2   Key finding 5: A strong understanding of consortium partners' strengths and areas for development enables strategic planning for implementation

A strong understanding of the skillsets and networks available within the consortium supported consortium partners to effectively strategise on the delivery

of key strands of the MyEnds programme. This included sequencing delivery and allocating responsibility depending on strengths, knowledge and skills.

4.2.1 Sequencing delivery according to existing strengths and knowledge base

For example, some sites deliberately sequenced their delivery of different strands based on their assessment of consortium partners' knowledge, skills and networks upon contract award. In THICN, consortium partners identified that they needed a better understanding of the local grassroots sector and the gaps in provision that grassroots organisations could fill, before rolling out their onwards grants programme. They built this understanding through engaging with the community and local organisations in their first year, which supported them to deliver their onwards grants programme more effectively in their second year. In ACT-AS-1, consortium partners paused on formalising community engagement until they had a clear strategy for this (community link ups and engagement in an onwards grants panel), to ensure that they were able to deliver this meaningfully.

4.2.2 Allocating responsibility according to consortium partners' strengths and skills

Some sites tasked different consortium partners to lead on specific elements of the MyEnds programme, based on their assessment of one another's strengths. This was the case in Ecosystem Coldharbour, where consortium partners led strategic decision making groups in collaboration with community members, based on their specialist areas. Consortium partners then reported back from each of these groups to the consortium. This helped to share responsibility and capacity among consortium partners. It was also a mechanism for community engagement, supporting inclusive decision making, regular and open communication channels with community members, and information sharing with regards to activities and tensions on target estates.

> **Future focus: Encourage sites to strategise according to existing skills and resources, including sequencing delivery as appropriate**
>
> Informed by capacity building needs assessments, sites could be supported to understand their relative strengths and areas for development, and strategise accordingly. This may mean designating consortium partners to lead on particular aspects of the programme based on their skills and experience, or sequencing delivery to hold off on delivering some elements of the programme until relevant capacity building needs have been met.

4.3 Key finding 6: Statutory organisations and housing associations are key partners in a collaborative approach to violence reduction

Where sites have been able to meaningfully engage statutory partners and housing associations in MyEnds this has been highly beneficial. This has included using the data and intelligence they have access to, and harnessing their relationships with other valuable partners.

4.3.1   Statutory organisations

Most sites engaged statutory partners in their strategic meetings, in some cases identifying and targeting specific statutory organisations according to need. For example, THICN engaged the Youth Justice Board and data analysts from the local authority, who helped the consortium to target services according to local data on criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. Having these members at their strategic meetings also supported the development of referral pathways from these organisations and partners they were associated with, such as Early Help, Pupil Referral Units, Integrated Offender Management and Project Adder[1].

4.3.2   Housing Associations

Housing Associations are highly beneficial partners to have involved in the MyEnds programme, either as consortium partners or members of strategic groups. Their involvement was supportive in the following ways:

- Bringing together community members from a range of different demographic groups who lived in housing managed by the Housing Associations.

- Providing local intelligence, supporting information sharing from targeted housing estates, especially in response to critical incidents.

- Providing access to space, both in the local area and more broadly, for example in central London, where they had property available for use.

- Brokering relationships between the local authority and consortium partners.

- Sharing ideas and good practice beyond MyEnds areas to other areas they provide housing. For example, the She Is Summit set up by OFOB is being taken to Nottingham by OFOB Housing Association consortium partners.

Future focus: Require sites to incorporate engagement with housing associations on target estates into strengthening community networks strategies

Given the benefits of engagement with Housing Associations highlighted by current MyEnds sites, the VRU may want to consider stipulating that engagement with these organisations is a prerequisite of future MyEnds sites' strengthening community network strategies.

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[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-adder/about-project-adder

5   Engaging communities and understanding need

5.1   Key finding 7: Cultural competence and networking with leaders of cultural groups can increase engagement with target local populations

Supported by EqIAs, sites have identified groups within their local communities who have a need for support but have not been engaging in existing interventions. They subsequently sought to target these groups and increase engagement. This was successful where sites were able to build relationships with local leaders and organisations who are well-known and embedded within the targeted groups.

For example, having identified a growing Brazilian population in Brent, one of OFOB's delivery partners began working with a Portuguese speaking organisation, to encourage Brazilian young people to engage in OFOB activities. Similarly, THICN identified that engagement with the Somali community was low, and approached community elders and leaders to understand where THICN could add value to the support already provided within the Somali community, and avoid duplication. They also developed promotion materials in Somali.

> **MyEnds systems change e-survey findings**
>
> - In 2024, 95% (101/106) of respondents in operational/operational management roles strongly agreed/agreed that they felt confident in delivering support that meets the needs of diverse communities and works in cross-cultural situations, compared to 88% in 2023 (126/143) and 78% in 2022 (168/215).
>
> - In 2024, 88% (174/197) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that in their local MyEnds areas, the community (including young people) can receive support that meets the needs of diverse communities and works in cross-cultural situations, compared to 77% in 2023 (184/240) and 78% in 2022 (168/215).

5.2   Key finding 8: Sites' knowledge of and relationships with their communities have helped them to understand local need, priorities and preferences

As discussed in thematic report 4, consortiums and wider partners in sites took an organic approach to identifying local needs and gaps in support. This drew on knowledge and experience from prior delivery or proximity to the community.

Most sites used data sources within their communities to help them to understand local need and priorities, and strategise accordingly. This has included:

- Data collected by consortium partners themselves, for example on the demographics of young people attending their services prior to MyEnds.

- Information gathered through relationships with wider local stakeholders. For example, West Croydon have gathered data from local business owners and teachers around the London Road area.

- Data gathered through community consultation, for example through events with young people and parents, or ongoing community feedback opportunities, such as the THICN public interactive map on which local residents anonymously flag their concerns about local safety.

Site have used this local data and intelligence to understand the types of provision needed in their local areas, and how best to target this. For example, OFOB identified a need for interventions focused on supporting young people into employment, supporting their mental health, and helping young women to feel safe from harassment and abuse. Many sites have also used local intelligence to understand where and when provision is most needed, particularly detached and outreach youth work, for example after school hours.

> *"We recognise teachers, business owners have a lot to say about this patch, and we're going to respond to that. We've got after 3pm provision now, which we didn't have three years ago. Outreach workers can now guide young people to a live activity after school."*

Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

MyEnds systems change e-survey findings

- In 2024, 84% (163/194) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that their local My Ends programme has increased funding for interventions that meet the community's needs, compared to 74% in 2023 (171/232) (question not asked in 2022).

- In 2024, 89% (191/215) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that they adapt when needs change in the area, compared to 85% in 2023 (211/248) and 78% in 2022 (164/209).

5.3 Key finding 9: Sites may need support to take a more strategic approach to understanding need, and to respond when local need cannot be met by local provision

An organic approach to understanding need played well to consortium and wider partners' strengths and ways of working. However, it did create a risk that other needs and gaps might not be identified and addressed, where these related to communities or types of provision further from the expertise of partners involved in MyEnds. Thematic report 4 provides further detail on this finding.

London's VRU

MyEnds evaluation. Thematic report 5: Lessons and implications for future programmes

In some cases, sites identified needs within their communities, but were not able to respond to these due to a lack of appropriate local provision. For example, OFOB identified need through its EqIA in relation to SEND and sexuality, but were unable to identify local delivery partners with the reach and experience required to engage and support people with related needs.

Future focus: Early implementation of EqIAs and identification of suitable delivery partners through community needs assessments

Future MyEnds sites will benefit from undertaking EqIAs to understand the needs of different groups in their local areas at an early stage of programme implementation. Community needs assessments will enable them to assess need more strategically, providing confidence that needs and gaps which are less well-known to consortiums and wider partners can be identified. Needs assessments should also support sites to identify local organisations capable of supporting groups for whom existing provision is not suitable, or to consider bringing in external expertise where suitable support is not available.

6 Central programme management

6.1 Key finding 10: The VRU's enabling, supportive approach to programme management has built trust and encouraged local innovation

The VRU has adapted its approach to programme management based on learning throughout implementation. VRU staff took an enabling, supportive, non-prescriptive approach. This included attempting to develop an equal partnership with sites, through listening with humility and allowing sites the freedom to develop their programmes as they saw fit according to local need and context. They sought to develop trust with sites to encourage them to take innovation and accept that it was okay to make mistakes along the way, if they could be honest about this and any support needs they had.

The programme team's background in the VCS instilled within them the importance of taking this kind of approach with sites, and also gave them credibility with consortiums and other local stakeholders.

> *"The MyEnds team really cares about their work and has spent a lot of time getting to know everyone locally. Hopefully local partners see this too. They are more than just commissioners – they are part of the process and drive behind the local programmes."*

VRU Stakeholder

Site PMs felt enabled by the VRU's approach to programme management. They felt that there was flexibility in how they used the funding, encouraging them to take more innovative, locally led approaches. This included incorporating grassroots and community input, which sometimes pointed to different approaches to those traditionally funded by commissioners. Sites valued this flexibility, in particular the freedom it gave them to develop their programmes according to their understanding of local need.

> *"We felt we could be innovative with MyEnds, that there was the option to be flexible with how the funding was used. This allowed things to be more locally led, by people who might have a different way of thinking and doing things."*

Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

Sites also noted that this approach empowered them to work with more locally led organisations. For example, Ecosystem Coldharbour felt encouraged to prioritise working with grassroots organisations who were entrenched in the local community, and had stronger reach than some more established organisations.

MyEnds systems change e-survey findings

In 2024, 92% (199/216) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that their plans focus on defined areas/communities, compared to 88% in 2023 (215/244) and 80% in 2022 (173/215).

6.2 Key finding 11: It has sometimes been difficult to strike a balance between taking an enabling approach and intervening when needed

In some cases, sites' delivery of the programme has deviated from the VRU's intended governance model. The VRU's enabling approach to programme management has meant that it has taken some time to identify and address this.

For example, the VRU required that lead consortium partners had to be established organisations, delivering across all delivery strands. This rationale for this was to ensure stability of programme delivery whilst supporting the growth of smaller, grassroots delivery partners through the onwards grants process. Croydon initially took a different approach to consortium membership which meant that the delivery was led by smaller grassroots organisations which led to difficulties in delivery capacity. However, once the VRU had identified this issue, it changed tack and took a more prescriptive approach with this site, working on an action plan to bring delivery more in line with the intended programme structure. This worked well from both the site's and the VRU's perspectives.

A more structured approach may also be beneficial for new site PMs who join part-way through the programme. As they are learning on the job, it may be more difficult for them to engage with cross-site training to the same extent as more established site PMs.

Future focus: Develop pathway for onboarding new staff in sites

Whilst much of the onboarding process for new site level staff will be site specific, the VRU team could support with onboarding new staff through the development of an onboarding pathway, including previous programme level training and insights from other cross-site events. They could also help to bring new staff into the wider MyEnds network by setting up a buddying system for new staff with longstanding staff members in other sites.

7 Tailored, needs led and strengths based capacity building

7.1 Key finding 12: The commissioning organisation providing direct capacity building support has instilled trust and understanding, enabled tailoring and increased quality of support

The VRU's in-house capacity building and community engagement posts have enabled the VRU to dedicate time to building relationships and trust with sites, for example through site visits and attendance at community events and strategic meetings. Having built this trust, sites have felt more comfortable to be honest and open about challenges they have encountered and related support needs. This has allowed the VRU team to tailor their capacity building resource more effectively to respond to these needs. After having external capacity building support and a vacancy in the community engagement post, having stability in these roles has provided more consistency in guidance, messaging and support. This helped:

- **Increase the speed at which the VRU could identify need**, and the responsiveness and cohesiveness of support as a result.

- **Build a level of informality into support**. Site PMs valued feeling equally comfortable contacting the capacity builder to ask a quick question or to schedule a meeting about something they were struggling with.

  "It doesn't feel like we have to pretend we know when we don't know. If we don't, I ask [VRU staff member] to go through it again. We have an honest relationship, which is great."

  Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

- **Develop a more in-depth understanding of sites among VRU staff**, and stronger relationships between sites and wider members of the VRU team, such as the programme manager and Research, Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (RMEL) team.

- **Facilitate access for sites to the VRU's relationships and networks**, for example with schools through the VRU's education team, and with safeguarding leads within local authorities.

7.2 Key finding 13: Tailored support is resource intensive, but efficiency and effectiveness could be increased through robust needs assessment

The scale of the MyEnds programme, and the variation across sites given its localised approach, has meant that each site has required support in different areas. As a result, the VRU have needed to take a very individualised approach to support which, whilst effective, proved to be resource intensive. Within current capacity in the VRU team, it has not been possible to respond to all support

needs of all sites and partners. It has therefore been necessary to prioritise, for example by focusing more resources on the most common support needs, and bringing sites together to respond to these areas collectively.

Limited capacity may have also meant that sites whose needs were most immediately obvious were prioritised. This may have resulted in a less proactive support offer for sites whose needs were less evident. For example, one site PM had not realised one-to-one sessions with VRU team members had been available, and suggested they may not have been made aware of this support option as they had not flagged a specific need. The development of capacity building needs assessments and corresponding action plans should allow for more clarity between sites and the VRU of the support offer available and how it can be most effectively utilised by sites.

> **Future focus: Identify capacity building needs and appropriate approaches to programme management via capacity building needs assessments**
>
> For future MyEnds sites, the capacity building needs of consortium partners will be assessed as part of their community needs assessments. This will help sites and the VRU to identify the most significant areas of need, and to develop support offers based on a more detailed understanding of common and site-specific needs at an earlier stage in the programme. It will also help the VRU to understand whether sites will benefit from a directive, interventionist approach, or a more enabling approach to programme management, and to tailor their approach accordingly. This in turn will help increase the efficiency of capacity building support.
>
> It may be helpful to work with staff at site level to understand their learning styles as part of this assessment, to ensure that different learning styles are catered for within training and capacity building support.

7.3 Key finding 14: Cross-site networking and relationship building has enabled sites to harness their strengths to support one another

With increased capacity to engage with sites, the VRU have been able to identify issues some sites have been struggling with, and facilitate opportunities for other sites to support them by sharing their good practice and offering inspiration. In some cases, this has involved 'practice surgeries', run by a site excelling on a particular topic, to support other sites needing support with this topic. Having led MyEnds practice surgeries, some sites have gone on to present at wider VRU events, further developing their networking skills and exposure to wider partners.

In other cases, the VRU has facilitated sites working together on a specific issue, where one site was well placed to share learning with others. For example, THICN supported Rise Up East with its onwards grants programme, sharing examples from its youth panel and monitoring and reporting of onwards grants activities.

The relationships sites have built as a result of these networking opportunities have now developed beyond the VRU. For example, sites have identified opportunities to work together through ideas shared at VRU events, and have set up their own networking forums outside of the VRU. This has included a group set up by sites to develop a strategy on reducing school exclusions.

> *"Two years in, MyEnds groups came together outside of the VRU to look at a strategy to work together on reducing school exclusions. That would not have happened if we had not formed those relationships through these events."*

Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

The informal culture modelled by the VRU has enabled the development of these positive relationships between sites, contributing to a supportive relationship dynamic, as opposed to one of competition. Keeping attendance at these events relatively low in numbers and consistent across roles also helped individuals build strong links with one another.

8 Developing and using data to strategise according to local need

8.1 Key finding 15: Aligning commissioner monitoring requirements with consortiums and providers monitoring approaches and resources proved challenging

It proved challenging to establish central monitoring mechanisms which provided the VRU with the data they needed to monitor programme implementation and performance and which were also manageable and useful for stakeholders in the local sites. Data requests from the VRU have been refined over time, based on learning through application. The current approach is now thought of positively by the VRU and sites. Key milestones have included the introduction of the VRU outcomes framework, sites' development of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs), and a move to grant monitoring software, Flexigrant.

8.2 Key finding 16: Thorough onboarding, context setting, and relationship management supports buy-in to monitoring and evaluation

The VRU have invested time in contextualising new monitoring and evaluation tools for sites, and relationship management to ensure sites bought into these tools in a meaningful way. This included explaining monitoring and evaluation developments to sites face to face through dedicated sessions on the outcomes framework and Flexigrant, and providing one to one sessions and informal capacity building support as required. The VRU's approach to bringing sites on board in this way modelled an approach for sites to bring delivery partners on board with monitoring and evaluation.

The VRU's approach to introducing new monitoring and evaluation tools has supported sites' understanding of how to collect data effectively, and why its collection is important. This has led to an improvement in data literacy and data quality across the board, with all delivery organisations now reporting on at least one VRU outcome.

MyEnds systems change e-survey findings

In 2024, 83% (179/216) of respondents strongly agreed/agreed that their plans and ideas are based on evidence of 'what works to tackle the problem', compared to 82% in 2023 (203/248) and 70% in 2022 (151/216).

8.3 Key finding 17: Further programme level support is required to enable sites to make the most of monitoring data

Some sites are now engaging with their monitoring data more critically and using it more proactively. For example, one site used RAG ratings in monitoring reports

to generate discussions about prioritising and progressing plans they have committed to, to hold themselves accountable for these. Another used monitoring data to help them lobby for further funding from the local authority, by showing the level of need and potential impact of support in high need areas.

However, whilst there are some instances of sites using monitoring data critically, most are not making strategic use of monitoring data, and are instead reacting to insights on the ground and adapting organically. The VRU have not pushed sites in their use of monitoring data, and indicated that they could have prioritised this more, had there been more capacity in the VRU team.

At programme level, data is largely being used to highlight the value of the MyEnds programme to internal and external partners, and has not been used extensively in programme level strategising.

Future focus: Identify priorities for strategic use of data at programme and site level

The VRU intends to provide increased support to future MyEnds sites to build their capacity to generate and use data, focusing particularly on outcomes measurement. Within this, VRU stakeholders could benefit from a) determining priorities for the strategic use of data at programme level; b) understanding how sites have benefited from engaging with and using monitoring data at site level; and c) using this information to further develop and refine data collection mechanisms, to ensure these mechanisms produce useful data that is fit for purpose. This will help make the most of time taken to gather and collate monitoring data at both programme and site level.

Future focus: Use grant management meetings as a mechanism for data collection and review

Monitoring data could be reviewed within grant management meetings to a) inform and guide sites' strategy; b) identify and address areas sites may need further support with; and c) identify opportunities for sharing good practice across sites. Using the data in this way may help with targeting and prioritising capacity building support effectively, and further build sites' understanding of the importance and utility of data collection, validating the time taken to gather this data. Given these meetings offer an alternative method for data sharing, the VRU may want to ensure that key learning from these discussions is centrally captured alongside monitoring reports, so that it can be easily referred to for future programme design and commissioning.

8.4 Key finding 18: Mechanisms for collecting monitoring data could be made more accessible for delivery partners

Site PMs continue to struggle to elicit data from delivery partners, particularly grassroots organisations with little to no experience measuring outcomes and

articulating impact. In some cases, delivery partners have preferred to submit reports via video or case study, which is incompatible with the Flexigrant portal. This limits sites' ability to collect and share data from delivery partners, and to use this data in a meaningful way.

> *"I'm not sure if we are able to give out the best information. Delivery partners report things in a different way, and then it is difficult for the VRU to see the evidence of what they are doing, as there's a set way we need to report."*

Local Programme Manager in a MyEnds area

Future focus: Work with sites to determine suitable mechanisms for collecting data from delivery partners

Identifying priorities for strategic use of data will help the VRU to determine the kinds of data it requires sites to collect from delivery partners. This will enable the VRU to understand how best to adapt monitoring data mechanisms to make them more accessible for delivery partners. This may include sites using less traditional but more realistic methods to gather data from delivery partners, that still elicit useful information for sites and the VRU.

8.5 Key finding 19: Programme level networks and relationships could be harnessed to support strategic use of statutory data

Most site PMs drew on various statutory data sources to develop their localised strategies. These included publicly available local authority data and data shared by statutory partners such as police and local authority Community Safety Teams at strategic meetings. For example, Home Cooked reported using police and local councillors' insight into levels of violence in the local area to guide their strategy development.

However, data collected from statutory partners was not consistently used to strategise across sites. Barriers to this may have been related to broader difficulties sites experience in engaging statutory partners in their programmes, or specific concerns related to data sharing and data protection.

Future focus: Support sites to engage statutory partners in providing data to identify need and strategically plan a response to violence

Sites may benefit from further support from the VRU in a) understanding data sources held by statutory organisations that could help inform their localised strategies; b) advocating with statutory organisations on sites' behalf regarding the importance and utility of the data they hold for local MyEnds programmes; and c) navigating issues or concerns statutory organisations may have with regards to data sharing and data protection.

9 Sustaining MyEnds networks and activities

9.1 Key finding 20: Delivery of some MyEnds interventions is expected to continue beyond the current programme

Sites are keen to continue delivering interventions where possible. Some larger consortium partners were already funding interventions prior to MyEnds, and these partners are likely to continue to fund MyEnds interventions once the current funding round has ended. Some consortiums have also sought new funding to continue intervention delivery, such as THICN who are lobbying the council to fund MyEnds interventions under the Serious Violence Duty.

Local spaces that have been opened for the delivery of MyEnds interventions are also expected to remain open, such as youth centres in Tower Hamlets.

9.2 Key finding 21: New events, partnerships and relationships developed to strengthen community networks in MyEnds areas are likely to be sustained

A range of activities that have taken place within the strengthening community networks strand of MyEnds are planned to continue beyond the current funding round. This includes:

- **Events** such as the She Is Summit, which focuses on investing in women's safety and aspirations and involves speeches, panel discussions, and career stalls. This will continue in Brent and will be taken to Nottingham.

- **Formalised partnerships between local VCS organisations**. For example:

  - The Newham Youth Partnership. This convenes organisations working in the youth sector, and provides capacity building and training opportunities for smaller grassroots organisations that would not otherwise have funding for professional development. This pre-existed MyEnds but ended due to lack of funding. ACT-AS-1 revived some of the support and relationships involved in the partnership, and have now received funding to rebuild it.
  - Hackney Reducing Exclusions Partnership, a new consortium of organisations specifically geared towards reducing school exclusions, developed through Rise Up East in Hackney. This now has its own funding, separate from MyEnds.

- **Collaborative relationships**, such as those:

  - With statutory organisations. For example, some site PMs plan to continue regular catchups with police and local authority representatives, and maintain representation at multiagency meetings.
  - Between consortium partners. The majority of MyEnds consortiums indicated that they would continue working collaboratively beyond the MyEnds programme.
  - With delivery partners. This is particularly the case where funding to deliver their interventions has been secured.

9.3   Key finding 22: The VRU have provided a varied support offer in the extension year to aid sites' sustainability

The VRU have put the following support in place to aid sites' sustainability:

- **A sustainability grant of £75,000 per site**. A portion of this is designated for coordinating partnerships and collaborative working, following feedback from sites that this function of MyEnds is difficult to fundraise for. The remainder could be used flexibly by sites, although could not be used for interventions.

- **Training to support sustainability planning**. This included training delivered by consultants with expertise in supporting VCS organisations to develop business cases and fundraise, and practice surgeries run by sites with solid sustainability plans in place, to share best practice.

- **Incorporating sustainability planning into monitoring data requests** to encourage sites to think about this and to generate insight into how the VRU could support sites' sustainability.

- **Continued membership in the MyEnds network**. Current MyEnds sites will remain part of the MyEnds network coordinated by the VRU, with continued involvement in training opportunities, events, and VRU communications.

9.4   Key finding 23: The VRU could support sites to embed mechanisms in support of sustainability at an early stage of programme development

Whilst some elements of MyEnds are expected to continue in all sites, the extent to which sites have put set plans in place for sustaining their MyEnds activities beyond VRU funding has varied. Some sites have been reliant on a second round of funding for MyEnds from the VRU, and did not consider alternative mechanisms to support sustainability until towards the end of the current programme.

Future MyEnds sites could be encouraged to prioritise this earlier on. Sites could be supported to tap into the VRU's networks, for example with local authorities and the corporate sector, at an early stage of the programme. This may help them to identify and engage with other potential funding opportunities long before MyEnds funding comes to an end.

Future focus: Support sites to integrate into the VRU's networks and identify and engage with corresponding funding opportunities

The VRU could build in opportunities for current and future sites to integrate into its networks with potential wider funders. Coupled with the VRU's own promotion of the MyEnds programme and the support it is providing to current sites to develop business cases for further funding, this could support sites' sustainability into the longer term.

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