

# Model City London - the journey so far

Summary and Insights, January 2020



SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**

## What is Model City?

*“A pioneering approach to creating positive change through sport in major cities”*  
(Laureus Sport for Good)

Model City is a place-based approach to creating positive social change and integration through sport and physical activity. Over the past four years, Laureus has been pioneering this approach through sport in major cities. The journey began in New Orleans and Atlanta in the USA, is currently being developed in London, and will shortly kick off in Paris and New Delhi.

With [Model City London](#), NDTi<sup>1</sup> is working with the partners from each of the three piloted areas involved (Bedfont, Feltham and Hanworth in Hounslow, Haringey (East) and Barking) to develop and use a community-led outcomes framework to evidence what is happening and starting to change for local people. It is taking the learning from similar initiatives in the USA developed by Laureus Sport for Good and is applying this to London, where there is a close alignment with the strategies of our funding partners the Mayor of London (Sport Unites strategy) and Nike (Made to Play initiative).

This document shares the learning from the first phase of this work – focusing on the set up, engagement and development of shared visions for change within of the three targeted areas. The full report can be read [here](#).



<sup>1</sup> [The National Development Team for Inclusion \(NDTi\)](#) is a social change organisation with a specialist interest in place based evaluation approaches, appointed by Laureus as the MCL evaluation & learning partner.

# The Model City 4 Stage Process

At the heart of Model City is a **4-step process**, facilitated by Laureus and a dedicated Community Coordinator, who they recruit. This process provides a safe, neutral scaffolding within which a community can build a successful social change strategy. The four phases enable local people to unearth what matters in each area; identify the issues and places they want to focus on; develop a shared understanding of priorities; and importantly, draw together the diverse local people and networks to move forward.

Within the space of 18 months, **Model City London** has created the conditions for engagement, taken root in three communities where a shared agenda for change has developed, and approved a total of 26 project grants to help make that change happen. Discussions to get to this shared agenda have indicated the level and nature of social change needed in each area. The push for change is coming from local people and there is clear evidence of “need”, but the approach being taken to address this need feels different from what people have experienced before. It’s not a top down, policy imperative; its coming from local communities, enabled by Community Coordinators, within a space created by MCL partners.

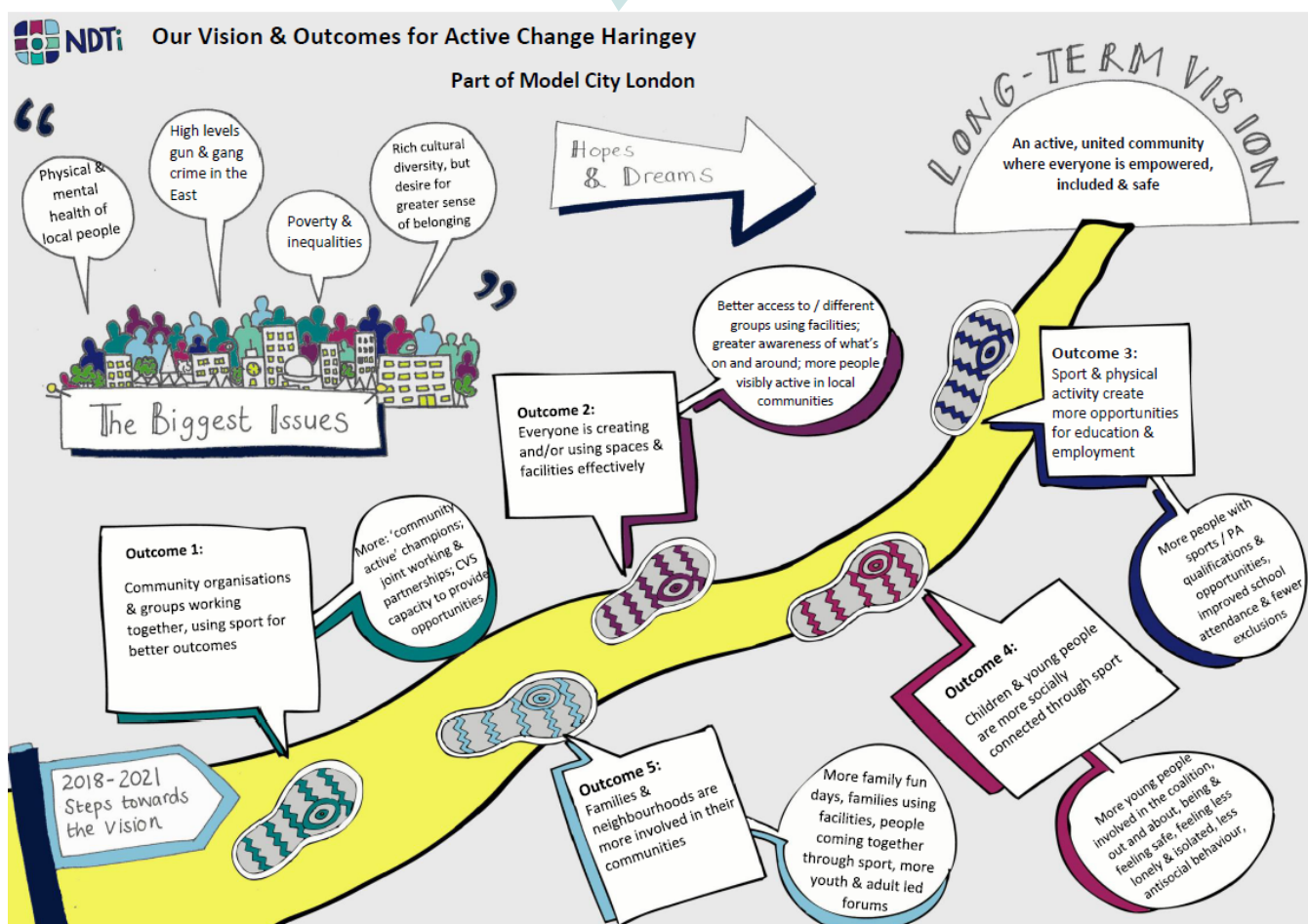
## *The Model City 4 Stage Process*



In London, Laureus are working with three partnerships (Coalitions) of local communities and organisations: Bedfont, Feltham and Hanworth in Hounslow (known as Generations Active BFH); Haringey (East - known as Active Change Haringey) and Barking (known as Sports 4 Change) – each of whom are working collaboratively to identify the issues they want to address to improve the wellbeing of local people and neighbourhoods through sport and physical activity.

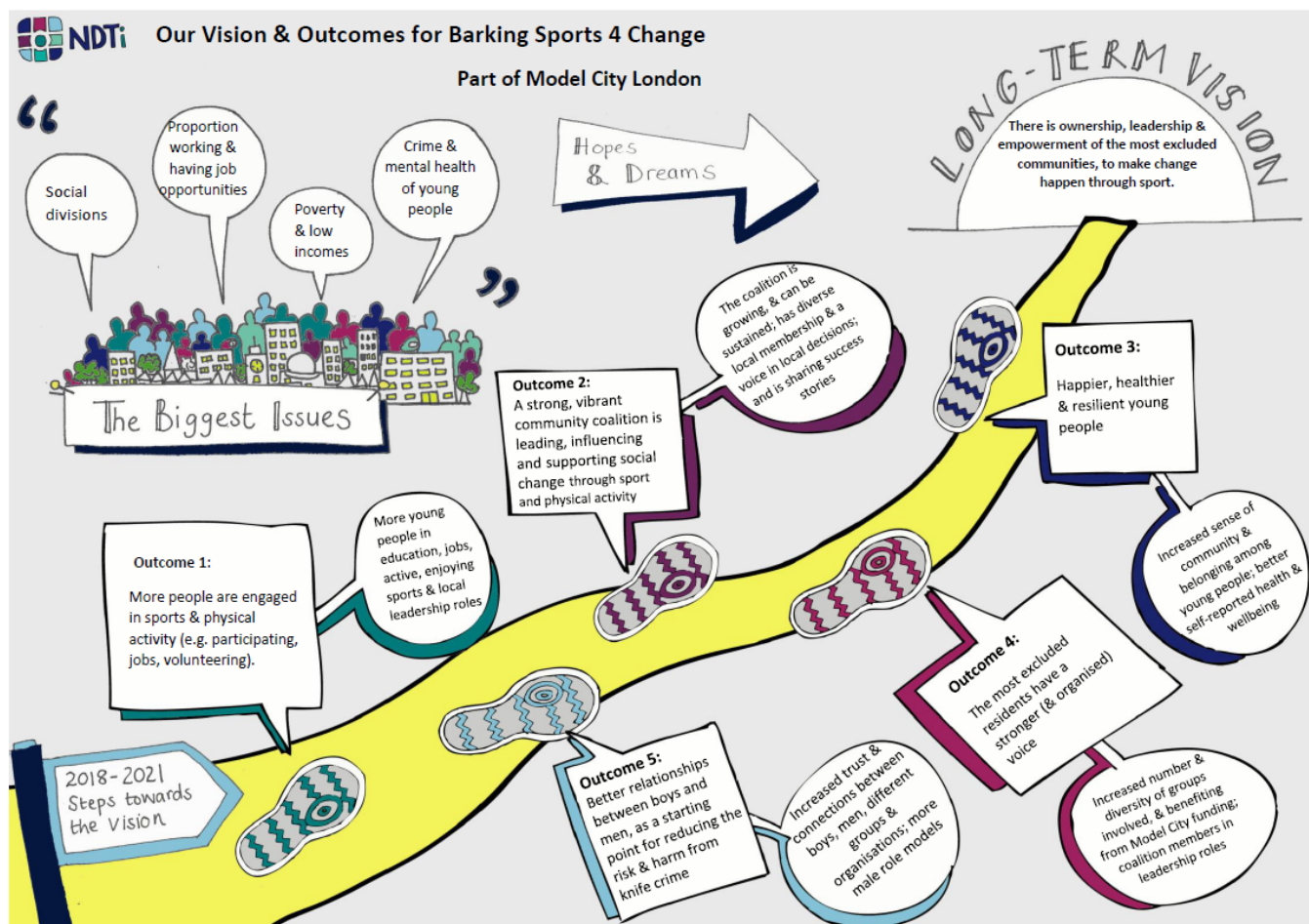
## Haringey (East) Coalition – “Active Change Haringey”

Haringey is a culturally diverse borough where Coalition members stress that local residents are the community’s assets. Whilst its diversity is something people value, the Coalition believes there is a need to improve understanding about different people and cultures (including language) in order to overcome barriers to participation. Inequalities exist across the borough but the East of Haringey has the greatest socio-economic challenges. In addition to poor physical and mental health, the borough has a number of other issues that it is dealing with: as a transient community, many people feel like they don’t belong and therefore are unlikely to stay in the area, and high levels of gun and gang crime in the east means that children and young people are fearful about where they can go. Active Change Haringey are prioritising: a focus on better outcomes for people; building connections; improving educational attainment and employment prospects; using spaces more effectively; and enabling more people to become involved in their community. The Coalition is bringing together people from 18 local groups and networks and is a vehicle for collaboration and strengthening partnerships, exchanging information and best practice, improving provision and securing long-term funding.



## Barking Coalition – “Sports 4 Change Barking”

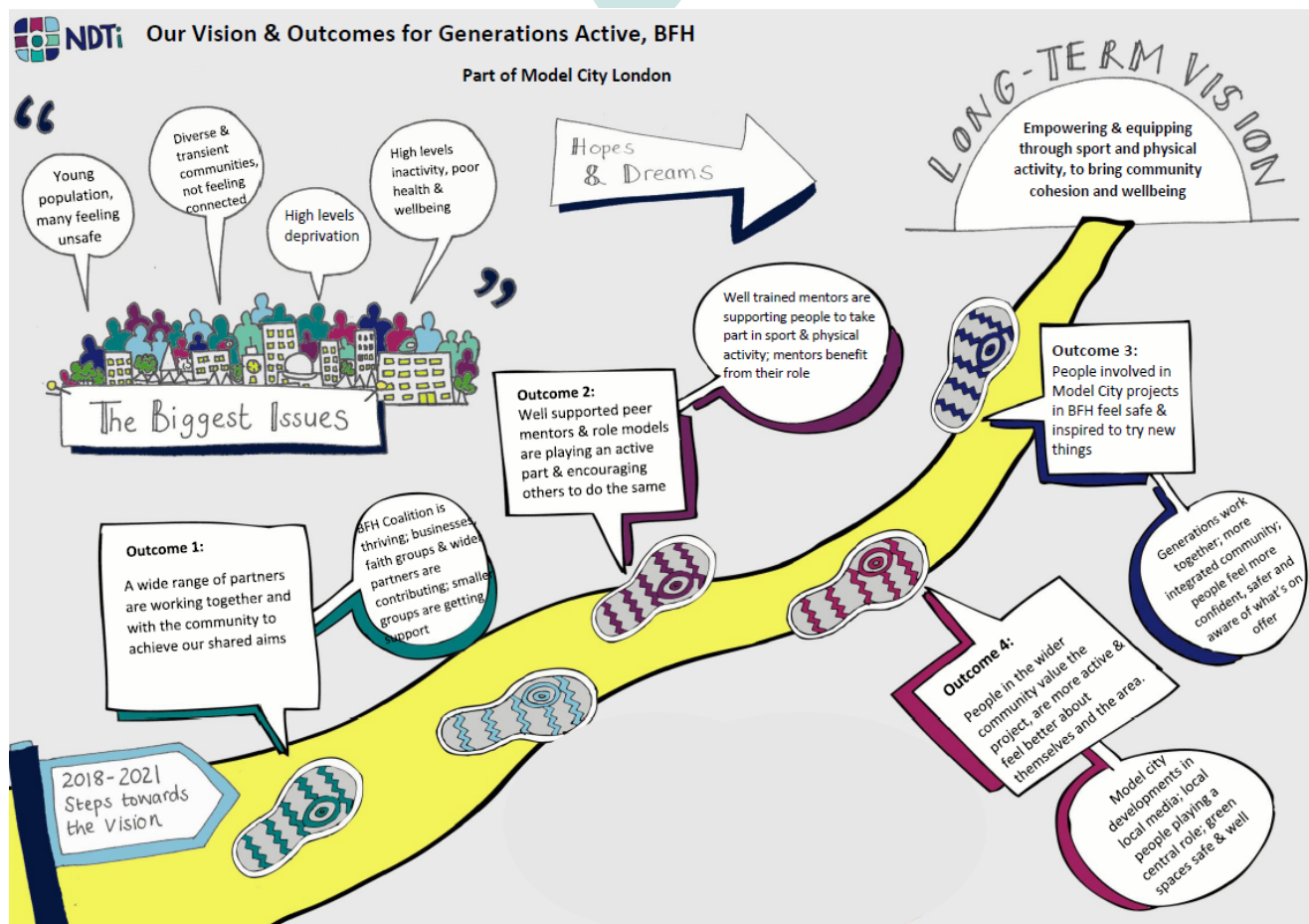
Barking is experiencing lots of change, bringing both positives and negatives; regeneration is creating social divisions, high population churn means that people aren't investing or engaging as much as they could in their community, and there are few spaces that enable people to come together and connect across different communities, generations and neighbourhoods. The demographic trend suggests that there is a small proportion of people who are economically active; two thirds of the population are either children or young people or people who have retired. Young people face a number of challenges around poor mental health, obesity and crime. People of all ages are keen to develop better intergenerational relationships, especially between boys and young men, and young and older men, as this is where local people feel there are the greatest tensions. The borough has a less established voluntary sector than other areas, so has a relatively low starting position for local capacity building in order to address these issues. Model City provides a fantastic opportunity for mobilising individuals, leaders, groups and networks to come together and move forward. Priorities are therefore focused around people in the community being empowered to lead social change; and ensuring the most excluded residents have a much stronger voice. Sports 4 Change Barking involves people from 22 local groups and networks, and is providing a way of developing leadership, encouraging and modelling collaboration and strengthening community cohesion.





## Hounslow Coalition – “Generations Active BFH”

Hounslow has areas with significant deprivation which also experience the lowest levels of physical activity and highest level of health issues in the borough. As a result, poor health and wellbeing (including social isolation) are key issues for the Coalition to address in Bedfont, Feltham and Hanworth. These areas feel disconnected from the rest of the Borough, and there is a perception that they do not get as much support as other places. Although one third of the population is aged under 25, there is a lack of community activities, employment and further education opportunities for younger people. The borough has a track record of strong partnership working, whilst recognising the challenges inherent in a relatively small voluntary and community sector. Local people feel disengaged and powerless and have voiced their lack of trust in some local agencies. Model City London in this area is providing a vehicle for bringing a diverse range of people together from 25 different groups and organisations, to work on shared priorities and to encourage and support more people to be active. These shared priorities include improving wellbeing and building a cohesive community where people feel safe and more positive about their community and themselves.



# Model City Lessons from the USA

Launched in September 2014, New Orleans was Laureus' first Sport for Good City [Laureus USA currently uses the term 'Sport for Good City' in place of Model City]. Since then, the **Sport for Good New Orleans** initiative has reached more than 80,000 young people and built a cross-sector Coalition of 20 diverse partners dedicated to improving the community through the power of sport.

In 2017, after a year of community conversations and deliberations, **Sport for Good Atlanta** was launched. This involved students, community leaders and representatives of non-profit, corporate and governmental organisations working together to develop a shared vision for Atlanta's Westside. The ambition is to achieve a positive transformation in the lives of young people and local communities through sport.

The early years in New Orleans and Atlanta were organic and cyclical, enabling partners and stakeholders to revisit their priorities and hone their funding programmes year on year. Those involved in these early developments shared their learning and experiences with the London Coalitions over the summer of 2019.

## They emphasised that:

*"Change moves at the speed of trust"*

So invest time in getting to know each other and to build trust. Levels of trust amongst community members and partners is pivotal and requires human time, capacity, investment and research.

Engaging and involving different stakeholders from the outset is key

A Coalition full of sport based youth development groups is great but is not a true, collective approach. Make it a priority to engage different types of groups that may have different positions in the community, and to ensure that individuals around the table are not too senior. *"You need to have "implementers" present; those that don't necessarily make the decisions but who are easily inspired to be change agents".*

Transparency is all important

It is crucial to clearly articulate and define what it is you are trying to do, and to explain the benefits of place-based, collective impact as early as possible. *"Rather than suggesting we are bringing competitors together who are guarding a little piece of their pie, the 'Coalition' approach strives to make the whole pie bigger for everyone".*

# Model City Lessons from the USA (continued)

It's important to have a concept of the 'end-game' in mind when designing the Model City roadmap

If local Coalitions know that they are designing a useful opportunity, product or service that will sustain beyond the infrastructure and empowerment that Laureus brings to the table, they will be more inclined to take up local leadership roles to take things forward. *'Coalition' approach strives to make the whole pie bigger for everyone*.

Laureus' role is to focus on backbone support

This includes bringing together cross-sector organisations, creating a holistic community approach, governance, mobilising investment and commitment from local partners, sharing and coordinating useful processes and procedures. The Coalition's role is to focus on the vision, implementation and mapping the future journey.

*"Learning in public"*

If you're genuine about coproduction everything is done in public! This is risky, scary, visible and important. Some things don't work and you need to be open and honest about these things. You also need to have built up some trust before you can do this, but equally the process of doing this and being transparent builds trust.

*"You need to continuously lift up & engage the voices of young people"*

And learn from different places about how to do this well, and also what young people are saying when they have a voice.

*"There is no blueprint!"*

You can't explain Model City without seeing and experiencing it. This is hard for some people, it takes a leap of faith and people need to trust first in order to do this.

*"Focus on changes we can all see in a few years' time"*

This helps with the above and energises people, keeping momentum going especially in the difficult times. It helps to have tangible things people can observe or experience. A key challenge in this is that it's organic and ever changing. But this is important too; keeping track of those changes and communicating them to everyone is key. This highlights the need to move beyond "monitoring & evaluation" to developmental evaluation that understands what enables change to happen as well as the impacts experienced.

# London Calling!

With these lessons in mind, the concept of **Model City London** emerged. USA colleagues counselled their London counterparts to avoid imposing a predetermined structure and process. However, the **4-step process** and underlying principles of coproduction and collective impact have proven to be essential in garnering support, enthusiasm and for building trust. They have been used to transport the Model City approach to London, where it is developing its own unique pathway taking account of the different contexts and priorities for change with the communities involved.

Some important differences were quickly observed as Model City London started to take shape. London is a capital city with different political and policy contexts and structures to both New Orleans and Atlanta (each also different from the other). The 32 incredibly diverse boroughs that make up London each have their own distinct characters, communities, issues and priorities. *“How do we hone the focus in London?”* was a key question that partners were actively considering at this stage, as was *“how big/small should each area be?”* It was decided to focus on what makes sense to local people, informed by mapping data and research undertaken in partnership with the GLA’s Intelligence Unit whilst also seeking a mix of areas to work with, to take forward Model City London.

Two phases of preparation followed to identify and select the areas to pilot the Model City approach in London from a longlist of 10 possible communities. A series of community consultation events held over Spring 2018 narrowed this to a shortlist of five contenders, from which the final three were selected. For many involved in these developments the approach was fundamentally different from previous experiences of community engagement and development. These conversations identified local needs, priorities and importantly the readiness of local communities to engage in Model City London.

## Building Model City London Coalitions

The Coalition building phase for the three areas spanned the Autumn and Winter of 2018-19 up to June 2019, during which time local membership expanded and diversified, steering and working groups formed, terms of reference were developed, and importantly in-depth conversations and workshops were held to develop community strategies for change.

A critical turning point during this phase was the appointment of a local Community Coordinator for each area whose role has been instrumental in supporting, enabling and organising communities and Coalitions. These appointments were not straightforward or linear; it took time to find the right people in and for each area, and as a result the team of Laureus coordinators have worked collaboratively themselves to cover and support each Coalition whilst final arrangements were put in place over the summer of 2019.

In late 2018, at the same time as these conversations were taking place, NDTi was appointed as the Model City London evaluation and learning partner. They joined in and facilitated Coalition workshops between February and April 2019, drawing all of the preceding conversations and research together into local Vision & Outcome maps. A further period of consultation followed in May and June 2019, including sessions with young people in each community to test, refine and further develop these maps, which will be used to evaluate progress and impact over the following 16 months (October 2019-February 2021).

The grant making process began in June 2019, around the time that the local Vision & Outcome maps were finalised; and in September a total of 26 project grants were awarded across the three areas through which their change strategies will be delivered. A further funding round will be developed in 2020 to help build the capacity of Coalitions to deliver their strategies and achieve their outcomes.





## The lack of a blueprint was challenging when starting out in London:

The Model City approach has common features and unifying principles that enables the model to be adopted in and for different places. In London there was initial hesitation and a degree of disbelief about the lack of an imposed delivery model, but the combination of continuous community engagement, modelling of coproduction by all the partners, and leadership at all levels has convinced members and embedded ownership.



## ***"It's important to radiate positive intent":***

The critical ingredient for helping Coalitions and the Laureus team move from this dominance of disbelief to collaboration (meeting regularly, sharing experiences, offering mutual encouragement to move forward) was the style and approach of those facilitating and holding the room at each step. This positive intent doesn't gloss over difficulties, it helps to surface them so they can be addressed, which in turns helps to build trust. In addition to engagement, leadership and structure, you need consistent, positive intent to get off first base.

## Forming local Coalitions has been a turning point:

Each of the three areas has different histories and therefore expectations about collaborative decision making. Given the degree of hesitancy and need to build confidence and capacity in some areas, it is fascinating that governance arrangements to help mobilise actions has proved quicker in London than USA. *"We initially planned more workshops but the Coalitions progressed quicker with our intensive support and [by January 2019] we have already held an initial steering group meeting and have started to provide governance support"* [first annual report, Laureus]



## **Local priorities are key:**

You need a combination of local intelligence and evidence from different sources, and an understanding of local pressures and needs in order to identify these. Conversations with a mix of local stakeholders, including young people, cemented the priorities in each area, and this element of the process emerged through exploration of priorities across the three areas. Ideally young people should be involved from the start, but the confidence and readiness to do this varied across Coalitions.

## ***"Smaller is better":***

In terms of how big or how small each area and Coalition should be, the lesson so far is that "smaller is better". It is easier to mobilise people to come together around a more intimate and shared notion of 'place'. Reflections from those involved indicate that the optimum, workable size for localities involved in Model City is a third of the borough or a population of 100,000.

## ***"The approach gives a voice to help others have a voice":***

As indicated above, the way people work and listen together is key, and in particular a shared commitment to bring forward and amplify local voices and experiences is critical. For those involved across Model Cities to date, this comes back to the initial starting statement around trust, and whether the conditions for trust and therefore people's voices to be heard is there. It may be easier to focus on tangible signs of change like establishing a Coalition membership and governance arrangements but creating the right conditions for these Coalitions to thrive involves work behind the scenes, which is less easy to track. *"Focus on the voices, they are the signs that things are shifting"*.

## Further Reading

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

## Contact

Angela Bonora at Laureus on  
[angela.bonora@laureus.com](mailto:angela.bonora@laureus.com)  
or Research and Evaluation Team at NDTi  
on [research@ndti.org.uk](mailto:research@ndti.org.uk)  
or visit [www.laureus.com/modelcity](http://www.laureus.com/modelcity)

National Development Team for Inclusion  
First Floor  
30-32 Westgate Buildings  
Bath BA1 1EF  
[www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)



SUPPORTED BY  
**MAYOR OF LONDON**