

HACKNEY SOCIAL RADIO – SERIES 1

April – September 2020



SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

During the height of the COVID-19 lockdown, from April to September 2020, we successfully produced 15 episodes for the first series of *Hackney Social Radio* – a community radio show created by older people, for older people, specifically aimed at the digitally isolated in the London Borough of Hackney.

We produced a weekly 59-minute radio show, which broadcast every Wednesday at 11am from June to September 2020. It was transmitted through Resonance 104.4FM, played out on their online radio player, and was made available for ongoing playback through Mixcloud.

In total we enabled 178 local people to participate in the production of the show – these included the production team, feature makers, feature contributors, editors and interviewees – local artists and creatives, community activists, volunteers, service users and experts such as representatives from Local Government, GPs, faith leaders, advisors and community champions.

We had **12,364 listeners** to the series, with a total of **4,528 listener hours** (source: Piwik) with **1,239 playbacks** on Mixcloud at the time of writing.

BACKGROUND

One of Immediate Theatre's regular programmes is *Theatre Exchange*, which works with active older people aged 50+, creating performances and workshops to engage more isolated elders in lunch/social clubs and sheltered accommodation. In response to the COVID-19 lockdown in March, we transferred our core group to online activities, meeting weekly via Zoom and maintaining regular contact through a WhatsApp group. However, we were concerned about those who were not able to engage in this way and this led to the idea of establishing a local weekly radio programme that would:

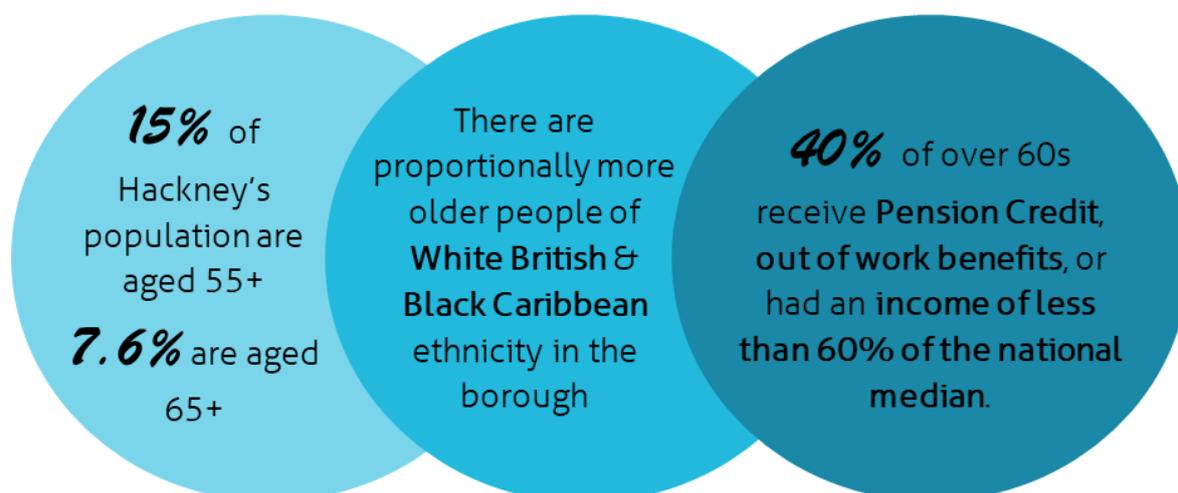
- Engage isolated older people, promoting wellbeing and connectivity and providing entertainment
- Provide up to date information about where they can access help and support
- Provide key health messages

Thus began *Hackney Social Radio*. We secured emergency funding from Arts Council England for a pilot project, plus support from Connect Hackney (an Ageing Better National Lottery funded project), the London Borough of Hackney's Culture Team and the Clinical Commissioning Group. At the end of September, we had successfully broadcast 15 programmes and received very positive feedback from listeners:

"I really enjoyed hearing about all the wonderful things that are happening for older people..."

"Very clear voices – very important at my age – upbeat, informative, relevant and not too long"

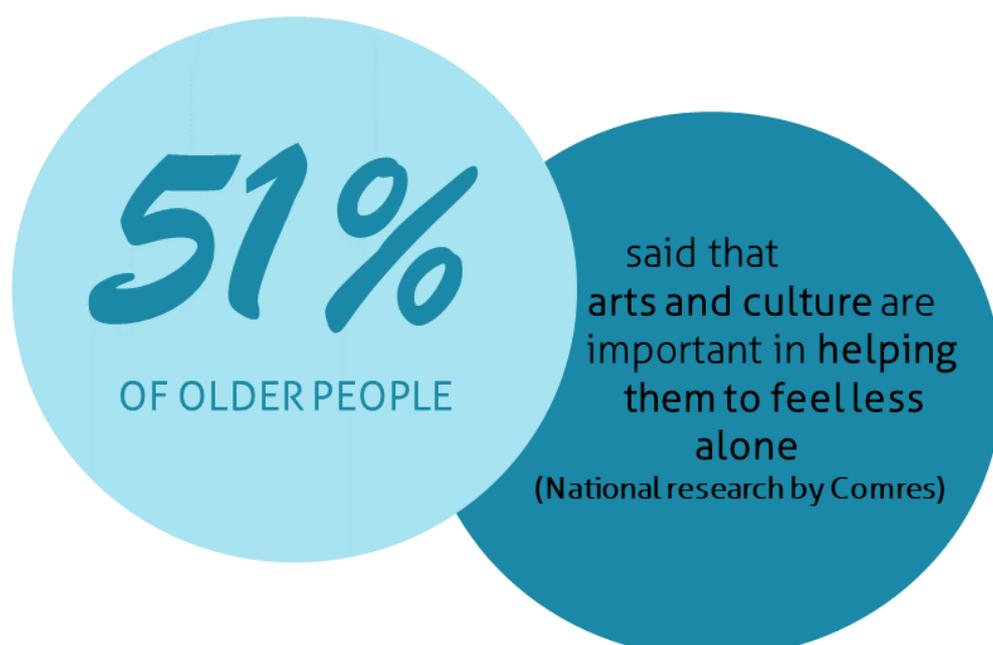
Hackney Social Radio (HSR) is targeted at local people aged 50+, with a specific focus on isolated older people who are not regular internet users, to provide them with important information in an engaging format. This responds to an urgent ongoing need to communicate with the many older people who do not access the internet, which was identified by Connect Hackney and supported by local data.



In a survey of 500 local residents aged 50+:

- nearly 60% said they sometimes or always lacked companionship
- over 30% said they rarely or never felt part of their neighbourhood
- 25% said they were lonely.

National research by Comres identified that 51% of older people said that arts and culture are important in helping them to feel less alone.



As well as having a positive impact on our active elders who are able to make a positive contribution through their involvement as presenters, feedback indicates that that *HSR* can alleviate this isolation:

"[It made me feel] better connected to the community, better informed about things on offer, uplifted by some of the music"

"It built up my sense of community spirit"

With many older people shielding or feeling anxious about going out, we do not see the need for this kind of support decreasing. **It is our aim to continue *Hackney Social Radio*.**

Hackney Social Radio forged a partnership with intergenerational, community station Reel Rebels Radio, and through the employment of their editors helped to keep the station afloat during the covid crises.

LISTEN

Listen [here](#) to an interview with Jo Carter, *Hackney Social Radio's* founder, on why she set up the programme during lockdown. Or type bit.ly/HSRBackground into the address bar at the top of the browser screen.



Chinese Community Centre Lunch Club – Episode 11

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

From the outset we established an editorial committee, consisting of 8 people who worked for London Borough of Hackney, Connect Hackney and Immediate Theatre, who met with us fortnightly via Zoom. This allowed us to identify key local messages for broadcast, gain the support of the CCG, who introduced us to our regular guest expert Dr May Cahill, and provide introductions to local community groups and individuals. Their input was invaluable in terms of public health information, publicising services and generating ideas for the shows, and ensuring we were reaching the diverse communities of Hackney:

- Petra Roberts (LBH Culture Team)
- Tony Wong (Director of Connect Hackney)
- Alice Beard (CCG Lead, LBH Comms Team)
- Corrina Antrobus (LBH Culture Team)
- Sarah Warman (Learning & Engagement Lead, Connect Hackney)
- Georgia Gill (Marketing & Administration Officer, Immediate Theatre)
- Jo Carter (Artistic Director & HSR Producer, Immediate Theatre)
- Lucie Regan (HSR Assistant Producer, Immediate Theatre)



Ray Carless, Windrush Day on Newington Green – Episode 2

FORMAT

Each weekly episode ran for 59 minutes and followed a similar format:

- Intro – lead presenter, Sue Elliot-Nichols
- Chat with resident DJ, Frank Kaos
- Songs x 5 throughout the show (requests from listeners or DJ selections)
- Presenter chat between lead presenter and community presenters
- Interview with an expert, led by community presenters
- Feature on the community

- Feature on the Arts
- Caller – a chat with a listener or an active community member
- Wrap up and next week teaser

PRESENTERS

Our presenting team was led by professional actor and presenter Sue Elliott-Nichols. Sue helped train the community presenters in interviewing skills and presenting and helped them to develop confidence and the knowhow to write interview questions, put guests at ease, and draw out information relevant to our listeners.

“Being involved in HSR has enabled me to talk to very interesting and informative people and being part of a team/group gives me a feeling of belonging and hopefully contributing to something which I would not normally do. It was fascinating to learn of so many different projects going on in Hackney which I wouldn’t get to know about otherwise”

- Sharon Aspess, Community Presenter

COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

Jo Carter and Penny Cliff held a total of 28 weekly sessions with the members of *Theatre Exchange's* core group. During these sessions, participants generated ideas and content for the show, which varied from questions for the experts, ideas on features or guests, song requests, to creating radio plays and comedy sketches.



Theatre Exchange Zoom session

Members of Theatre Exchange:

- Janet Evans (regular presenter)
- Sharon Aspess (regular presenter)
- Steve Roberts (regular presenter)
- Alice McKenna (guest presenter)
- Steve Latner (guest)
- David Howells (guest)
- Heather Qualtrough (guest)

Other community members

- Richard Harris – Sailor & shop owner (guest)
- Antonia Folivi & members of Hackney Elders Song Writing Group
- Yvonne Wickham, Clara Onyemere & Ben de Sausmerez (writing and performing a short play)
- Yvonne Lloyd – Local Libraries Writers Group (guest)
- Wendy Pettifer – poet (guest)
- Rosemary Antrobus – performer & stall holder (guest)
- Beatrice Ni Bhroin – local activist & podcaster (guest)
- Caroline Allouf – Carer’s Development Coordinator (guest)

"Being mostly at home due to COVID-19, taking part in the group allowed me to be creative and social. I cannot begin to say how valuable this is"

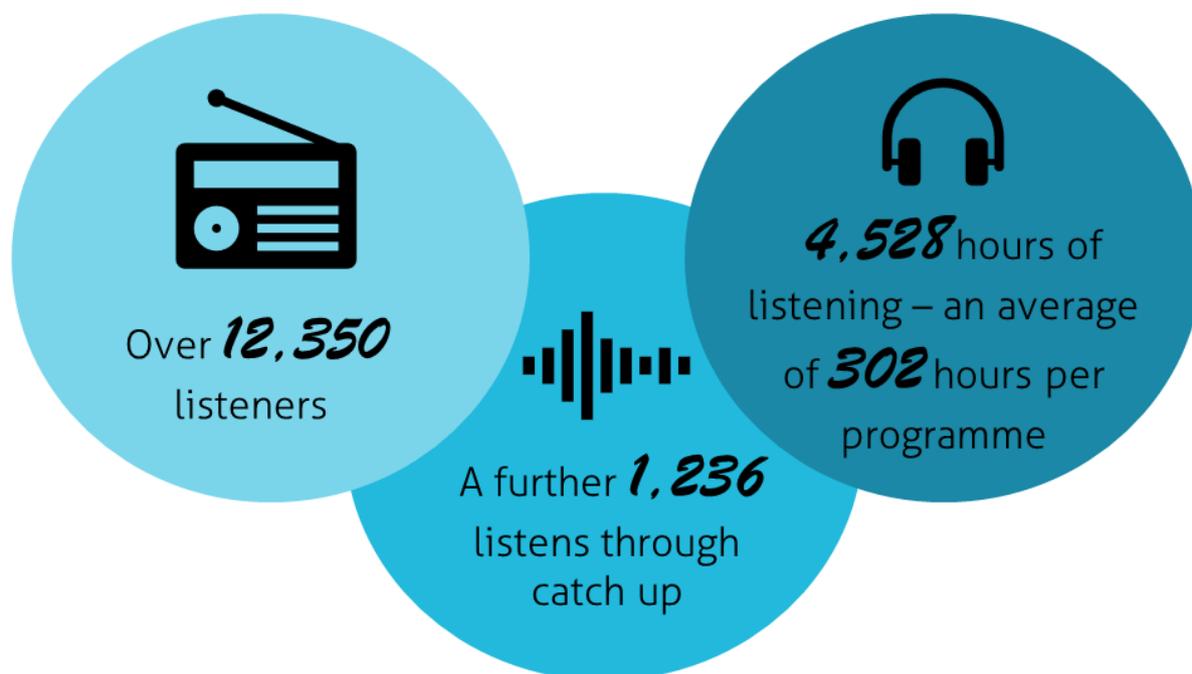
- Steve Latner, Creative Contributor & Guest

"During the height of lockdown when we were all confined to our homes in March and April and only allowed out for 1 hour a day to exercise or shop for essentials, it was a real pleasure to meet up with the Theatre Exchange members on Mondays. Being creative and having fun with a group of people was a real high point of the week"

- David Howells, Creative Contributor & Guest

LISTENERS

Across the series, we had a total of **12,364 listeners**, with a total of **4,528 listener hours** (source: Piwik), plus **1,236 playbacks** on Mixcloud.



We gathered feedback at the end of the series through an online form. Responses were very positive, with listeners stating that the programmes made them feel:

"...positive about all the great work going on in Hackney through lockdown"

"...more connected to Hackney"

"...like I live in a fun borough"

"...happy to live in Hackney, stimulated, inspired."

"...positive about the wonderful Borough I have lived and worked in for 32 years."

EXPERTS

Each programme featured an interview with an expert. The questions put to these experts allowed our participants and listeners to learn useful information, largely related to the pandemic, positive activities, and local services available.

Experts featured were:

- Dr May Cahill – General Practitioner (regular guest, appearing on 6 shows)
- Laura Jane Connolly – Core Arts
- Tim Webb – Go Parks
- Tilly Cook – Groundwork/Silver Connections
- Chris Kennedy – LBH Councillor
- Suryagupta Dharmacharini – Director of London Buddhist Centre
- Olivia Woodward – Shoreditch Trust Nutritionist
- Dr Jonathan Davis – General Practitioner
- Paul Fleming – Hoxton Legal Trust
- Shirley Murgraff & Antonia Folivi – Patient Involvement
- Revd Clive Main – Vicar of St Barnabas, Homerton
- Philip Glanville – Mayor of Hackney
- Jo Carter – Immediate Theatre
- Tony Wong – Connect Hackney



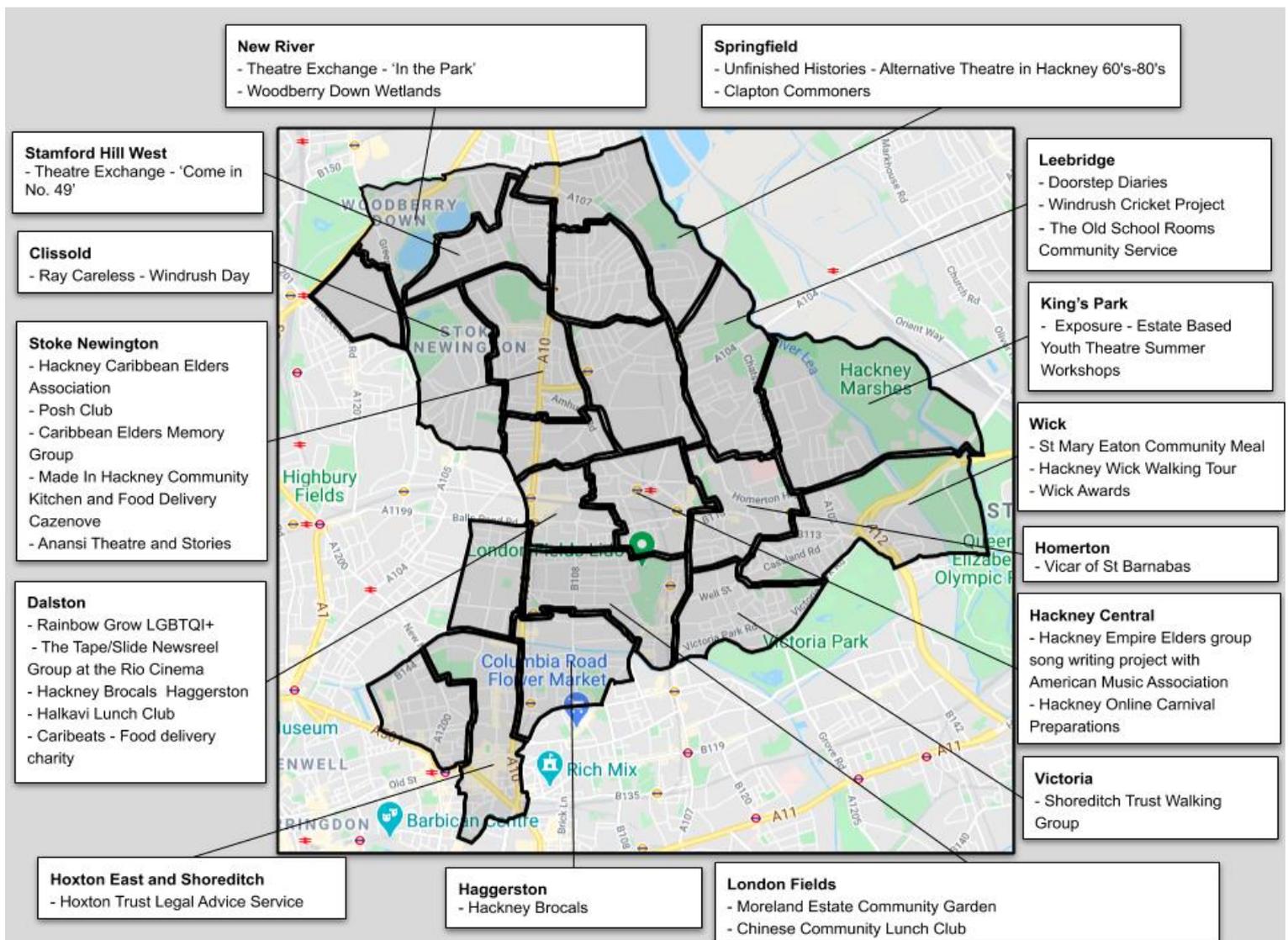
Silver Connections – Episode 5 [Image source: Unsplash]

FEATURE MAKERS & SUPPORTING ARTISTS

Aside from aiding Immediate Theatre to keep four of its staff employed and not furloughed, the project was able to give gainful employment to nineteen other local artists and creatives.

- Penny Cliff
- Zahra Awani
- Ray Carless
- Vicki Carter
- Tamsin Hughes
- Justin Marosa
- Susan Croft
- Lucie Regan
- Gbenga Olopade
- May Robson
- Lucy Rowe
- Rob Truscott
- Beatrice Ni Bhroin
- Frank Kaos
- Ben Dorling
- Gary Horsman
- Benoit Gouttenoir
- Alicia Graham
- Jake Reynolds

WE COVERED STORIES IN...



LESSONS LEARNT

- **Delegation** Having a very small production team meant that all bases were covered by both part-time producers. Future projects would benefit from division of labour and more outlined areas of responsibility.
- **Communication** – With more time, it would have been beneficial to talk over the interviews with every interviewee before recording, test equipment and send a follow up communication, thanking them for their time and ensuring they knew when the show was going out. Also, our briefs to feature makers need to be clearer, particularly around sound mixing and not having background noise or music too loud, as our audience are more likely to have hearing issues.
- **Contributors Release Forms** – As we were mainly recording remotely, we didn't get formal release forms signed by contributors. In hindsight we could have set up a form that can be signed online, however our older, digitally challenged participants would potentially find this difficult.
- **Data Capture** – It would have been beneficial for our feature makers to get release forms signed and get contributors to sign up to our mailing list.
- **Sound Recording** – We need to advance our skills and learn how to record better sound quality remotely.
- **Editing** – Using two outside editors slowed the process down considerably and caused confusion in some aspects of post-production - for a future series, we would bring post-production in house.
- **Systems, Sign Offs, Delivery** – For a second series we would put a better system in place for sound files, show sign off and delivery.
- **Audience Development** – We need to research who our audience is and how best to reach them. Ideally we would get out into the community and involve residents in care homes and sheltered housing, as well as reaching out to older people out and about in Hackney who may benefit from the content and the community connection.
- **Simplifying** – We possibly over delivered. We can simplify the format by only having one pre-recorded feature and we can have more regular guests, which will cut down a lot of the pre-production work.

NEXT STEPS

We are seeking funding to continue to produce a weekly programme for *Hackney Social Radio*, for 8 months from December 2020 to July 2021, in order to serve the isolated older people who are most feeling the impact of COVID – and likely to continue to do so.

We envisage that *HSR* will continue to need financial support to operate, however we are building our pool of volunteers and developing their skills to gradually decrease the programme's reliance on paid professional support and thus, its cost. That said, we believe there is an important balance to be struck between providing paid work for local people of working age and volunteering opportunities for active, older, retired people – a growing percentage of Hackney's population.

Since we first broadcast in June, we have grown an online audience of around 150 each week; we are unable to capture data about those listening live to the programme on FM. We aim to increase this to 500+ people each week, targeting the most vulnerable in our community, in partnership with Anchor Hanover Housing who will share the programme through their internal 'SparkoTV' system in the many care homes they manage locally. We are also working with the Dementia Alliance to look at how we can support patients and their carers whilst they are less able to access support, for example sharing their 'playlist for life' songs which trigger positive memories.

We are receiving increasing enquiries from local groups who want to promote their services for older people through the programme, such as Silver Connections – a free digital training programme for older people, baking classes, singing workshops, and writers groups.

The fact that the programme can be created online was a huge advantage during lockdown and as many of our participants and audience will remain 'socially distanced' due to age and health conditions, we think it is critical to sustain being able to work with them in this way. We are particularly concerned to continue the programme during the winter months when older people tend to go out less and are more likely to feel isolated. There is also the danger of a further lockdown, given the increasing R rate combined with falling temperatures.

LISTEN BACK

Listen here to any of our 15 episodes, which are available on Mixcloud. Or type bit.ly/HSRSeries1 into the address bar at the top of your browser screen.

With thanks to our funders and partners:

