

# BEYOND THE SCREENS

## THE LEGACY OF THE DIGITAL HEALTH AMBASSADOR



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# Project Summary

## The Programme at a Glance

The Digital Health Ambassadors (DHA) programme, was delivered by Partnership for Young London with Good Thinking and NHS England. The programme brought together young people aged 16-25 from across London to improve digital mental-health information and support within the capital. The programme made sure that young people were not just consulted but actively involved in shaping digital health resources, campaigns and decisions that affect their wellbeing.

Many young people rely on online tools when they are worried about their mental health, yet these resources are often designed without their input. The DHA programme aimed to fix this by giving young Londoners a real voice in digital health, ensuring services were accessible, relevant and grounded in lived experience.

Throughout the programme, the Digital Health Ambassadors worked on a variety of projects that helped organisations understand what young people need from digital mental-health support. They helped shape Good Thinking's Five Ways to Wellbeing content by advising on the videos, posters and self-assessments, making the materials more relatable and easier for young people to use. They also worked with The Reading Agency on the Reading Well for Teens booklist, reviewing books, discussing themes with clinicians and co-designing the final posters to ensure the resources reflected the lived experiences of young people.

The Digital Health Ambassadors also created youth-led digital content that reached young people across London. During the pandemic of COVID-19, they co-produced a livestream that attracted thousands of viewers, giving young people a space to talk about their worries and ask questions. Additionally, they supported NHS England's Ask About Asthma campaign by helping develop resources for young people with asthma and speaking at online events to share their experiences. These projects showed how the Ambassadors used their own perspectives to improve digital health information and make it more accessible, engaging and meaningful for young people.



# Background & Rationale

## Understanding the Need

Young people across London face growing challenges when it comes to their mental health, and many turn to digital platforms as their first source of support. National data shows that around 1 in 5 young people aged 8-25 in England now have a probable mental health disorder, a number that has risen sharply since the pandemic. In London alone, it is estimated that 2 million residents experience mental ill-health each year, and with a quarter of the city's population under 25, this places young people at the centre of a significant public health challenge. Despite these needs, many young people struggle to find digital tools that feel trustworthy, accessible or relevant to their experiences.

Good Thinking commissioned the Digital Health Ambassadors (DHA) programme in direct response to these pressures. As London's digital mental-wellbeing service, Good Thinking recognised that although many young people rely on online help when they are struggling, these resources are often created without young people's input. There was a clear need to involve young Londoners in shaping digital support - not only to improve the quality of information, but to make sure services reflected the realities of being a young person today. By investing in a youth-led programme, Good Thinking aimed to reduce digital-health inequalities and create more effective pathways to support.

The DHA programme prioritised young people who were most likely to be overlooked or disadvantaged in digital-health spaces. This included young people dealing with high stress, those who faced barriers to traditional mental-health services, young people from low-income households, and groups at risk of digital exclusion. It also sought to amplify the voices of young people from communities that experience known health inequalities, including young people of colour and racially minoritised young people, disabled young people and those with care experience. Bringing together Ambassadors from across London ensured a wide range of lived experiences shaped the programme's work.

At its core, the vision of the Digital Health Ambassadors was to make digital mental-health support fairer, easier to access and more genuinely youth-led. The mission was to empower young people to influence the design, delivery and communication of digital wellbeing resources - shifting services from being something created for young people to something created with them. By centring youth voice and lived experience, the programme aimed to improve digital mental-health support across London and ensure that young people's needs and perspectives shaped the future of online wellbeing services.

# Our Work

## Highlights of Youth Voice in Action

### Five Ways to Wellbeing with Good Thinking

#### What the project was:

DHAs co-created videos, posters, blogs and self-assessments to make the Five Ways to Wellbeing more youth-friendly and practical. They rewrote scripts, created ideas for visuals, and helped shape every stage of production.

#### Why it mattered:

Wellbeing campaigns often miss the mark with young people. This work gave DHAs a platform to shape the tone, imagery and language so other young people could relate to it.

#### What young people contributed:

- Rewriting wellbeing advice
- Recording videos that positioned young people as the experts
- Designing content that felt “real” and honest about stress

### Covid Youth Live Takeover

#### What the project was:

During the pandemic, DHAs took over a YouTube channel to host a youth-led discussion about the realities of Covid for young people and its effects on their mental wellbeing. The episode reached nearly 9,000 viewers.

#### Why it mattered:

This was a moment when young people were largely excluded from national Covid conversations. DHAs changed that narrative.

#### What young people contributed:

- Questions that reflected what young people were actually facing
- Authentic conversations with healthcare and science professionals
- A space where youth struggles during the pandemic were validated

#### What young people said:

*“Covid took so much from us - this was the first time we got to talk about it openly.”*

### Our Voice, Our Care (NHSE) : Improving how the NHS listens to young people

## What the project was:

Our Voice, Our Care was created after national findings showed that only 47% of young people feel involved in decisions about their healthcare. DHAs joined a steering group with NHS England to help change this, shaping resources, messaging and approaches designed to make healthcare more youth-friendly.

## Why it mattered:

Young people often feel unheard in clinical spaces. This project directly addressed that gap and gave DHAs a meaningful role in influencing how the NHS communicates, involves and supports young people.

## What young people contributed:

DHAs shared lived experiences, challenged assumptions, and co-designed clearer, more respectful resources. They advised on:

- how professionals can build trust
- language that makes sense to young people
- what meaningful involvement in healthcare should look like

Their insight helped shift the tone of the whole campaign.

## What young people said:

***“Doctors talk about me, not to me.”***

***“Being listened to can change your whole experience of care.”***

These reflections guided the work and showed why the campaign was needed.

## What we learned:

- Young people want partnership, not tokenism.
- Clear communication builds confidence and trust.
- Youth voice strengthens the quality of care and the relevance of health resources.

## **DHAs DHA x YGAM: Gaming & Gambling Association, Wellbeing & Finding Balance**



TIANA DOSHI

YOUNG ADVISOR



ALFIE KINGSNORTH

YOUNG ADVISOR

Accessing healthcare as a young person is

How you engage with me

## What the project was:

The DHAs partnered with YGAM to explore how gaming supports young people's wellbeing, especially around connection and stress reduction. We linked the work to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, highlighting the positives of gaming while also addressing concerns about balance, time online and mental health.

## Why it mattered:

Many young people game every day, but the public narrative often leans towards risk rather than wellbeing. This project created a more balanced, realistic conversation shaped by young people's lived experience.

## What young people contributed:

- Personal stories about how gaming supports social connection
- Messaging that felt relevant and non-judgmental
- Content ideas that focused on community and mental health, not scare tactics

## What young people said:

***"No one ever asks us what gaming actually does for us. It's not just a 'problem' - it's how I connect with friends."***

## What we learned:

- Young people understand digital balance far better than adults assume.
- Framing health messaging with young people prevents stigma and improves engagement.
- Conversations about digital wellbeing need to recognise joy, connection and creativity - not just risk.

## **Co-Designing Digital Mental Health Support (Good Thinking)**

Since 2024, DHAs have been working with Good Thinking to redesign their website and make digital mental health support more accessible for young people. They also helped shape youth-led campaigns on issues like climate anxiety, loneliness and body positivity.

## What young people contributed:

feedback on website layout, clearer language, ideas for relevant content, and themes that reflect real youth experiences.

## What young people said:

***"Some wellbeing sites don't feel made for us - this one finally does."***

## What we learned:

- Youth co-design makes digital support more relatable and usable.
- Campaigns work best when they reflect issues young people actually face.

## Legacy:

An archival youth-informed platform now supporting young people across the UK.

# Young People's Quotes

DHA Thoughts &  
Reflections

*“I really enjoyed being a DHA. It allowed me to contribute to something important to me, the youth mental health space. I was able to help design a website and make it more representative of young people”*

*~ Imogen, Digital Health Ambassador*

*“I appreciated having a platform to publish my thoughts through blogs and explore unique topics like climate anxiety”*

*~ Maisha, Digital Health Ambassador*

# Impact

## The Numbers

The programme strengthened how digital mental-health support is designed and communicated by ensuring youth voice directly shaped campaigns, resources and policy work.

Ambassadors made digital wellbeing content more relatable and accessible, influenced how the NHS involves young people in care, and helped shift messaging so it better reflects real youth experiences. Their contributions turned lived experience into meaningful change across services, partnerships and communication practices - leaving a lasting imprint on how young people are heard within digital health.

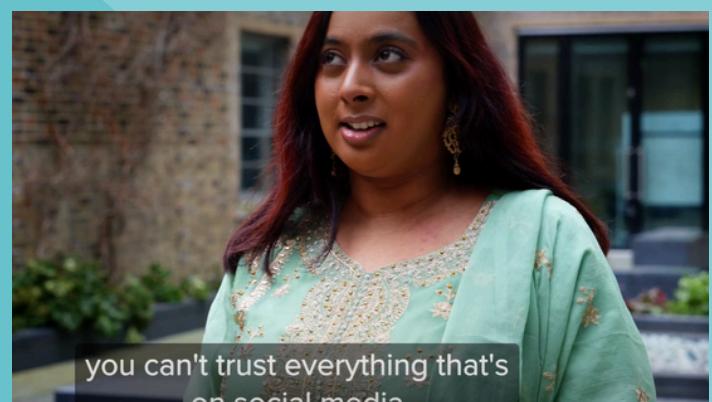
**In numbers, the programme achieved the following:**

- **4+ youth-informed digital health campaigns in active circulation**
- **20+ digital outputs co-created or influenced by Ambassadors**
- **10+ wellbeing videos, including Five Ways to Wellbeing series and youth content for gaming and balance**
- **9,000 livestream engagements during Covid youth takeover**
- **1 youth-redesigned digital wellbeing hub now supporting young people nationally**
- **5+ organisational partnerships, reaching diverse networks across London**
- **Beyond The Screens**

The programme reshaped how digital wellbeing is understood by centring real youth experiences. Ambassadors shifted narratives around gaming, mental health and wellbeing towards connection and balance, and ensured campaigns on issues like climate anxiety and loneliness reflected what young people were actually facing.

They also developed confidence, leadership and co-production skills, enabling meaningful participation in professional spaces. As one Ambassador put it, ***“Being listened to can change your whole experience of care.”***

Overall, youth voice moved from insight to influence: resources co-designed by Ambassadors continue to be used, national messaging was shaped by their perspectives, and their impact endures through the skills and confidence they now carry forward.



# MAISHA'S DIGITAL HEALTH AMBASSADOR JOURNEY MAP



**MAY 2025**  
**FOCUS**  
**GROUP**  
**DESIGNING**  
**GOOD**  
**THINKINGS**  
**WEBSITE**

Made the website more accessible  
for young people to use



**2022**  
**TOOK**  
**PART IN**  
**#LONDONYOUGO-**  
**OD CAMPAIGN**



**AUGUST 2025**  
**AUTHORING**  
**OUR OWN**  
**STORIES X**  
**DHA'S**



Contributed to  
discussions on the  
mental health  
experiences of young  
Black and Asian  
people, highlighting  
the need for better  
support rather than  
expecting us to cope  
alone due to identity  
and adultification.

**2019**  
**MET**  
**MAYOR**  
**SADIQ**  
**KHAN**



He shared his vision for London,  
particularly around VAWG, and  
emphasised working with young  
people like me to ensure our voices  
shape decision-making.

# Partners Quotes

Partners & Workers

Thoughts & Reflections

*“Working with the DHA’s taught me that design, language and support made for young people only become effective when young people help shape them. Their insights didn’t just guide the programme - they will guide me long after it ends.”*

*~ Tanisha Zaman, PYL Communications and Outreach Officer*

*“Digital Health Ambassadors programme has helped shape resources, policy, and practice across the mental health and digital access landscape.”*

*~ Shelby Davies, GOSH Experience Children And Young People’s Co-Production Facillitator, Former PYL Youth Engagement and Participation Officer*

# Challenges

## Feedback & Lessons Learned

In November 2025, a focus group with both long-standing and newer Ambassadors was held to reflect on what could have improved the Digital Health Ambassadors programme. Participants shared that although the programme created meaningful opportunities, several structural and practical challenges limited how consistently they could engage and influence.

A recurring theme was clarity and continuity. Ambassadors noted that changes in staffing and evolving project priorities sometimes created uncertainty about what was happening and when, with some sharing they ***“weren’t always clear when the programme was finishing,”*** or felt it had ***“gone quiet,”*** leading to a sense of disconnection. Others felt that clearer communication from partners and more consistent updates would have made it easier to stay involved over time. Many Ambassadors highlighted the need for more regular contact - suggesting frequent check-ins, scheduled meetings, or periodic touchpoints to maintain momentum and motivation. Newer members also expressed that a clearer understanding of their role and responsibilities at the start would have helped them navigate expectations and contribute with more confidence.

There was also feedback around scope and collaboration. Some Ambassadors felt the programme could have worked with a wider range of partners and introduced a broader mix of topics, noting that conversations occasionally felt repetitive and that further branching out could have increased engagement and creativity. Others emphasised that certain digital outputs - such as improving the youth-friendliness of the website - were difficult to progress within the time and capacity available, and more support or flexibility could have enabled deeper impact.

**These reflections underline learning points that may be useful for future youth-health projects:**

- **Consistent communication and regular touchpoints maintain engagement**
- **Clear role definitions and onboarding help newer members contribute quickly**
- **Visible timelines and project endings prevent uncertainty or disengagement**
- **A varied topic range and expanded partnerships sustain creativity and relevance**
- **Longer-term structures enable youth-led ideas to develop beyond surface-level input**



# The Heart Behind the Screens

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, thank you to every young person who took part as a Digital Health Ambassador. You shared your lived experiences, ideas and energy, helping to make digital mental-health support more relatable, accessible and youth-friendly. This programme is what it is because young people showed up, spoke up and led the way. Your voices didn't just take part - they shaped real change.

We also want to thank the organisations who supported young people throughout the programme. Partnership for Young London created the space for young people to lead and shape priorities. Good Thinking worked closely with Ambassadors to co-design genuinely youth-friendly digital mental-health content. NHS England, NHS London and wider NHS partners listened to young people and ensured their insights reached decision-makers influencing digital health policy and practice. Thank you for backing young people meaningfully, not just involving them.

For those interested in replicating or learning from this model of youth participation, this programme closely reflects the priorities set out in the newly published England National Youth Strategy. The Strategy emphasises young people's wellbeing, access to trusted health information, and meaningful opportunities to influence decisions that affect their lives. The Digital Health Ambassadors programme offers a practical example of how these ambitions can be put into practice through co-production, youth leadership and sustained institutional support.

A big thank you also goes to the staff, facilitators and volunteers who worked directly with Ambassadors. You ensured young people felt supported, respected and heard, and helped turn ideas into real projects and campaigns. Your work enabled young people to build confidence, skills and leadership they will carry forward.

Finally, thank you to the families, friends, teachers, youth workers and supporters who encouraged young people to take part. Your support helped young people show up, stay involved and lead with confidence. The impact of this programme belongs to them - and to you.

### **Good Thinking team:**

Jessica Simpson · Samira Rahman · Thomas Stone

### **Former Partnership for Young London leads:**

Shelby Davies · Sharon Long · Troy Norbert · Tanisha Zaman

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***Communications & Outreach Officer, Partnership for Young London***

# Resources & Links

A collection of youth-informed digital health resources, campaigns and projects supported by the Digital Health Ambassadors.

## Digital Mental Health & Wellbeing (Good Thinking):

Good Thinking - Young People's Hub

- <https://www.good-thinking.uk/youngpeople>

## Five Ways to Wellbeing - Poster (PDF)

- [https://good-thinking.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/JC0423\\_CYP\\_5Ways\\_Poster\\_v3b.pdf](https://good-thinking.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/JC0423_CYP_5Ways_Poster_v3b.pdf)

## Five Ways to Wellbeing for Children & Young People

- <https://www.transformationpartners.nhs.uk/resource/five-ways-to-wellbeing-for-children-and-young-people/>

## Youth Voice & Co-Production:

NHS England - Youth Engagement & Voice

- <https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/london-clinical-networks/our-networks/london-babies-children-and-young-peoples-transformation-team/youth-engagement-and-voice/>

## NHS Case for Change Report (DHA contributions on pages 18-23)

- <https://www.transformationpartners.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Case-for-Change-report-single-pages.pdf>

## Campaigns & Health Support:

Ask About Asthma (2024 Campaign)

- <https://www.transformationpartners.nhs.uk/programmes/children-young-people/asthma/askaboutasthma-2024/>

## Reading & Wellbeing:

Reading Well for Teens (The Reading Agency)

- <https://readingagency.org.uk/get-reading/our-programmes-and-campaigns/reading-well/reading-well-for-teens/>

## National Youth Strategy:

[https://www.gov.uk/guidance/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy-summary-report?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/youth-matters-your-national-youth-strategy-summary-report?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

# **Partnership for Young London**

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