

Camden Futures

Final Evaluation Report

March 2019

“I am absolutely staggered and impressed by their skills. They are equal in many respects to trained mental health professionals. Their commitment is fantastic. Lots of families would have gone by the wayside and fallen between the gaps in services if not for Camden Futures”

External stakeholder

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Introduction

Camden Futures is a whole family support service for Camden families funded from February 2016 to January 2019 by the Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities programme and the John Lyon's Charity. The service operates within a delivery partnership model established between Elfrida Rathbone Camden, the lead agency, and Citizens' Advice Camden.

This report presents the findings from an independent evaluation of the work of Camden Futures conducted between November 2017 and March 2018 by R. Malfait Consultants Ltd.

A total of 71 stakeholders across a range of roles and organisations were consulted through individual interviews, focus groups and on-line surveys.

Evaluation overview and methodology

This evaluation was commissioned by Camden Futures to review impact, achievements and learning points to inform and support subsequent project development and funding applications. It explored:

- How well the service has met each of the four project outcomes
- How effectively service beneficiaries have been involved in planning and delivering activities and projects
- How effectively the service has developed positive connections and links in the community
- Camden Futures' partnership working
- The impact of the service on wider stakeholders and statutory bodies
- Recommendations about the overall impact and operation of the service that will inform subsequent project development and funding applications

Methodology included a desk top review of reports, client feedback forms and demographic information as well as consultations with clients, staff at Elfrida Rathbone Camden and Citizens' Advice Camden, Community Connectors (volunteers) and other relevant internal and external stakeholders. The questions and survey tools were jointly developed by the evaluation team, Camden Futures' staff and a small Evaluation Advisory Group.

Stakeholders, including service users, were identified and invited to participate in the consultation process by Camden Futures. A small team of Community Connectors (volunteers) took part in an interviewing preparation session and subsequently completed interviews with service users. In total, 71 stakeholders participated in the consultation process through a combination of individual interviews (including through volunteer interviewing, online surveys and focus group discussions). This total included 28 service users, 13 Camden Futures paid staff, six Community Connector volunteers, 16 external stakeholders¹ together with eight non-service users.²

Consultation arrangements with all stakeholder groups were made as accessible as possible, ensuring people's experiences and needs were taken into account. All were informed about the purpose of the evaluation and how the information gathered would be used. It was made clear that their participation was voluntary and that contributions would be anonymised. Clients were assured that future support and entitlements would not be affected by their participation (or non-participation) in the evaluation.

Camden Futures service overview

“They are old school family support, they have a gentle approach, not undermining families, working with them and families do not have to fit into a box, they are flexible and can offer hand holding where that is needed” External stakeholder

Camden Futures was established to provide a holistic family support service for Camden parents and children aged 0-18 with multiple needs through tackling issues related to poverty, debts, housing, children's behaviour, education and family relationships. Increasing numbers of families in Camden are struggling to cope with the impact of issues linked to mental health, debt, poverty, domestic violence and relationship breakdown. The service aims to tackle the negative impact that these can have on family dynamics and parenting and seeks to increase engagement with support services and community networks. To date, Camden Futures has engaged with 167 families through a range of 1:1 support and community activities.

¹ External stakeholders were individuals working in peer and referral organisations.

² Non-service users were drawn from a pool of service users at other local organisations

The target outcomes for Camden Futures are set out below:

- 1) The confidence and self-esteem of parents/carers will be improved through volunteering as Community Connectors.
- 2) The confidence and skills of parents/carers, in terms of effectively supporting their children's well-being, will be improved.
- 3) The physical, emotional and mental well-being of children will be improved.
- 4) Parents/carers will be better able to improve their family's economic or living conditions.

The service has been delivered through a combination of:

- 1:1 family support delivered by Elfrida Rathbone Camden.
- 1:1 financial inclusion advice and casework delivered by Citizens Advice Camden.
- Support from a cohort of volunteers recruited to the role of Camden Futures' Community Connectors who were trained and supported to enable parents and children to build enduring and sustaining relationships within their community through a range of activities including events, workshops and school holiday programmes.

Camden Futures has developed (throughout the three years of service delivery) a number of connections with other organisations to increase the offer to their families and volunteers including with: British Library, London Borough of Camden, Maths on Toast, the Winch and Pirate Castle to quote a few. The team has been also successful, for two years in a row, in securing additional fundraising through the John Lyon's School Holiday Fund. This has enabled the delivery of two years of summer and holiday fun and learning activities called Summer Family Fun.

Executive summary

“Other services do offer support but not at this level – and if Camden Futures stopped other services would be overloaded. These service users may not be able to access other help too as they’re often very vulnerable and need one to one support from a trusted person which others cannot offer in the same way.” External stakeholder

Stakeholder evaluations and feedback on the impact, value and importance of Camden Futures’ work in responding to the needs of families with often complex needs in Camden have consistently been very positive. Both service users and external stakeholders repeatedly emphasised the effectiveness and necessity of the work. Family Workers, the Financial Inclusion worker, Community Connector volunteers and team colleagues across the Camden Futures partnership have helped service users change their lives for the better in practical, financial and emotional terms.

Key findings from the evaluation consultations and data review are summarised below:

- The multi-disciplinary support delivered by the Camden Futures partnership of ERC and Citizens’ Advice Camden has been successfully delivered, highly valued and very effective in meeting the needs of families in Camden.
- The combination of family support and financial inclusion work has been a key strength in the approach and delivery model.
- Review of service outputs and performance based upon agreed indicators confirms that all four of the target outcomes for Camden Futures have been achieved
- Citizens’ Advice Camden’s monitoring data indicates that overall, families have benefited by almost £330,000 through the provision of expert advice and support accessed through Camden Futures.
- Camden Futures has worked collaboratively and effectively with partner organisations to facilitate and improve access to support for vulnerable families with multiple needs (for example by taking on the 'Lead Professional' role to help coordinate the input of professionals within network composed at times of up to 13 agencies).
- The professionalism, high skill level and commitment of practitioners in both Camden Futures partner organisations is very highly valued both by service users and peer organisations.
- Camden Futures has established innovative and effective ways to encourage and enable service beneficiaries to be involved in planning, delivery, review and evaluation of activities and projects (for example by engaging former service users as volunteer Community Connectors).

- The service has worked collaboratively with mainstream organisations and community-based groups and has become a highly valued and accessible referral resource.
- Well established and wide-ranging links with referral agencies and statutory partners have helped families access Camden Futures and make connections beyond the service.
- Stakeholders across all groups, including statutory services, consistently reported that there is no similar multi-disciplinary service in Camden and that there is ongoing and growing need for the services that Camden Futures offers. The level and complexity of need is expected to continue and grow in the future.

Recommendations

The following recommendations draw upon review of the strengths, challenges, learning and needs identified through consultations with stakeholders and upon desktop review of data and reports provided by Camden Futures.

1. Maintain and continue to deliver the current Camden Futures' services and activities - there is evident and high need for the services. The Camden Futures' partnership model and approach is highly respected and is effectively responding to the needs of Camden families and service providers.
2. Ensure funding and fundraising strategies are in place to sustain and support future development including enhanced capacity across jointly considered and agreed priority Camden Futures' functions (for example to enhance support to Community Connectors).
3. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the value and impact of Camden Futures' work but would welcome increased capacity to respond to unmet need. Consider feasibility and options for resourcing and extending the provision of 1:1 support beyond six months.
4. Continue to prioritise accessibility to the support offered by Camden Futures - this is a valued quality of Camden Futures across stakeholder groups but the usual challenges for services and projects apply. Aiming to recruit a balance of male and female Community Connectors and staff from a range of cultural and social backgrounds along with looking at the timing and location of services and activities can help to maximise accessibility.
5. Share the main findings and recommendations from the evaluation with Camden Futures' teams in both organisations (and other key stakeholders agreed by the partnership). This work has made a real and very important difference for the people supported. There are inevitably challenges and learning points but the need for, impact and the value of the work is clear.

Profile of families supported by Camden Futures

In November 2018, Philip Alston, the UN’s rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, made a two-week fact-finding mission to the UK, visiting towns and cities including London, Oxford, Cardiff, Newcastle, Glasgow and Belfast. In an article dated November 2016³, The Guardian newspaper outlined findings from his pending report, citing figures from the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimating that about 14 million people, a fifth of the UK population, live in poverty and that about 1.5 million people are destitute, being unable to afford basic essentials. Alston highlighted predictions that child poverty could rise by 7 percentage points between 2015 and 2022, possibly up to a rate of 40%.

In 2018, Camden Futures were interviewed as part of a Children's Society research project that explored the impact of welfare reform on families such as those supported by Camden Futures. Their report (Not Making Ends Meet, The Children's Society, 2018⁴) identified that problems with the benefits system were the single most frequently cited cause of crisis for people they interviewed, with changes to disability benefits at the top of that list.

It is within this context that Camden Futures has provided vital help and support. Since February 2016, the service has supported a total of 167 families or 534 beneficiaries (201 adults and 333 children) through a range of 1:1 support and community activities. The majority of families presented with a combination of socio-economic needs (i.e. poor housing, low income or no access to public funds and/or being newly arrived refugees) and poor mental and/or physical health, disability and exposure to past trauma. Referrals and the level of needs of every family worked with are monitored to ensure that the service is engaging the children and parents who are most in need of additional support and reflect the profile of the Camden community. These records confirm a service user profile that is summarised below:

Prevailing needs in children (40% present with a combination of 2 or more of the following):

- 56% presented with emotional/mental health difficulties

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/16/uk-austerity-has-inflicted-great-misery-on-citizens-un-says>

⁴ <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/not-making-ends-meet-2018.pdf>

- 37% were victim of bullying /isolation or damaging family relationships
- 24.5% have a disability/long term health problem

Prevailing needs in parents:

- 55% are single parents (and 73% of the total are female)
- 49.3% are homeless, threatened with homelessness, or living in overcrowded housing
- 50.7 % are unemployed

Ethnicity:

- 22% are families from Black/Black British African descent followed closely by
- 21 % from White British background
- 13% from other White backgrounds
- 8% are from any other mixed background
- 7% are Bengali
- 6% are from any other Black African/Caribbean background
- 5% are from Arab descent
- 5% are from Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- The remaining 13% comprises Chinese, Indian, any other Asian and other backgrounds.

Referral source analysis

In evaluation consultations, external stakeholders commented on the benefits of being able to discuss potential referrals with Camden Futures and on the ease of making a referral when needed. Referrals were regularly made by the Early Help Team and psychologists from CAMHS. The overall analysis of referral sources is set out in the table below:

Source	Percentage
Camden Early Help and Children Safeguarding teams	43
Citizens Advice Camden	22
CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)	13
Self-referrals	11
Primary schools and GP practices	5.5
Children centres' services	3
Voluntary and Community Sector organisations	2.5

Self-referrals have doubled compared with the delivery period for the first iteration of Camden Futures. The high number of self-referrals reflects the strong links that Camden Futures has developed with individuals and groups within the local community. Knowledge of the services is spread 'word of mouth' by people who have had a good experience of the support that Camden Futures offers. This is an indication of the reputation and reach of Camden Futures and self-referrals are the third source of referrals after statutory services and advisers in other Citizens' Advice Camden services. Importantly, external stakeholders consulted confirmed that Camden Futures is a welcoming service that connects with vulnerable, often isolated people and families who aren't necessarily known to or accessing mainstream services.

The low turnover of paid staff within Camden Futures has enabled staff to develop excellent in-depth knowledge of other services available to support children and families in the borough. This can help to reduce isolation, helps families to develop independence and can be particularly useful if people are new to the country or area and find it difficult to understand how the system works. People are linked with activities available in the borough and a range of year-round support as well as sources of funding, access to food banks, discounted or free goods and services (such as theatre tickets, complementary therapies, cakes for children's parties and museum entry).

A cross-referral network for children and young people was maintained and developed for both 1:1 work and Community Connector activities with a range of local organisations including: the Winch for young people's support, the Pirate Castle, Camden Connexions, Kentish Town City Farm, Excel Project, Coram's Fields, Calthorpe Project, the Living Centre, Little Village, Maths on Toast, Kentish Town Community Centre, NW5 Project, Castlehaven Community Association, WAC Arts Camden Summer University (a performing Arts and Media college for young people), The Roundhouse, Brandon Centre and The Hive.

Camden Futures impact - families

“As a single parent finances are low – Camden Futures has enabled me to meet people and my child got to do different activities and was able to make new friends.” Service user

“The service has had lots of impact – the Family Support Workers do a good job – this work is so important at the moment with all the changes to benefits – people need someone to ‘translate’ the complex systems and changes for them.” External stakeholder

Impact against the Camden Futures outcomes is internally monitored and assessed using the Family Outcome Star tool and sometimes the Child or Teen Outcome Star. These cover key areas of child development and parenting. The tools are completed by the parent reflecting upon their ability to successfully support areas of their children’s development. Family members are also asked to complete Exit Questionnaires. This questionnaire is filled in during the last visit, where parents and young people are encouraged to give feedback on the impact of Camden Futures’ support generally but also in relation to Camden Futures’ target outcomes.

Desktop review of this data, along with management and funder reports collated by Camden Futures, confirms that target outcomes have been achieved and that agreed indicators and targets under each of the four target outcomes are being met or exceeded. Similarly, stakeholder feedback in the independent evaluation consultations on the impact, value and importance of Camden Futures’ work was also consistently very positive across all groups. Examples of key statistical and qualitative impact indicators are listed under each outcome.

Outcome 1: The confidence and self-esteem of parents/carers will be improved through volunteering:

“Being a Community Connector has helped me be a better parent myself and I’ve learnt so many things - for example how to be a role model for my children, how to manage things in the house and day to day. I became more confident. Because of this I have been able to help other parents.” Community Connector.

Camden Futures developed the Community Connector role as a volunteering platform for former Camden Futures parents and other Camden parents to build confidence by helping to engage them in social activities whilst being supported and supervised by the professional staff. Community Connectors have accessed a range of training opportunities including:

- **Safeguarding Children and Young People compulsory training**

- **Mental Health First Aid** training (two-day accredited training)
- **Improving Research Skills** (Carrying out face to face interviews, constructing questionnaires for Camden Futures evaluation)
- **Family Kitchen training**
- **Food and Hygiene** training to be able to run Family Kitchen programmes
- **Creative Skills** training to work with groups on self-confidence and teamwork
- **Equality and Diversity** training (L2)
- **Writing a great bid** training (Voluntary Action Camden)
- **ARISE - 'Analysing Refugee Inclusion in Southern Europe'** (Kairos lead agency) – 1-week residential training with 8 partners in **Southern Italy**
- **Participation to Policy Roundtable with Whitehall representatives Dec 2016**
- **Maths on Toast (Feb 2017 first workshop)**
- **Participation as part of discussion panel facilitated by the Camden Futures manager at Mutual Aid Conference, Camden Sep 17**
- **Creative Therapies Group Sessions (March-June18)**
- **British Library Project (Feb-april18)**
- **Universal credit Information session led by CITIZENS' ADVICE CAMDEN**
- **'Widening Participation Team for the Connectors' offered by School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London** over 5 weeks, 7th Jan-4th Feb 2019

Community Connectors co-produced a number of activities and projects involving their own families and Camden Futures' service users with the support of Camden Futures staff. These opportunities have given the Community Connectors chances to develop skills and confidence in a range of areas compatible with their family commitments. Other routes through which parents and carers felt they developed confidence and self-esteem included:

- Opportunities to socialise and make friends helping to overcome isolation including for those who may be new to the country or area.
- Learning from each other and Camden Futures' professional staff through the work.
- Speaking in front of a group of people through the role giving 'a new string to their bow'.

- The DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) check was seen as a valuable thing to be able to note in personal CVs, as was the training and the role itself.
- Learning new skills to put on their CVs for future volunteering or employment.
- The Community Connectors who were in difficult circumstances (such as caring for children with special needs) felt that they could be role models for their peers.

In evaluation consultations:

- *66% of Community Connectors agreed or partly agreed that "Volunteering as a Community Connector has helped me maintain and (or) build my confidence and self-esteem".*
- *69% of paid team members told us that they think that parents who volunteer with Camden Futures grow in confidence and self-esteem.*

Outcome 2: The confidence and skills of parents/carers will be improved in terms of effectively supporting their children's wellbeing

"The Family Worker helps – for example suggesting a chart for my son's behaviour so he gets a star. She opened my eyes to the different strategies and resources to support my children. Every time she comes she brings something. She gave advice to me and my son's school."
Service user

In evaluation consultations, paid staff members, external stakeholders and service users commonly commented on the effectiveness of Camden Futures' approach of working with and alongside families as much as possible to problem solve and offer support. The aim and often the success of this approach is that it helps people develop their parenting skills, confidence and ability to feel "fully in the driving seat".

This was achieved through a range of interventions, including 1:1 family support by Family Workers, 1:1 debt casework and money advice from the Financial Inclusion Worker, some ad hoc interventions by Community Connectors using their language skills, enabled understanding the in meetings or phone calls with housing or welfare benefit departments and a variety of community projects involving families organised by both Community Connectors and other Camden Futures staff.

In our evaluation review of 27 Exit Questionnaires completed by parents/carers who received 1:1 support, 86% reported that the support helped them feel more confident in their parenting and 81% reported that FT helped them improve their children's safety. 80% reported improvement in family relationships.

In evaluation consultations:

- 90% of 21 responding service users agreed or partly agreed that Camden Futures "... has helped or is helping me to develop my skills, confidence and understanding as a parent in order to support my children's well-being". 2 'disagreed' and 7 responded 'I don't know' or 'not relevant'.
- 83% Camden Futures Community Connectors agreed that it is helping "... parents and carers to develop skills, confidence and understanding as parents in order to support their children's well-being". 1 'partly agreed'.
- 77% paid team members told us that they think Camden Futures has a high or medium impact in terms of helping parents develop their skills and ability to support their children's wellbeing

Outcome 3: The physical, emotional and mental wellbeing of children will be improved

"My son was very shy at school and the school referred so my son could become more confident and mix with other children." Service user

Most staff, Community Connectors, service users and referral agencies felt that Camden Futures benefits the well-being of the children in the families that are being supported. The increased stability of families through improved financial and living conditions resulting from Camden Futures' interventions reduces pressure on parents and this positively impacts family relations. Similarly, the children often benefit from having a dedicated worker who can have sessions only with them and explore the activities they would like to do and the barriers preventing them from doing these. Children can also enjoy better quality time with their parents by accessing the Summer Family Fun activities, exhibitions and workshops, as well as the financial and in-kind support available.

In evaluation consultations:

- 91% of service users who responded agreed or partly agreed that their engagement with Camden Futures is helping to benefit the emotional and mental wellbeing of their children.
- 73% of external stakeholders that responded told us they think Camden Futures has a medium to high impact in relation to the mental or emotional wellbeing of children in families engaging with the service.
- 83% of Community Connectors agreed or partly agreed that Camden Futures is helping to benefit the emotional, mental wellbeing of children whose families engage with the service.

- 77% of paid team members told us they think Camden Futures has a high or medium impact in relation to the mental or emotional wellbeing of children in families engaging with Camden Futures.
- 82% of service users who responded agreed or partly agreed that their engagement with Camden Futures is helping to benefit the physical wellbeing of their children.
- 73% of external stakeholders that responded told us they think Camden Futures has a high or medium impact in relation to the physical health of children in families engaging with the service.
- 67% of Community Connectors who responded agreed that Camden Futures is helping to benefit the physical wellbeing of children whose families engage with the service.
- 55% of paid team members told us they think Camden Futures has a medium to high impact in relation to the physical health of children in families engaging with the service.

Outcome 4: Parents/carers will be better able to improve their family's economic or living conditions

“They helped me sort out Tax Credits which was really good for me because we were having trouble with finances. They put me in touch with the right people to improve our housing condition and helped with ways to keep our house warm.” Service user

“When I turned 18, I didn’t know I could apply for Housing Benefit. My Family Worker referred me to CAB and spoke to my social worker.” Service user

Citizens’ Advice Camden’s case analysis confirms that the financial inclusion work delivered through their Financial Advice Team (as part of Camden Futures) has achieved almost £330,000 of long-term financial gain for clients since 2016. This has included helping service users:

- manage priority debts totalling almost £137, 000
- manage non-priority debts of almost £359,000.

A breakdown of the financial impact of Camden Futures ' work with families is shown in the table below:

	Priority Debts	Non-Priority Debt	Financial Gain	Clients	Families
2016	£ 77,457.17	£ 262,235.88	£ 74,554.81	57	41
2017	£ 34,949.85	£ 83,189.45	£ 132,096.13	26	17

2018	£ 10,255.11	£ 7,165.57	£ 56,675.89	12	7
Totals	£ 136,711.87	£ 358,488.90	£ 329,242.18	105	76

In addition to the above, Camden Futures Family Workers raised £7,297 in individual fundraising for families, to tackle severe hardship and crisis by applying to private trusts such as: St. Pancras Welfare Trust and the Hampstead Wells and Camden Trust.

Camden Futures also distributed Food Bank vouchers and a range of donated new goods such as sanitary items for personal hygiene and household items including bedding, small to medium white goods such as kettles, toasters and microwaves and Christmas Hampers with durable foods. This additional support has alleviated many situations of hardship.

In evaluation consultations:

- *88% of service users that responded agreed or partly agreed that their "... Engagement with Camden Futures is helping them to improve their family finances and living conditions".*
- *83% of Community Connectors agreed or partly agreed that "Camden Futures is helping families to improve their finances and living conditions".*
- *69% of paid team members told us that they think Camden Futures has a high or medium impact in relation to relation to improving the financial position and access to basic items for families engaging with Camden Futures.*
- *62% paid team members told us that they think Camden Futures has a high or medium impact in relation to improving the living conditions and housing for families engaging with Camden Futures.*

Impact on community and partnership working

"The service makes a really important difference for the people it supports with a complex range of needs. Camden Futures support them through a plethora of issues with a strength based, empowering approach, not imposing a deficit model (looking at what problems are and start with that rather than look at what strengths they have and starting there). The practical support is invaluable – accompanying, advocacy etc." External stakeholder

The support that Camden Futures offers was felt to be hugely useful to both other voluntary sector organisations in and around Camden as well as statutory bodies locally. The low staff turnover within Camden Futures has enabled staff to develop detailed institutional knowledge and this is used to ensure that families are referred to other services where appropriate. Staff are involved in a range of forums and in the first iteration of the service staff contributed through the Wider Referral Network which brought practitioners together to share knowledge and information. Whilst this was useful, unfortunately there was not enough capacity for this to continue in the second iteration. Camden Futures' staff led a workshop in September 2017 at a Mutual Aid conference offering examples of communities coming together to promote mutual aid and also developed a two-day training with the local authority and Home Start around resilience which was rolled out to staff. Strong links have been developed with the voluntary sector through which knowledge and information is shared (for example with North Camden Zone, The Winch and Home Start).

The value and importance of developing good links with schools and GPs was commented on in evaluation consultations and identified as something to build on in future if possible (for example staff could usefully give information about the service in staff meetings or parent coffee mornings at targeted schools and GP practices). Citizens Advice Camden's Advice in GP Surgeries service running until July 2018 facilitated referrals from GPs to the Financial Inclusion Worker who could then encourage the parent to take up the family support element of Camden Futures.

"We have very good rapport with Camden Futures. They're very constructive and supportive in their work with and alongside other organisations. They go to a range of meetings and they are very knowledgeable. They are recognised for this – they're an authority and are respected for their work." External stakeholder

Stakeholders across all groups consistently told us that Camden Futures works very well in partnership with other organisations and is a respected source of expertise, second tier advice and referral resource. Senior managers in the Social Care Team (for example in the Early Help Team, the Children's Team and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)) value the service a great deal. Camden Futures is a key partner providing vital services and playing an important part in the provision of services for children in the borough.

Camden Futures' staff in both organisations are recognised as highly skilled and the complexity, level of case difficulty and needs of the families that they work with can be very high. The Camden

Futures' team is felt to work well with safeguarding colleagues and the level of professionalism is seen to be excellent. Staff are encouraged to attend training put on by the local authority because they are so important in the mix of support for families in Camden. One stakeholder commented that staff are covering the type of work that Social Workers might have done in the past and another commented that they had "*never known a voluntary sector team operating at this level of intervention*".

The impact and value of Camden Futures in the wider community is also evident in the development of relationships and collaboration with several local authority departments and a range of voluntary sector organisations. Examples include:

Resilient Families Framework Training: The local authority drew upon Camden Futures staff expertise when planning this training framework (in October 2016). The model blends key elements of the Anna Freud Centre's AMBIT training and the Family Partnership Model. Camden Futures staff were involved in this induction process for Early Help Team staff to enable them to support local families. This also ensured that practitioners across different sectors could work within the same practice framework and could refer to the same language and tools when helping families achieve resilience.

North Camden Zone (The Winch): Camden Futures staff joined the North Camden Zone Steering Group in June 2018, together with representatives from the local community, primary healthcare providers, local businesses, voluntary sector agencies and Camden's Director of Early Intervention and Prevention. The Zone is trialling a 'system-change approach' for the North Camden area, involving cross-sector work to improve outcomes for children and young people.

London Borough of Camden, Early Help Team: Camden Early Help approached Camden Futures to help organise a public engagement event called 'For Camden Families, by Camden Families'. This took place on 29th June 2018 at Camden Futures and was attended by 30 Camden parents and carers.

Community Concierge Network: In parallel with the above event, Camden Futures started conversations about this new initiative with a wide range of stakeholders including three Camden service directorates, Owls (an organisation testing innovative solutions to reconnect people into their communities), North Camden Zone, the Somali Youth Resource Centre, St. Luke's, Inspire, Kentish Town Community Centre, NW5 Project and the Peckwater Estate Tenants' and Residents' Association.

British Library: Between February and June 2018, Camden Futures worked in partnership with the British Library on a creative project led by two artists involving six families. The sessions

were supported by two Community Connectors and took place every Saturday for ten weeks. The purpose was to help families become familiar with British Library collections and events.

Analysing Refugee Inclusion in Southern Europe (ARISE): In May 2018 Camden Futures entered a partnership led by Kairos Europe (UK) involving other seven organisations including King’s College University, Young Roots, African Language Matters, Creating Ground, Red Ochre, the Amirah Foundation and Migrants Resource Centre. The aim of this two year project is to provide a professional development course in Southern Italy for 72 professionals and volunteers from the participant UK organisations, to gain new skills and knowledge around migration, social inclusion, the effects of UK and EU policies on migrants/refugees and on the support services working to integrate these communities into the hosting society.

Strengths of service and future development

“The level of knowledge and skills is really high! One team member has been there for 25 years. Something about the professional approach is really impressive- the coordination and level of skills and professionalism and expertise. They care on a human level.” External stakeholder

Evaluation consultations with stakeholders identified the following strengths in the design and delivery of Camden Futures' services:

A model that empowers families: Camden Futures aims to empower parents and family members through encouraging, supporting and working with individuals to jointly identify both their support needs and also the skills and qualities that they can offer. Working alongside families to problem solve and offer support gives people the tools to help themselves in the future, and offers people agency over their own lives, increasing confidence levels. Their work with families, whether in relation to financial or other problems can often help improve family relationships. For example, one stakeholder reflected that people often row less when they have less debt. The partnership's approach of working alongside people offers a role model and can help people develop ability to and confidence in managing their lives for themselves.

5 out of 6 (83%) Community Connectors told us that they feel encouraged and able to take part in planning and delivering Camden Futures activities. 1 person reported that they had been too busy to be more involved.

A flexible and holistic service: Stakeholders feel that Citizens’ Advice Camden and Elfrida Rathbone Camden work extremely well together combining complementary skills and expertise to provide a holistic and flexible service tailored to the needs of families and individuals within Camden. The service aims to meet families ‘where they are’, offering support with housing, finances, health services, relationships (including strategies to manage children’s challenging behaviours), parenting, school (including transition), referrals to other organisations as well as moral and emotional support. This coordinated support across a range of areas was felt to be very helpful. One external stakeholder commented that *“Camden Futures offers a range of support and one door in allows you to go through other doors. Other organisations provide their services in pockets - and families miss out”*.

The development of the Wider Referral Network (a network of organisations working with same client group) in the first Camden Futures has helped the service to build good relationships with community partners across the borough and opened up additional support and referral opportunities for Camden Futures families.

Evaluators recognised and value the high degree of flexibility that is built into the service model, for example in accepting and assessing self-referrals and in providing interpreter support based on need. Similarly, the flexibility of the service model in enabling Family Workers to make home visits was valued in evaluation feedback, enabling improved service accessibility and enabling staff to gain insight into any relevant issues and dynamics.

Independence from statutory services: Referrers and clients alike appreciated the independence of Camden Futures from the statutory authorities. It was felt that this conferred trust and a feeling of safety for families who may not have had good experiences of contact with local authority services. The positive relationships that develop and the supportive approach can feel very different to that which people are used to (with a Social Worker for example). Families feel that the Family Worker and Financial Inclusion Workers are “on their side”. Whilst independence from statutory services was recognised as a strength in consultations with both service users and external stakeholders, it is also clear that Camden Futures is respected and valued as a vital partner organisation by statutory organisations, not least for its safeguarding role and practice. As a trusted and respected independent organisation, Camden Futures is able to support the establishment or rebuilding of relationships between some families and mainstream services.

“It is voluntary and not statutory – this is important for some people. They feel more comfortable approaching them or being referred. They trust them more than statutory support. Families trust them. Camden Futures can work with families that statutory services

like social services can't due to lack of trust and relationship. They meet Camden Futures team members and other people that go there and make friends, develop relationships and networks. Also, we get more feedback from Camden Futures than we do from social services". External stakeholder

A service that ensures continuity and offers high level of expertise: Most of the Camden Futures team have remained in post since 2012 and now work in the second iteration of the project. Camden Futures' team members within the two partner agencies have around 50 years of relevant experience between them. This continuity is seen to be extremely valuable. Trust and links across the voluntary and statutory sector have been developed over time. Several stakeholders in referral and other external agencies emphasised their respect for the high levels of skills, knowledge and professionalism that Camden Futures service workers demonstrate in their work both with families with complex needs and in their dealings with other mainstream and specialist organisations.

One external stakeholder commented: *"We've made referrals for families needing health-based support and advocacy – it tends to be at the heavier end of needs in this respect. We know that Camden Futures are strong in this type of support and that people will meet a friendly face. We have a very good rapport with Camden Futures and have been very satisfied with how they've responded to referrals".*

Challenges - economic and social context

The national and local context within which Camden Futures has been delivered remains challenging and is changing in a range of ways that will need to be taken into consideration by Camden Futures' partners in future planning and service development. According to the latest estimates from the Greater London Authority, the population of Camden is predicted to rise to around 261,500 (+9%) over the next 10 years. Camden, with a score of 25.0, is in the fifth more deprived decile (IMD 2015). The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Camden (2015/16) identified several socio-economic factors that remain relevant for future planning:

- Camden's population is becoming increasingly diverse.
- The availability of quality housing is an issue and levels of overcrowding in Camden are among the highest in the country.

- Camden has the 4th highest rate of claims for Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Incapacity Benefit (IB) amongst all London boroughs (6.2% of the working age population, compared with 5.1% across London).
- Camden had the second highest crime rate of any London local authority in 2015/16.
- In 2013, 27.6% of children (under the age of 16) in Camden were living in poverty in real terms (this equates to approximately 9,000 children), compared with 19% nationally. Camden has the eighth highest proportion of children living in poverty in London.
- There are an estimated 1,079 (1.4%) of children and young people aged 0-25 years old who live in Camden who have a statement of Special Education Needs (SEND) or Education, Health and Care Plans (EHC). The number of children living in Camden with SEN statements or EHC plans has increased in the last year.

Stakeholders in evaluation consultations also identified a number of current or imminent changes and developments that are likely to impact the families that Camden Futures partners support, wider communities and service providers locally and nationally. They included:

An increasingly hostile environment - which affects the most vulnerable (i.e. those with no recourse to public funds) who are in need of legal and financial inclusion advice.

The roll out of Universal Credit - Universal Credit will fully launch in December 2018 in Camden and is expected to cause a lot of difficulties for many families. Evaluation stakeholders consistently emphasised that individuals and families need to be supported in understanding and preparing for changes in personal benefits and allowances.

Brexit - the implications and uncertainties of Brexit for both the wider community and individuals within Camden are expected to have a knock-on effect for the service, increasing the number of people who might be affected by any adverse impact on the UK economy. There is also anecdotal evidence that since the referendum outcome hate based crime and hostility has risen across the UK which impacts Camden's diverse population.

Increasing demand on Camden Futures as other support services' capacity and remit is increasingly limited - sustained cuts and funding challenges for the voluntary and statutory sectors are expected to translate into an overall reduction in services and increased thresholds for support. There is increasing need for the expert financial advice and support advice provided by Camden Futures as a result of more families experiencing difficulties with paying essential bills and rising poverty levels. Equally there is a growing need for a service that can meet the clients "where they are" and tailor the support to families' needs by sourcing, for example, ad hoc

interpreting, emergency items and accompanying parents to meetings that they feel anxious about. This is the unique feature of the work of the Family Workers Team and it has been consistently acknowledged and praised by a wide range of stakeholders working alongside the Camden Futures' team or referring into the service for exactly this reason. The increased threshold for statutory intervention and the lack of resources within local authority Social Care Team to carry out 1:1 support with children and young people has also contributed to an increase in referrals. The multi-disciplinary approach of hands-on family work combined with financial inclusion casework has had a high impact and value for families. It enables parents who can feel extremely anxious about their financial situation to have access to specialist financial inclusion casework with an experienced money and benefits adviser whilst also gaining money skills to build resilience for the future.

Camden Futures' capacity - The Service Manager's role was intended to cover the management of the multi-disciplinary teamwork and the development of the new Community Connectors cohort. Due to the high level of need presented by families receiving 1:1 support, the Service Manager has had limited capacity, especially around the Community Connector induction and checks. In October 2016 Camden Futures took on a university student on placement from Metropolitan University's 'Community Development and Leadership' degree for 100 hours to support the Service Manager with the Community Connector recruitment and induction. This additional support proved to be a big help. At the time of writing, Camden Futures have decided to allocate part of the budget underspend to supporting a new 'Community Connectors Project Worker' post that will develop and support the Community Connectors role. The ERC Board of Trustees have identified this area of work as crucial to develop sustainability and agreed to use some reserves to maintain this post until the end of January 2019. Similarly, to rebalance some of the capacity pressures within the service, underspend was allocated to allow increased financial inclusion support. This particularly helped those family units where a young person was also a young parent or trying to live independently and required welfare advice in their own right resulting in a separate piece of work for Citizens' Advice Camden. This work will become even more crucial to families after the introduction of Universal Credit in Camden and will help many to avoid getting into unsustainable debts.

Future needs and recommendations

Stakeholders across all groups consistently stated that the needs that Camden Futures responds to are ongoing and that its role both as a service provider and a key partner of other support providers is essential. Camden Futures' stakeholders, including respondents from external organisations, predict that the services that Camden Futures offer will be increasingly in demand over the next three to five years. The uncertainties of Brexit, the roll out of Universal Credit and the increasingly difficult funding climate will all make life more challenging for families and other service providers in Camden. More voluntary sector services may close, and local authority support may continue to be cut. Whilst the model of support that Camden Futures offers facilitates change and undoubtedly benefits families in Camden, the complexity of cases and deprivation levels families face may well get worse. Increased capacity and specific support around Universal Credit will both be needed. A rigorous staff training programme is expected to be essential to keep up with the changing benefit and economic landscape. Similarly, the development of income generation capacity would help to future-proof Camden Futures against any funding challenges to come.

87% of stakeholders consulted across all groups told us that there is no other local service that offers this sort of holistic, coordinated support all in one place and that without it families would find it impossible or very hard to access the sort of support that Camden Future provides.

External stakeholders were asked to reflect upon and rate (high, medium or low) the future need for the current range of services currently delivered by Camden Futures. Responses for the main elements of service provision were consistently rated as 'high' as shown below:

- One to one family support - 92% 'high'.
- One to one financial and benefits - 92% 'high'.
- Linking families to local resources and networks - 83% 'high'.
- Providing mentoring support to improve confidence and skills for children and young people - 83% 'high'.
- Providing mentoring support to improve confidence and skills for parents - 86% 'high'.
- Providing information sessions on key topics i.e. Universal Credit/tenants' rights/children's mental health/social media awareness - 66% 'high'.
- Providing family learning and fun events - 85% 'high'.

Recommendations

The following recommendations draw upon our review of the strengths, challenges, learning and needs identified through consultations with stakeholders and upon desktop review of data and reports provided by Camden Futures.

1. Maintain and continue to deliver the current Camden Futures’ services and activities - there is evident and high need for the services. The Camden Futures’ partnership model and approach is highly respected and is effectively responding to the needs of Camden families and service providers.
2. Ensure funding and fundraising strategies are in place to sustain and support future development including enhanced capacity across jointly considered and agreed priority Camden Futures’ functions (for example to enhance support to Community Connectors).
3. Stakeholders consistently emphasised the value and impact of Camden Futures’ work but would welcome increased capacity to respond to unmet need. Consider feasibility and options for resourcing and extending the provision of 1:1 support beyond six months.
4. Continue to prioritise accessibility to the support offered by Camden Futures - this is a valued quality of Camden Futures across stakeholder groups but the usual challenges for services and projects apply. Aiming to recruit a balance of male and female Community Connectors and staff from a range of cultural and social backgrounds along with looking at the timing and location of services and activities can help to maximise accessibility.
5. Share the main findings and recommendations from the evaluation with Camden Futures’ teams in both organisations (and other key stakeholders agreed by the partnership). This work has made a real and very important difference for the people supported. There are inevitably challenges and learning points but the need for, impact and the value of the work is clear.

Concluding comments

We hope that this report provides a useful assessment of the impact, achievements, challenges and learning identified through the implementation of Camden Futures. We also hope that it provides material that will prove to be useful in informing Camden Futures’ future planning, development and service or project delivery by both Elfrida Rathbone Camden and Citizens’ Advice Camden. All the internal stakeholders helping to deliver the work of Camden Futures have engaged very openly, reflectively and constructively throughout the evaluation process for which we are grateful. There is evidently a shared and passionate commitment to this work and to the families and individuals that the service supports.

Camden Futures' team members (paid and volunteers) should be proud of their success in its continued and successful delivery and in the very positive difference the service is making for so many people in Camden.

***Sophie Cottrell, Richard Malfait and Barbara Wilson, independent evaluators,
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