

Camden Family Changemakers: Evaluation Report

1. Introduction

Camden Family Changemakers is a co-design project between Camden parents and family members, the Service Futures Lab and MA Service Design at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London (UAL) who came together to create a design vision for good help for families after COVID.

The project was run by the Camden Family Early Help Service and based on three principles: deliberative dialogue, participatory design and design justice. The parents met with the students online every two weeks to participate in workshops and insight activities, which the students took away and developed, sharing with the parents at the following workshop. Work began in January 2021 and concluded in April 2021, with the parents and students presenting the Good Help Manifesto to senior Camden leaders.

More information about the project, including videos from the parents and students, and the outputs produced, is available [on the Camden website](#).

Evaluation

This evaluation has been carried out by Lizzie Cain from Co-Production Collective at UCL. To continue the participatory approach of the project, she was joined by Alice Gray and Hafsa Muhammad, who are both Camden Community Researchers and parents.

This explores the experiences and outcomes of the Camden Family Changemakers project in order to:

- identify areas for improvement
- understand the value of this work for participants and others connected to the project
- generate learning to inform future projects like this across Camden and beyond

More information about the evaluation is available in the appendix.

2. What were the benefits of this project for those involved?

Motivations and expectations

The Family Changemakers project emerged in September 2020 when Becca Dove, Head of Family Early Help, began thinking what family support would look like post-Covid.

"I realised that it's not up to me, I'm here to serve and people's hopes, expectations and experiences should inform and lead that. That's what makes it credible and relevant, and make sure it's not based on assumptions or bias."

Co-design is an example of the participatory processes increasingly embedded across Camden Council's activity. Putting citizens "at the heart" of everything the council does is central to its major strategic visions - [Camden 2025](#), [We Make Camden](#) and [The Way We Work](#) - so the project received full support internally.

The Expert Parents reported feeling unsure about what to expect when joining the project, but shared four main reasons for getting involved:

- to share their own experiences of being a parent in Camden
- to keep busy during lockdown
- to make connections and feel less isolated (especially for parents of children with additional needs)
- to contribute to change

"To talk about my experiences and express how things could have been made easier with the right support." Expert Parent

The shopping vouchers were also valued by those whose finances had been hit by lockdown, but this was mentioned in addition to the motivations highlighted above.

"The subject struck a chord. Had "help" myself, and concluded that it could make or break, depending on whether it exists and what type of help." Expert Parent

Benefits for Expert Parents

All parents reported at least one or two benefits they'd gained from participating, with most highlighting many more. These included:

- **Confidence**

This was particularly in relation to participating in the final presentation to Camden senior leaders, and in overcoming initial nervousness within the group itself.

- **Pride**

All those interviewed were proud of the Good Help Manifesto and the work they'd done together. Many felt that they were contributing to something meaningful and relevant to their lives and those of their wider community.

- **Skills**

All improved their IT skills as a result of working together via Zoom and Miro, whilst some reported improvements in their English language abilities.

- **Wellbeing**

Parents reported that the project helped their mental health, especially during lockdown and when facing challenging personal situations.

"It was a space to find comfort." Expert Parent

- **New connections**

Hearing others share their experiences and finding mutual understanding contributed to building relationships within the group.

- **Family relationships**

One parent reported feeling closer to their children and grandchildren who had supported them or got involved in the project activities.

- **Appreciation for Camden**

Multiple parents commented that the project made them realise how lucky they were to live in Camden and appreciated the opportunity to be heard.

"It also made me realise how good Camden is! There was so much I didn't know that Camden had, so much good things!" Expert Parent

- **Further opportunities**

Finally, a number of parents accessed additional opportunities following the project, including becoming Parent Champions or taking on other voluntary roles, while one person successfully gained employment at the council. Many expressed their enthusiasm for getting involved in additional activity and for the group to continue.

What isn't clear to the parents is whether and how the work they've done will make any difference to the services they receive – this is explored further in sections 3 and 4.

Benefits for Camden staff and partners

It wasn't just the Expert Parents who gained benefits from the project – others involved in shaping or supporting it did too.

For one of the project team, it was *"the most joyous experience of my entire career"*, coming in the midst of an incredibly challenging Covid period.

"Being with parents... allowed me to connect and reconnect, laugh, love, learn, live, cry, be humbled, remind me why I do what I do, what it's all for. I was educated by them." Family Early Help Team Member

This re-energising effect was echoed by some of the family workers and community partners, while others felt that their practice had been deeply affected by their experiences on the project.

"Without a doubt it has changed how I begin work: giving their experience of help time in initial meetings; giving them the space and time, and giving it importance: showing that I value it and that that's a really important part of my understanding and my ability to help them... It's an important aspect that I hadn't really given the appropriate time and weight to before." Family Worker

Those involved from LCC also felt they had deepened their understanding around policy and service co-design and were planning to use the Family Changemakers as a model for future projects. The course leader reported that the impact of co-designing with the families was visible in the students' later work, with greater attention to ethics, justice and collaboration.

3. What aspects of the co-design process worked well, and what could be improved?

Designing together

“So often community engagement can be complaints, defensiveness from staff, but this was different.” Community Partner

Everyone involved emphasised that the project was a real co-design experience that developed both in response to changing circumstances (covid lockdown) and to the content of discussions within the workshop (e.g. putting on an extra training session for Miro). The decision to include the children of the Expert Parents (who were often present due to lockdown) by offering activities and prizes was felt to be particularly thoughtful and kind, but also added a new layer of insight and understanding.

Parents were never under any pressure to contribute more than they felt comfortable to, but the impact of their words were made visible throughout the process. The family workers and partners involved in the workshop valued sharing their frustrations with parents, stepping outside of their roles and breaking down the boundaries which usually separate them. Bringing together these multiple perspectives, including those of the students, allowed the group to think beyond the usual confines of services and systems.

“You could tell people were getting involved and talking more as it went on.”

Expert Parent

“Nobody was ever made to feel small for their contribution, and the visual way it was laid out, and made accessible for people, meant that any language barrier or cognitive barrier was overcome, and you could see the build-up of ideas.”

Family Worker

The final manifesto was the idea of the parents, all of whom contributed to the final script for the presentation, so their ideas were present even if they themselves were absent. One improvement in this area, mentioned by a number of those interviewed, was for the senior leaders to have been brought into the process earlier – to have been part of the conversations and collaboration rather than simply receiving the final results.

Those who participated in the evaluation were asked how much they felt their voices were heard and on average scored this 6.9/10. All felt positive about the process itself,

but some reservations were expressed in terms of the extent to which their voices would really influence change.

“The end result will show how much we’re heard.” Expert Parent

Organisation and support

“It was accessible for many different types of people, and I think it really worked well.” Family Worker

Praise was universal for the project’s organisation and the support provided to parents in terms of accessibility. Laptops were delivered to homes when the project had to rapidly pivot online, (and families were able to keep them afterwards), while each workshop was repeated (one during the daytime and one in the evening) to maximise attendance. A weekly email bulletin provided regular, clear and consistent communication and one parent commented that they “always knew what to expect” – this reliability was particularly valued given the uncertainties of life in lockdown. Similarly, the facilitation of the session was appreciated for providing structure, focus and flow, building confidence in the participants.

“It was brilliant to get great people running it, and that they accommodated the evening group. This finally showed that they’re not out of touch with family’s lives”. Expert Parent

As is always the way with projects like these, time came up as a barrier. Some participants mentioned wanting more time during the sessions to ensure everyone was able to share as much as they wanted to, but also challenges in finding the time to participate when trying to juggle caring responsibilities. That said, the ongoing attendance of the Expert Parents shows that this balance was largely achieved.

Working online

“It’s a shame that it was virtual, but then there were some advantages to that, as well.” Family Worker

Undoubtedly the biggest challenge was the shift to online working when the second covid lockdown began. This necessitated a rapid rethinking of approach and a very

steep learning curve for all involved. Whilst not ideal, this did act as a bonding experience and helped remove some of the 'them and us' dynamics with everyone having to learn new tools such as Miro together.

For the Expert Parents, meeting online was convenient, in terms of being able to join the sessions from home, but also presented problems. Difficulties downloading or accessing online materials affected ease of participation, whilst children needed the laptop for homework and could be a distracting presence.

"I wanted to put my camera on but my children kept interrupting." Expert Parent

Overwhelmingly the biggest downside of online working for participants was not having the chance to meet each other in person, something which undoubtedly affected the strength of relationships developed. One participant felt that it might have been easier to stay in contact with their fellow parents if they'd spent time together in 'real life', with the incidental conversations that naturally enables. On the other hand, a Camden senior leader noted that virtual meetings allowed them to *"really hear"* from the parents who were presenting, in contrast to the formality and potentially intimidating set-up of an in-person meeting, where the parents may not have felt as confident.

Diversity and inclusion

"The different voices were very diverse, you could tell a lot of work had gone into achieving that." Senior Elected Member

The 20 parents came from 12 Camden wards, represented 11 different ethnicities - recruitment materials had been translated into Camden's most popular languages - and had children ranging from new-born baby to young adult. The final group was more diverse than those usually involved in council activities, paid for their participation and supported with access needs. However, the team felt that they could have done more within the workshops to support with translating and interpreting the complicated materials on screen - one participant was helped by their daughter rather than provided with specific support.

Most significant was the gender disparity - very few men took part in the project. This is not unusual within family services, but was highlighted by one senior leader that this was

perhaps even more reason to ensure their perspective is included. Regardless, the participating fathers themselves did not particularly feel outnumbered or exposed and really valued what the group provided them with.

“At first I was a bit unsure, not sure if I would stay, but as soon as it got going I didn’t feel different at all. It provided a space to get comfort.” Expert Parent (father)

It is worth noting that those who wanted to see more diversity in the group (including economic status, housing status, and those already receiving significant interventions from social services) were almost universally Camden staff. This demonstrates a commitment to continued improvement and a desire to ensure that all families within the borough are supported in a way which puts them first.

Partnership with Service Futures Lab at London College of Communication, UAL

“It was one of my favourite projects to work on” LCC Course Leader

All groups of interviewees identified the partnership with Service Futures Lab at London College of Communication (LCC), UAL as bringing unique benefits to the project. The frameworks, tools, rigour and insight brought by the students and staff was valued not just by Camden senior leaders, but the parents as well. Similarly, their presence as a neutral partner, rather than one connected to the council, likely made it easier for parents to be honest about their experiences and dispel perceptions of Camden leading proceedings. One participant noted that the involvement of the students enabled the group to be more creative and focus on ideas and solutions rather than returning to negatives.

From LCC’s perspective, the opportunity to work directly with the stakeholders added significantly to the learning gained by both staff and students, as well as increasing their commitment and motivation to the work – this was “real” co-design, rather than theory. In addition, the course leader highlighted how collaborative and dedicated to the idea of design justice this particular cohort of students were, which she felt had a big influence on its success.

“I cried most when students presented their designs to bring the parents ideas to life because I could see how they’d listened.” Family Early Help team member

Final presentation and Good Help Manifesto

"It had a piece of everyone's experience and input, everyone's joy and hardship."
Expert Parent

The clear highlight of the whole experience for everyone involved was the final presentation, online to over 100 attendees including Camden senior leaders. This required bravery from the parents, but the positive response they received showed them that their voices had truly been heard and their insights taken seriously. It was described as uplifting, inspiring and incredibly powerful by those who attended.

"It was so powerful because it was their voice, not professionals. The people we work FOR speaking power to the highest levels is a rare opportunity (although it shouldn't be)." Community partner

A large part of this positive response was due to the content shared and the Good Help Manifesto itself. On a purely surface level, its visual and creative design makes it stand out against other corporate documents (although suggested improvements include making it a little less cluttered and easier to read). But most important is its clarity and how accessibly it communicates complex concepts in a way which resonates with multiple different audiences. All those from Camden interviewed for this evaluation could see how the manifesto could be used in many different ways to shape and improve practice, attributing this to the Expert Parents.

"It's quite a simple thing; the power of it is its authenticity, where it comes from, and the structure of it... allows it to be used very readily." Senior Leader

"I didn't expect such a complete framework, so much about Early Help but also beyond – other services and areas... I actually loved being able to see examples of bad support –you can use it in a non-judgemental way to help people recognise themselves and use it in training and staff support. And to promise that we'll change that [bad help]. You could give this to a GP, an officer, caretaker and it could be genuinely useful because it has been co-designed with real insight and meaning." Senior Elected Member

Managing expectations and maintaining communication

“We never hear if anything happens” Expert Parent

The biggest concern raised by parents was what would actually happen as a result of their work. The evaluation took place more than six months after the completion of the project and a number of parents were disillusioned about the impact they had actually had within Camden. None of the parents felt that anything had changed in their own families or communities – some still had hope that they might, but others displayed more anger in their responses.

“I haven’t heard anything about getting the right service. But I still think one day the project will help this.” Expert Parent

“I want to see the outcome of the work, not talk about outcomes for myself. There is no “victory” for me without knowing if anything has happened. We established our ideology, we need to see the outcome, what measures have been taken, tangible and viable and visible changes.” Expert Parent

For one parent, the lack of change made the positive response they’d received feel somewhat hollow.

“There was plenty of gratitude to us for sharing. But it is one thing to collect information, another for parents to be really generous and honest in sharing. We never hear if anything happens. Or if we do, it is too late and will no longer apply to us. It takes so long and is hit and miss if they actually revisit us. It is very tricky for parents when they keep asking and keep getting the same answers from us, and nothing changes.” Expert Parent

For those parents who participated in the project in the hope of directly improving their family’s lives, disappointment may have been somewhat inevitable if their expectations (e.g. for specific service changes) could never have been matched by the remit of the work; whether this was specifically addressed is unclear.

Despite these perceptions, the Good Help Manifesto has been influencing Camden’s policies and practices, as will be explored in Section 4. However, this had obviously not

been communicated with the parents, although some have been involved in sharing the work in other settings such as the Children's Trust Partnership Board.

As the parent above noted, feedback loops with participants are rarely maintained following projects like these, leading to 'consultation fatigue' and potentially damaging the trust and relationships which were so valued during the project itself. In reality, this is rarely deliberate but due to workload pressures, the short-term nature of projects, and a lack of planning and/or funding for sustaining contact, as one of the community partners noted.

"I want to see it in action, not shelved, a priority and the parents to see the benefits of what they created. You can't evaluate until you have a conclusion or celebrate when you're not finished. The local authority should be honest if there are delays and take responsibility." Community Partner.

Communication has been maintained with the group on an ad hoc basis, to promote other opportunities within Camden and the team have expressed their desire to make sure the parents see the results of their work and remain involved as much as they would like to be. It seems that this has yet to translate to a concrete offer, although the appetite is there; many of the parents wanted to carry on, even suggesting ideas for how they could be part of the delivery or act as champions.

It is understandable that planning for the sustainability of this work was not a priority given the situation with the pandemic and the subsequent crises which the Family Early Help team have had to deal with (including welcoming refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine) on top of their usual workload. This report can hopefully be the starting point for conversations around how the Expert Parents can be kept informed about how the Good Help Manifesto is used, and around opportunities for them to continue making a difference.

4. What impact has the Good Help Manifesto had within Camden?

Influencing change at an organisational level

“It’s ethically the right thing to do but actually it’s practically the right thing to do” Senior Leader

Following the final presentation to senior leaders, the Good Help Manifesto has been shared widely in Camden largely thanks to Becca Dove (Head of Family Early Help) presenting it to different teams and holding detailed conversations with specific officers in influential roles. Becca has also used it to develop practice within her own team and it has influenced the development of multiple new strategies, as well as inspiring others who are beginning co-design in their own work.

“Doing it [co-design and participation] is incredibly challenging and difficult to achieve. So, to see that writ large in the project is very helpful from my point of view.” Housing Senior Leader

First and foremost, the Good Help Manifesto has been instrumental in the work of the Family Services team, informing practice and acting as a touchstone for reflection and to inform planning. However, its reach and impact has been greater than this, as shown in the table below; it has acted as a building block for other projects and strategies.

Family Services	Education	Other
Presented and discussed in detail at the Camden Children’s Partnership Trust Board	Mentioned in conversations with the Department of Education	Ideas, language and approach reflected in Health and Wellbeing Strategy
Ideas, language and approach influencing the Camden Resilient Families Framework and informing the programme refresh	Cited in Camden’s new education strategy, ‘Build Back Stronger’ and its implementation plan	Mentioned in conversations with the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Health and Social Care
Directly influenced Camden’s successful application for funding from the Department of Education to expand advice and guidance provision in community settings – with roles for residents in this work.	Recommended as the ‘practice standard’ to inform schools’ engagement with families	Influencing approaches to co-design and support for families in hostels and temporary accommodation.

The above is just a snapshot of the *known* influence of the work – the full extent may be much greater. Part of the challenge for the Family Services team has been to keep track of where the project may be informing practice; this is particularly so within Camden, where it is part of a wider shift towards relational, participatory and strengths-based work.

The Family Changemakers and Good Help Manifesto has also had a personal and professional impact on those who work within Camden, as explored in Section 1. However, this extends to challenging the thinking of those who saw the final presentation or have been in subsequent meetings.

“The Family Changemakers’ work is really important because these journeys are very complex; they’re not linear; everyone’s got a unique situation and the systems find it hard to look at the whole family and act contextually and holistically. And it’s good to have anything that might help us with that.” Housing Senior Leader

“I expected to be surprised, by which I mean, I thought I knew that certain things would be said, but I also knew that both the way that it was presented, and the content, would illuminate things in a way which I wasn’t necessarily expecting.” Senior Leader

Hopes for the future...

“No-one knows better how to serve the communities of Camden than the communities of Camden.” Housing Senior Leader

Everyone interviewed for this evaluation expressed their hope that the Good Help Manifesto itself would become further embedded across Camden, but also that its approach would be replicated elsewhere.

“I’d like to see it go on and spread into mainstream good practice. It’s strong in that aspect in children’s services but inconsistent across council. The leader is keen that it does go beyond this though, and all the officers are talking about relational work. It does take time though.” Senior Elected Member

Specific ideas mentioned (particularly by senior leaders) involved using the Good Help Value Statements and Principles to develop simple evaluation tools, both for staff self-reflection and to gather resident feedback. They also spoke about wanting to use it to inform and influence practice within and beyond Camden, seeing it as an exemplar both of genuine co-design and family help. Elsewhere, the versatility of the manifesto and the potential for it to be translated and applied to different areas particularly stood out to family workers and community partners.

“Bits of the manifesto could be used in different ways...You don’t need to create more stuff to go with it, but services need to own it and live it.” Family Worker

Beyond the project itself, those working in other services with less experience of co-design and participatory practice were confident that this approach had the potential to transform their services too.

“It hasn’t changed a lot yet, because of the Changemakers’ project: we haven’t fully got there yet, but I know that with Becca’s expert guiding hand, and a bit of extra funding from government, there are things we can do to really drive that in.” Housing Senior Leader

Similarly, a number of interviewees expressed an ambition to develop projects which offered qualifications or further opportunities, creating pathways for residents to get involved in multiple areas of the council’s activities.

... and what might get in the way

“The real question is – how much will we listen?” Senior Elected Member

Alongside what they would like to happen, interviewees also identified potential barriers to the work realising its full potential.

“The most challenging thing is to make sure that we don’t just honour the activity of it – recognise that this is a great piece of work – but actually translate that into real difference in people’s lives. We need to make sure that this set of principles and these ideas are embedded through participative design so that it develops and evolves, rather than being a moment in time where we recognize something we need to do differently, but the system falls back to its default position.” Senior Leader

Practical challenges

Having the time to give this work the attention it deserves, both to implement and share it more widely, is an ongoing challenge. This has been exacerbated by years of austerity and the pandemic, with exhausted workforces trying to do more with fewer resources. All the areas this project touches – family services, housing, education and health and care – are increasingly stretched and facing rising demand. Arguably, developing this co-design approach and embedding the Good Help Manifesto across services would actually lead to increased community capabilities, improve outcomes and reduce the need for statutory support.

“If we can harbour the goodwill, support and even help of our communities, it’s a lot cheaper than us doing everything. It is part of trying to mitigate against the shrinking of the welfare state, and public service.” Housing Senior Leader

However, both the council and partner agencies are facing shrinking budgets and this raises questions about how services can balance meeting short-term needs with investing in longer-term changes. The pressure to see results quickly in the day-to-day activity of services could stand in the way of the deeper work the Good Help approach requires, as well as the ability of the project team to champion and communicate it. Keeping the manifesto principles on the agenda of other teams, each working to their own priorities, is a big ask for the project team and one which they are unable to do alone. In an organisation as large and complex as Camden, there is only so much that they can do.

Cultural and systemic challenges

“Having parent champions in the room [at The Children’s Partnership Trust Board] clearly leads to different conversations happening. We had an item on the manifesto and everyone was energised by their presence. It’s refreshing to get these voices involved but it’s hard to see how to put it into practice when work is organised in the council’s bureaucratic ways.” Senior Elected Member

The wider systems of family services, health and care, education, and local and national government are not set up to work relationally and truly put the needs of residents and families at the heart. Translating one-off projects into sustained changes in practice requires investment in different skills and capacity as well as system-wide structural and cultural change. This work takes longer and can’t be ‘measured’ easily, so may

therefore be seen as risky in an outputs and targets-focused world. There is also the potential for 'change fatigue' where new initiatives and reorganisations come and go, especially following the pandemic.

Conclusion: Camden's commitment

"I want parents to see the change, to be open and responsive. I want to help make sure the work is always fit to meet the needs of Camden residents." Family Early Help Team Member

Despite these barriers, it is clear that Camden are committed to moving towards this way of working at every level, from the Chief Executive and Council Leader through to the family workers and community partners on the ground. Already, the Good Help Manifesto and Family Changemakers project is having an impact at strategic and practice levels, and is fundamentally aligned to Camden 2025 (the council's vision and plan).

There are challenges, and its development and implementation will not be perfect. But the fact that the interviewees acknowledge what might get in the way, yet still reiterate personal and organisational faith in the work and a determination to do justice to it – alongside the Expert Parents and other residents – sends a strong message.

"If we say to external influential groups and policymakers and heads of government departments 'we're doing this' and then we don't do them. That's not a great place to be. We're holding ourselves to account by talking about it."
Senior Leader

While the ongoing involvement of the Expert Parents in this work has been patchy, this is primarily a result of circumstances and the challenges highlighted above, rather than any deliberate practice. All the conversations in this evaluation ultimately returned to the parents and their contributions; identifying and developing ongoing roles for them and other Camden residents is something the team intend to work towards. This evaluation report can hopefully act as a catalyst to re-engage them in realising Camden's commitment to delivering good help for all its families.

"We know what's best' is wrong. We need to invest in time and space for deeper and more meaningful change to emerge, and hold it to account. It's hard to prove in the short term but in the long term we have to have faith in the

approach and trust the families. We need to learn this across the council."

Senior Elected Member

"I would say to another Camden resident to give it a go! You never know, but it may have a positive influence on future outcomes, even though it may not happen early enough for our own families. Your voice will be heard and listened [to]. They care about your opinion. I would [like] to let others know how valuable their ideas and suggestions are seen". Expert Parent

5. If you're thinking about a project like this....

The overwhelming message from those who were part of Family Changemakers would be – do it!

Co-design and participatory practice meaningfully shares power with those who are experts in their own lives and values their contributions equally. This doesn't just happen; it requires thought, preparation and a continuous process of reflection and learning.

Below are some prompt questions drawn from the Family Changemakers project learning – both what worked well and what could be improved. We hope you'll find these useful as you start thinking about your own project.

What...?

- ... are you doing to clarify and communicate the remit of this project – what it can and cannot change for those involved?
- ... are you doing to create a genuinely reciprocal space, where everyone's contributions are valued?

Who...?

- ... might be missing in your project – and how can you bring them in?
- ... can you collaborate with to bring in relevant skills and act as a neutral partner?
- ... should the results of your project be shared with and who should be involved in doing that sharing?

Where...?

- ... would be the most appropriate places – physical or virtual – for your group to meet and work together?

How...?

- ... will you maintain communication, engagement and involvement with your participants once the co-design is finished?
- ... will you capture, keep track of and learn from the impact your project is having?
- ... will you translate the project outputs into practical tools and materials that can be applied by others?

6. Appendix: Further information about the evaluation

Evaluation design

Data for this evaluation was gathered from Expert Parents, Camden staff, Camden senior leaders, and other project partners via:

- Two focus groups (one online and one in-person) with creative methods
- Online survey
- Nine interviews
- Analysis of project outputs and other materials

In total, 10 Camden staff, senior or elected leaders and project partners participated in the evaluation. Four parents responded to the survey and seven attended focus groups, out of a possible 20.

Co-evaluation reflections

All of the evaluation activities were co-designed and co-delivered by Lizzie, Alice and Hafsa working in partnership. Lizzie took the lead on analysis and writing this report, with Alice and Hafsa preferring to act as editors, as well as leading on the focus group delivery and some of the semi-structured interviews.

Working as a team brought real benefit to our work and maintained the ethos of the project itself. Alice and Hafsa brought a deep understanding of Camden and the experiences of the parents, as well as creative ideas and insight (e.g. use of interactive Venn and H diagrams with post-its in-person and online via Jamboard).

The evaluation was not commissioned until after the project had finished. We all found this challenging in terms of our understanding of what had happened and securing engagement from participants; this was even more the case when external circumstances meant that the evaluation was delayed, took longer than anticipated and did not include the children of the Expert Parents as originally planned. On the other hand, this delay gave more time for outcomes to emerge within Camden.

In future, we would suggest bringing in evaluators or even learning partners at the beginning of the project and asking them to support the co-design process itself. The insider/outsider role of learning partner allows for more iterative evaluative activity which can improve the project as it is taking place.

