



Co-Production  
Collective

# Evaluation of the Camden Family Changemakers Good Help for Families Project

**Summary**

# Project Background

- Camden Family Changemakers was a co-design project between Camden parents and family members, UAL London College of Communication (LCC) Service Design Masters students and Camden Council. They came together to create a design vision for good help for families after the COVID pandemic.
- The project began in January 2021 and concluded in April 2021. The project started the same week as the third national COVID lockdown and was delivered 100% online.
- 20 Camden parents and family members formed a project Expert Parent Group. They came from 12 Camden wards, represented 11 different ethnicities, and had children ranging from newborn baby to young adult.
- Parents met every two weeks online to develop their ideas for what good help should feel like and what good help should be. They then met with students online once a fortnight to share their insights. The students then turned their insights into service design concepts.
- The children of the Expert Parent Group participated through artwork and descriptive writing.
- A film of the project is available here ([232 Camden Family Changemakers - YouTube](#))
- The Camden Family Changemakers Good Help for Families Manifesto is [here](#)

## Evaluation Method

- Undertaken by UCL Coproduction Collective in partnership with two Camden Community Researchers
- Ran from October 2021 to June 2022
- Focus groups and interviews with Expert Parent Group members
- 121 interviews with local authority senior leaders, politicians and officers, community leaders, staff and students at LCC.
- Review of project material and recordings

### The evaluation set out to:

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

# Findings

## Value reported by expert parent group members:

- **Confidence building** – particularly participating in the final presentation
- **Pride** – contributing something meaningful to the wider community
- **Skills development** – particularly use of IT and English language development
- **Wellbeing** – helped with mental health during lock down

- **New connections** – hearing others sharing their experiences and mutual understanding
- **Family relationships** – feeling closer to their children and grandchildren who got involved in the project activities
- **Appreciation of Camden** – as a place and for the opportunity to be heard
- **New participation opportunities** – including become parent champions, taking on other voluntary roles or gaining employment

“

*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)**

“

*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**

## Value reported by others involved in the project:

- Involvement of students helped the group to be **creative and focus on ideas and solutions**
- Students felt they deepened their understanding of policy and service co-design and working with the parents **added to their learning, commitment and motivation to the work**
- Camden staff and the parents valued the **frameworks, tools, rigour and insight** brought by the students and LCC staff
- Early help workers felt it had **helped and informed their own practice**
- Senior leaders felt they could see how the Good Help Manifesto could be **used** in many different ways to **shape and improve practice**

# Findings

## Areas for improvement/learning for next time:

- **Show us the difference the work makes** – some parents had reservations about the extent to which their voices would really influence change and wanted to be kept more informed about what had changed; more regular communication after the project would have helped.
- **Bring senior leaders into the process earlier** – to have them as part of the conversation and collaboration
- **Make ongoing opportunities to participate and maintain feedback loops** once a project has ended
- **Participating online can be difficult** – participants would have valued the opportunity to meet in person and the length of sessions was challenging (sometimes not enough time but also tiring being on Zoom for long periods)

“ 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** ”

“ 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, viable and visible changes.  
**Expert Parent** ”

“ The most challenging thing is to make sure that we don't just honour the activity of it 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** ”

## Final thought from a parent

“

*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**