



Ageing Better in Camden

Ageing Better in Camden

Interim evaluation report

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Executive summary

Ageing Better in Camden (ABC) is a six-year programme that aims to address social isolation and loneliness in older people (over the age of 60) living in Camden. The programme is intended to produce the following outcomes:

- Older people at risk from or experiencing social isolation will be more involved in their communities and provide stronger support to each other.
- Older people will experience less social isolation as a result of participation in programme activities.
- Services which address the social isolation of older people (SIOP) in Camden are more relevant and better co-ordinated, with increased numbers of older people engaged in their design and delivery.

With £4.5m of Big Lottery funding, ABC has commissioned a range of projects in order to build a body of evidence that can support increased awareness and knowledge relating to SIOP, both locally and more widely.

Traverse is conducting an independent evaluation of the programme. This is the first of two interim evaluation reports exploring the outcomes that ABC-funded projects are having and the extent to which these align with ABC's aims. This report draws on rich qualitative data from conversations (interviews and focus groups) with project participants and project leads, as well as quantitative data from participant demographic surveys.

This report can be used to provide emerging indications and individual participant stories about how projects are achieving progress, the impacts they are having on some participants, and whether these fall in line with ABC's aims. In the drafting process, each project chapter was checked with the project leads for accuracy. However, it should not be read as a comprehensive description and progress check of each of the projects, as it relies on data from a small selection of individuals from each project and therefore cannot be fully representative of all project participants' views and experiences.

Key findings by project

In this phase of the evaluation, we report on the progress of the 8 projects funded by ABC that were more established at this time. An additional 4 projects will be included in the next phase of the evaluation. These 8 projects are described in the table below. Each entry covers

- The delivery partners involved and no. of registered participants since the ABC contract commenced;
 - The number of participants who took part in an interview or focus group;
 - The project's key aims and activities;
 - How the project is structured; and
 - The key findings from the qualitative evaluation research, covering the impacts achieved and how the project might be improved.
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Conclusions

Project impacts

Across the groups and interviews, participants tended to have high levels of satisfaction with the projects, and identified the following positive impacts which support ABC's aims:

- Reduced social isolation and increased wellbeing.
- Increased confidence and independence.
- Stronger relationships across communities and generations.

When it comes to achieving impacts, stakeholders and project leads cited the challenges of supporting people with complex needs who cannot easily be supported in community settings as well as a lack of appropriate services and support e.g. befriending services, and community transport.

Role played by staff

Frontline staff are playing a pivotal role in enabling participants to achieve positive impacts. The positive qualities and ways of working include:

- Being friendly, developing rapport and joining activities with participants.
- Enabling participants to feel that they're part of how the project is run and able to make suggestions about changes
- Going 'above and beyond' to facilitate participation, e.g. collecting a wheelchair user from home, but also regular communication/reminders to service users about events and activities – making people feel 'looked after'.

Where projects have built on pre-existing groups and activities, they have tended to take longstanding participants with them. There is some evidence that these participants are well placed to welcome and support new joiners.

The relationship between long standing participants and new joiners is a theme that can be further explored in the next phase of the evaluation.

Pathways into the programme

Projects are using a wide variety of engagement approaches to recruit participants. However, across the board there is evidence that projects are struggling to engage the most socially isolated older people.

It was suggested that there needed to be more recruitment at the contact points where people could be identified as being on the cusp of social isolation, before they become isolated and harder to reach e.g. through GPs/other service partners.

The programme has acknowledged the need for more contact with those who are socially isolated and not known to services and has therefore developed the Outreach Project.



How participants are experiencing the project

New joiners tend to identify with a single activity. However, as time progresses, they may build more of an attachment to the lead organisation or to the community centre where it takes place.

There is evidence of increased social resilience as participants go to more than one activity and build networks. Furthermore, across most projects 'super participants' have emerged, who attend multiple sessions per week and/ or are support others to be involved.

Participants tend not to be aware that they are part of a larger programme called Ageing Better in Camden.

If the programme has ambitions to be 'greater than the sum of its parts', there could be value in exploring how to raise levels of awareness.

Project structure and delivery models

ABC funded projects have various models and structures:

- Most projects have one lead organisation which works to different degrees with community centres and other local assets to deliver a rolling schedule of activities and events.
- Other projects are made up of organisations working in partnerships – they tend to have a central management group, but each partner will host and deliver activities.
- One project organises time limited courses working with a range of settings/organisations to recruit participants. It works across the borough with a range of groups and settings, 'threading' through the other ABC projects.

When it comes to delivering activities, successful ways of working have included:

- Hosting activities across multiple venues in communities, which encourages people to explore new areas and meet new people.
- At the same time, holding most events within a single centre can build familiarity and encourage those with less confidence to stay engaged, and may also reduce accessibility issues for those with more limited mobility.
- Providing different tiers/ intensities of activities that are appropriate to older people with different levels of health and mobility.
- Offering a range of activities/ sessions that meet older people's varying preferences and interests.

In the next phase of the evaluation, there would be value in exploring the pros and cons associated with the different staffing models and structures used across the programme, as well as the development of partnerships and different types of asset-based working.




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Co-production with participants

Many examples have emerged of how participants are informing and developing what is offered (co-design) as well as contributing to the delivery of the projects (co-production).

When it comes to co-production the evaluation has found that key enablers include a diverse range of options for people's involvement and an approach that supports participants to move up or down a ladder of participation. The various co-production actions or steps that emerged across the projects are set out below.

Longer-term involvement

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- Advising/managing an element of the project
 - Leading an activity
 - Contributing to an activity/event
 - Helping others to learn or do
 - Encouraging/supporting new joiners to settle in and feel comfortable
 - Supporting others to take part
 - Encouraging others to take part

Initial involvement

There would be value in looking further at how projects that fall into these categories are successfully shifting participants away from being more passive 'consumers' of services/activities to being active contributors.

The evaluation found that all projects are attempting to build co-production into their practice. However, across the programme, there are different starting points. The evaluation found that there were:

- 1) Newly formed projects who have attempted to build in co-production approaches from the outset.
- 2) Well-established projects with a track record/ commitment to co-production.
- 3) Established organisations which are now seeking to develop their practice around co-production.

Systems working

Systems working will help ABC to achieve its aim of creating more relevant and better co-ordinated services in the borough. To date there has been limited evidence collected about the extent to which ABC has been achieving or working towards systems level impacts. To date the evaluation team has identified the following examples:

- Bangladeshi CAP has a strand of work to develop partnerships with local mosques and to help them raise awareness of and drive recruitment to the project. There are few similar examples across other projects.
- The Third Age Project has developed some referral pathways with various



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local services e.g. a falls clinic, a mental health service to gain new participants.

The Community Connectors project has the potential to make a significant contribution at the systems level by helping to develop new referral pathways, identifying gaps between provision and needs, connecting more vulnerable older people to relevant projects and helping older people to join a variety of Ageing Better in Camden Projects.

The role played by Community Connectors will be explored in the next phase of qualitative research.

We will also explore the extent to which projects have set strategic goals around creating systems change and are working towards them. It will also look at the role of the Older People's Advisory Group (OPAG) and the Strategic board in informing service commissioning and planning in the borough.



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
Digital Inclusion, Mary Ward Centre 417 registered participants 15 evaluation participants	Digital inclusion provided dedicated classes where project staff provide training and support to use technology. Activities include iPad photography classes, singing classes with iPads, and local history project with iPads.	The project lead at Mary Ward oversees and plans sessions, which are delivered by a team of teachers who deliver session in a range of settings.	<p>The fact that the project is geographically flexible, and not rooted to a specific place has helped with widening its reach.</p> <p>The positive impacts associated with taking part in the sessions included learning new things, improved mental wellbeing, meeting new people and becoming more confident in social settings.</p> <p>Suggested improvements include better accommodating those without Apple devices and integrating the use of mobile phones into the sessions.</p>



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
Men's Action, North London Cares 268 registered participants 18 evaluation participants	Men's Action aims to create activities which appeal to men who are generally less engaged in social activities than women. Activities include men's cookery, podcast recordings, gig and quiz nights and photography.	North London Cares runs a large programme of activities through both projects. From the perspective of a participant there is no distinction between the two projects, and many attend activities from both.	Participants appreciate the range of activities on offer and intergenerational connections that are being supported. NLC activities are felt to provide alleviation from life struggles, including ill-health, caring responsibilities and loneliness.
Intergenerational activities, North London Cares 640 registered participants 10 evaluation participants	The intergenerational project focuses on activities that bring older and younger people together. Activities include work place visits, a weekly social club and movie nights.		The role played by staff in facilitating activities has been important to their success, ensuring that everyone feels welcome. It was suggested that more could be done to help people shift from acquaintances to friendships.



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
Kilburn Community Action, Kilburn Older Voices Exchange (KOVE) 443 registered participants 12 evaluation participants	KOVE aims to improve the quality of life for older residents through supporting older people's engagement and involvement in their local communities. Activities include an older person's steering group, community forums (which are member-run and host discussions on local issues), bench-to-bench walks and a cinema club.	KOVE is led by a job-share between two coordinators and a member-led steering group. The project also places a strong focus on regular members taking an active role in the design and delivery of project activities.	The project has been supporting older people to take community leadership roles and has enabled them to better influence and challenge decisions that affect them in the local area. The bench-to-bench walks were felt to have a range of impacts, including increased social contact, physical fitness and engagement with the local area. The bench-to-bench walks could be made more inclusive through catering for individuals with different abilities.



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
LGBT+ Connect, Opening Doors London/ Age UK Camden 268 registered participants 8 evaluation participants	LGBT+ Connect provides opportunities for older Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans people in Camden to meet and socialise with one another. Activities include singing sessions, creative writing, computer drop-ins, speaker and movie nights, and a coffee and cake club.	The project lead based at Opening Doors London oversees and coordinates activities. A team of volunteers deliver the activities in a range of settings across Camden.	Participants felt that the activities were having a positive effect on their wellbeing. Male participants felt that activities were immediately welcoming. Female participants felt that activities should be made more inclusive for women through better facilitation and that the channels of communication between hub leads and participants could be improved.



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
We are Ageing Better St Pancras and Somers Town (WAAB), Origin Housing 392 registered participants 15 evaluation participants	WAAB aims to reduce isolation encourage active citizenship and support greater interaction between four distinct communities in the area. Activities include art sessions, fish and chips socials and Somers Town Voice Meetings.	WAAB is led by a part-time Project Coordinator based at The St Pancras and Somers Town Living Centre. They are supported by a steering group and 11 volunteers.	<p>Holding activities across community venues, and moving activities between them is enabling participants to meet more new people.</p> <p>Participants are starting to take ownership of running activities and are welcoming newcomers, supported by an approachable Coordinator</p> <p>Where certain activities such as the trips have become oversubscribed, participants felt that a seat rotation system would be fairer than a “first-come-first-served” approach.</p>



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
Regent's Park CAP, Third Age Project 367 registered participants 11 evaluation participants	The Third Age Project works in a diverse area and aims to target older people who experience cultural and language barriers when trying to access mainstream services. Activities include an English club, exercise clubs and a luncheon club.	The project is led by a manager and project support worker. As part of its work with ABC, the project has increased its volunteer base to 37 and it is supporting volunteers to lead activities, attend monthly forum meetings and operate as Trustees.	<p>The use of mostly one venue has meant that activities are accessible and convenient and that residents, including those from different backgrounds, are becoming more connected.</p> <p>Participants are consistently positive about the quality of activities on offer and the impact of participating, which includes making new friends and connections and improved physical and mental well-being.</p> <p>Some participants are apprehensive about contributing to the delivery of the project. This highlights the importance of including light touch and one-off opportunities to contribute.</p>



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
Bangladeshi CAP, Hopscotch Asian Women's Centre (lead partner), the Bengali Workers Association and Kings Cross Brunswick Neighbourhood Association. 125 registered participants 16 evaluation participants	Whilst a key focus is on working with the Bangladeshi community, the project also aims to build and strengthen connections between residents from different ethnic backgrounds. Activities include chair based exercise classes, walking groups, massage classes, tea and coffee morning and community lunches. The project is also focused on working with strategic partners in the area to raise awareness and support recruitment.	The project has a core team of coordinators and managers, based across the three organisations who are involved in managing and overseeing the project as well as delivering activities, alongside volunteers and specialist practitioners to run sessions.	The regular activities hosted by the project are leading to many positive impacts, including improved physical and mental well-being and greater independence. There is evidence that the project is encouraging participants to take an active role, contributing to the delivery in a range of ways. A popular request is for more days out in the mix of activities, because in their day-to-day lives participants go to a limited number of places.



Project, delivery org, no. of registered participants, no. of evaluation participants	Activities	Structure and delivery	Key findings
Gospel Oak and Haverstock CAP (Our Three Points), Kentish Town City Farm (lead partner), Castlehaven Community Association and Queen's Crescent Community Association. 119 registered participants 9 evaluation participants	The project aims to build connections between local people, places and nature and between the three participating centres. Activities include Knit, Make & Sew sessions, coffee morning events, yoga and exercise classes, social lunches and one-off activities e.g. intergenerational pottery.	The project is led by a Partnerships Manager and Coordinator based at Kentish Town City Farm who works across all three centres. They are supported by a growing team of 10 volunteers, and a steering group that shapes project delivery and supports communications.	<p>In line with the project's aim, project participants are also moving between the three participating community centres to attend activities.</p> <p>Activities cater to differing levels of physical mobility. Being in a class suited to their ability appears to have sustained individual's involvement in the project, and also led to other benefits such as increased confidence.</p> <p>People called for further engagement activities to increase the numbers of participants, e.g. working alongside GP surgeries, placing adverts in local publications and introducing less formal activities such as walking groups.</p>



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