



Briefing Note – Camden Family Changemakers Project March 2021

What is Family Changemakers Project?

Family Changemakers is a participatory design project, to create a design vision for good help for Camden families after COVID. The design vision is co-created by a group of 20 Camden parents and family members, and 32 students on the UAL London College of Communication Service Design Masters course.

The project is run by Camden Family Early Help Service in the Supporting People Directorate of Camden Council. The project was developed in partnership with the Public Collaboration Lab, which brings design education and public services together on collaborative projects. The project ran from 18 January to 26 March 2021, with a final presentation to senior Camden leaders in April 2021.

The 20 parents came from 12 Camden wards, represented 11 different ethnicities and had children ranging from new-born baby to young adult. The whole project took place online during the third national COVID lockdown.

Why was Family Changemakers Project Started?

In October 2020, Camden Family Early Help began planning their post-COVID service strategy. We recognised that COVID will have a lasting impact on family life in Camden. The challenges that families would face after COVID might be different to the challenges before COVID. Just as family needs were changing, our service - and other services supporting children and families - might need to change.

Families living in Camden are best placed to understand and explain the strengths of families in their communities, the challenges those families might face after COVID, and what help they might want. Camden families should have power to influence the ways in which local services and organisations provide help for families after COVID, and the decision-making about it.

We also wanted to understand how families would describe what 'good help' feels like for them. Camden families are best placed to explain what families need to feel safe to seek help, and for help to be a positive experience. This would be particularly important post-COVID, as help for families may have felt less visible during long periods of social restrictions.

Camden Family Changemakers was created to inform those two questions – how good help for families should feel, and what good help for families should be after COVID.

What Methods Does Family Changemakers Project Use?

After researching participation methods, and liaising with experts in the co-design and participation disciplines, we chose a project model based on three approaches:

- **Deliberative dialogue** - *using consensus-building techniques, enabling participants to work together to develop an agreed view or set of recommendations. Participants may then be involved in taking their recommendations forward to decision-makers.*

- **Participatory design** – a democratic process for design of systems involving human work, where users are involved in designs they will be using, and that all stakeholders, including and especially users, have equal input into the design process.
- **Design justice** – an approach to design that is led by often marginalized communities and that aims to challenge structural inequalities.

What does Family Changemakers Hope to Achieve?

The project purpose, as articulated by the Family Changemakers Expert Parent Group, is summarised in this graphic:



The project's anticipated outcomes/outputs are:

- A design vision for what good help for Camden families should look and feel like after COVID
- Increased insight into the challenges families feel they may face after COVID and what help they feel they might want or need, as expressed by Camden families
- Presentation of this design vision to decision-makers and leaders in Camden who would use it to inform their strategic or operational delivery post-COVID, and ensure the design vision was incorporated into Camden post-pandemic recovery and renewal plans.
- For the Expert Parents Group to have feedback from those leaders three months after the presentation, about what change had taken place as a result of their design vision

How Does Family Changemakers Project Work?

There are two key strands of the Changemakers Project:

Expert Parents Group

In December 2020, we put out an open call for Camden parents and family members to join an Expert Parents Group for the project. The Expert Parents Group is the central foundation of the

project, providing views, wisdoms, experience and insight into family needs during and after COVID, and influencing all stages of the design work.

We pay for the Expert Parents Group's time, in line with participatory and co-design principles. Each Expert Parents Group member receives a voucher for every hour worked on the project, at London Living Wage rate.

We were keen to ensure the demographic of the group was representative of families who use early help services. The service worked with the Council's Participation Team to examine the demographic of families who accessed early help in the last 3 years, looking at gender, age of children, ethnicity and home ward, and created a demographic sample to aim for in the group recruitment.

20 parents applied to be part of the Expert Parent Group. 19 have been active throughout the project. Four additional parents joined the project at week 3. The group demographic is a broad match for the demographic sample we had hoped for, and no second stage recruitment process was needed.

We also invited 4 Camden Family Early Help staff, who live and work in Camden, to join the Expert Parent Group meetings. The staff join as participants not as professionals, and ensures there is reciprocity and an opportunity to listen and learn from each other.

Student Group

Through connections between the Public Collaboration Lab, Camden Council, and the UAL London College of Communication (LCC), it was agreed that the Family Changemakers project would be a term curriculum project for the LCC Service Design Masters students in 2021. There are 32 students in the year group, who worked in groups on the project.

Two graduate interns also supported the Family Early Help Head of Service to plan and deliver the Expert Parent Group online workshops, and provide the bridge between the two groups.

How the Two Groups Work Together

Expert Parent Group met every two weeks online. In between, the group had a take-home task that gathers views and opinions from other families in their community wherever possible. The insight from their meetings was synthesized by the graduate interns and provided to the Student Group. The Student Group then created visualisations and design concepts based on the parents' insight, alongside discovery work into the family help system in Camden and online sessions with parents and key stakeholders. The students work was then fed back to the parents group, in a constant feedback loop. Parents also received a fortnightly project bulletin so they can see how the project is progressing.

How does Family Changemakers Work?

