

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b> Camden Community Champions	
<b>REPORT OF:</b> Director of Public Health	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> The Health and Wellbeing Board	<b>DATE</b> 20 December 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>Community Champions is a pilot programme to deliver resident-led approaches to health and wellbeing, focused on housing estates in three areas in Camden (Regent’s Park, Kentish Town, and Kilburn). The programme has been running since April 2020 and is currently funded to March 2024.</p> <p>Public Health fund a Champion Co-ordinator in each of the three areas, hosted by a community organisation. The Co-ordinator’s role is focused on engaging residents to understand their priorities to improve health and wellbeing, to recruit, train and support a network of Champions to deliver activities and initiatives to address community needs raised by residents, and act as a bridge between residents and services.</p> <p>This report is intended to provide a progress report on the Community Champions programme and the contribution the programme is making towards the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, particularly the Community connectedness and friendships priority. It also highlights some of the learning from the four-year programme.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Sharon Dunn Participation Lead, Camden Council 5 Pancras Square, N1C 4AG <a href="mailto:sharon.dunn@camden.gov.uk">sharon.dunn@camden.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Ian Sandford Public Health Strategist, Camden Council 5 Pancras Square, N1C 4AG <a href="mailto:ian.sandford@camden.gov.uk">ian.sandford@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>It is recommended that the Health and Wellbeing Board:</p>	

- Note the findings of this report and the wide range of benefits linked to Camden's Community Champions programme, relevant to Camden's Health & Wellbeing Strategy, Estates Mission, and Food Mission.
- Note the proposal to continue the work of the Community Champions for another year, to enable further development of the model, with co-ordinators developing their community empowering role across a wider area, and embedding the findings from the forthcoming external evaluation into the programme.
- Identify any potential matched sources of funding alongside a starting commitment from the Council's Health & Wellbeing Department.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMcGregor', written in a cursive style.

Jess McGregor  
Executive Director of Adults and Health  
Date: 8th December 2023

## 1. Community Champions update

- 1.1 The Community Champions programme was established in March 2020 to enable local tenants and residents to have their say on local issues and be more involved in finding local solutions to local problems, with a particular focus on improved health and wellbeing. It responds to Camden 2025 by helping “to make Camden a home of innovation and creativity, where we learn together, and trial new ideas to tackle inequality and long-standing problems.”
- 1.2 The model takes a strength-based approach using the skills and knowledge of local communities to reduce inequalities, improve health and wellbeing and tackle local issues of concern.
- 1.3 The Community Champions programme fits the broader context of the Council’s ambitions for participation, enabling Camden citizens to shape and deliver change in their local communities. The programme supports the delivery of the We Make Camden Estates Mission that ‘by 2030, Camden estates and neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity’, as well as the strategic objectives of Camden’s Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30 (JHWS), particularly, the short-term priority on Community Connectedness and Friendships.
- 1.4 The Community Champions also supports the We Make Camden food mission, ‘by 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food’, through for example Community Kitchens at Regent’s Park, regular community barbecues at Kentish Town, and food growing in Kilburn.
- 1.5 By bringing communities on estates closer together through volunteering opportunities, activities and events, the Community Champions play a significant role in reducing social isolation and increasing community cohesion.
- 1.6 There are three Community Champions projects in Camden, with each covering a group of Camden housing estates:
  - Kentish Town – coordinated by Elfrida Rathbone
  - Kilburn – coordinated by South Hampstead and Kilburn Community Partnership (SHAK)
  - Regent’s Park – coordinated by Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA)
- 1.7 One Community Champion Co-ordinator has been appointed for each project and they are responsible for managing the project in their area. They engage with residents, identifying issues that are important to the community, and act as a strategic bridge between residents and services.
- 1.8 Community Champions support residents to improve health and wellbeing in their local area, by signposting to existing services and developing new activities and services to fill any gaps in provision, all based around improvement priorities they have identified. Community Champions receive training and support while volunteering, to support them to develop skills and confidence. Some of the Champions progress into further training or employment. Their key strength is their credibility within their communities and using existing social networks to help bridge

the gap between services and communities. They use residents' social action to improve health and wellbeing as part of daily life.

## **2. Funding**

- 2.1 The Community Champions programme was funded through the Council's ring-fenced Public Health Grant. Initial funding of £150,000 over three years was allocated to each of the three projects (£50,000 each) to fund a full-time coordinator, their management, and activities. This funding came to an end in February 2023.
- 2.2 In reflection of the impact that Covid had on the start of the project and to allow time for an evaluation of the programme, the Council agreed to extend funding for the project for one further year through individual grants awards of £50,000 each from the ring-fenced Public Health Grant.
- 2.3 The current Public Health Grant for the current Community Champions programme will conclude at the end of March 2024. Officers are now considering options for extending this funding further, most likely through another request of a grant award, to support the next steps.
- 2.4 The Regent's Park programme has secured £25,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy funding to extend their project until summer 2024.

## **3. Overview of key achievements**

- 3.1 Each of the three projects have taken different approaches, focussing on the needs and aspirations of the residents they are supporting. The intention is for all the activities the Champions undertake to be resident led with the support of the coordinator.
- 3.2 These are just a few examples to illustrate the projects residents have established with the support of the Community Champions coordinator.

## **4. Regent's Park Community Champions**

- 4.1 Key themes that have been identified and form the basis of all activities, action and campaigns in Regent's Park are: community safety (anti-social behaviour and crime, how residents can travel across the estate safely, feelings of safety in their own neighbourhood), cleanliness, fly tipping and environment (impacting how people feel cared for in the community, in their own homes and the environment they live in and sustainability), the ongoing impact of HS2, and tackling loneliness and social isolation by connecting residents to existing or creating new activities and events for different ages in the community.
- 4.2 The Regent's Park Community Champions have weekly socials and work on projects together. Some highlights from 2022/23 are:
  - Engaging 50 Community Champions (attending either weekly for minimum 3 months or once per month across the year) and engaging a further 48 individuals as Support Champions (attend socials regularly and promote). There are a core 25

individuals across the groups who have attended nearly every week over the past year.

- Development of Young Guardians as a youth steering group with focus on community safety and youth safety as a wellbeing need for young people.
- The Young Guardians have recently developed training materials and a video on how to be an active bystander, providing support and information on how to respond if there is an incident.
- Outdoor events and activities – Cumberland Fun Fest 2, Regent’s Park Estate Community Festival (now known as Regent’s Roots), Illumination Market and Everton Mews Pop ups engaging over 1400 individual attendees across them.
- Development of the Neighbourhood Studio at Old Diorama Arts Centre, the Champions’ continued base and core partner
- Securing additional funding to run projects like Young Guardians, develop the Story Trail with a dedicated coordinator from Old Diorama Arts Centre and pilot ideas such as Everton Mews improvements stage 1 and community kitchen.
- Cumberland Youth Club continued levels of engagement despite challenges of the green space closure for half the year.
- Monthly socials including Halloween Spooky Social, Safety Social and the celebration of 12 months of socials.
- Developing a weekly Community Kitchen serving 400 meals per week to provide support to residents impacted by the cost-of-living crisis and with a place to meet and access creative and fun activities for free. Three local businesses have supported the project across the year providing donations of hot meals for the residents as special treats when our regular chef has not been available.
- Community Champions becoming more involved with co-design or informing services and how they impact residents such as Lendlease, Veolia, HS2 partners and impact on residents, local police and community safety services and noticeboards in the estate.
- Support for local projects such as parent and child football sessions and 6 local artists running workshops at Community Kitchen, pop ups and events.
- A successful celebration event in May 2023, when Community Champions and young guardians presented their projects and achievements to an audience of councillors, council staff, partners, and other residents.

4.3 More recently the Regent’s Park Community Champions have secured external funding to extend their Young Guardians model to the Amptill Estate in St Pancras and Somers Town. They have also been approached by local partners and councillors who want to secure funding to replicate pilots of their community kitchen and Young Guardians models in other areas of Camden.

## **5. Kentish Town Community Champions**

5.1 The key priorities for Kentish Town residents living on the target estates are how to address the ongoing impact of the cost of living, finding safe places for young people to go with more activities, tackling anti-social behaviour and improving community safety, finding places for people to meet and more community activities, and addressing mental health.

5.2 The Kentish Town project had a period without a coordinator, and the new coordinator has spent time re-establishing connections and projects. Some highlights from 2022/23 include:

- Weekly Wellbeing Walks. The walks are gaining in popularity, particularly with older residents.
- Monthly Connecting with Others coffee mornings, which have provided a warm space for residents to connect and for some new friendships to be established. Helping to tackle loneliness.
- Supporting parents with their own coffee mornings and giving them 6 different workshops ranging from financial advice to gaining a better understanding of IT.
- Community meals project over Ramadan that brought residents together after they broke their daily fast and helped to establish connections into the Bengali community living on the target estates.
- Establishing a Women Only Exercise Class which took place at the Kentish Town Community Centre (KTCC).
- Supporting the Kentish Town Community Giveaway during Christmas which was food and essentials packages designed to support those most vulnerable during the Christmas period.
- Running a series of summer barbeques bringing residents together outside over the summer.
- Establishing twice weekly football sessions – there are now two large WhatsApp groups, one for young people and one for adults, used to arranged football sessions.
- Supporting the NW5 project to run their successful annual Peckwater festival.

5.3 More recently the coordinator has been working with the tenants and residents' association on the Kenbrook estate to establish an after-school homework club in their TRA hall. This will open when the hall's refurbishment has been completed later this year. The coordinator is also supporting the residents of Oseney Crescent, another target estate, to establish a tenants and residents association, which will enable them to tackle some of the issues on their estate.

## **6. Kilburn Community Champions**

6.1 The ongoing priorities for the residents living on the target estates in Kilburn are environmental concerns such as tackling littering and fly tipping, addressing anti-social behaviour and improving community safety. Residents also said they would

like more activities for children and young people and more projects based around improving the local environment.

6.2 Some of the highlights of the Kilburn project over the last year include:

- Weekly coffee mornings and a wellbeing walk. The project trained seven residents as walk leaders and have weekly coffee mornings followed by a local walk, which has enabled residents to establish new friendships and helped to tackle loneliness.
- Supporting the Netherwood Centre to run a warm space over the winter with weekly art classes for adults.
- Supporting the residents of Webheath to develop and launch their community garden with an opening event in Spring 2023.
- Ongoing support for the Kilburn Grange Park community garden including supporting them with events, including a birds and bugs event in autumn half term and planting parties.
- A well-attended multi-faith children's activity celebrating Easter, Ramadan and Eid was held in the park in April 2023 and was well attended by over 40 children and their parents / carers.
- A series of events offering free bike maintenance and art and crafts sessions for children.
- Supporting the residents of Kilburn Vale to relaunch their 'secret garden' with bulb planting sessions and successful seed giveaways.

6.3 A new coordinator recently joined the project and has been working with residents to try and launch play streets on the local estates.

## **7. Evaluation of the Community Champions programme**

7.1 The Community Champions programme was established as a pilot and learning and evaluation was an essential component, looking at what elements of the programme have worked and what elements have proved less successful. Learning and insights have always been a feature of the Community Champions' annual reports.

7.2 We have recently commissioned an external organisation to evaluate the programme. They are interviewing residents, Champions, coordinators, and council officers to help us to understand the benefits of the programme, what learning we can take from the programme on what has worked and how this project can contribute further to neighbourhood working. The findings from the evaluation are due in early 2024.

7.3 The evaluation provides an opportunity to examine the different approaches that each of the Community Champions programmes have taken but reflections on the last four years are:

- Working with a Voluntary and Community Sector partner and having an independent coordinator, who is not a council officer, has helped to build trust with residents.
- Having dedicated support for target estates has motivated citizens to make improvements to their estate and provided them with the capacity to develop projects they would not have done on without this support.
- Having a local meeting point on or near the estate so citizens have a regular place to meet and connect has helped to build enthusiasm, trust, and support for the project. Regent's Park Champions meet weekly at Old Diorama, and they have over 50 Champions now. The Kilburn Champions do not have a local base and have struggled to gain a regular commitment from Champions.
- The coordinator has helped citizens to tackle some of the complexities of the council so that they can get projects established, for example gardening projects and establishing tenants and residents' associations.
- Providing citizens with the opportunities to volunteer on community projects has built up their confidence and enabled some citizens to move into work or access additional training.
- Establishing projects on estates and providing opportunities for people to connect has helped to create friendships, build cohesion between communities and tackle loneliness.
- The projects have helped to create new partnerships at a local level and supported other organisations to grow, for example the Kentish Town project has provided support to the NW5 project and managed to recruit Young Champions. The Regent's Park project has worked with Central Saint Martins on several projects and are currently developing a story trail around the estate.
- The projects are helping to deliver Camden's Estates Mission by supporting improved health, creativity, and sustainability at a local level, through projects such as wellbeing walks, football, gardening, estate clear-ups, circular economy projects and healthy cooking.
- Residents express a sense of pride in their estate and feel more ownership because of the Community Champions project.
- Having this type of capacity building at a local level has helped to bring in additional funding and opportunities at an estate level. For example, coordinators have supported residents to apply for We Make Camden kit funding, and external funding has been secured for community safety projects in both Regent's Park and Kentish Town.
- When support has been withdrawn, due to staff vacancies, some citizens have become disheartened, and it had been hard to build up trust again.
- Coordinators have been able to share their learning with other community organisations and provide organisations with support to set up their own projects. For example, Regent's Park have been discussing their Young Guardians model with Castlehaven community centre.

## **8. Resident Feedback**



8.1 Resident feedback has been overwhelmingly positive across the three Community Champions projects. Examples of feedback are:

- *“Being a Guardian has shown me that with the right support I can create change.”* 17-year-old Young Guardian, Regent’s Park
- *“Being a Champion has changed my life. I used to think I was useless and worthless...It was the start of a new me and I would say my dream came true literally...I have been able to do so many things as part of this project. I have gained so much confidence and this is where I belong.”* Community Champion, Regent’s Park
- *‘These walks have inspired me to make myself fitter, I even found myself researching gyms’* – Kentish Town resident who attends wellbeing walks
- *“I was walking past and saw people building and painting in Everton Mews. ...I went and got my painting jacket and joined in! I am an artist myself and just thought what a great project, residents just trying to make a pretty grim area look better.”* Regent’s Park resident.
- *“I love being part of the Champions, I have made some brilliant friendships and met people I can rely on if I am in a bind.”* (Regent’s Park resident).
- *‘I would never have thought of doing something like this before and wouldn’t have been able to without Community Champions support’.* (Kentish Town resident who set up a Healthy Cooking project)
- *“We have become a really strong team and a group of friends – it doesn’t matter the age”* Young Guardian, Regent’s Park.
- *“I used to be afraid to go out alone and now I find myself wanting to be outside more and more.”* Older resident on weekly walks, Kentish Town.

8.2 However, a gap between co-ordinators in Kentish Town demonstrated how easily community trust can be lost, although the co-ordinator was able to rebuild trust over time:

- *‘After losing trust after Community Champions ceased, I had no plans to ever take part in the Community Champions Project but thanks to the continued support, I now feel I can trust what the project is aiming to achieve thanks to your continued efforts’* Kentish Town Champion

## 9. Conclusion

9.1 The Community Champions programmes have played important roles in contributing to Camden’s health and wellbeing priorities, including:

- Empowering communities to be more involved in decisions that impact on their lives.
  - Reducing social isolation, and supporting and creating new friendship opportunities

- Increasing intergenerational and community cohesion
- Delivering on the Warm Welcome and Food Mission priorities
- Improving the environment on estates, including sustainability
- Developing opportunities for exercise among marginalised communities.

- 9.2 The experience to date is that building trust in communities takes time and, when there has been a gap in delivery due to a change in co-ordinator, that trust is soon lost.
- 9.3 It also takes time moving from a “heavy lifting” phase where the co-ordinator plays the larger role in organising activities, events, etc. to a model where residents themselves take the lead with a lower level of support needed from the co-ordinator.
- 9.4 We are now starting to see residents taking on much more of a lead role as their confidence grows. the aim is for the model to evolve from one based on a small number of estates to gradually expand towards a neighbourhood model. There is evidence that this evolution is already taking place. The Regent’s Park champions have shared their approach to developing community kitchens with Somers Town Youth Centre (STYC) and Somers Town Community Association (STCA). STYC are now running a community kitchen and serve 400 meals a week and STCA plan to open from January and serve an additional 400 meals. It is anticipated that this together with the plans to establish a Young Guardians model on the Ampthill estate, could lead to the development of a Euston Champions programme.

## **10. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

- 10.1. This project has been wholly funded via ringfenced funding from public health grant and this funding is due to come to an end by March 2024. There are ongoing considerations for how this funding can be extended and this is yet to be finalised.

## **11. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

- 11.1. The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of the report and has no comments to add to the report.

## **12. Environmental Implications**

- 12.1. This report has no environmental implications.

## **13. Appendices**

13.1 Appendix A – Community Champions Slides

**REPORT ENDS**