



Theory of Change

Setting the Context ^{1/3}

Context	Challenges	Strengths
<p>This Theory of Change sets out the shared vision for the ways the council supports the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in Camden for the next 7 years. It was developed together with 42 VCS organisations who are part of the We Make Camden VCS Investment Programme 2024-31 and who are vital in delivering for Camden’s diverse communities and building community strength. The investment programme provides £4m a year in grants to Camden’s VCS and supports the council’s wider Missions set out in We Make Camden to tackle our most challenging social issues. Working with partners to develop long lasting solutions is a vital part of this Missions approach.</p> <p>How We Will Use the Theory of Change:</p> <p>The Theory of Change outlines the ways in which we can all work together as partners to deliver impact for our communities and build a strong community voice and leadership. It sets out the steps along the way that will help us to achieve that vision and the intended outcomes for communities and the VCS. We will use this Theory of Change to check the progress we’ve made over the next 7 years, to measure the impact we’ve had on communities and VCS and to establish future funding opportunities.</p>	<p>VCS organisations across the UK are facing the triple squeeze of increased demand for services, increased costs and reducing levels of income. These challenges apply to Camden’s 2,400 groups, making it hard for organisations to prioritise crisis management over preventative efforts. Opportunities for flexible, core, unrestricted funding are scarce, and the duration of the funding is often limited to a short period of time, which limits meaningful and sustainable community impact.</p> <p>Additionally, VCS organisations face workforce challenges including managing and maintaining community spaces, recruitment, retention, skills development, pay, progression, and supporting staff and volunteer well-being. The economic climate further exacerbates these issues, making it increasingly hard to attract and retain volunteers, as many people now have less time or flexibility for unpaid work. Both established and new organisations struggle to increase their staff numbers to support communities as their needs, diversity and numbers expand. We are proud of how diverse we are as a borough, but we recognise that many of our community’s face barriers that make it harder for them to access services, support and activities.</p>	<p>Camden has an active and thriving voluntary and community sector with over 2,400 groups. Many small grassroots organisations and individuals take action to support their communities, with new ideas being supported and championed. There are also many long-standing organisations who are deeply embedded in Camden’s neighbourhoods with strong local knowledge and expertise. The sector provides a strong community voice and VCS leaders reflect the diverse communities of Camden.</p> 



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What We Will Do ^{2/3}

Funding

Community Partner Fund: 7 year unrestricted funding to organisations who are deeply rooted in Camden communities.

Advice Fund: 7 years funding to organisations providing advice to residents in Camden.

We Make Camden Project Fund: Grants of 1-3 years for organisations addressing one of the We Make Camden missions.

Infrastructure Support: Long term and one-off grants (see 'Organisational Support' for further details).

WMC Kit grants: Small grants of up to £2,000 to support individuals and groups to test good ideas around the key We Make Camden Missions.

Small grants: Cohesion, faith and refugee work.



Providing multi-year, unrestricted funding creates a wider ecosystem of grants, allowing organisations the flexibility to respond to community needs, refocus, grow and address key risks, creating a sustainable, responsive sector.

Organisational Support

Keeping the support offer to the VCS up to date: Analyse sector trends and use these trends to shape the support offer to VCS organisations of all shapes and sizes. Recognising and valuing the diversity of the sector, workforce and VCS leaders, and making sure that support works for small and equalities led organisations.

Camden VCS Infrastructure Support: Providing a range of support, training and resources around volunteer and workforce development, governance, finances, strategic planning, impact and evaluation. Partner with VCS Infrastructure organisations to provide advice, support and training on VCS strategy and management. Our Camden Infrastructure Grants will provide long term funding for these partners, with a focus on four key areas: leadership and advocacy, partnerships and collaboration; capacity building and volunteering.

Organisational Foundations Fund: One-off grants to organisations to develop, grow or tackle organisational risks.

Wrap around support: Regular visits to support leadership development for senior staff and trustee leaders funded through our grants.



A strong, sustainable, well-run and independent VCS that responds to people's needs, is central to our ambitions for Camden. We can work with infrastructure partners to create an eco-system of support that can respond to different organisational needs and support our diverse communities to take on positions of leadership.

Data, Insights and Impact

Community-driven insights: VCS supported with training and tools to collect impact data and support people to tell their own stories. This would help organisations to strengthen and develop ways to share knowledge, learning and impact.

Co-creation of data with VCS organisations: Create opportunities for Camden's VCS to share data, evidence, and community stories, offering insights into the collective impact of work on our Missions and other social challenges, such as through the annual State of the Borough report.

Access to data: Expand on opportunities to share data that helps the VCS make sense of their local area and community needs, such as the Open Data Portal, State of the Borough report or ward-based demographics as well as developing new opportunities for VCS to share insights with each other.

Grant monitoring and evaluation: Provide insights to shape current and future grants processes and enable insights from our grants to be shared to shape grant making policy and practice.



And why:



Sharing quality data and insights fosters a shared understanding of the community. By supporting data-sharing systems, VCS organisations can access locally relevant insights to better plan and deliver services that meet community needs. These systems will also empower the VCS to influence local policy and drive systems change on key social challenges.

Collaboration

Network meetings: Opportunities for organisations to share and connect via partnership networks and forums – a space to increase awareness, collaboration, peer support and networking.

Referral Pathways Support: Formal referral processes which make accessing a range of services easier for residents such as advice support or social prescribing.

Influencing policy and strategy: Expanding and removing barriers to VCS representation in strategic decision-making bodies in the council, sharing information about ongoing projects, connecting with neighbourhood pilots to reach local areas. Ensuring communication across stakeholders via newsletters and website updates.



Making connections between organisations helps create a collective understanding of issues and shared goals for our work. The nature of this collaboration allows us to work as equal partners, build movements for change and recognise expertise.

Community Spaces

Investment in VCS facilities: A programme of conditions surveys, repairs and regular maintenance to support community spaces to be well-maintained, well-used and accessible to all.

New social value lease: A new social value lease for organisations in specific council community spaces is being implemented- recognising the social value of VCS organisations running community spaces through discounted rent.



Supporting community spaces with effective management, quality services, and engaging events can foster a strong sense of belonging.

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What We Will Achieve ^{3/3}



Intended Community Outcomes

Improved access to a wide range of services and activities helps people to be happy and healthy.

Builds community strengths and a deeper sense of belonging across Camden's diverse communities through activities and community spaces that bring people together.

Greater opportunities for community members to volunteer, lead projects and to have a voice on issues that are important to them.



Intended VCS Outcomes

Improved, reliable access to tools and support to explore new ideas, turn ideas into social action, diversify income sources and allocate money where needed.

Create an environment of cross-stakeholder collaboration to tackle social challenges across the programme, enabling a more joined up offer for residents.

Support identification and management of key risks with a focus on key areas of a well-run, sustainable organisation such as finance, governance, strategic planning and delivery, workforce development and impact evaluation.

Create a shared understanding of the community and develop systemic solutions by sharing quality data and insights among VCS and Camden Council to support in shaping policy and practice regarding key social challenges by recognising experiences of inequalities.

Facilitate leadership of trustees, managers, staff and volunteers to reflect the diversity of our communities and neighbourhoods.

Impact

Camden residents lives are improved through a contribution to tackling root causes of inequalities.



Camden residents feel a sense of control for their lives.



Camden residents feel a connection and belonging to the area.



Camden residents have healthier and happier communities.

