

# PANEL+ PROGRAMME

Shifting decision-  
making powers to  
Camden Residents

 CAMDEN  
GIVING



Camden Giving's Panel+ has improved my knowledge and given me confidence to make better decisions for my community. It was an amazing experience!





# An alternative model for civic participation

**Camden Giving** connects businesses to local grassroots community activity that responds to local challenges of inequality and poverty. Based on a notion that everyone has something to give; be that time, skills or money, we channel those resources into grassroots community action that responds to these local challenges.

Across all of the grants we have awarded since Spring 2017 we have supported 161 local organisations and distributed more than £3.1 million pounds to a wide range of services in their communities.

## **But we haven't done this alone...**

We prioritise shifting power to a varied range of voices, through supporting local residents to make decisions on how we invest funding, because people who are surviving local inequalities are the ones we should look to for the solutions.

So far, we have trained and paid London Living Wage to 48 Camden residents representing Camden's diversity - 62% BAME, 24% disabled, 44% under 25 (30% who are young offenders) to come together and co-create our grant programmes aims, criteria, and decide which services they want to fund in their community.



All our panellists are completely new to grant-making and base most of their decisions on their direct experience of inequality and their local knowledge of the services, but this can sometimes have an impact on their decisions.

They're often completely blown away and intrigued by the scale and diversity of the funding sector, expressing an interest to learn more about grant-making to enable them to make more informed decisions when they come together to award grants.

With limited time and resource, we can often be restricted to the amount of supplementary training we can offer to our resident panellists. However, as we continue to explore new ways to put Camden residents in the driving seat of their borough, we were fortunate to receive an unrestricted grant from The London Community Foundation for the Panel+ programme, allowing us to continue evolving new approaches to power-shifts in grant-making.

# Participatory Panel Training

We paid London Living Wage to 12 residents from groups often underrepresented in decision-making and leadership roles - from individuals with direct insight into homelessness, youth offending, the refugee community - to participate in 40 hours of grant-making exploration sessions. The workshops focussed on areas that would expand their decision-making knowledge, understanding how their own decisions have an impact on their community alongside other factors and influences, including:

## **Analysing & Interpreting Data**

to understand why it is important in grant-making, how to search for datasets, the different types of data that exists, and how to apply it when assessing grants to supplement their own direct experiences.

## **Meeting Camden Civil Society**

organisations to learn about how funding influences their work. The residents asked *"Is it challenging meeting the needs of funders who are looking for you to deliver specific outcomes?"* and *"How do you ensure you will be able to continue doing what you're doing in a challenging funding climate?"*. The panel learnt the importance of core funding and unrestricted donations which enables grassroots charities to become more financially sustainable.

## **Managing Bias**

to help panellists understand what the factors are that contribute to unconscious bias, how it can affect or influence behaviours when making decisions and understand effective ways to manage and remove their biases better when awarding funding.

## **Effective Communication**

to understand how to influence decisions through learning about persuasive language and listening techniques, making arguments with clarity, how to be challenging fairly and constructively, and ultimately build their confidence when speaking in a group setting.

## **Visiting a range of funders**

including Corporates, Foundations and the Council who are also investing in Camden's Civil Society. The panel learnt how the decisions they make will have an impact alongside decisions other funders make, discussing where their funding comes from, how they make decisions, what makes them different to other funders. It also meant that funders had the opportunity to meet those who usually benefit from their decisions afresh. We visited City Bridge Trust who told us *"We found it really invigorating to chat with the panel and see our world through a different perspective and slightly fresher eyes."*

## **Reading Charity Finances**

to learn about reading basic charities accounts including how they generate income and how they spend it as well as assessing the stability and viability of a charities finances, to make informed decisions.



# Benefits of Shifting Power

For the 12 residents taking part in Panel+ it was more than just a training programme... Often, funders and others in positions of power have a lack of direct or lived experience of the issues they're trying to tackle. We've seen the value of shifting financial and decision-making powers to people who have lived experience of inequality but who also have a wealth of local expertise. We believe that by opening up a diverse and rich supply of community-held knowledge that complements and supplements learnt experience of grant-making, it is a really effective and accountable model for giving.

Panel+ allowed us all to bring these elements together through explore a more detailed learning and development programme, helping to catalyse community participation in the grant-making sector. Panel+ Resident panellists told us that it:

## SPARKS THEIR THINKING

Make strategic and analytical decisions about grant applications.



## TEACHES COMMUNICATION

Ability to communicate effectively and participate in discussions about grant applications.

## GIVES THEM SKILLS

Ability to read a grant application, manage bias and data, access financial skills and much more.



## INSPIRES THEM TO BE INVOLVED

Be an active member of the community.

## BROADENS THEIR MINDS

Learn about the voluntary sector and existing and future activities, events, opportunities and support for the community.



“ I'm proud to be part of a new community of decision-makers where I can represent the voice of my neighbours and influence positive change through the grants we channel into our community. ”

## A Participatory Perspective

Panel+ was not just a training programme, we supported residents to explore opportunities that they faced barriers in accessing. One young panellist on the programme told us that the '*current systems aren't working*' for him and was unaware that he could raise pertinent issues with his ward Councillor. We introduced them and he's now actively attending surgeries speaking up about issues faced by him and his peers. Alongside this, he expressed that he wanted to do more to support his peers and felt, because of his direct insight into inequality, he could bring a lot of value to our youth-led grant programme. So he's now Chairing our Future Changemakers Fund and being paid to support us with fundraising and leading the new group of Camden Changemakers!

“ By being involved in the fund, I hope for my fellow Future Changemakers gain leadership skills, an opportunity to be portrayed better and better connections between community and postcodes. ”

You can more about why he's involved here [www.camdengiving.org.uk/new-blog](http://www.camdengiving.org.uk/new-blog)

# Beyond Panel+



By equipping residents with tools and skills to help them become more informed decision makers and layering things like data, communication skills and self-confidence amongst people with lived experience, in-turn we'll get a more diverse and better range of voices in funding decisions at Camden Giving and beyond. The combination of these skills and exposing them to practical steps/access to opportunities to engage in civic participation beyond our programmes is key to giving residents a voice in their community and beyond. One resident told us

“ *This programme went above and beyond my expectations. It ended up being about empowering local people and making an investment in us, our knowledge and what we can give.* ”

The panellists valued the financial contribution which helped break through barriers to participation, including covering childcare costs, travel expenses and access to learning and development. But the panellists told us they didn't just attend Panel+ because of this incentive, they wanted to spend their day with new friends and even started to form their own connections. For example, one panellist is now accessing free event space through meeting a business during the programme, and is able to run her own community-led activities without the burden of venue costs.

In 2019, we trained and paid 36 residents experiencing inequality to have complete control of our funding process. As we continue to support businesses to invest their funding into communities we are equally committed to ensuring that more Camden Residents have power, control and a say over their lives and communities.

In 2020 we want to train a further 50 Camden Residents to be part of our growing pool of Camden decision-makers and co-design programmes that enable residents to have a genuine say in the shaping of their neighbourhoods.

This wouldn't be possible without the generosity of our supporters who can help us to fund the core costs programme for 1 year. If you want to know how you can be involved email [danielle@camdengiving.org.uk](mailto:danielle@camdengiving.org.uk)

We continue to invest our time into supporting residents to access relatable opportunities beyond our grant programmes. The Panel+ residents will be part of our growing pool of community panellists and will have:

1. An opportunity to sit on one of our grant panels;
2. Opportunities to shadow other trusts and foundations
3. CV Support with tailoring their training and panel experience in a way that works for them
4. Access to employment and/or volunteering opportunities
5. Networking and Shared Learning opportunities with other community panellists

“ *Panel+ enabled us to access to businesses, knowledge, opportunities we wouldn't have otherwise had access to - usually these opportunities aren't for us as they are too expensive or for people working in decision-making roles.* ”

## Total Programme Costs for Year 2: £51,000

**Camden Giving Costs**  
£25,000

**Refreshments and Travel Expenses**  
£1,000

**Paying London Living Wage**  
£21,500

**Facilitator fees and Venue Hire**  
£1,500

**Participation Support:**  
**BSL interpreter,**  
**Childcare costs,**  
**Stationary**  
£3,000

**The London  
Community  
Foundation**

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