

# **YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME**

## **SUMMARY REPORT**



# INTRODUCTION

At Camden Giving, keeping young people safe and supported is a key priority. We do this by providing paid, meaningful opportunities for them to participate in and are committed to transforming routes into employment because, in Camden:

- 43% of young people live in poverty;
- Only 8% of jobs in Camden go to local people;
- Funding for Youth Services that protect them are being cut;
- In 2015 34% of 18-24 year olds reported money worries, including not being able to keep the house warm, using a foodbank or using a payday lender;
- Young men make up the majority of young offenders and have higher rates of unemployment than young women;



**The Future Changemakers 2019**

During the co-creation sessions, where they work collaboratively together to decide the priorities of the fund, they shared their insights and told us:

“

***Young people want to earn money to support themselves & their families, but know for some peers there were "easier but less safe routes to access financial income".***

“

***Access to meaningful, quality employment is an important way to improve youth safety in Camden, but often we are locked out of jobs & opportunity on our doorstep.***

## Participation

We prioritise shifting power to a varied range of voices over counting the number of residents making funding decisions. Why? Because people who are surviving local inequalities are the ones we should look to for the solutions.

Everyone involved in Camden Giving's community led decisions brings new perspective and ideas. They have something to say that might not otherwise be heard, no one is ever involved to "tick a box". We're shifting power to people, supplementing their knowledge and opening up new networks.

We are shifting decision-making power to young residents so they have a say in shaping and creating solutions that tackle inequality that affects them. In 2019 we worked with businesses to increase funding for projects that make Camden safer for 16-25 year olds. Over the summer we trained and paid 10 young Camden residents – the Future Changemakers – to decide which charities should receive grants of up to £10,000.

The Future Changemakers didn't think their funding was enough to tackle these challenges alone, so we focussed our fundraising efforts on this insight and secured £30,000 from Euston BID in July 2019 to pilot our Youth Employment Programme.

We launched the initial phase of the programme in September 2019, providing 3 young people with a 12-week paid training placement with a Camden business. These placements enabled them to participate in an opportunity to gain job ready skills to support their transition into longer-term, meaningful employment.

# A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

We recognise that transforming routes into employment requires a collaborative team effort involving a broad range of employers, local government, funders and youth organisations and most importantly, young people themselves. After our Future Changemakers told us what young people in our community needed, we convened partners – local youth services, businesses and the borough's Youth Offending Service – to understand what other factors would contribute to a successful employment programme, identify what current schemes were missing, and why businesses were struggling to recruit locally. We learnt that there is a huge appetite for Camden businesses to employ local young people, but often faced barriers such as....

Though there's a desire to better understand and support individual circumstances, such as how trauma, mental health, disability can impact on young people's 'professionalism' i.e. timekeeping, communication and motivation; employees often felt unequipped in supporting young people in a holistic way.

Bureaucratic HR & Recruitment practices can often exclude people with unrelated criminal convictions, e.g. through DBS process which can be used as a 'filtering' mechanism and sometimes discourages people from even applying.

There's often lack of roles that don't require formal qualifications or easy pathways into these roles so often invest in people who require less support. In addition often supporting junior roles can be time consuming, resource intensive and can be a challenge keeping them engaged.

We also heard from youth experts who shared that businesses should be recruiting young people at “teachable moments”, such as those at risk of, or at the point of first time offences, when it is likely that they can be influenced away from criminal activity, earn money legitimately and gain a better understanding of work readiness. This is a gap not many current employment providers are meeting and is key in supporting a group of young people often locked out of opportunities. In addition, employment programmes often lack the individualistic, holistic support for young people on placements and educating employers and their employees on trauma-informed behaviours and how to best work and support young people who have lived experienced of navigating complex situations.

From these cross-sector insight and development sessions we set-out our ambitions of the Youth Employment Programme:

*1. Find quality, paid work placements for 3 young people identified at risk of, or at the point of, a first time criminal conviction, tailored to their individual interests, ambitions and needs.*

*2. Provide a package of wrap-around holistic care from a dedicated youth worker to support their emotional needs and in the workplace.*

*3. Help 3 Camden businesses recruit brilliant local young people into tailored roles, breaking down barriers with their recruitment approach and training them to better support those on placement*

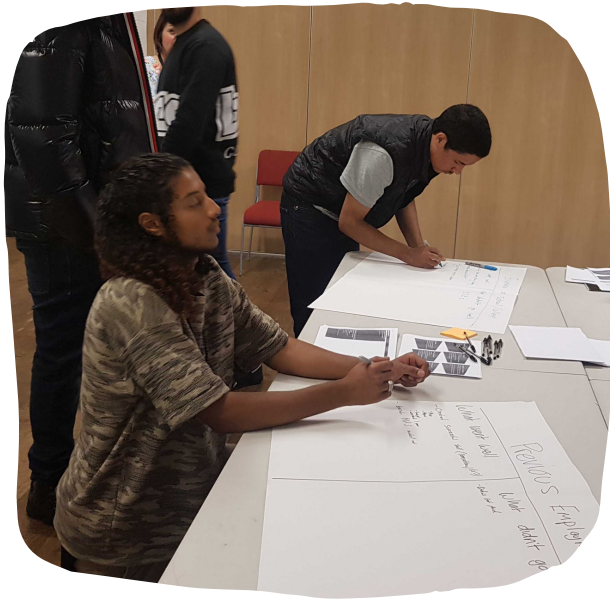
*4. Create an employment model that is scalable across a large number of businesses and young people in Camden, London and the UK.*

We now knew that achieving a more effective employment programme requires a human-centric approach and we made sure that youth voice remained at the centre of shaping the project, resulting in a more meaningful, relatable, educational experience for everyone involved. Continue reading to find out what steps we took to achieve it...

# A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

## September 2019 Youth Insight Sessions

In partnership with Camden's Youth Offending Team and Coram's Fields Youth Service, we invited a group of 16–25 year olds to join a paid focus group session to explore and share barriers they faced in accessing work-related roles. We focussed on what went well, what could have been improved and what an ideal work-skills programme looks like. This informed and shaped the structure of the placements and what employers needed to consider. They told us:



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More one-to-one support from relatable staff members would have improved previous work experiences.

“

The employer could have cared more about what we wanted to achieve in the long-term and explored a range of activities/tasks to keep me engaged.

“

Personal circumstances might affect someones performance and capabilities at work. So empathy, trust & flexibility goes a long way and means we'll perform better in the long run.

“

An accessible location, full-time hours and a decent pay is important to youth safety. Sometimes where a job is based, or poor pay, will have a negative impact on us.

## October 2019 Engaging Business Partners

We engaged with many businesses keen to participate as placement hosts and we wanted to make sure those joining held the right values as their reasons for wanting to be involved, rather than this being a 'tick box' exercise. So, much like any candidate applying for a job, the business joining had to go through a certain level of scrutiny and vetting, by demonstrating they:

- Had capacity to support with training and guidance on the job.
- Were not backfilling a vacancy where the young person would just be an 'extra pair of hands', but created new roles.
- Offering roles that allow for unrelated convictions and for residents under 18, where possible.
- Allowed a level of flexibility with the role, responsibilities & working hours.
- Fundraised £2,066 towards the cost of the placement.
- We're preferably a LLW employer, so if a role was made available at the end of the placement they'd be paid the equivalent, or more.
- Were understanding of individual circumstances and abilities that could affect attendance, performance etc.
- Were open and willing to learn and try new approaches and ways of working.
- Attend pre-placement sessions and training facilitated by Camden Giving & Coram's Fields.

# A PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

**October  
2019**  
Co-Development  
Sessions

After shortlisting and recruiting the 3 businesses joining as placement hosts - Regents Place, Collins Construction and 4D Projects - we invited them to a 'Meet and Greet' session with a group of young residents referred through Coram's Fields and the Youth Offending Team. They spent the afternoon together exploring the types of roles available and what to expect from a work placement within that business..

It also gave them an opportunity to share their experiences and familiarise themselves with the people they would be working with, as well as ask any questions about expectations, understand pathways into other opportunities and share what a good placement means to them.

By the end of the session we gathered everyone's thoughts on which business, roles and teams they felt were a "good fit" for them, based on what they hoped to each get from the opportunity personally and professionally. This helped us with matching together the businesses and young people in the most meaningful way.



“ At this session I learnt about roles in Community Events & Marketing which I didn't think was for me until I spoke to the business more. I had a new view of the world that I didn't know existed; through school construction was what I was good at and had narrow view of jobs. But speaking to them I realised I'm interested in things I didnt know existed! ”

**November  
2019**  
Interview  
Practice

Three young people from the wider group were paired together with businesses based on their development goals, interests, compatibilities. But also focussed on those who would gain the most from participating in a 12-week training placement through support with finding and/or staying in employment, improving life management skills and increasing personal wellbeing.

They each attended an interview with the business to become more acquainted prior to the placement, providing an opportunity to have a more in-depth discussion about what a meaningful placement looks like for Camden young people.

They were able to co-design a tailored, flexible placement for instance by adapting tasks and exposure to different departments to enrich their learning and skills development and changing working hours to fit with individual circumstances - putting the young residents best interests at the centre of the placement.



But it also enabled our young residents to become familiar with an interview setting - which for most was a completely new experience - helping them explore different communication styles and understand what is expected from future employers at this stage of the application journey.

# TRAINING FOR EVERYONE



**December  
2019  
Business  
Training**

The training was not just for the young residents. It was important the businesses and their employees were giving consideration to the wellbeing, lifestyle decisions and external factors affecting the young people that might influence their conduct, motivation, engagement during the placement, to better understand how they can adapt their support and approach. So Coram's Field trained business employees working directly with the young people to make sure they were well equipped and confident in guiding and supporting them throughout the placements as best as they could.

The training focussed on trauma informed practice, scenarios role plays, best practice approaches and safeguarding, because the workplace environment can have a considerable impact on employees' physical and mental health and this, alongside other challenges, can be an additional hurdle for many young residents accessing work for the first time. Prior to the placements starting, the partners met to discuss some of the issues the young people faced in their lives and how we, as a program could support the individual to develop and grow within their organisation was important. The employers took their role very seriously and took every opportunity to learn more about the young person before the start dates. This enabled the organisations to prepare themselves and other employees to support the young people.

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*It was very helpful, especially as we were nervous too! It was great to have support to give us more confidence that we could provide an excellent opportunity and to have expert professionals give us much needed advice on how to make the most of this programme and how to work in a way that would suit a younger member of staff.*



**February  
2020  
Employment &  
Placements  
begin**

In February 2020 the 12-week placements began for 3 Camden residents who began their training within three very diverse sectors and roles. Part of what made this Employment Programme unique was that Camden Giving provided employment for the trainees, paying them the London Living Wage for the duration of their placements - including covering reasonable expenses e.g. weekly travel expenses, providing a pay advance to cover the initial immediate costs of their placements as well as paid holiday entitlement. This was an important element to enable participation of both businesses and young people.

Alongside their individual, tailored placements with the businesses, they spent 1 day of their working week with Coram's Field youth workers, who provided weekly wraparound support to each individual. These sessions focussed on their ongoing work-skills development both in their roles and off-the-job, as well as providing wellbeing support. Everyone played a part in making sure the value-centric approach to the placements remained, adapting around the needs of each young person in order to make sure they were supported in their roles; from adjusting working hours to tailoring tasks to develop skills in an area of particular interest.

We carried out 6-week probationary reviews to reflect on successes, development areas and further opportunities for each young person. But sadly, because the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic hit businesses, communities charities in a volatile and unpredictable way, the placements ended prematurely.

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*I found having a team working together to develop the program was invaluable. Having Camden Giving leading on the program to develop relationships with host businesses and employ the young people and having Coram's leading on the pastoral support meant that I had more time to support the young people to explore the options and prepare them for employment.*  
**Michelle, Youth Offending Team**

# MORE THAN JUST JOBS

Despite the placements ending just 6 weeks in, for us the outcome of this programme, though important, wasn't simply just about the number of young people we could support into jobs. We truly believe that the impact of a good employability scheme and the role it can play in a young person's life is underestimated. It's not just about finding a job, it's about their journey of finding their identity and worth along the way, as they transition into employment. And this was evident from just 6 weeks of being on a training placement for all three young people.

This programme offered young Camden residents the opportunity to learn practical, employability skills through on-the-job training, but also skills and exposure to experiences that equipped them to with personal development such as increased independence, confidence and wellbeing. This included learning new things we can often take for granted; from opening a bank account and understanding how pay and employee tax works to timekeeping and having a regular routine. They told us that they gained additional soft skills that helped with citizenship building, they learnt more about money management, and found increased self-esteem in the fact they were handed more responsibility.

They shared that the additional considerations helped them to feel valued as individuals, from flexibility with working hours to meet probation or counselling appointments, identifying training, tools and tasks to carry out their job functions better, and identifying other workplace triggers from social events to the location of work. It provided a safe, supportive but realistic space for them to learn about work-related expectations without repercussions or fear of failure.

In the short time, we identified that meaningful paid roles, alongside pastoral care and flexible, empathic approach from employers played an important role in reducing behaviours of at-risk offending or re-offending during their time on the placements. Anecdotally we also know that building trust between trainees and colleagues is key in order to have spaces to reflect on and discuss challenges constructively. One young person identified that they needed to take more responsibility with their timekeeping in order to not let other team members down, and recognised this independently as an important part of their development into future work.



We also looked at their individual progression opportunities beyond their placements whether that focussed on gaining other skills not learnt on their training or opening up new connections. For one young participant, who worked with Regents Place Community & Events Team, she was offered a further paid training placement for 10 weeks with them in their Estates Team, maintaining the public realm spaces in Euston through gardening. This opportunity complimented her passion for working with Global Generation during her initial placement as well as another gardening project she engaged in during the first national lockdown with Coram's Field!

**What was the most important thing about participating in this programme for you?**

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*Because I was interested in the role itself I enjoyed it more, compared to other placements, this meant I was able to develop a work routine. Also, being paid helped a lot because I am earning money legally and I'm motivated to find a job.*

# EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS EVERYONE

We know that by providing young residents with access quality work-skill opportunities, as well as the chance to gain emotional and social support alongside this, is imperative in helping them to succeed with their transition into employment. But often employers have a generalised view of how employees should have certain skills to enable them to work within their organisation, yet very few seem to consider that vulnerable young people who want to work, and who they want to engage, need additional support to make the first steps into employment and that they're not necessarily equipped to make those first steps. From this project we saw that employers are willing and able to take the time to support young people to access the labour market with dignity and respect and can be valuable and productive members of the workforce.

They got to see 'work experience' as vital in providing a talent pipeline for their business, bringing more more people into work and out of unemployment whilst breaking down barriers to support local young people into work on their doorstep. Staff learnt about wider social issues that impacted their local community, including the young residents they were directly supporting on the placements. Anecdotally we saw a shift in the behaviours of businesses who saw the value of opening opportunities to local residents through their role; rather than it being another CSR 'tick box' activity. In addition it provided further ways for staff and employees to develop their own skill sets and reflect on how they can be opening up opportunities like training, networks, courses, space, access to mentors through their roles.

Through Camden Giving's role, it benefitted businesses as we took a certain level of risk away from them, by being the employer, facilitating the recruitment, line management duties, processing payroll, and other HR-related elements that businesses don't always have capacity, time or knowledge to fulfil. This meant they could spend more quality time making sure the young people were supported and focussed most of their time and energy here instead.

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*This project was possible for us because Camden Giving processed payments and were responsible for the important employment elements. This sort of partnership is key so that large organisations can be flexible and offer opportunities in a supported and appropriate way, which also acknowledges the additional pastoral support required in such an initiative.*

## **What does meaningful employment mean to you?**

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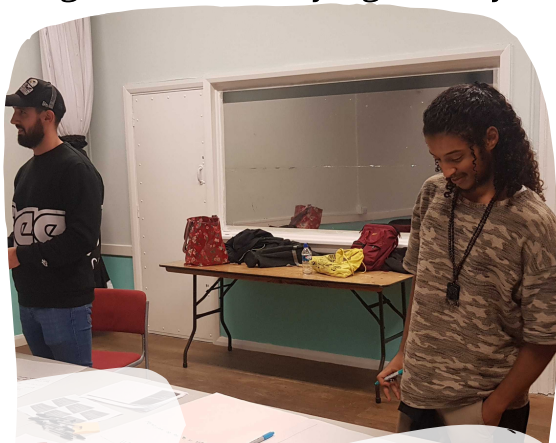
*An opportunity like this, which has got me interested in different jobs I didn't know about. Getting into a regular routine and learning new things day to day. Having a regular income is good, it allows me to be free and get my own things without having to stress my parents for money.*

In addition to their training to learn about ways to better support young people on placements, Coram's and the Youth Offending Team continued to support the businesses through the placements. They acted as an intermediary between the young people and the businesses, guiding and advising them to ensure the young people were always supported. This meant that the placements were person-centred and tailored in a way that worked for everyone so the young people didn't feel a burden, or an 'extra pair of hands', but rather embedded into the team and given the support and flexibility they needed to succeed.



# THROUGH COVID & BEYOND

Camden is one of the worst affected areas economically in the UK as a result of the pandemic and it has had a disproportionate impact on young people. Despite lockdown coming into effect halfway through their 12-week placements, we knew now was a critical time for young people to continue being supported and an assurance that they won't be let down in an already uncertain time. As their placements came to a premature end, we committed to continue paying them the London Living wage for the remaining weeks they were supposed to be on their work placements. We know financial participation, connection and good health & wellbeing during this challenging time of uncertainty was more important than being able to attend placements in person. In addition, accessing financial means supported them to get online, stay connected socially and emotionally, access job vacancies, courses and further training and earn money legitimately.



*Coram's Fields Youth Workers continued to engage and support the young people during the pandemic.*

Alongside this, Camden Giving, Coram's Fields and Camden Youth Offending Service continued to engage, listen and support them throughout the pandemic via Zoom; during a time where young people look to trusted services and people for guidance and answers. By staying engaged and helping them look for alternative ways to explore their personal and professional development, we could connect to other opportunities. Such as online courses in Adobe Photoshop & Illustrator for one young man interested in further developing his knowledge and employability skills in Graphic Design. Reflecting back to the start of the pandemic has allowed us to re-think our approach to how we can be adapting better to deliver future employment programmes in a growing digital world, from the access to technology and the way placements can be delivered.

A lot of uncertainty still remains, so accessing quality pathways and support into work is more important now than ever before. Camden Giving is continuing to work hard to ensure that those who need these services have access to alternative employment support:

- Exploring alternative work-based opportunities such as connecting to online workshops and training or services providing offline resources and support.
- Providing funding including through our Future Changemakers Fund, of which half of the grants given focussed on skills & employment and our COVID-19 Pathways to Employment Fund of which 13 of the 15 funded projects will benefit young residents.
- Continue listening and working with young people through meaningful participation in roles with Camden Giving and our Partners in order to enhance and influence opportunities for them.



This year's Future Changemakers and our Young Euston Voices echoed the same priorities as our panellists in 2019; that they key to improving youth safety and unemployment must consider:

- Meaningful employment opportunities;
- Developing alternative skills to suit the demand of growing sectors in Camden;
- Better access to financial income and financial stability;
- Businesses should value local recruitment and investment
- Focus on prioritising the wellbeing of young people

# LEARNINGS FROM OUR PILOT

We will find what works by listening, testing, funding and evaluating activity and are committed to approaches that where proven to be effective, expanded to more young people. We believe our youth-centric, collaborative and evidence-based work will continue to define our approach to youth employment. We know youth safety, high unemployment rates and low paid jobs aren't just a Camden issue. So we will use our learnings to explore how we can be developing this scalable and replicable model, which we hope will open up suitable and attractive routes to employment for other young people of London. Some of our key learnings include:

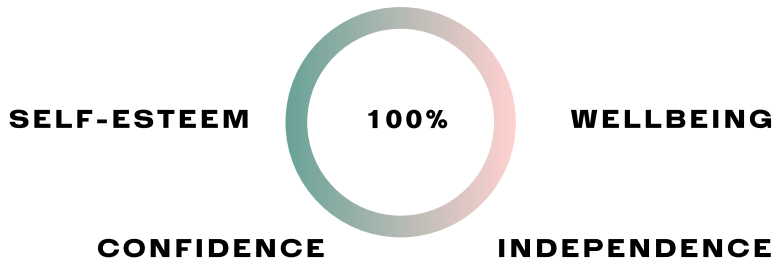
- Participatory partnerships can be complex, expensive and resource intensive, but the positive impact far outweigh the challenges and are worth the investment. Every partners brings something different and can play a role in providing quality jobs and tackling inequality.
- Having a value-driven approach reinforced why the journey *into* employment is just as important as gaining jobs. A great programme has experts, lived experience, enacting on insights from those benefitting, additional holistic support, a commitment to paying young people.
- Businesses having a commitment to being flexible, empathetic and understanding challenges and difficulties young people face, alongside devolving responsibility and trust, was key to supporting their journey of development into work and being equipped to best support young people.
- Having a vehicle to both employ and pay young people in a flexible way, because often businesses don't have capacity, time or knowledge to broker recruitment within the local community nor manage payroll, line manager responsibilities or provide additional HR elements.
- A national pandemic doesn't stop ambition and resilience of young residents disproportionately impacted. It was important to continue paying them even when their placements stopped, to value their worth but also support the digital divide so they to get online and stay connected. We are also now better equipped to support with transitioning placements and training online if this happened again.
- Building familiarity before placements start is key to a more positive start to the employment journey. The paid pre-placement development sessions, where the young residents had a genuine say in shaping their placements alongside youth experts and the businesses, reinforces that building trust, value, familiarity early on is key to a successful programme.
- With more time, and funding, we could run more focussed sessions such as demystifying roles and sectors within Camden businesses, finance management for the young cohort to better support them beyond their placements. In addition, bringing together a wider group of diverse businesses and young people means we could have a broader pool of voices and talent, also creating a wider network of connections and opportunities.
- Businesses learn a lot about their own barriers and areas of development, understanding how they can play a very vital role in supporting the wellbeing of employees, as well as work-ready skills, through employment-based training, opening doors and possibilities to local residents, and embracing training and learning new skills themselves.



# THE DATA

At the end of their placements, we asked the young people to report on the following social, emotional & wellbeing indicators to which 100% responded 'Yes' to whether they felt an improved sense of...

## SELF-ACTUALIZATION



In addition we asked them more specific questions about the structure of the programme and employment-related questions, again **100%** responded 'Yes' when asked if they:

- Feel more confident about accessing future employment, training or education?*
- Found the additional sessions (e.g. weekly support, pre-placement sessions) beneficial?*
- Feel this experience helped to develop a more positive outlook on your life?*
- Feel valued and part of the team at work?*
- Had a better understanding of what skills or attributes are required in work-related roles*

## Budget for Year 1

**£36,198**

### CAMDEN GIVING COSTS

**£11,557.85**

- Programme Management
- HR & Employment Support
- Fundraising
- Brokering partnerships and further opportunities

### PARTICIPANT COSTS

**£9,640.15**

- Co-design session payment for 7 young people
- Clothing and Travel expenses
- Salaries for 3 Trainees

### YOUTH SERVICES FEE

**£15,000**

- Weekly Support sessions
- Safeguarding lead
- Training sessions for participating businesses



*This programme demonstrates to other businesses, who may otherwise not have had the time, connections, confidence or expertise to embark upon this approach, the importance of opening doors and opportunities to young local residents.*  
**4D Projects**

With thanks to our partners who made the Youth Employment Programme possible:

**EUSTON**  
TOWN



coram's  
fields



Camden



Regent's  
Place



4D PROJECTS

**Collins**

If you are a business and want to learn more about our pilot or interested in supporting young people in Camden into employment, contact Danielle Green (Assistant Director): [danielle@camdengiving.org.uk](mailto:danielle@camdengiving.org.uk)