

Empowering Connections

Opportunities and Gaps:
Summary Report

INTRODUCTION

We know that supporting the onward journey of panellists and grantees, beyond their immediate roles with us, plays a vital role in them participating in other forms of power, builds social capital, increases democratic engagement, access to public and social infrastructure and supplements our grant-giving. These connections are increasingly important as we want to ensure their time with us does not feel extractive, which can often be a risk with short-term interactions, and the support we provide through this has a longer-term benefit.

Businesses hold significant power and we are working to ensure they understand the issues that exist, but also commit to providing opportunities that solve these issues. We know businesses also need our help to understand what connections are most useful, that ensure there are more equitable and accessible opportunities for Camden's civil society. Camden Giving plays a role to help bring the two together through our Connections, to advocate for better access and quality opportunities across Camden in the long-term for our grantees, panellists and ultimately the wider community.

We believe our donors and supporters can play a significant role in tackling injustices, beyond their financial contributions to Camden Giving, by opening-up resources, opportunities, assets and knowledge.

ACCESS TO POWER

There are three main types of power that we've identified as being integral for communities to be able to access opportunities in a more equitable way. We are confident that, because of our connections, we have been able to enhance, protect and open up access to:

COMMUNITY POWER

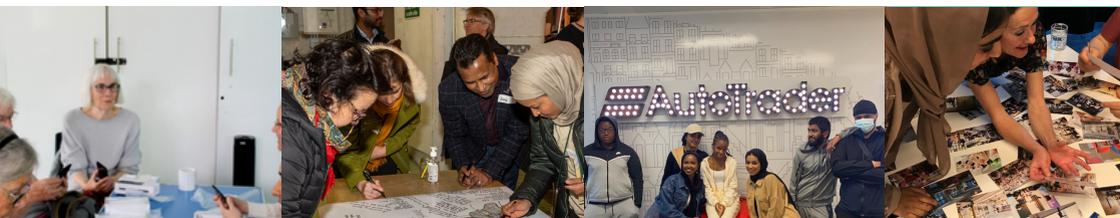
Opening access to assets, support, services or activities within the community they otherwise might not have, or have limited, access to. This also includes connections that ensures their voices are being heard for example quality community engagement with businesses, peer-referrals and supporting the wider community to engage in opportunities

ECONOMIC POWER

Improving financial inclusion and participation through paid opportunities (not just jobs), access to work, and/or career-related skills development and work-readiness. This might include building on employability skills, personal development skills, access to jobs, engage in new networks. It also includes opportunities for grantees to improve their organisations access to financial support like grants and fundraising abilities.

POLITICAL POWER

The ability to influence or engage in local or national government and/or democracy through opportunities that might include democratic participation, influencing policy, engaging in forms of civic activism and direct engagement with policymakers.



REFLECTIONS

2021 to Now

Since we were set-up in 2017 we have brokered connections to ensure grassroots leaders and residents have access to opportunities beyond money, to enhance their roles in their communities; from coordinating volunteering, convening networks and providing in-kind support from businesses.

As our participatory approaches continued to evolve alongside an increase in business supporters and the number of panellists, grantees and participants, there was an increased desire and need to access other forms of participation and power beyond just money.

So in 2021 we reviewed our approach to connections to bring all of this invaluable work together in a more aligned way. "Empowering Connections" is now a core pillar of our Manifesto to create more equitable connections by:

- **Short-term:** Setting-up an improved referral mechanism for supporters, panellists and grantees.
- **Long-term:** Advocating for better opportunities and support external organisations to provide this and improve accessibility



REFLECTIONS

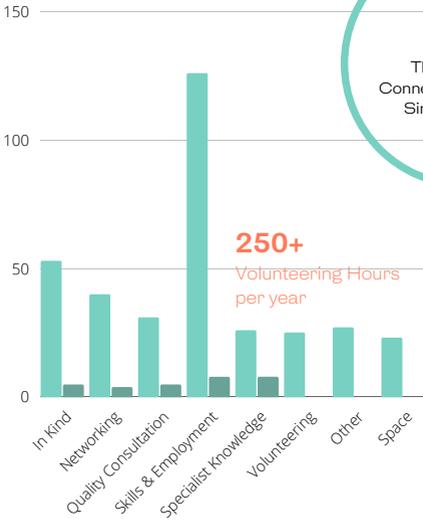
2021 to Now

At the start of 2021 we set out our plan to achieve our goals towards increase connectivity between residents, community groups, institutions and businesses in Camden, so that everyone benefits from these connections.

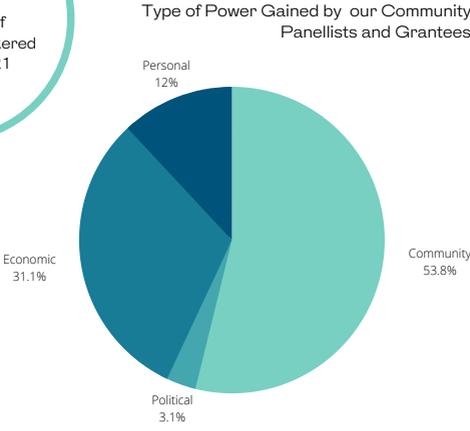
We recognise that there isn't a one size fits all approach and needed to adopt a more individualised mechanism that protects and enhances the power of communities (economic, political, community) beyond their roles with us. We have done this in a number of ways:

- We've reduced the number of blanket connections we're promoting through social media, newsletters and email groups and use the full team to provide more tailored solutions for each problem via our weekly referrals meeting. Including The Community Ideas Project Citizen Grantees who require additional support beyond money to run their project.
- We're regularly mapping demographics, areas and types of activities that lead to successful outcomes, as well as mapping demographics, areas and types of activity where there are gaps.
- We now have quality data and insight we need to start advocating for better opportunities and in the next year we aim to bring about better opportunities for residents from our business supporters.

A Snapshot of Connections One Year On



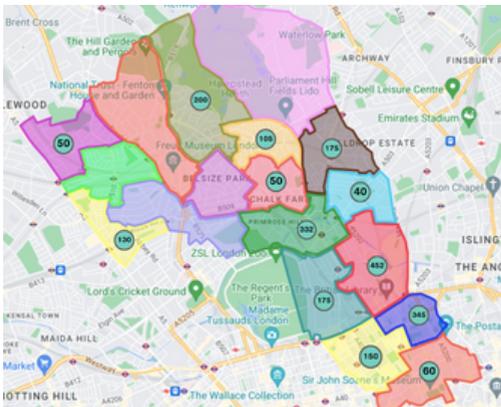
365
The number of Connections Brokered Since May 2021



Type of Connection brokered to benefit Camden's communities

Bridging the Digital Divide

In July 2022, Camden Giving donated 2,219 smartphones to 49 Camden charities to help those from disadvantaged communities. The map below shows the different communities across Camden who benefited from the phones, with St Pancras and Somers Town being the highest with 452 and Camden Town with Primrose Hill receiving 332.



2219
Phones Donated to grassroots charities

"I have wanted a modern phone for a long time, so thank you so much. My grandchildren think I'm a modern Nan now!! – or I will be once I really know how to use it"

Castlehaven Community Association Member

Pathways to Power for Camden Citizens

Participatory Grantmaking builds power, connectivity and networks with in communities. The value of the process is as important as the outcomes of the grants. So we work with panels beyond their roles as community panellists so they can truly benefit from a rapidly changing city. We identify individual needs for money, connection and well-being, exploring new opportunities that enable them to gain individualised support and access to other forms of political, economic and community power.



We have connected our We Make Camden Panellists to many paid opportunities with other grant-giving organisations to benefit from the knowledge and experience of citizen participatory grant-making, to enhance their own grant-giving approaches and learn from residents experiencing challenges they exist to tackle through their own funding; from London Funders, Botnar Foundation, BBC Children In Need, Vermont Foodbank, National Lottery Community Fund. For example, one of our panellists was paid to participate in a panel discussion with ACF about the importance and impact of participatory grant-making on Asylum, refugee and immigrant communities.

Other connections include fostering signposting includes things like accessing funding, community choirs and fencing classes, presenting with confidence workshops, access to free space, greening and arts workshops.

We have also engaged the panel in other paid opportunities that they've identified as a priority for them to enhance their economic participation, such as sharing job opportunities tailored to their needs. One panellist is now in employment as a result of our connection to another charity in Camden as well as providing employment references for them.

Another example is providing policy templates for one panellist who recently became a Trustee at an arts charity, so they had an existing resources and support from us to support them in their role, without having to spend a significant amount of their own time to research and create new policies.

WHAT'S NEXT

We have gathered quality data on the impact of these connections on communities reached (by demographic, geographic area, other characteristic), the type of power enhanced, and the type of connections offered and requested – from volunteering, space, networks, in-kind donations, skills and employment, quality consultation, specialist knowledge.

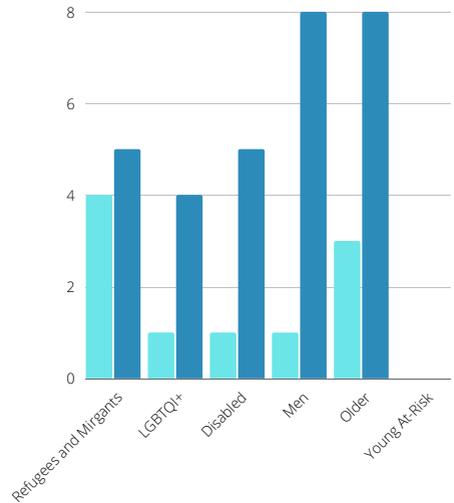
But importantly, we also have clear understanding into what gaps exist by type of opportunity, who's being reached, type of power. We need to enact on this to ensure we fill these gaps, by working with Camden businesses to provide connections that address these areas and prioritise what the community needs. But we can't do this without the support of Camden businesses.

Our supporters can play a significant role in tackling injustices beyond their financial contributions, by opening-up connections to resources, opportunities, assets and knowledge for communities in Camden.

Our 10 Calls to Action on the next page highlight how businesses can play a key role in solving problems that exist and be part of the solution for Camden's communities and increase economic equity and justice, democratic and community participation through empowering connections.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

The table on the right shows the top 6 groups and demographics who are offered the least connections and opportunities. These are groups where significant gaps are highlighted throughout the report and many of these groups are disproportionately impacted by intersectional socioeconomic and political inequalities. The 10 calls to action for businesses are outlined and we hope to find solutions together to address these issues.



Increasing Economic Power

Disabled Residents

Despite around 20% of our panellists identifying as disabled and around 10% of grantees led by, or providing services for, disabled people in Camden, 0 connections under Skills and Employment have been offered to disabled people in Camden – this includes mental health, cognitive, learning or physical disabilities. Black and Asian communities make up 25% of Camden’s residents with learning disabilities and are also over twice as likely to be affected by serious mental illness than average. Men account for 59% of the population with a learning disability too.

1

Men

Men are disproportionately underrepresented in skills & employment connections with only 2 opportunities where they have engaged. Though this could be due the majority of our panellists and grassroots grantees being women, there are significantly fewer opportunities ringfenced and targeted at men in Camden. Around 4% of men aged over 18 in Camden claim out-of-work benefits and we also know that unemployment was highest among the Black and White and Caribbean ethnic groups for both men and women, with far more Londoners from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities earning salaries below the London Living Wage (£11.05p/h).

2

Increasing Economic Power (continued)

Young People At-Risk

3

Just under half of the Skills & Employment opportunities we've brokered are aimed at Young People aged 16–25. However, these are often not ringfenced to young people typically locked out of, and under-represented in, employment, with 0 opportunities coming forward from businesses to support young people at risk of youth violence. Only 9 of our connections support young people Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) and although 4 are benefitting Black and Ethnic Minority young people, there is no intersection across these groups. So, it's important that we focus our efforts here.

Refugees and Migrants

4

Although a significant number of our grantees support people who have been displaced by the refugee crisis, as well as refugees who have been living in Camden on a longer-term basis, very few opportunities exist to support this particular community's journey into employment and access job-ready skills. Only 2 connections support refugees and migrants, with only 1 being offered by an external organisation to engage and pay a resident with refugee experience to participate on a panel and the other from a grassroots grantee, and a refugee herself, wanting to employ other refugees to work with her and support them into paid employment.

How can businesses help?

The majority of the people involved in Camden Giving's participatory grant-making are unemployed or underemployed and this is reflective of 48% of our overall connections' focussing on requests to engage in skills & employment opportunities. However, there are gaps in who these opportunities are generally offered by businesses and doesn't reach those who typically face systemic barriers into accessing employment and who often experience intersectional inequalities.

Providing these following 4 groups with targeted opportunities to access skills and employment through connections to quality paid, inclusive employment opportunities including ringfencing jobs, providing paid work placements, hosting mentoring and coaching opportunities.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

5 Increasing Power to LBGTQI+ Communities

There is a severe lack of opportunities specific to LBGTQI+ communities in Camden with only 2 connections across all types of which have come via internal networks, and not from the business community – one from a Camden Giving grantee recruiting trustees and the other from a panellist to increase digital training skills. Currently there are no opportunities to engage in any form of skills development, networking, consultation-based opportunities through us.

How can businesses help?

Panellists who identify as LBGTQI+ and grantees providing specialist services and have knowledge and trust within this community provide useful insights into what is needed in Camden. Businesses can provide targeted opportunities for the LBGTQI+ community that range from activities for increased belonging, shared interests, creating safe spaces to network, and providing valuable knowledge through diversifying trusteeships and engaging in quality consultation.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

6 Opening Access to Space: Citizens

We are prioritising citizen and grassroots grantees who face barriers to accessing space in Camden because they often; don't have access to their own space; don't have funding to cover costs especially with rising rents; lack networks to organisations or businesses who can support them to access spaces. Only 1 offer of space benefits 1 for disabled residents and 0 for LGBTQ+ and 0 for refugee communities – groups that need safe spaces to come together, connect and share together.

Just under 50% of the requests for space come from our citizen grantees and we get more requests from Women, Black and Ethnic Minority groups and Young Adults than other groups, but this is reflective of the composition of the citizen grantees we fund, but these groups also face barriers to resources that we want to find solutions for. One grassroot leader told us “Rent is increasing by 50% for the community space we use, so just one session will be around £60 which is completely unaffordable for us.” The number of requests for multi-purpose spaces for service delivery, workspace and storage significantly outweigh the number of spaces accessible to them that exist within businesses.

How can businesses help?

Providing free or subsidised spaces that is multi-purpose, either on an ad-hoc or longer-term basis, is most useful for small charities, groups and citizen grantees but particularly these groups above. Alongside this, equitable access is providing resources such as refreshments, equipment, IT support, and most importantly ensuring they experience is inclusive where community members using the space are trusted and treated fairly.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

7 In-Kind Support: Digital

Sometimes the things businesses can take for granted are of huge value to a grassroots charity and our communities, in addition what is offered doesn't always match what is needed. For example we get a lot of offers of donations for large pieces of office furniture, however many charities do not have the space or need these items. What is most useful varies a lot between different organisations, changing community needs and external factors such as global crisis'. Though we can't always anticipate what communities need, we can see from our connection trends what is useful and where there are gaps. We also know that the in-kind donations are often not targeted to benefits groups who traditionally have less access to assets and resources. Just over 50% of the donations offered by businesses are for 'All' demographics and groups, and not targeted.

There are gaps in donations for digital devices such as laptops and mobiles to digital equipment such as audio recording devices for podcasts especially for refugees, young people, BAME residents and families in poverty in particular. In addition, there is a digital skills gap and requests for professional assistance for these groups is sought after to upskill them in technology and specialist digital platforms and equipment, such as audio recording, photography support, website development and even the basics.

How can businesses help?

The in-kind donations businesses offer to us benefit the local community by opening access to valuable resources and allows us to go beyond simply giving financial support for projects. In-Kind donation requests can be offered quite ad-hoc and we never know the scale of demand or need, but businesses who can provide quality digital donations for families experiencing poverty, young people, refugees, black and ethnic minority groups are a priority to bridge the digital divide. Alongside this, providing specialist knowledge and skills to supplement the digital donations and outputs of this is a priority.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

8 Volunteering Support: Citizen Grantees

We have significantly more requests for volunteer support and knowledge than business employees are offering to citizen grantees and we know that a significant amount of the requests for volunteers aren't being met – 60% of volunteer requests come from Camden residents running organisations and our citizen grantees requiring specialist skills and knowledge but only 23% of volunteer requests are from businesses that do not always match their needs. We have many businesses offering group volunteering sessions as a one-off opportunity, rather than providing more intensive, skills-based volunteering – which isn't always beneficial to grassroots organisations who often don't have capacity, space or simply the need for larger group volunteer activities.

How can businesses help?

There are two key areas that citizen grantees request volunteering support for that businesses can help with:

Capacity Building

Providing advice and strategic support on how to sustain their work, to help both with the growth of ideas and access to funding, as well as development support for the project or their own personal development. Support could also be in the form of mentoring and coaching which often comes at a high cost for charities that they just can't afford to fundraise for

Skill-Based Workshops

Volunteers can deliver workshops to bring together different charities, residents and groups focussed on developing knowledge and skills in Branding, Social Media and Marketing focussed on increasing engagement, brand awareness, type of content to share and using storytelling to promote their work and engage new supporters.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

9 Increasing Political Power

Whilst the political connections offered by institutions are 5 times more than communities and charities requesting political power, this only accounts for 3% of the total connections offered through our connections. This is particularly stark in a place like Camden where a significant amount of change is happening led by institutions and local government with a lot of political power, and can leave communities feeling disenfranchised, unheard and lacking trust. Connections for communities to feel represented and included in decision-making, policy and responsible towards improving their community can lead to other positive outcomes in regards to community and economic power.

The majority of connections offered are also targeted at our Euston Voices group likely because they are already engaged in consultation with the council, but this can sometimes feel tokenistic and extractive for this group. So wider community groups and residents engaged in our work need to be included in access to political opportunities. Most of the political connections also targeted at young residents and 'all' people, with 0 directly engaging disabled residents, Black and Ethnic Minority groups, LGBTQI+ community, young people at-risk or older neighbours – groups we know are underrepresented in this space.

How can businesses help?

Provide meaningful, quality consultation that increases the participation of disabled residents, Black and Ethnic Minority groups, LGBTQI+ community, young people at-risk and older neighbours with intersectional characteristics. Shifting power to these communities who are too often underrepresented in democracy to become active participants. These opportunities should ensure that there is a majority representation of groups who are typically underrepresented, provide a fair way to compensate them, ensuring that the experience of sharing lived experience is non-extractive and that they understand what real influence will happen as a result, including how the institution will enact on, or provide recommendations, to those holding the power to create change.

10 CALLS TO ACTION

10 Building Connectivity: Older neighbours

Only 6 connections for older neighbours aged 65+ to engage in opportunities currently exist and this is a group who have told us that “there are many opportunities for young people shared but not many for retired and older neighbours”. This is a group who also experience increased social isolation, loneliness and poor mental health exacerbated by the pandemic.

There are 0 opportunities for them to engage in political connections and of the 5 connections aimed at increased community power none are ringfenced to older people, these are purely reaching a small number of older panellists in things like free wellness workshops and a grantee offering places on their ‘start up for seniors’ business masterclasses. In addition, most of these connections primarily benefit women and none intersect with other marginalised groups such as LGBTQI + or disabled residents and very few benefitting BAME communities.

How can businesses help?

Provide opportunities to continue increasing skills and learn new knowledge, as well as spaces for connection, networking and cohesion and having a voice in democratic spaces. Businesses should open up opportunities for social connectivity and learning for older neighbours and particularly groups who are often underrepresented elsewhere and are typically harder to reach such as BAME Men and those identifying with the LGBTQI+ community.

To find out more about our Connections and to support our work visit www.camdeniving.org.uk/connections or email danielle@camdeniving.org.uk