What Matters
The Camden Approach to Adult Social Care

Stella Smith, Principal Social Worker

London Borough of Camden
‘We want to make Camden a better borough – a place where everyone has a chance to succeed, where nobody gets left behind. Together, we will create a place that works for everyone, and where everybody has a voice’

Camden 2025

We want to build on strengths, working with people, as experts in their own lives, focusing on What Matters to them not what’s the matter with them”.
Working Together – Camden Focus Groups

- Involving residents from across the Camden community, inclusive and representative of different circumstances.
- Carers
- Voluntary and Community Sector

Help you stay well and connected
Help when you need it
Ongoing support for those who need it
Help you stay safe
Help when you need it
What did people tell us

- I need people I can trust
- I need accessible, useful & up to date information about my community
- I need people to understand me & what is important to me
- I need good quality appropriate communication
- I need consistent, I don’t want to tell my story again & again
- I should be able to contact ASC when I need to
- I want someone who takes time to get to know me
- I want professionals to share information about me
- I am the expert in my own life
- I need people I can trust
- I have the right to person centred services
- Carers are important and need support
- I need the right information in a crisis
A ‘Social Care Sorting Office’
A Strength Based Approach

“A strengths-based approach to care, support and inclusion says let’s look first at what people can do with their skills and their resources and what can the people around them do in their relationships and their communities. People need to be seen as more than just their care needs – they need to be experts and in charge of their own lives”.

Alex Fox, chief executive of the charity Shared Lives
The Care Act – Transforming Adult Social Care.

The Care Act 2014 requires local authorities to specifically ‘consider the person’s own strengths and capabilities, and what support might be available from their wider support network or within the community.

- keeping the person at the centre of all decisions
- Identifying what matters to the person and helping them achieve their outcomes.
- Being interested, curious, skilled and informed.
- Encouraging hope that things can improve
- Increasing self-worth and well being
- Empowerment, creativity, choice, control, citizenship and community inclusion.

These are the core principles of What Matters, the Camden Approach to Adult Social Care.
What Matters, a new approach to supporting adults in Camden

What Matters is about conversations and building relationships, it puts people at the centre of all decisions.

It’s about building on strengths, skills and ambitions.

It connects people to their communities and to those who are most important to them.
Building a culture of strengths-based practice

What Matters
Camden’s approach to adult social care

- Working together with people with lived experience, building positive relationships
- Having conversations to identify strengths and opportunities
- Learning and development, peer support, coaching, supervision and developing empowering culture
- Using Family Group Conferences to promote natural support networks
- Building infrastructure, Direct Payments, Assistive Technology, promoting independence, choice and control
- Wide system culture change, cross Council, care providers, health, mental health. SSCR Research
Conversation 1: Stay well and connected

How can I help you to connect to the things that will help you to get on with your life?

How can you, your family, friends or local community help with this?
Conversation 2: Help when you need it

What needs to change to make you feel safe and back in control?

How do I help to make that happen?
Conversation 3: Longer-term support

What does a good life look like for you?

How can I help you to use available resources to support the life you choose?

Who do you want to be involved in planning this?
Walk the Mile

**Different:** “Unlike a meeting where you sit face-to-face and share or read information, a walk gave us the chance to share information and local knowledge in a friendly, memorable and less transactional way.”

**Spontaneous:** “We noticed a sheltered housing scheme on the way and took the opportunity to introduce ourselves. Staff were able to tell us about local facilities like neighbourhood centres and residents association.”

**Connective:** “Walking helped us bond with colleagues and form stronger working links with people in other roles and other areas of service.”

More walks are planned during September and October, before passing over to the teams to organise their own walks.
What Matters – not What’s the Matter? Working Together

1. We want to work together to enable people to build the life they want to lead?

2. We want to work together and realise collaborative strengths, skills and ambitions?

3. We want to know we are making a difference?
Focus Group – Measuring The Right Things.

- Annual survey (externally supported)
- Practitioner check-in questions
- Managers check-in questions
- Snapshot survey
- Future consideration for mystery shopping
- Practitioner survey
- Experts by experience case file audit
- Tracking complaints & compliments

MEASURING THE RIGHT THINGS
School of Social Care Research Study

Camden Council is working together with the University of Birmingham School of Social Policy and two other Councils to find out if strength based ways of working are helping people to have better lives.


This research study will consider how to move beyond often fragmented strength based approaches to a more ‘joined-up’ approach enabling vulnerable adults to experience greater wellbeing, social connectedness and support. The study will provide evidence to inform the development of social care policy and practice.

Two service user or carer representatives from each site will be co-opted on to the Lived Experience Advisory Panel for the study.
Any Questions?