



paddington development trust



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Commissioning case study

Co-production of early years services in Queen's Park

co-design # whole-systems model # cost-benefit analysis # community champions # early years services

The headlines

- Westminster City Council's children's services department and Central London Community Health are committed to a neighbourhood-based co-design of children's centre services.
- The neighbourhood community budget pilot has provided an opportunity to develop and test an integrated, whole-systems model for the delivery of early years services, with residents and partner agencies working together in new ways.
- The pace of change within different organisations represented on a partnership is not consistent and this has to be taken into account when establishing a timeline for co-designing and co-commissioning services.

What is the context?

The heavily residential Queen's Park ward is situated at the northern end of the City of Westminster, bounded by the Grand Union canal and the London Overground railway. The ward borders the London Boroughs of Brent to the north and Kensington and Chelsea to the south. The area has a population of 12,750 and is made up of approximately 70 per cent social housing. It ranks high on the list of London's most deprived wards, along with the nearby neighbourhoods of Harrow Road, Westbourne and Church Street. The area was chosen as one of twelve neighbourhood community budget pilots part-funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government. The pilot programme was launched in April 2012 for a period of 24 months.

At the same time and after ten years of community organisation and development with Paddington Development Trust, active citizens successfully petitioned to establish their own community council (a form of parish council) and triggered a review of neighbourhood governance in Westminster. Following the establishment of a shadow community council, they then won 70 per cent of the votes in a local referendum to establish London's first democratically-elected community council in 2014. The Queen's Park Community Council has powers to raise money through a local precept. The campaigning process in Queen's Park has brought local residents together from all sections

of the community with the intention of reversing generations of state dependency and of reforming hyper-local public and community services.

A community meeting was held to discuss priorities and residents raised particular concerns about gang violence and more broadly about the quality and availability of services and support for children and young people. Early years was chosen by residents to be the focus of the neighbourhood community budget pilot. It was estimated that in the four years that would follow the launch of the pilot around one thousand new children would be born in the Queen's Park ward. The ambition for the community was for these children to benefit from a progressive reduction of risk in their later years.

When deciding on the early years focus, residents made the point that they were concerned not solely with money but also with the way in which the design of services took place largely unseen by the community. The fragmentation and lack of cohesion in the service offer was identified by residents as a long-term issue in Queen's Park, with many local families having fallen and continuing to fall through the cracks. Although front-line staff were willing and able, providers had not always worked in concert with each other or local residents in a spirit of co-production.

The key objectives for the neighbourhood community budget pilot were:

- to facilitate a whole-systems Queen's Park children's centre, out of which a more flexible and multi-skilled team would work alongside a growing cohort of active citizens supported by two community champions;
- to successfully integrate three local services, health visiting, midwifery and the children's centre;
- to co-design services involving residents through the Queen's Park Forum and Shadow Council, a newly-formed Queen's Park Children and Wellbeing Commission and the formation of a local mutual health exchange;
- to change and improve the future life chances of children at risk in Queen's Park through early intervention;
- to enable a sustainable resident stake in Queen's Park children's services, including promotion of local volunteering and employment for volunteers and parents;
- to modernise and enable inter-agency communications and technology; and
- to genuinely get more from less by harnessing the strength of the community budget partnership and the goodwill between residents and service providers

What commissioning and delivery model has been adopted?

The neighbourhood community budget pilot provided an opportunity to develop and test an integrated, whole-systems model for the delivery of early years services with residents and partner agencies working together in new ways. Westminster City Council's children's services department and Central London Community Health committed their support to the model of co-design and co-commissioning of services with local families in order to enrich the local 'offer'.

The first year of the pilot involved intensive work to guide the partnership activities and support the review and redesign of existing services. Tasks included:

- establishing an overarching route map to clearly define activities, lead partner responsibilities and timescales for delivery;
- initiating a detailed resource mapping exercise;
- assessing the feasibility of mutualisation;
- developing a business case and completing a cost-benefit analysis exercise; and
- establishing the partnership and governance infrastructure

Paddington Development Trust, through the pilot, commissioned Westminster Business School at the University of Westminster to develop and facilitate a series of workshops for residents in the context of the neighbourhood community budget. This training was invaluable in building the capacity and confidence of residents to engage in the process of co-designing local services. A co-design Practice Group was established to provide a small group of residents with hands-on experience of planning and implementing an early years project.

One of the design ideas put forward by the residents was for health visitors and midwives to be co-located on a part-time basis at the children's centre in order to facilitate access to services for more 'hard to help' families in the community. This co-location has now been achieved as a result of the pilot, although there was a need to address a number of organisational cultural differences between the two services.



The co-design group also organised a new playgroup, 'Sounds Like Fun' which now offers five weekly drop-ins with music and story-telling. Each parent who attends is given a 'goody bag' that contains items that were judged by the group to be valuable for pregnant women and mothers with children under four years. The group also produced an attractive map identifying the facilities available to them in Queen's Park.

Who are the key partners?

A Queen's Park Children and Wellbeing Commission was established in September 2012 comprising the following members:

- Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust – associate director, children, families, health and wellbeing;
- Queen's Park Health Centre – general practitioners;
- Imperial College Hospital Trust – head of midwifery;
- Inner North West London Primary Care Trust – senior commissioning manager;
- Paddington Development Trust – chief executive;
- Queen's Park Children's Centre – head teacher;
- Queen's Park Community Champions – coordinator;
- Queen's Park Shadow Community Council – chair;
- Rainbow Family Centre – director, children, youth and family services;
- West London Clinical Commissioning Group – managing director;

- Westminster City Council – head of early intervention and localities; and
- Westminster City Council NHS (Primary Care Trust) – early years commissioning lead

Terms of reference were established to guide the work of the commission with an agreed remit to:

- oversee the successful delivery of Queen’s Park’s neighbourhood community budget early years pilot;
- bring service providers and residents together to increase take-up of and satisfaction with local early years services;
- identify the most appropriate methods to achieve cost savings and the operational efficiency of early years services;
- co-design a step-change in the delivery of early years services based on best practice business models, so as to inform mutual working at the Queen’s Park front line;
- improve children’s future readiness for school;
- harness the skills and capacity of Queen’s Park parents and local volunteers; and
- provide clear lines of accountability of services to local people

Commissioning of local services has remained the responsibility of individual service providers; however the Queen’s Park Children and Wellbeing Commission has become a powerful partnership vehicle that has provided the space for dialogue, sharing of practice and a forum to enable service providers to listen to the ideas, concerns and experiences of local families. The process of delivering the early years pilot has focused attention on a shared objective to improve local services and outcomes. Effective management of the partnership has ensured that while the model has necessarily been challenging for its members it has avoided fuelling conflict and creating a divide between service providers and the local community. Queen’s Park Practice Group has taken on day-to-day planning and delivery of the programme.

The process of delivering the early years pilot has focused attention on a shared objective to improve local services and outcomes.

What has been the impact?

The neighbourhood community budget early years pilot and the work of the commission have provided considerable learning for all partners. The focus on whole-systems integration has helped to identify opportunities to improve joint working and discussions are ongoing with the clinical commissioning group and Westminster City Council to secure future investment in the whole-systems model. Co-location of health visitors and midwives at the children’s centre has been achieved and is facilitating better access to early years services for local families.

Paddington Development Trust has supported the Queen’s Park community to engage in the Community Health Champions programme, which is delivered by the public health team across the Tri-borough and uses a community development approach to improve health and wellbeing and tackle health inequalities. Historically it had been difficult to recruit local volunteers (champions) from the Queen’s Park area but the work of the trust, together with improving relations between service providers and the community, has resulted in 14 community health champions being recruited from the Queen’s Park ward. These champions are playing a key role in widening parent access to services, increasing contacts through effective outreach and contributing to the co-design of local services. They are ambassadors for delivering important messages to the community, principally around health and family, and also support local consultation activities, for example conducting 500 surveys within the local community to inform local service planning and delivery.

A network of ‘maternity champions’ has been recruited and trained to support pregnant and new parents with babies up to one year. The maternity champions host weekly drop-in sessions and are on hand to welcome new arrivals, providing signposting advice and support and a friendly space for parents to meet and socialise. The health visitor team attend the drop-in sessions once a month to provide advice and support. The community has been encouraged to take on a greater role for itself and has secured £60,000 of lottery funding to continue the drop-in sessions for families at the children’s centre.

Work on improving inter-agency communication and use of technology has highlighted opportunities to achieve service efficiencies. For example, analysis of birth records and numbers of new families accessing the children’s centre identified 328 infants not benefitting from a

service designed for 1,020. Investment in local information systems, together with stronger reach into the community, is projected to reduce the unit costs of children's centre services from £192 to £132 per child. In addition ensuring earlier intervention and support for families by increasing take-up of children's centre services is projected to deliver longer-term impacts, including:

- a reduction in acute use of health services;
- a reduction in visits to Accident & Emergency;
- improvement in dental services and behaviour;
- every mum/dad understands early years and local health systems;
- every child 'school ready' at primary stage; and
- a reduction in late intervention costs

The future ambition for Queen's Park is to reduce the public costs for the ward to the mean Westminster average. The projected savings are based on preventing the need for more costly later interventions for children from the Queen's Park estate and include:

- an average saving of £100,000 per annum for the first five years;
- an average saving of £350,000 per annum over the second five years;
- an average saving of £442,000 every year thereafter

Further savings can be made if there is reinvestment in preventative services in order to meet increased demand for and take-up of early intervention services that result from the Queen's Park initiative.

The process of analysing service data and associated costs is continuing with partners committed to establishing a robust cost-benefit analysis model to reflect and respond to changing budget conditions. However, notwithstanding the ongoing analysis of real and projected costs and savings linked to early years childcare services in Queen's Park, the cost-benefit process remains a challenging task and the neighbourhood community budget project has only scratched the complex surface of forecasting costs and benefits in early years intervention.

What have been the key elements of success?

The key success factors for neighbourhood community budget early years pilot include:

- undertaking a detailed resource-mapping exercise to provide an accurate picture of the levels of spending and nature of services delivered in the Queen's Park ward;
- the creation of the Queen's Park Children and Wellbeing Commission as a partnership vehicle to bring service providers and the community together to facilitate the co-design of services;
- the production of a detailed business case and cost-benefit model to enable service efficiencies and improvements to be clearly articulated and evidenced; and
- effective coordination and leadership which has steered conversations away from an adversarial conflict between service providers and the community to a shared focus on improving standards and outcomes for children and families

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What has been learnt?

The Queen's Park project operates as a micro-participant in the Whole Place and neighbourhood community budget context of complex and sometimes chaotic delivery of public services. Queen's Park is subject to budgets already designed at corporate levels. It has to negotiate rather than enforce.

The neighbourhood community budget has empowered residents and given the local community confidence to question, scrutinise and cooperate with willing public partners to seek savings, efficiencies and better services by co-designing solutions to entrenched and historical challenges.

The 'narrow' Queen's Park neighbourhood community budget business case rests on efficiencies and improved outcomes arising from more integrated early years services being delivered as a result of co-location at the children's centre and stronger reach into the community through a network of community champions. The project has produced an achievable analysis of the immediate and medium-term impact on costs and efficiencies that can be expected, as well as providing a scalable model that can be rolled out in other acute and high-cost neighbourhoods across Westminster and beyond.

The Children and Wellbeing Commission has involved a broad range of service providers. The pace of change within these organisations can differ and this needs to be recognised when establishing a timeline for co-designing and co-commissioning services. Staff within services are often (and increasingly) working under considerable pressure with heavy workloads as a consequence of reduced capacity and tightening service budgets. Given this pressure it can be difficult for staff, in particular front-line staff such as midwives or health visitors, to engage in processes of service redesign or to support requests for information for the purpose of undertaking an accurate cost-benefit exercise. Negotiations between senior managers within local services and the Queen's Park Practice Group were able to resolve this issue and ensure that front-line staff could participate in the design process.

One of the key benefits of the neighbourhood community budget has been to bring residents and service providers into a shared space where this complexity can be jointly explored and simplified. Sustaining community-based innovation is a challenge, nowhere more so than in Queen's Park. However, through the governance and precept arrangements in place, the Queen's Park Community Council will provide both the democratic and fiscal context for Queen's Park neighbourhood community budget over future years.

Who can I contact?

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Other useful information

<http://www.pdt.org.uk/>

<http://lovequeenspark.co.uk/>

<http://communitychampionsuk.org/work-with-us/our-achievements/>

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