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# **Hard Times, New Directions? The impact of the local government spending cuts in three deprived neighbourhoods of London**

**Final report**

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## Preface

This is one of a series of papers examining aspects of the social policy record of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition in England from 2010-15, with a particular focus on poverty, inequality and the distribution of social and economic outcomes. The papers follow a similar but smaller set covering Labour's record from 1997-2010, published in 2013. They follow the same format as those papers. Starting with a brief assessment of the situation the Coalition inherited from Labour, they move to a description of the Coalition's aims (as discerned from manifestos, the Coalition Agreement and subsequent policy statements) and the policies enacted. They then describe trends in spending on the area under consideration, and an account of what was bought with the money expended (inputs and outputs). Finally, they turn to outcomes, and a discussion of the relationship between policies, spending and outcomes, so far as this can be discerned.

The research is taking place from October 2011 to May 2015. More detail and other papers in the series will be found at: [http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/new/research/Social\\_Policy\\_in\\_a\\_Cold\\_Climate.asp](http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/new/research/Social_Policy_in_a_Cold_Climate.asp)

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A short supplementary paper defining the terms used in the framework and exploring its uses and limitations is available at <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/RN001.pdf>

A summary of this report is available at <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/SWP09.pdf>

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## Summary of findings

### Introduction

This is one of a series of papers examining aspects of the social policy record of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition in England from 2010-15, with a particular focus on poverty, inequality and the distribution of social and economic outcomes. The papers follow a similar but smaller set covering Labour's record from 1997-2010, published in 2013. They follow the same format as those papers. Starting with a brief assessment of the situation the Coalition inherited from Labour, they move to a description of the Coalition's aims (as discerned from manifestos, the Coalition Agreement and subsequent policy statements) and the policies enacted. They then describe trends in spending on the area under consideration, and an account of what was bought with the money expended (inputs and outputs). Finally, they turn to outcomes, and a discussion of the relationship between policies, spending and outcomes, so far as this can be discerned.

In the context of what was described as the worst financial settlement in living memory for local government, we set out in this study to establish how residents living in some of the most deprived neighbourhoods of London have been affected by the local authority spending cuts since 2010. These are neighbourhoods where, because of concentrated disadvantage, residents would be particularly vulnerable to service reductions and not well-positioned to cope with the wider pressures of recession and austerity. This is the first study to map the local impacts of the cuts in detail.

Our study focuses on services for older people, young people aged 16-24 and families with a child under five, and on one of the most deprived wards of each of three case study boroughs: Brent, Camden and Redbridge.

All display the symptoms of the inequalities of the capital. They share in common high unemployment, high benefits claimant rates, high proportions of social housing and over-crowding. They also all have high proportions of residents of ethnic minorities. We anticipated that we would find different impacts from area to area because of the different responses the councils might make and because of different local contexts.

### Service changes in deprived wards

Overall, front line service changes were most evident in **older people's services**.<sup>1</sup> Compared to the other two service areas service changes had been more substantial in all wards. In each ward:

- a council-run or voluntary sector provided day centre had been lost
- lunch club charges had increased as council funding to the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations providing those had decreased
- there were fewer activities on offer and/or activity charges had increased (e.g. day trips)
- discretionary transport services had changed. They had become more expensive, less reliable or had been reduced

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the neighbourhood focus of this work we have explored, primarily, community-based services. Residential and domiciliary care services feature to a lesser extent in our reporting.

In this service area we therefore found considerable change to the front line offer. Overall residents have been left with a reduced level of community-based provision and were having to pay more often and more for services they accessed.

There was a pattern of more minor change to front line **youth service provision** in the wards. The service offer had not reduced significantly in any case. There had been staff reductions in either or both of youth centre teams or the Connexions team in all wards. In both Redbridge and Brent charging had increased. However, in every case there had been improvement to the youth centre facilities and front line staff reported that activity offers had been largely maintained or improved. In other parts of Redbridge and Brent (beyond the case study neighbourhoods) there were examples of more significant change: in Redbridge a youth centre closure had occurred in a different part of the borough. In Brent a Connexions facility had been closed in a neighbouring ward.

In **under-fives services** the picture was mixed. In the Camden ward the service had been largely protected. In contrast in Redbridge and, in particular, in Brent, the cuts had impacted the front line. There was in both of the latter cases a reduced activity offer at the local children's centres and there had been substantial staff cuts with both of those children centre services having come to rely more on volunteers. Introduction of charging for children's centre activities had been largely avoided. Only in the Redbridge ward had charging for children's centre activities been introduced post 2010. In this instance charges were for a small number of sessions where extra resources were required as part of the activity (e.g. a CD and booklet for a parent and baby music session).

The cross-ward differences in the extent of change in early years services can be accounted for by the different decisions taken by the councils in response to the cuts (Fitzgerald et al. 2013). In particular, in Camden the protection of the under-fives service was well-evidenced at ward level. In Brent and Redbridge 'efficiencies' through staffing along with budget reductions were limiting the ability of children's centres to maintain their activity offers at pre-cuts levels, when there had been more Sure Start funding available.

### **Making and absorbing the cuts locally**

There are similarities and differences in how the cuts had been made. Overall, reduction in service staffing levels was widely reported, to lesser or greater extent. In the Camden ward we learnt of reductions in headcount in both the youth service and the older people's service. In the Brent ward under-fives and youth services had seen reductions in staffing. In the Redbridge ward all three services had fewer staff now than in 2010. Services have used volunteers to help cope with staff reductions. There were examples from two youth centres and two children's centres of volunteers being used to help minimise the impact of staff cuts on the front line service offer.

Remaining staff reported doing their best to absorb those headcount reductions without impact on users. The majority of front line staff interviewed said that their workload had increased substantially. In all but one case the message from staff was that quality had not been compromised. Because of the dedication of the teams the extra work was being absorbed. The one service manager who did say quality had been impacted attributed that to the increased use of volunteers. Volunteers might not be able to be as reliable

as paid staff. Without the continued or greater use of volunteers however these services would not be delivering as much to users as they currently are.

In our interim report we noted that all councils reported greater targeting of services towards the most disadvantaged/at risk. Given this work has focused on deprived wards we would expect to have found a degree of protection of services for residents in these areas. In the case of under-fives services there was targeting within the neighbourhoods towards the most disadvantaged of those residents in all cases. In youth services provision in Brent the Connexions service was targeting young people in the case study ward. In all three cases there were examples of charges being waived for young people who could not afford the fee (the youth access charges in Redbridge and Brent and the Duke of Edinburgh charge in Camden). In the case of older people's services we did not find evidence of services being targeted towards residents of the study wards or the most disadvantaged of those communities.

It was evident that Councils had not found it easy to make the cuts and there were several examples of cuts that had been made but then reversed. This was the case with a reduction in the above statutory free childcare provision in Camden and also with its discretionary transport service. A free shopper bus had been withdrawn but then reinstated and an increase in the charge for the Taxi card had been higher initially. In the case of youth service provision in one ward – which as reported here we found relatively intact in the areas considered – it was noted that more severe cuts to the service, through staffing, had been proposed, but had been withdrawn after resistance from local staff on the grounds of risk. Though a small number of examples, these help to show that councils may have been under greater pressure than may seem the case from the more positive service accounts here.

It is also the case, of course, that further cuts lie on the horizon. Interviews with service staff revealed that question-marks hovered over the future of some of the services covered here.<sup>2</sup> About half of the local service representatives we spoke with were unsure whether their post would remain after the next round of cuts. Concerns as to whether some of the buildings being used to house services (for example the youth centre) would have to be closed following a further round of cuts was evident in conversations with some of the youth service and older people's services staff we spoke with.

### **Voluntary sector changes**

Our local fieldwork included in-depth interviews with VCS representatives, at least four per case study. All of the VCS representatives reported an increase in financial pressures in recent years; they were having to do more for less or the same. The majority of those receiving council funding had seen a reduction or no increase in funding from that source. Interviewees stressed the importance of council funding in raising additional funding. It was a marker of credibility, making attracting further funding easier for them.

Interviewees noted greater competition within the sector between organisations for both funding and clients. Small locally-grown charities were finding it difficult to compete with the larger charities who had greater capacity and expertise to respond to a more business-model operating environment. The cuts to funding for services puts a disproportionate amount of pressure on smaller VCS organizations to spend their time and resources securing funding. There were reports of this taking their focus away from service

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<sup>2</sup> To protect staff who gave candid accounts and reflecting that decisions have not yet been made we do not state here which services these are.

provision, which is what they want to do and are there to do. Smaller VCS organizations are being forced to either adopt, for example, a sounder governance structure, or not get funding. Some struggled to find the time needed to adapt their governance structure, to change business models, to acquire the expertise needed to face this new environment of obtaining funding with confidence. The larger organizations either were already preparing internally for the shift in some capacity or were large enough to shift gears quickly.

Competition between the council and VCS has increased as well since the cuts, according to some of the VCS representatives. The three case studies of VCS each had different relationships with their local authority. Indeed, the quality of the relationship was often dependent on whether we were speaking to a large, established VCS or a small VCS. But overall a pattern emerged from the interviews which suggests that whether the VCS was large or small, the spending cuts have put pressure on them to compete for contracts from the council.

There was a picture, therefore of the VCS under strain. In older people's VCS services we found in every case the local VCS offer had been negatively impacted. Charities are seeking to develop their sustainability through bidding for commissioned services and through selling their services. Where councils are looking to the VCS to offset reductions they are having to make in their own services, the reality of a sector increasingly unsure of its funding casts doubt over the feasibility of VCS provision as an answer to losses in council provision at local level.

### **The impacts on residents**

We have explored the impact of these service changes on residents through a qualitative methodology comprising interviews with a small sample of residents from each of our service groups and in each ward.<sup>3</sup>

In early years we have the best example of how the decisions of a council could create a very different experience of the cuts for a resident. In Camden early years services had been protected and we saw in our resident interviews how that help was aiding parents to cope with the wider pressures they are currently experiencing. In contrast, in Brent where the cut had had a noticeable impact on the front line service offer, parents we spoke with reported how the reductions in that service were making it harder for them to cope at home. Their opinion was that the behaviour of their children had been impacted and it was causing a strain on the families. They, like the mothers in Camden, could not afford replacement services sourced privately. The difference made by the council's decisions was significant.

The significance of local context was stark in the case of youth services. In this service example the differences in local changes from case to case were relatively small; they amounted to differences in charging, and those charges were generally considered modest. However, local context was making a difference for young people. In Redbridge the young people reported good support at school and had high aspirations. In this they were reaping the benefits of being located in a borough with good schools. They could see for themselves a future beyond the limitations of the locality they were growing up in. In Brent the young people had a sense of there being limited opportunities. They were concerned about finding jobs and said they had not received enough work experience opportunities or careers advice in school.

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<sup>3</sup> Resources and data availability did not permit a detailed quantitative survey of service use, household finance and consumption patterns and changing outcomes.

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Impacts on older people of service changes were not strikingly different from case study to case study. Greater boredom or isolation was seen in every case. Concerns about a reduced quality of service was a theme again across all of the cases. With reductions in the VCS offer in all three cases, the availability of additional or replacement support from that service was reducing for residents of every area. Introduction of charging was a barrier to people accessing services they used to use. The effects of reduced council support were similar, with echoes across the accounts of residents.

Taking the accounts of the three groups of service users (families with under-fives, young people 16-24 and older people 65+) as a single group by ward and then comparing the three wards, some Inner London, Outer London contrasts in wider local pressures can be noted. In the Outer London cases VCS provision seemed scarcer than within the Inner London case. This could have implications for residents in the context of changes in council provision. In the Inner London ward, where there were examples of a service having ceased, for example the VCS run day centre, we did find amongst our interviewees residents who knew of or were accessing a replacement service amongst local VCS provision. This was not detected in our Outer London samples – for example, the Mothers of under-fives interviewed in Brent could not identify equivalent, affordable provision to replace lost children's centre activities.

The pressures residents referred to differed in some respects. Finding suitable housing was a pressure common to families with under-fives in Camden, but mention of that was the exception rather than the rule in Outer London wards. In Outer London distance was noted as a compounding factor. In Brent once under-fives services had been reduced, parents noted the challenges (financial and time costs) of trying to travel between two centres to get the equivalent provision. Young people there, who felt remote from employment opportunities, felt constrained in accessing opportunities outside of the area for reason of travel costs appearing prohibitive.

## Key messages

Our in-depth study of three deprived wards in London found that:

- Front line services for under-fives and young people have been impacted in all wards (with the exception of under-fives services in Camden) but not to the degree we might have expected from the extent of local government spending cuts.
- Staff reductions were widely reported in these services and were the principal change in most cases. Those reductions were being offset as far as possible through paid staff doing more and through use of volunteers. For this reason more extensive impact to the front line had, to this point, been avoided.
- Services for older people had been affected more than services for under-fives and young people in all three wards. Losses of day centres, reductions in activities, or higher charges had occurred across the case studies. Adult Social Care makes up the largest part of council spending and as councils are obliged to protect statutory provision discretionary community services are being substantially impacted.
- In the wards where children's centre activity provision had been reduced some parents reported worsening behavioural problems. Parents on low incomes were not able to offset those service reductions by paying for private services.
- Older residents who had experienced changes in local activities provision reported greater boredom. In some cases the changes have created a barrier to access (e.g. inability to pay higher charges) and leaving those older residents more isolated. Social ties were being severed with service losses.
- The case of early years services in Camden shows most clearly the difference that the commitment of the council to protection of services can make to residents in hard times. In Camden a relatively extensive under-fives offer was helping parents cope with wider pressures. In Brent parents reported how reduction in early years provision has a compounding effect on the pressures their households are under.
- The maintenance of service provision can depend on VCS organisations being able to offset reductions by the Council. VCS provision is uneven across the case studies. In the Brent and Redbridge wards, more gaps in service provision were appearing for this reason than in Camden where VCS partnering has been an important part of the strategy to coping with the cuts.
- VCS organisations we spoke with are under increasing pressure, particularly smaller, locally specific ones. We have to question the long-term potential of VCS provision supplying the antidote to council reductions at the local level given the extent of competition for funding reported. We have noted here the reduction in all wards of funding to VCS providers of older people's services and, importantly, the impact of that on older residents' lives.

This work reflects a snapshot at a particular point in time, just before local elections in 2014 and before a second round of budget cuts. The situation is likely to get worse: in our interim report (Fitzgerald et al. 2013) we reported that senior officers and Members thought they would not be able to absorb further large cuts a second time; local service managers have echoed that sentiment - more than a third of the local-level service managers we spoke with were unsure of the future of their job or the particular service they managed.

This work reflects coverage of a small number of cases as was necessary to achieve an in-depth analysis of local contexts. We do not present these findings as reflective of all of London, nor of all deprived wards of London. The intention has been to complete a detailed qualitative analysis that would furnish a detailed description of neighbourhood level experience of 'hard times'.

## Introduction

### About this report

This report is the second in a programme of work investigating the impact of the local government funding cuts in London. It focuses on three of London's poorest neighbourhoods and on three groups of people: families with a child aged under 5, young people aged 16-24 and older (65 plus) people with care needs.

Local government has borne a disproportionate share of the public spending reductions initiated by the Coalition government. At the 2010 Spending Review, plans were announced to reduce the funding of local authorities by 26 per cent (£7.6 billion) in real terms, between April 2011 and March 2015 (excluding schools, police and fire).<sup>4</sup>

Concern about the impact of these budget reductions on local communities is understandably widespread. However, relatively little is yet known about actual impacts and evidence to date is somewhat conflicting. A recent survey of London Councillors suggested that 91 per cent thought services had been affected by budget cuts and 30 per cent thought that they had been drastically affected (London Communications Agency 2013). On the other hand, a 2013 survey by Ipsos MORI found that two thirds of people surveyed had not really noticed any changes to the services provided by their local Council.<sup>5</sup> A survey by PwC, covering this same issue, roughly corroborates that observation (PwC 2013).<sup>6</sup>

In this context, our research is designed to provide detailed empirical evidence of the changes that are underway.<sup>7</sup>

In our first report, *Hard Times, New Directions? The impact of the local government spending cuts in London*<sup>8</sup> published in January 2014, we examined the scale of the local authority funding cuts in London. We found that London local government had taken a 33 per cent real terms cut in service funding from central government between 2009/10 and 2013/14. Not all London Boroughs have been affected to the same extent. Spending power reductions<sup>9</sup>, per capita, over the period 2010/11 to 2013/4 ranged from 12 per cent to 26 per cent in real terms. In general more deprived boroughs, which had more income from central government and spent more to start with, have faced the biggest cuts. Overall in London, the

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<sup>4</sup> Schools are excluded because of the rapid acceleration of the Academies programme, shifting funding from local authorities to Academies, obscures analysis of real changes in levels of funding in other services; police and fire are technically 'local government' but are not under the control of local councils, which are our focus here.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/3123/Public-concerned-about-cuts-to-council-services-but-councils-arent-necessarily-to-blame.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> A figure somewhat lower than that of the Ipsos MORI survey is presented but, at almost half of all people, the figure is still high given the scale of the cuts.

<sup>7</sup> This study forms one output from a larger programme of work 'Social Policy in a Cold Climate' which examines changes in social policy and its outcomes across the Labour and Coalition administrations. In that larger project we examine changes in trends in outcomes through quantitative data. A key purpose of this locally-focused element of the work has been to elaborate through a qualitative approach, how policy changes are filtering through to local residents, in their local communities and in the wider context of the 'hard times' of recession and austerity.

<sup>8</sup> <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/spcc/wp07.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> 'Spending power' takes into account all Council income, not just funding from central government. Official 'spending power' data are only available from 2010/11.

largest percentage cuts seem to have come in so-called 'discretionary services', e.g. planning and development services (56 per cent) and cultural and related services (28 per cent). Spending on social care reduced by 12 per cent – although because social care is such a large area of spending, this accounted for almost half of the overall cut in service expenditure.

We also worked with three local authorities – Brent, Camden, and Redbridge – to find out how they were responding to these cuts to their budget. To what extent were they managing to protect frontline services? What strategies were they using to make savings at the same time as minimising impacts on frontline service users? How were they making decisions about which services, and which areas and groups, to prioritise?

In brief, we found that all three Councils had been making strenuous efforts to make large savings without cutting front line services, and to protect services for those who need them most. Most savings have come through efficiencies, the sorts of savings which Councils have argued are neither detrimental to, nor noticeable at, the frontline. However, Councils have, reluctantly, had to reduce their own role in the provision of discretionary services. More of these services are being delivered by voluntary and community sector partners. Council officers and Members also had concerns about the future, arguing that 'limits of efficiency' have been reached, and there is little scope for further large-scale savings without significant effects on front line services.

In this second report, we explore how these strategies have played out in some of London's poorest neighbourhoods, where demands for local authority services might be expected to be highest, and where residents are likely to have been most affected by current economic pressures and by the government's other austerity measures.

To what extent have local authorities actually been able to maintain services in these neighbourhoods? Have voluntary sector services been able to survive or grow to meet increasing demand and fill gaps left by Council cuts? How are residents experiencing the combined pressures of economic downturn, austerity measures and local government budget reductions?

## Research Locations

The research reported on here was, as in the first phase of the work (Fitzgerald et al. 2013), carried out in Brent, Camden and Redbridge, enabling us to follow through the decisions made at local authority level to their impact on the ground. Brent is a Labour-led Outer London borough, Camden a Labour-led Inner London borough and Redbridge an Outer London borough led, at the time of this research, by a Conservative–Liberal Democrat partnership.<sup>10</sup>

In each local authority we made a decision to focus on one of the poorest neighbourhoods, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010, and other contemporary indicators<sup>11</sup>, on the grounds that it is the residents of such neighbourhoods who might rely on local authority (and other) services most, and thus

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<sup>10</sup> In the 2014 May elections Redbridge became a Labour-led Council.

<sup>11</sup> Ward deprivation was measured using the Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2010 and 2007, child poverty and fuel poverty scores. Individual wards within each borough were ranked from most deprived to least deprived on each variable. The ranks across the variables were summed to give an overall score. One of the most deprived was selected.

who might be most vulnerable to the effects of austerity measures. We report on the impact of the cuts to local government funding in neighbourhoods where economic pressures and austerity measures might be expected to hit hardest.

Given that this is a small-scale study, going to the poorest neighbourhoods is an efficient way to reach some of the poorest residents, as well as to identify how cumulative pressures might be impacting in neighbourhoods of concentrated disadvantage. However, the research cannot be taken as representative of all neighbourhoods in London. The poorest neighbourhoods are not necessarily those which have experienced the greatest cutbacks – indeed the opposite might be true as local authorities have sought to protect vulnerable residents. We have also been working in Boroughs where the local authority was willing to take part in the research. Cutbacks to services may have been greater in Boroughs which declined to take part.

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants in the research, we do not identify the neighbourhoods.

## **Framing the Enquiry**

The research is designed to examine how cuts to local authority funding are having an effect not just in isolation but given the cumulative effect of other changes. Our approach was as follows.

A first step was to define three groups of service users or ‘client groups’: families with a child under 5, young people aged 16-24 and older people with care needs. All of these groups tend to be high users of local authority and other public services – health, care, education, leisure and recreation – as well as recipients of state subsidies and benefits of different kinds.

We then examined briefly the national and local contexts in which local authority service changes would play out for each group. The **national contexts** are relatively well known – we summarise them briefly in Boxes 1-3 (below). In the main chapters of the report we establish factors affecting the selected groups in the **local context**: additional pressures, demands or opportunities that might be arising locally, because of demographic changes or cuts to services other than those directly provided by the local authority for the groups in question - for example, cuts to health services or to the voluntary sector.

The next step was to provide a detailed account of the impact of the local authority cuts on service provision for each group in each of the case study neighbourhoods. For children under five, we looked at children’s centres and nurseries and for young people at changes to youth centre and youth work provision. For older people social care involves home care, residential care and community care (at day centres, luncheon clubs/meals services). In a neighbourhood focused study, we focus principally on community care, although as some community care users also have home care we reflect on this too where captured. These accounts form the major part of the report.

We then looked for evidence of three kinds of impacts:

- **Service utilisation** – is there evidence that services are being more or less well-used?
- **Health and well-being outcomes** for the groups concerned.
- **Other impacts** - for example, changes in the neighbourhood environment

The diagrams at the end of this chapter set out these models for the three groups, giving examples of the kinds of contextual factors and impacts that might be expected in each case. We used these to frame our enquiries, deciding what data to collect and from whom. It is clear from the diagrams that the effects of the national and local contexts and specific service changes are seen as cumulative and interacting.<sup>12</sup>

Individual case studies illustrate cumulative impacts in individual lives, but we do not claim to prove a causal link between Council cuts and individual outcomes. Nor do we claim to ‘turn every stone’ by documenting every service change by every organisation in detail. Both of these would be beyond the scope of the methodology adopted, given the resources available.

### **Box 1: National Context: Families with a Child aged under 5**

Families with children and on low incomes have been particularly adversely impacted by rising costs of living and by tax and benefit changes associated with Coalition policies. The Office of the Children’s Commissioner (2013) reports that average living standards of the poorest 10 per cent of families with children fell between 2010 and 2013 by equivalent to around a 22 per cent fall in net income. The lowest earning families with under-fives have also been negatively impacted by changes to subsidies for childcare through the tax credit and benefits system, and at the same time housing costs in the rented sector have been rising and state support through housing benefits has reduced, leaving families’ After Housing Costs (AHC) income reduced (Belfield et al. 2014). Low income families in London are particularly affected (CPAG, 2012:7; 10). The absolute poverty rate for children has been increasing since 2009/10, as has child material deprivation (Belfield et al. 2014) – and rates for both are high in London compared with other regions.

Under the last government, both child poverty and early years services were given particularly high priority - Sure Start Children’s Centres and free early education for all three and four year olds being two key developments (Belfield et al. 2014), and the Coalition has also emphasised the importance of this developmental phase. Indeed in some respects, it has extended support for families with under-fives through investment in health visitors and in free childcare for two years olds in the 20 per cent most disadvantaged areas. However, funding for under-fives has fallen as the Sure Start funding became a non-ring-fenced Early Years Intervention Grant (Stewart, forthcoming).

### **Box 2: National Context: Young People Aged 16-24**

Young people are experiencing particularly hard times since the financial crash and recession (Hills et al., 2013); (Belfield et al. 2014). Young adults’ real incomes have fallen considerably more than those of other age-groups with median weekly pay in the 22-30 age bracket falling twice as fast between 2007-08 and 2012-13 as for those aged 31-59 as their hourly wages have fallen and part-time employment increased at higher rates (Belfield et al. 2014). Though educational attainment for this group has been rising, young people are struggling in the difficult labour market (Sissons et al.,

<sup>12</sup> In a larger study, with data on each of these variables collected at individual, household, neighbourhood, local authority and national level, it might be possible to model the effects of each factor on the outcomes identified. That is not the objective of our small-scale studies – rather we aim to describe the various factors that are present and how they appear to be interacting and shaping impacts of different kinds.

2012). Housing is another challenge for this group; the number of young people living at home with their parents has risen. Around one quarter of 22-30 year-olds are living with their parents (ibid). In respect to the situation of young people in London relative to other parts of the UK, young people in London have fared a little better in the labour market than those of former industrial cities in the North West, Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East (Lee et al., 2011:11); (Lupton et al. 2013).

On the other hand it is low income households in London who are more likely to be being impacted by housing benefit change (Joyce et al, 2010). Under the Coalition government policy focused on young people (Clough et al. 2007) is becoming more focused on “the ‘at risk’ and ‘the risky’” and there is a trend toward more integrated services for youth (Davies, 2013:6). As in early years, elements of funding ring-fenced for youth interventions under Labour ceased to be so under the Coalition. Davies (ibid,7) notes the removal of the ring fence for the Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds. He also alleges that the Coalition’s “most high profile youth policy”, *Positive for Youth*, has been proving only rhetorical. Guidance to local authorities regarding their provision of youth services, he argues, was vague and reflected youth services being “play[ed] down” (ibid,9).

### **Box 3: National Context: Older People Aged 65+**

Older people appear to have weathered the recession and austerity better than other age groups. The 60 plus group is the only group to not have seen a drop in income. Absolute pensioner poverty has remained roughly constant across the 2008/09 through 2013/14 period, relative pensioner poverty fell by over a quarter and employment rates have improved, as in an ageing population older people are working longer (Belfield et al. 2014). For these reasons, one description that is being made of the post 2008 period is of divergence between older people (who have fared well) and young people (who have fared worst). Nonetheless, though the income of this group has been

## **Methods and Data Collection**

We worked through these models chiefly through qualitative research with service providers and residents, supported by quantitative data where this could be obtained.

Information about national contexts for each service area, as presented above, was gathered from secondary sources – existing reports and statistics.

Information about changes to local services was obtained through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with the main service providers in each neighbourhood. For Council services, for example, we interviewed the local children’s centre manager or day centre manager. Interviews lasted approximately one hour but in several cases were longer.

We also interviewed a small sample of voluntary sector service providers, 13 in total (4 in each of Camden and Brent, 5 in Redbridge). Not part of the original proposal, these supplementary interviews provided important insights into the wider picture of local support and allowed us to explore what council officers

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/elderhealth/8854308/Misery-for-millions-as-elderly-care-funds-cut.html>

had told us, in some cases, about VCS partnering as a means of sustaining some elements of discretionary services that were otherwise threatened (Fitzgerald et al. 2013). VCS providers of local services can be highly dependent on Council funding, that service provision therefore arguably representing an indirect form of the Council's provision of services to support residents.

We explored impacts principally through interviews with local residents. The sample and methods were tailored for each group and area to examine the issues thrown up by the descriptions of service changes. For example, where changes to services made it appear likely that there would be some gainers and losers, we sought interviews with people in each of these categories. Where there had been no or minimal service changes by the Council, we conducted focus groups to examine what other changes users, might have experienced and whether their reliance on Council services had changed. The detail of how this strategy translated into the data collection is as follows:

- Families with under-fives – we found a mixed picture of change in this service area, so we planned a mix of interviews and focus groups according to the above approach. In all cases participants were found through children's centres. In practice whether we conducted a focus group or interviews was determined by what the parents and centre could accommodate. In Camden and Redbridge parents were drawn from stay and play sessions. We interviewed parents individually whilst their child was supervised by a different parent. In Brent we conducted two focus groups.
- Young people 16-24 – there had not been large changes in the youth service provision in any of the wards so in all cases we arranged a focus group. Participants were found through a local youth centre or youth club in Camden and Redbridge. In Brent, where there was not a youth centre or club in the ward we found participants through the Connexions service.
- Older people (65+) – In all cases there had been significant change and we therefore arranged interviews with users of a local lunch club (in Camden and Brent) or with sheltered housing residents (Redbridge) as in this case the local lunch club participants did not speak English.<sup>14</sup> In practice, working in the lunch club environment, our conversations with attendees were in most cases with more than one person at a time. In Camden we also had the opportunity to speak to older attendees of a tenants association weekly tea gathering and include data from that in our reporting.

In total across the three wards there were 54 resident participants; 18 from each ward.<sup>15</sup> The respondents were split across the three service areas as follows:

- Brent: parents of under-fives, 8; young people, 5; 65+, 5
- Camden: parents of under-fives, 4; young people, 7; 65+, 7
- Redbridge: parents of under-fives, 7; young people, 7; 65+, 4

The coverage of this work by service areas is therefore: 19 parents with under-fives; 19 young people 16-24 and 16 with older people.

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<sup>14</sup> We did not employ a translator in this work and the principal fieldworkers did not have the necessary language skills to interview this group.

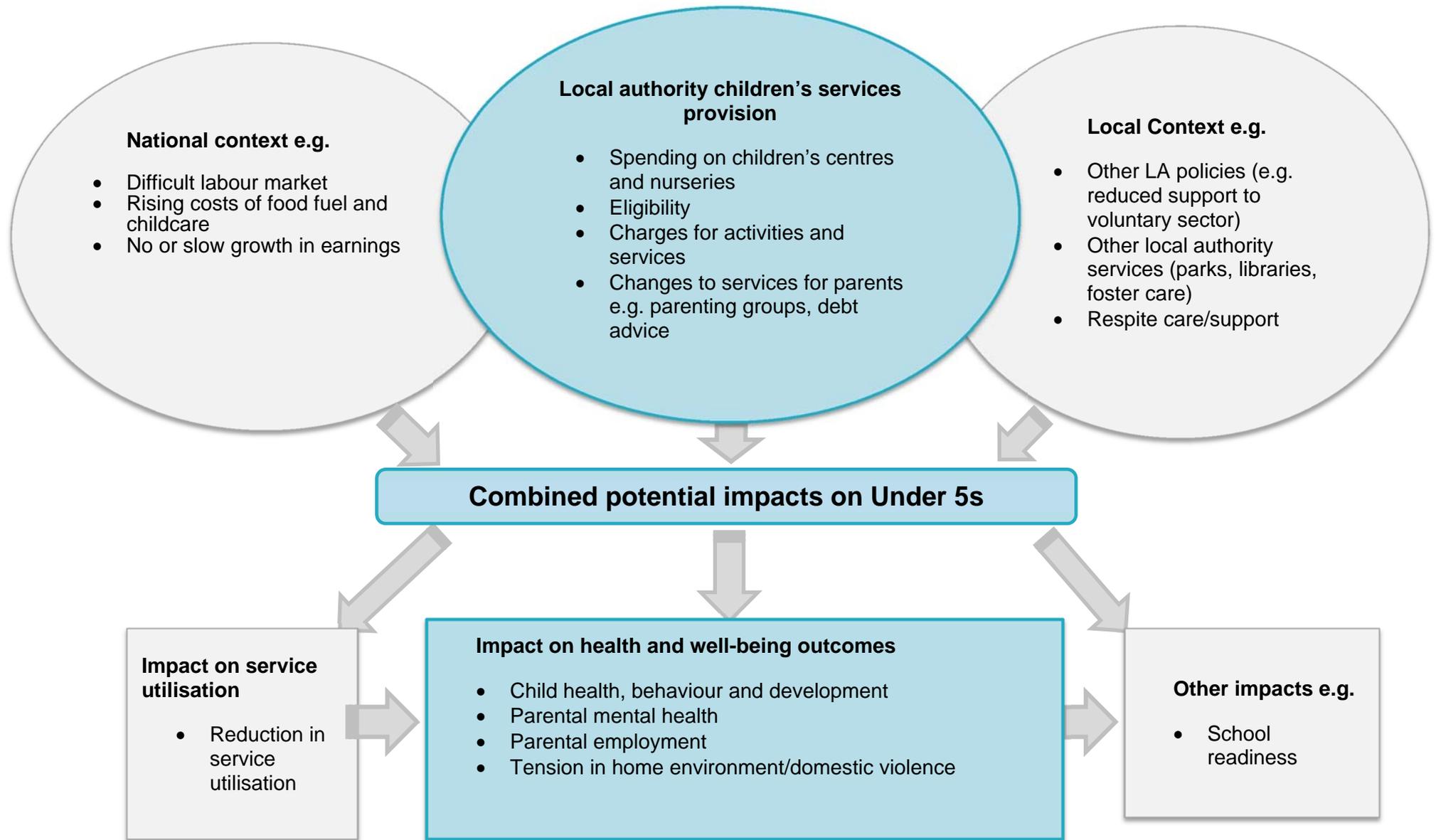
<sup>15</sup> This number excludes additional short conversations with local residents.

Finally, we gathered quantitative data wherever possible, to explore wider evidence of the anticipated and reported impacts (Appendix 1), as well as changes in service utilisation figures, notably Adult Social Care activity data (Appendix 2).

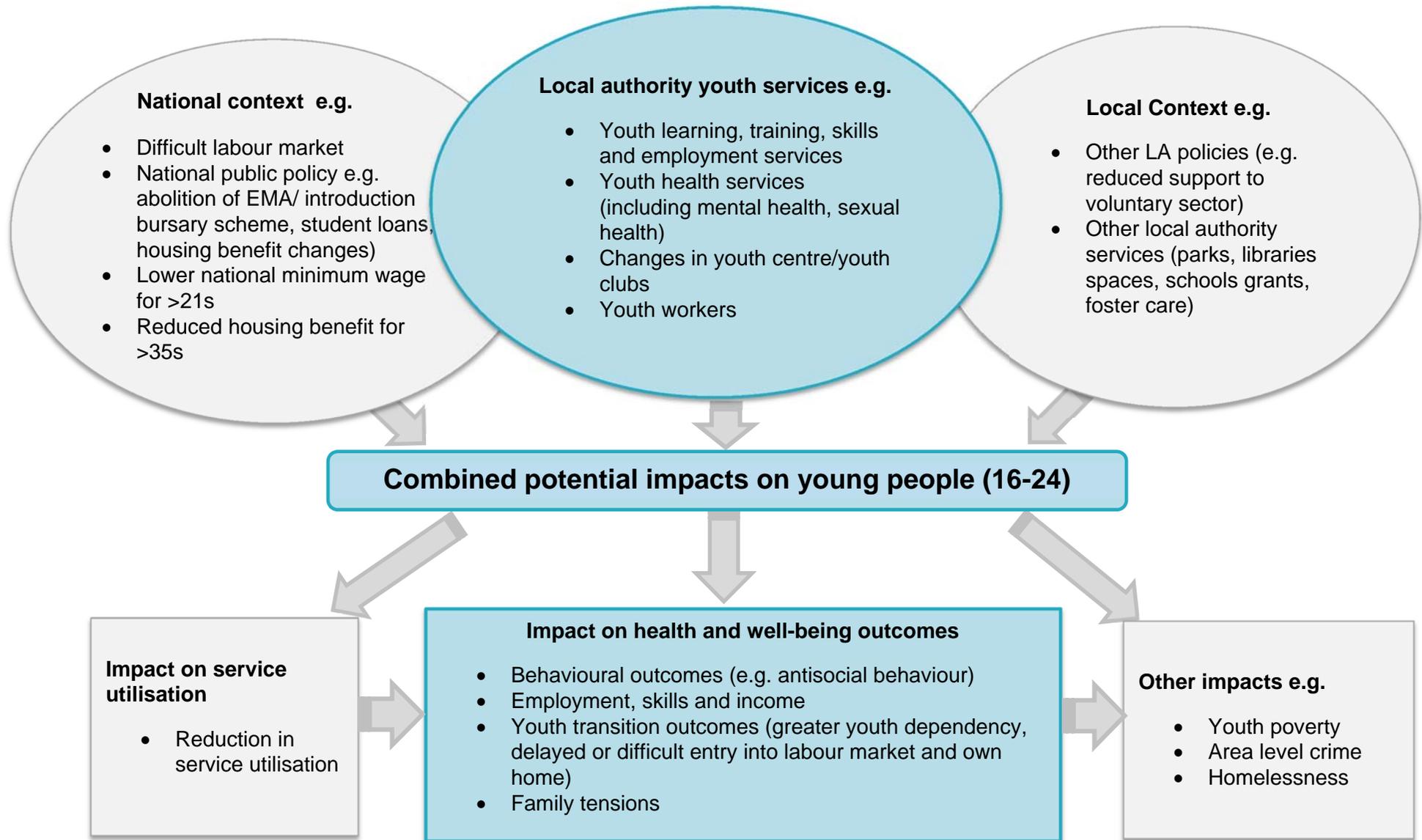
### **Structure of the Report**

The report is structured as follows. In Chapter 2 we briefly set out the main economic and policy conditions affecting the three groups which are the subject of the report – the ‘national context’ which forms the backdrop to particular local pressures and changes. We then visit each of the neighbourhoods in turn – in Brent, Camden and Redbridge (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). In each chapter we describe the changes taking place to local services for the three groups and report on the impacts as they were described by service managers, voluntary sector providers and residents themselves. The final chapter summarises these findings, comparing the three neighbourhoods and also the experience of the three groups from one neighbourhood to another. We also draw out key themes from across the case studies and the implications for policy and research.

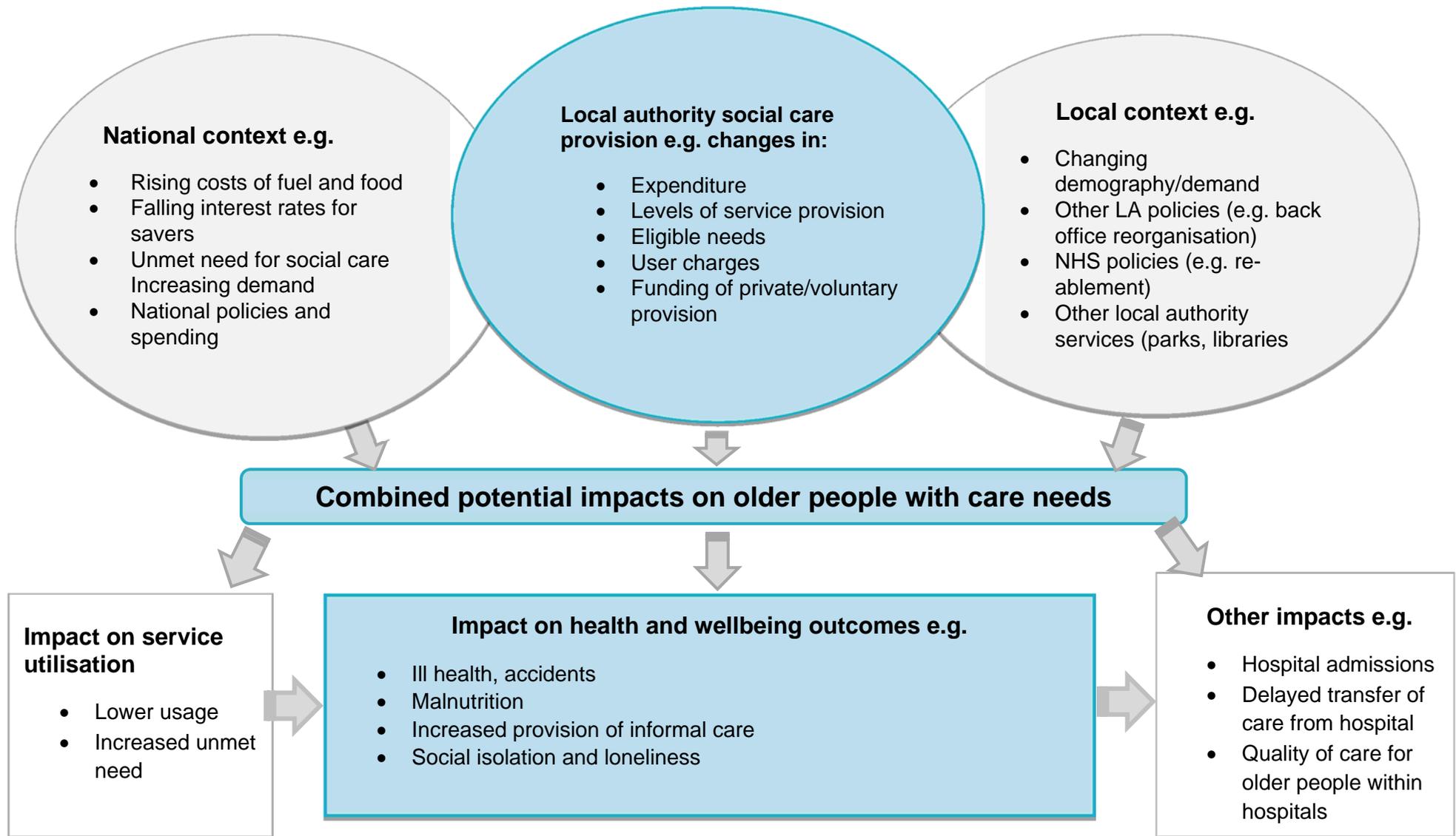
**WP09 Hard Times, New Directions? The impact of the local government spending cuts in three deprived neighbourhoods of London**



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## 1. Local changes and impacts in Brent

### Local Context

The case study ward in Brent is an example of a deprived Outer London neighbourhood set within a borough where disadvantage is widespread.

Several factors point to the struggles of the neighbourhood. Geographically, large sections of the ward are relatively isolated because of the make-up of the surrounding landscape – transport links cut through it and industrial areas are nearby. The wards that surround this area are also highly deprived. There is little in the way of a local economy within the neighbourhood itself. It is largely a residential area with the nearest high street shopping centre outside of the ward. Housing is predominantly low-rise terrace and council estate. Family size in the borough is above average and overcrowding amongst the highest nationally. In years past the neighbourhood has been associated with gang violence, something which residents note has reduced in recent years as gang members have grown-up. Nonetheless, young people reported concerns about safety in the area. They also felt that the locality did not offer them much in the way of positive activities. Employment prospects locally were considered very limited.

On the other hand, in recent years, the neighbourhood has seen some changes in its favour and there are signs of a strong community. With regeneration projects in areas of the borough, employment, leisure and retail opportunities have been brought to sites close to the ward. There has been housing improvement with the redevelopment of one of the area's housing estates. There is now newer and lower rise accommodation in that area. New community facilities formed part of the regeneration and now provide residents with a social space and local services. There are numerous places of worship in the ward, several running community projects and outreaches. Voluntary and community organisations present in this area have mainly grown up from the grassroots as members of the neighbourhood or surrounding wards have started community initiatives themselves. These tend to have small budgets and rely on volunteers.

Overall, the area is one of high unemployment, an ethnically mixed community with a high representation of Black African and Caribbean residents and large proportions of young and old. Compared to the other two case studies, this area seems more remote from opportunities and wealth.

In our interim report we reported on the approach this borough's council had adopted towards the cuts. As context for that we also situated the borough vis-à-vis other London boroughs in regard to the size of the cut it incurred and the subsequent drop-in service expenditure. To summarise, in this case, on the eve of the cuts, the council's spend per capita was relatively high (£925 per capita). Seventeen per cent of its income came from Council Tax. On these bases, as well as considering its deprivation score, which was relatively high, we classified this borough as one of our Group 1 boroughs. This identified it as a case of a more deprived and higher spending authority which had a higher proportion of its income from central government funding and less from Council Tax than the alternative group, Group 2, which were relatively less deprived and lower spend per capita. Income to the borough from central government fell by 29 per cent between 2009/10 and 2013/14 (real terms and excluding education and public health). Its estimated spending power fell by 19 per cent. Total Service Expenditure (less education and public health) fell by

16 per cent. The borough was Labour led at the time of the cuts and post the May 2014 elections continues to be Labour led.

Our analysis of the council's overall strategy toward the cuts, read from analysis of council documentation (strategy reports and action plans, for example) identified it as fitting the first type of our four-type typology of London borough strategies towards the cuts. It was one of a number of Labour-led boroughs (others being Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Haringey) in which public delivery of services (through partnerships with other public sector agencies) was being emphasised as part of their forward strategy. It was also notable that these boroughs also made explicit political commitments to poverty reduction or social justice. The message conveyed in our interviews with senior officers from Brent was that they had sought to combine making savings with the delivery of service improvements. Having been, according to officers, a rather decentralised council pre-cuts, the council was seeking to become more efficient by working as 'One Council'. In seeking to protect the most vulnerable, officers reported greater targeting of resources towards those with highest need.

## Services for Under Fives

### *Service Changes*

A senior officer reported, in phase one of this work (Fitzgerald et al. 2013), that since 2010 the service had made savings through a staff restructure. But it was thought that the service offer had not changed significantly.

Staff changes at the ward's children's centres had been significant. Since a staff restructure in April 2011, the staff that had previously looked after one children's centre has been operating two. Two centres now share a manager rather than having their own dedicated manager. Agency staff and zero hours contracted staff are brought in to supply staff cover and the service is using volunteers to increase capacity. This greater reliance on volunteers does, from time-to-time, impact on the quality of the service delivered. Though volunteers can help a high quality programme they cannot always be as reliable as paid staff.

The staff cuts have impacted the service offer. Firstly, they have limited expansion of the service. One of the ward's three children's centres was originally planned as an intergenerational centre. However, the money for the part-time post that was to support the intergenerational work of the centre was never made available, so that function could not be realised.<sup>16</sup> A nursery had been planned for one of the centres. Again, that was not established. Secondly, staff cuts had resulted in a reduction in the number of hours of activities offered and in the range of that offer. Several activity sessions now run for fewer weeks. Others are timetabled for shorter periods or less frequently as a means of preserving activities for as many families as possible.

The budget for the children's centres has reduced by more than fifty per cent. The team has been "creative" (staff interview). For example, more sessions are now supplied through bringing in other providers. The Citizens Advice Bureau and the Brent Adult and Community Education Service run weekly sessions. There are pressures nonetheless on parts of this offer as such providers are themselves under pressure. Cuts to the council's leisure service means few sports and fitness activity sessions can be programmed, for example. Also, a book library was cut (user interview) and the sessions have become more targeted (staff interview) which means here that more sessions are being designed with the most vulnerable in mind.

In this ward charging has not been used as a response to the cuts. The one charge that is raised – a £1 weekly contribution for fruit money – predates the cuts. Out of term day outings continue to be subsidised and staff will waive the fee, as well as the fruit charge where the families are known to not be able to afford it.

In this ward therefore the under-fives service offer has been impacted. There has been a reduction in the level of early years provision since 2010. Nonetheless, three council-run children's centres still each offer "as full a programme as possible" (staff interview). Sessions include messy play, rhyme time and a toy and book library. Parents can access parenting advice sessions, CAB appointments, a baby clinic, keep fit, nutrition, healthy relationships, ESOL and arts and crafts sessions. Parents are asked to pay a £1 weekly contribution for snacks. One centre offers an intergenerational activity – a gardening project. A

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<sup>16</sup> This centre currently offers one intergenerational programme with funding from a London- charity.

Health Visitor is regularly available at the children's centre. Each year occasional day trips are organised and continue to be subsidised.

There is additional council and VCS provision that families with under-fives can use in the ward. One is a local authority leisure centre. It offers occasional free drop-in activities for under-fives, particularly during school holidays, for example a bouncy castle event. Normally, it costs £3.60 a day to access its activities. It was noted that those activities were seeming less value for money (parent interview). A swimming session for young children had been shortened from two hours to one hour. Another service is a library within a neighbouring ward. It offers half-hour long Bookstart story and rhyme time sessions three times weekly. The area's parks offer places to take children. Parents reported improvements in the quality of those parks as well as in the local sports centres and swimming pool. Two VCS organisations based in or close to the ward offer support to vulnerable families including counselling and home visits.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

In 2014 the level of early years provision in this ward is less than it was in 2010. There are fewer hours of activities for families to attend at their local children's centres and significantly fewer contracted staff running those centres.

The parents we spoke with, all of whom were users of one or more of the children's centres in this ward, had noticed changes in the service. Foremost they noted the reduction in the activity offer. Specific activities which they reported had been lost included nutrition and cooking. One of the centres had cut a book and toy library. Of the remaining sessions some are now less frequent: a playgroup which ran daily now runs twice a week; sing along sessions have been cut considerably to one half hour session per week. Parents also noted that once a workshop (for example cookery) stops, it is not starting up again "[o]nce it is gone, it's gone" (parent). Parenting support – a parenting course and a safety course were named – is "less than what it was" (parent). These changes appear to support one parent's reflection that, "they have drastically cut back on what is offered at the children's centre".

Secondly, the parents were noticing the reduction in staffing. They understood this was linked to the reduction in the activity offer; for example, there are now fewer sing along sessions because the worker providing those is now responsible for sing along sessions across the locality. However, one parent's comment that "the staff they have are stuck doing paperwork" is also illustrative. There was a sense among the parents that the remaining staff in the service could not now afford them as much time as pre-cuts. It was said that staff who would have spent time with first-time parents are no longer able to sit with the parents and children and show them how to care for them. The suggestion was that there was less time for the informal and helpful exchanges that might take place outside of the structure of programmed sessions. Thirdly, parents reported difficulty in accessing some sessions due to demand for places. Demand for a parents' yoga class was "super high" and the session described as over-crowded (parent).

The parents identified several ways in which these changes are impacting their families. They reported greater stress in the parenting-child relationship. Parents with less to take their children to outside of the home were left at home with the child trying to deal with tantrums. Parents complained of disruption in their children's routines as sessions were altered or cut and of disappointment experienced by their children when activity sessions they enjoyed were suddenly no longer available. One parent spoke of how her child had been asking when the next cookery time at the children's centre would be; she had had to

tell them there was no more cookery. Parents noted how their children preferred to do activities rather than less structured stay and play sessions. Now with fewer of those the children were not engaged in the activities they liked most. There was also a concern amongst the parents for the impact on their child's learning. A parent commented "if they do not get foundation learning, then they end up on the streets." Parents thought that with less to do at the children's centres the children would not be as well-prepared for school as they might be, as Misha's comments illustrate (Box 7).

### **Box 7: Misha**

Misha has a child of school age and a child under five. Both of her children have been taken to the local children's centre as under-fives. The eldest child attended before the changes in the service were made. Misha reported that her eldest child, now in school, entered school well-prepared. The child's teacher had commented on this. Misha is concerned that her younger child's development is being impacted by the reduced level of provision at the children's centre. She says she is not exposed to the same foundation learning as experienced by the older sibling. Misha says she notices the difference in her second child.

Parents remarked that there are practical and financial obstacles limiting their capacity to find replacement activities. A few parents reported now using more than one children's centre to make up for reduced availability in any one. However, the greater resources of time and travel expense incurred in trying to offset service reductions this way made this a problematic substitute. Not all parents drive. Parents knew of free activities for children in local parks and the community sports centre for example – a parent said "they provide a lot of free activities for kids" – however normally leisure centre activities, and activities beyond the council-provided ones, were expensive. Also parts of that offer were changing. For example, it was said that swimming lessons at the council-run leisure centre used to be two hour long sessions but have been reduced to one hour, meaning they were less good value. All parents noted how difficult it is to personally replace or replicate activities provided outside of the home and for free. Some of the activities lost were not easily substitutable (the nutrition session was mentioned) and the parents emphasised that there are many demands placed on parents who already manage on very low incomes.<sup>17</sup> The service cuts impact them acutely because they are not necessarily in a position to pay for private services.

Drawing on borough-level outcomes data, there are trends in that data that align with these individual accounts of impacts. Child learning outcomes, as shown through Early Years and Foundation Stage achievement, improved in Brent between 2009/10 and 2011/12, as did the London-wide average.<sup>18</sup> However, whilst the London average shows a steady rate of improvement in that period, the rate of improvement in Brent was less in 2010/11 to 2011/12 than in 2009/10 to 2010/11.<sup>19</sup> It was in 2011 that

<sup>17</sup> The parents in this case said they had not felt changes in the economy or welfare particularly. This reference to having low-income then is not to suggest that the financial pressure on these families had worsened. They did not make that comment. They simply identified as low-income families.

<sup>18</sup> Early Years Foundation Stage achievement is measured by the number of children achieving 78 points across all 13 EYFS Profile scales with at least 6 points or more in each of the Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy scales, expressed as a percentage of the total number of children assessed against the EYFS Profile.

<sup>19</sup> Between 2009/10 and 2011/12 the percentage of pupils achieving scores of 78 or more in the EYFS rose from 43 per cent to 64 per cent; the London average figures are 55 per cent to 65 per cent. Most of the improvement in the rate in Brent occurred in the first year. The percentage increase in 2009/10 to 2010/11 was 33 per cent, for 2010/11 to 2011/12 it was 12 per cent.

the staff restructure, and the associated reduction in children's centre activity provision, took place. There are also indications that parents are under pressure financially; affording replacement provision where council-supplied services have reduced may indeed be difficult for parents of this area. Data on the take-up of formal childcare by low-income working families (to an extent a possible proxy for the number of low-income families with income available for childcare) show a rate of decline in take-up between 2009/10 and 2011/12 greater than seen in the equivalent London average figure.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, the parents' report as to health service provision – which they said was good and that they were happy with – does not align so well with wider data on children's health outcomes in Brent. Though parents we spoke with reported that they were satisfied with the level of health services provision through children's centres – a Health Visitor is available weekly – the incidence of low birth weight increased between 2009 and 2011, particularly between 2010 and 2011, and above the equivalent rate of increase in the London-wide data.<sup>21</sup> From 2007 to 2009 this child health indicator had been improving, the Brent figure falling to close to London average levels from significantly above London average levels. The indicator, by 2011, had returned to the same position as in 2007.

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<sup>20</sup> HMRC, Child and working tax credit statistics. Between 2009/2010 and 2011/12 up take fell from 15 per cent to 11 per cent. The London average fell from 17 per cent to 15 per cent.

<sup>21</sup> ONS, percentage of term babies weighing 2500g or less. The increase in Brent was from 3.5 to 4.3 per cent. In London from 3.1 per cent to 3.2 per cent.

## Services for Young People 16-24

### *Service Changes*

The senior officer interviewed in the first phase of this work reported that the youth service offer has been largely maintained post-cuts (Fitzgerald et al., 2013).

There was no building-based youth service provision in the case study ward in 2010 so we consider the change that has taken place at local level through consideration of the ward's nearest building-based, council-run youth services.<sup>22</sup> The nearest youth centre provision to the case study ward is in one of its neighbouring wards. That youth centre provision has improved since the cuts.<sup>23</sup> In 2010 the youth centre was operating out of a small, temporary facility and the activity offer was limited by that. The youth centre is now housed in a new, purpose-built building and offers activities every weekday. The youth centre currently has more staff than it had in 2010, with one part-time youth worker post having been added to the team since the opening of the new facility.

The budget for the youth centre has not reduced. The budget has remained at the same level over the two years since opening. In one of these years the centre underspent its budget. Even though there was no reduction in funding for the service, managers were seeking to stretch the available funds. They have found low-cost ways of expanding the activity offer, particularly through working with VCS organisations who they can invite to run activities in return for being able to do so through the youth centre venue.

On the other hand, parts of the service had been very significantly affected by the cuts. A Connexions centre which was again in a neighbouring ward and within walking distance of the case study ward had closed in August 2012. The number of Connexions staff thereafter was greatly reduced and the service does not have its own building, having moved to operating from the new youth centre. Apart from closing a building and reducing headcount, savings had been made by targeting the Connexions service towards the most vulnerable/disadvantaged. Young people in the case study ward are within that targeting and so will have been less impacted by this change than young people in less deprived areas. Young people we interviewed in the ward reported that Connexions had been proactive in contacting them or that they had been sign-posted to the service via the job centre. There is now a weekly Connexions drop-in session within the case study area run from a local community centre. Young people get help there with CV writing, interview techniques, careers decisions and guidance.

Charging for youth service provision had changed. Young people now pay to access parts of the youth centre provision. Council decisions on charging for the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Summer University youth services apply to young people in the ward. At the youth centre, charges of £1 and above now apply to specialist or tutored activities, such as cookery, Zumba and cheerleading.<sup>24</sup> Also, the

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<sup>22</sup> Gauging the change that has taken place since 2010 in this case is complicated by the fact that there was no building based youth service provision in the ward just prior to the cuts. For building-based youth service provision young people would have to go to a neighbouring ward, where there was a youth centre and a Connexions centre. As we were told that young people from the case study area use those facilities, and given that the council consider our case study ward and that neighbouring ward part of the same service locality, we describe here the changes in the neighbouring ward's facilities.

<sup>23</sup> This improvement has been made possible through a charity grant.

<sup>24</sup> These activities were not being offered pre-cuts so it is not here the case that a previously free session became a charged session.

council's efforts to increase income from venue hire of the youth centre from time-to-time disrupts the service. Weekend activities sometimes had to be cancelled if the venue was sought for a private function.

Despite the introduction of charging for parts of the service, staff reported that they were finding ways to continue to offer many sessions at no charge – they were creatively finding ways of offering free sessions, such as, as noted above, through VCS partnering. Where charges are made the centre staff seek to ensure those sessions are still accessible for local households. Siblings are charged only half of the full charge. The youth centre staff have also negotiated a discounted rate for their users at the nearby leisure club. Use of that provision is therefore now relatively less costly than in 2010.

We found three youth-focused VCS organisations with projects in the case study ward. Two were predominantly focused on young men and engaging them through sport. The third has a focus on engagement through music.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

There was therefore a mixed picture of change in the local youth service provision around the case study ward. Whilst a local Connexions facility had been closed, and whilst there is now greater use of charging in the service, the nearest youth centre has greatly improved and has expanded its offer.

In our sample of young people none had noticed a deterioration in the quality of youth services, nor in other local services they were using. None of the group were users of the youth centre but all used the Connexions service. They spoke well of that support and reported that it was helping them. One young person was a user of Adult Social Services. He reported that he was happy with the service and that there had been an improvement recently when he was assigned a different social worker. He is contacted weekly by phone and has face-to-face contact fortnightly. Among the group were users of a local library and parks. They had not noticed a deterioration in these leisure services.

Though the evidence from the young people we spoke with in this ward was that they have been impacted by the cuts to quite a limited extent – a change in use of the summer university being the only definite impact noted here – they were clear of these being increasingly hard times for them and their families. They noted various pressures on them personally and on the households they are part of. Firstly, there were reports from the young people of family members having to work longer hours to meet the demands of rising costs of living. The result of this was less family time. Secondly, there were indications of reductions in disposable incomes within the households these young people are part of. Two interviewees said their families had stopped having a Friday night takeaway together. The families could not afford it. Personally, they were finding costs of travel and activities limiting. One interviewee said she could not remember the last time she had been to the cinema. Those of the young people who were not eligible for a young person's travel card said the cost of using the underground was prohibitive. A few of the young people wanted to take driving lessons or buy a car but said that would be difficult.

There was a sentiment amongst these young people that local area characteristics were constraining the scope they had to face the wider pressures of recession and austerity. Jobs and training opportunities were the major concern for the group. The young people were quite negative about the preparation they had had in local schools for facing the job market. In particular the young people said that opportunities for work experience had been too few. They did not foresee being able to find work in the immediate area.

Also, the young people felt that the local area offered them little in the way of positive recreational activities. One man commented he had to go to Milton Keynes to have fun. In this respect the absence of a youth centre in the ward is notable. The young people themselves commented, independent of prompting, that there should be more youth centres and that they should be a free service. The young people also said they needed opportunities to get out of the area through going on youth trips. They felt that was important to broadening their perspectives and horizons. One young person had taken part in a Youth Challenge trip and spoke of how this had given her skills to then add to her CV.

In order to get a sense of how these individual-level accounts may resonate with the experience of young people across the area, we can consider service utilisation changes and trends in local data on young people's outcomes. In respect to the first, service utilisation, the picture was mixed. The introduction of charging for the Summer University had considerably impacted participation (youth worker interview). There are now far fewer people taking part. A young person we spoke with, for example, reported having received information about the Summer University. Although interested in the course offer she thought the cost was prohibitive so was not intending to enrol. On the other hand, a youth worker reported that attendance at the youth centre had increased very significantly following the opening of the new facility. It is unclear, however, what portion of that increase is from the immediate locality: the youth centre now attracts groups from a wide (borough-level) geography.

Reference to borough-level data on NEETS (not in education, employment or training) shows that the incidence of NEETS has shown improvement in the post-cuts period.<sup>25</sup> Between 2011 and 2012 the rate in Brent fell from 3.9 per cent to 2.4 per cent in contrast to the London-wide picture, where we see the proportion of NEETs increase from 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent in the same year. These figures show an improvement in entry to education and training for this group of young peoples' cohort. On the other hand performance at GCSE did not improve in line with the London average.<sup>26</sup> The fall in the rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system was slightly less in Brent than the equivalent London average rate of decline.<sup>27</sup> Brent's planned spend per head on young people's learning and development (ages 13-19) in both 2011/12 and 2012/13 was considerably below the London average, approximately just 60 per cent of the London figure in 2012/13.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Department for Education, Young people not in education, employment or training – percentage of 16-18 year olds. Over 2011 to 2012 the NEET rate in Camden rose from 7.2 per cent to 10.2 per cent. The London rate rose from 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent.

<sup>26</sup> Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England. The attainment rate for Brent in 2010/11 was 62.1 per cent, in 2012/13 it was 62.9 per cent. Between 2010/11 and 2011/12 attainment fell. It was 58.7 per cent in 2011/12. The average trend for London was improvement across these years and at a slightly higher rate, rising from 62 per cent to 64 per cent.

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Justice, Rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system per 100,000 people aged 10-17. The rate declined in Brent from 1612 per 100,000 in 2009/10 to 1400 per 100,000 in 2010/11 (13 per cent decrease). The London average equivalent was a decrease of approximately a fifth.

<sup>28</sup> Audit Commission, CIPFA Children's Services Estimates (Section 251). In Brent planned spend per head in 2011/12 was £0, in 2012/13, £7. The London average was £11 in 2011/12 and £12 in 2012/13.

## Services for Older People 65+

### *Service Changes*

The account of the staff interviewed centrally was that for those older people still accessing older people's services the service they were receiving should have improved (Fitzgerald et al., 2013). The team had sought to improve the quality of service supplied whilst making efficiencies. It was stated that some people would have had their service cut because of stricter application of the eligibility criteria and it was recognised that that might be very difficult for those individuals.<sup>29</sup>

A day centre in this ward was closed as part of a post-cuts Adult Social Services review. The day centre had been for adults broadly, not specifically for older people. There was local resistance to the closure. The user consultation on that closure revealed that people were concerned about losing contacts with friends and having to move from a familiar environment.

VCS provision in this ward for older people has been impacted by reductions in funding to the VCS from the council. An introduction of charges for a local VCS-run day centre had followed a cut in the organisation's funding from the council. The centre was not now able to admit people with low level need or no need for free as it had done previously. It had become focused now on delivering a day care service for people with higher levels of need for whom they would receive payment. The cost of having lunch at the centre had been increased as a result of the funding reduction. A resident reported that a VCS-run lunch club outside the ward, but in walking distance, had closed.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

Given these changes we would expect there to be losers in this service area. They would be the people who have had a service cut. For people still accessing services, changes, where experienced, should not have adversely impacted the service they were receiving.

Among the older residents we interviewed none had had a home care service cut. We cannot, therefore, directly comment on the impact of a care package cut on an older individual. Nonetheless, a woman in her fifties who was using an older people's day centre told us of her experience of having her care cut. Her case provides an example of how an individual may be impacted by such service loss:

#### **Box 8: Annabel**

Annabel is a woman in her fifties and currently attends an older people's day centre. Following a serious fall, down a flight of stairs, she was assigned a carer. Three years ago her care package was cut. She is concerned about the demands her care needs are now placing on her daughter who is currently studying and therefore pressured for time. The situation is particularly pressured because the Annabel's former partner, the father of her daughter, also requires care from her daughter. It is proving difficult for this family to provide the replacement care needed. Annabel said she is coping "by the grace of God".

<sup>29</sup> A reduction in the total number Adult Social Care clients age 65+ is observed in social care data showing activity levels. The total number of ASC service users 65+ decreased by 390 users between 2009/10 and 2013/14, a percentage decrease of 10 per cent (Appendix 2)

We also learnt from older people, and staff who worked with them, that simply the process involved in reassessment for service eligibility had proved difficult for some older people. Comments from the older people suggested there were long forms to fill out and some found this difficult and wanted support with the process but had not been able to access that help at home. The example of David (Box 9), described by a volunteer older people's support worker, illustrates the impacts on one local resident.

**Box 9: David**

David used to attend a local lunch club and took part in the seated exercise class there. David had relied on a local authority transport service to get to that club. Following admission to and release from hospital David was told he must now reapply for the transport service and was supplied with forms. He had not wanted to fill those out.

As a result, David was no longer accessing the transport service he had relied on to get him to the lunch club. The situation, described by the carer, was that he sat in his room all day and watched films at the sheltered housing facility where he lives. He has put on weight. Before his weight had been kept under control through his participation in the seated exercise class. There was a seated exercise class at the sheltered housing he could join in with but he shows no interest in it because it is not the same service he was familiar with.

There was a general sense that transport services for older people had got worse. Older people we spoke with said that the Dial-a-Ride service was unreliable and some reported having not been picked up on occasions. One interviewee said she now had to collect her own prescription, once delivered to her. This was a problem for her because her mobility was limited. We could not say from the conversations whether these changes were a direct consequence of 'efficiencies'/cuts. But there were clear impacts. Older people reported increased reliance on others and spoke of how it could be difficult for family members to provide replacement support. As one woman stated "[t]hey don't always have time for Grandma."

Service managers and the older people we spoke with – a majority current users of older people's services – told us that service utilisation had changed. The local lunch club and, previously free, day centre facility had seen numbers fall and there were also examples of attendees who were using these facilities less frequently. These changes in usage followed the introduction of a charge for use of the day centre. The impact has been that a significant number of once regular attendees have left the service for reason of not being able to afford it. Two men in their nineties had reduced the frequency with which they attend. This change has disrupted the social function of the day centre. The remaining attendees have lost friends through the change and those no longer attending were isolated.

## **2. Local changes and impacts in Camden**

### **Local Context**

The case study ward in Camden exemplifies in many ways both the opportunities and pressures of a central London location for residents on lower incomes.

On the one hand, the ward is well connected to economic opportunity, with its central London location providing proximity to transport hubs and national and international firms. The high potential return from property development has attracted inward investment in recent years. Local amenities are plentiful, including independent eateries, churches, a community sports centre and well-maintained green spaces with children's play areas and gym equipment. There is a weekly market. National chain supermarkets, shops and cafes are a short walk from any part of the ward. Discount stores are in walking distance of the north of the ward. The voluntary and community sector (VCS) is well-developed with many charities in the neighbourhood and surrounding localities supporting local and London residents. Patrons and sponsors of these charities include nationally-recognised individuals and funders. An active and engaged local community is in evidence in participation in local consultations and active tenants associations.

On the other hand, competition and resource pressures are high. Housing is in high demand and rents are above average. The central location of the ward and its proximity to London universities has attracted increasing numbers of student residents. Residents told us that private landlords were reluctant to accept people on housing benefit as tenants. There is a high proportion of social housing, much of it several storeys high, something which parents with children and the elderly found problematic. There were complaints about regular disruption and associated noise and other pollution from regular building projects around the area. Residents we spoke to said finding suitable employment or training was difficult. Competition for jobs was high and employers were asking for experience as prerequisite. Recognising this, the Council has introduced an employability initiative which gives Camden residents advance access to local job openings three days ahead of the vacancy being advertised outside of the borough. Local employers are being encouraged to make posts family-friendly and the Council has worked with local employers, encouraging them to pledge to take on an apprentice.

Overall, the case study ward is an ethnically mixed area which has higher than average proportions of both young (0-19) and older old people (85+) and people claiming state benefits. Its need for services for the groups with which this report is concerned is therefore relatively high compared with many other wards in London and nationally.

In our interim report we reported on the strategy adopted at borough-level in regard to services for the three resident groups considered here. As context for that we also situated the borough vis-à-vis other London boroughs in regard to the size of the cut it incurred and the subsequent drop in service expenditure. To summarise, in this case, on the eve of the cuts, the council's spend per capita was relatively high (£1442 per capita). Eighteen per cent of its income came from Council Tax. On these bases, as well as considering its deprivation score, which was relatively high, we classified this borough as one of our Group 1 boroughs. This identified it as a case of a more deprived and higher spending authority which had a higher proportion of its income from central government funding and less from Council Tax than the

alternative group, Group 2, which were relatively less deprived and lower spend per capita. Income to the borough from central government fell by 30 per cent between 2009/10 and 2013/14 (real terms and excluding education and public health). Its estimated spending power fell by 23 per cent. Total Service Expenditure (less education and public health) fell by 25 per cent. The borough was Labour-led at the time of the cuts and, post the May 2014 elections, continues to be Labour-led.

Our analysis of the council's overall strategy toward the cuts, read from analysis of council documentation (strategy reports and action plans, for example) identified it as fitting the third type of our four-type typology of London borough strategies towards the cuts. It was planning service remodelling and showed some commitment to greater fairness or equality or reducing poverty, notably in this case in the setting-up of an Equality Taskforce. The message conveyed in our interviews with senior officers and Members was that they had sought to make savings with as little impact to front line service provision as possible. They were seeking to protect the most vulnerable through greater targeting of resources towards those with highest need. In order to make the savings needed the council was having to cut some of its discretionary services – from, they noted, an above average level of discretionary provision pre-cuts – and was working in partnership with local VCS organisations.

## Services for Under Fives

### *Service Changes*

Under-fives services are a priority for Camden Council and were protected in the round of budget cuts made in 2010. The service made only a 10 per cent budget cut rather than the 20 per cent cut applied to other service areas.

In the case study ward, this protection was reflected in that there had been little change since 2010. No services had been wholly cut. In fact, the picture was of expansion in the breadth of the local offer with three new activities having been added to the children's centre: a free drop-in for Congolese families, a free drop-in for families with under-ones and a gardening project. Though the overall budget reduction for Sure Start had caused the Council to reduce the overall number of hours of under-fives activities offered by the council, the council had managed to retain the breadth of the local service offer by making these reductions in areas where there was duplication with the local VCS provision. There are now no more than a few instances of two similar activities (Council and VCS) running at one time. The budget reduction had also caused there to be greater targeting in the service. The children's centre was being encouraged to focus more on the most disadvantaged families, though access remained for other families. There had been no changes to charging structures, with activities such as drop-ins remaining free and childcare charges increasing in line with usual annual increases.

'Efficiency savings' were in evidence. Some vacated posts had been left vacant and the local under-fives family support services team is due to vacate its local accommodation, moving to another ward in a rationalisation of Council buildings. However, interviews with local staff suggested that these changes did not affect the services offered. VCS interviewees suggested that Council funding had reduced or stayed the same since 2010, but that they had nevertheless been able to continue their previous provision.

As a result, a relatively extensive offer for under-fives remains in 2014. Services are offered at two council-run children's centres, three VCS organisations (including Black and Minority Ethnic focused), a church, schools (including one SEN school) and private nurseries. Between the council and VCS providers, families with under-fives can access a programme of between two and four activities every weekday. The activities offered included toy library drop-ins, play drop-ins, drop-ins for particular groups, including Congolese families and families with under-ones and a play service. All but two of these activities are funded by Camden's Integrated Early Years' Service and are free to residents.<sup>30</sup> Parents continue to be able to access an above statutory offer of free childcare provision in their child's pre-school year. Beyond the neighbourhood, in close proximity, there are additional council-run free drop-in services for under-fives, including a weekly library-based drop-in. In addition, the family support element of the under-fives service offers health, parenting, information and advice services. Additional occasional activities, such as library visits, music sessions and storytelling are offered by one of the VCS organisations.

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<sup>30</sup> The exceptions (i.e. not funded by Camden IEYS) are non-council services: the church-based drop-in and places on a local play service, for which residents are charged. N.B. the play service might be considered a 5+ provision but it is appropriate in this case to include it as an under-fives provision on the basis that it has recently begun to offer places to four year olds.

The overall picture, thus, was of a relatively broad under-fives provision having survived the cuts to local government funding and which was continuing to adapt to new demands and needs.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

Given the picture of service changes we have noted in under-fives provision in this ward, we would not expect to find impacts of the budget cuts for this age group.

The views of parents we spoke with align with this expectation. Parents did not feel their families had been adversely impacted by changes in the service and had not noticed any reduction in provision. One mother stated “things have got better for parents.” They were very positive about under-fives services. The single observation about the service which could possibly be linked to the cuts was mention that there could be better signposting to and information about services.<sup>31</sup> The parents in making this point did not have pre-cuts insights, however, to be able to draw a comparison.

The parents were satisfied with the services on offer, with two mothers who had previously lived outside of London both noting a greater level of provision compared with what they had experienced elsewhere. One parent stated “there is a lot for children to do here.” All used a free under-fives drop-in and attended regularly. Two had accessed parenting support, such as parenting advice and ESOL classes, also free. They were using additional under-fives stay and play drop-ins in or close to the neighbourhood, a mother stated “there is a lot to do in the area”. Due to the number of activities on offer locally two parents were not accessing the free two year old and three year old childcare provision they were entitled to. There were alternative options to free childcare places, which they preferred. In effect, these parents had choice.

There are indications that what we find in our small sample of resident conversations is in line with what might be observed across the wider ward population of parents with under-fives. Firstly, Camden’s Local Resident Satisfaction Survey (2011/12)<sup>32</sup> shows little evidence of dissatisfaction with children’s services; we could reasonably expect greater expression of dissatisfaction if parents were being negatively impacted by any changes in that service. Asked an open-ended question as to what the council performed well on or needs to improve, children’s service appears joint 17<sup>th</sup> in a list of 23 areas for improvement (i.e. low down on the list) that residents raised; 1.3 per cent of respondents mentioned this. More generally, the survey shows community services were raised by only 2 per cent of respondents when asked an unprompted question about ‘what local issues you are most concerned about at the moment?’

Secondly, borough-wide indicators can inform us of relevant changes in under-fives outcomes (Appendix 1).<sup>33</sup> From these indicators there is some evidence of consistency in child development outcomes across

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<sup>31</sup> In this case a parent made the point that if they had not taken the initiative to find out about services they would have missed out on what was proving very helpful support. They added that other parents locally were not always forthcoming with information and it was posited that this was because of competition for places; parents having discovered a service might not share that information wanting to protect access for their child.

<sup>32</sup> Presentation of residents' survey results to RCP scrutiny committee, February 2013 <http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/council-and-democracy/having-your-say/residents--survey/> Accessed July 2014

<sup>33</sup> We acknowledge limitations with this method. There are not indicators for all of the outcomes in the logic diagram and within the time frames we need. The geography is not consistently ward-level (some of these data are not available at neighbourhood level for reason of anonymity) and the time-series is short, in some cases only two years forward from the baseline year of 2009/10.

the post-cuts period.<sup>34</sup> Considering the performance of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), we see that the proportion of children achieving 78 points in the EYFS profile rose from 58 per cent in 2009/10 and 2010/11 to 62 per cent in 2011/12 (DfE, EYFS profile results).<sup>35</sup> In terms of child health, the percentage of babies of low birth weight fell overall in the period from 3.5 per cent to 3.1 per cent (low birth weight, ONS). The improvement in low birth rate was better than the equivalent for London, which was constant.<sup>36</sup>

This is not to say that families with under-fives were being wholly protected from the impacts of the cuts. Amongst the parents we spoke with there was negative comment about employment and housing services. One parent hoping to find work or training locally complained that employment support was “not very good”. She was not aware of the availability of employment advice workers locally.<sup>37</sup> Another complained of competition for council housing, having been unable to secure a larger home for her family of four, who were living in a studio.<sup>38</sup> Given that these parents had only been in a situation of needing these services recently we cannot however conclude with confidence that there has been a decline in these services due to the cuts. That is though a possibility.

Over and above the impacts of any cuts in local services, parents were being impacted by wider economic pressures. The parents we spoke with all had concerns about employment opportunities and/or the affordability of suitable housing for them and their families. One mother offered anecdotes of friends who, in similar cramped living conditions to her own, were finding their lives emotionally very challenging. They also noted rising costs of living, something which was causing one Mother to find ways to reduce her weekly expenses. According to the Camden-wide resident satisfaction survey, it is indeed these broader changes that concern residents the most, more than changes in community services.

Outcomes data certainly indicate these type of pressures for residents over the last twelve months. In Camden the proportion of economically active unemployed, though decreasing between June 2010 and September 2012, rose from September 2012.<sup>39</sup> At London-level the rate has been approximately constant.<sup>40</sup> Adult mental health indicated by the percentage of adults registered with a GP with a diagnosis of depression rose in the borough.<sup>41</sup> The rate of that increase is similar to the equivalent for London overall between 2009/10 and 2011/12 (a 7.3 per cent increase compared to a 7.0 per cent increase).

By way of comment on cumulative effects of service changes and recession on families with under-fives in this neighbourhood, we can draw on our conversations with parents for anecdotal evidence. Overall,

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<sup>34</sup> We do not claim a causal link between service changes, or lack of them, and the trends in these outcomes but try to paint a picture of what is happening in families with under-fives outcomes locally.

<sup>35</sup> This improvement is nonetheless below the London average and in the period we have seen Camden fall from being above the London average on this indicator to being below that average in the most recent two years of data.

<sup>36</sup> We acknowledge limitations in the extent to which these outcomes data are indicators of the impacts we are seeking to gauge here: namely child development and child health.

<sup>37</sup> In conversation it was clear that this woman had, nonetheless, received informal careers advice from a VCS-provided under-fives drop-in manager.

<sup>38</sup> As noted in the local context section and as per other central London boroughs, demand for housing here is high and associated with that rents are relatively high.

<sup>39</sup> ONS, NOMIS. The percentage of economically active unemployed exceeded 10 per cent in June 2010 and had fallen to 6 per cent by September 2012. By June 2013 the figure had risen to over 9 per cent.

<sup>40</sup> ONS, NOMIS. It has fluctuated at around 9 per cent over this period.

<sup>41</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre, Adults with depression – shows per cent of adults registered with a GP with a diagnosis of depression.

we did not find in those accounts indications of service changes and economic pressures compounding negatively. Instead, there were examples of how the level of under-fives service provision that remained post-cuts was softening the effects of recession. The protection of local provision meant that parents could access free under-fives activities locally and regularly. As illustrated in the example below (Box 4), use of an under-fives service could help a family cope with the pressures of wider recession and austerity as they are coming to bear on the population of this area.

#### **Box 4: Heather**

Heather is a mother of two children under three. She is in her late twenties and has lived in this neighbourhood since aged seventeen. She lives with her partner and children in a studio flat. She says this is not enough space for them, they “desperately” need another bedroom. The living situation is a strain on the family – she finds it “mentally draining and hard to cope” – but they cannot afford the rent on a larger property given the rent levels in this central London area. Her husband is self-employed and they are not eligible for housing benefit.

Heather identifies this area as her home – she has immediate family living locally – and does not want to be “pushed out” as she says is happening to other residents. She feels that her family is “putting into the system but getting nothing back” and reflected “[t]hey make it so hard for you.”

Heather, whose children are not yet old enough for free childcare said “we can no way afford childcare.” She is a regular attender of free under-fives drop-ins locally, using the service three times a week. Being able to take her children to these free drop-ins gives Heather and the children a means of escaping their difficult living conditions. They also regularly use the local open spaces in and around the neighbourhood.

### **Services for Young People 16-24**

#### *Service Changes*

Although Camden Council has not been able to offer the same budget protection to youth services as to early years, it has sought to protect youth provision and to ensure it is of good quality. Its approach has been to make savings through partnership working – as noted above an approach also used in the early years’ service – rather than cutting services. The Council did this by reducing its provision where there was equivalent good quality VCS provision duplicating its offer and also by remodelling its service on larger geographical units.<sup>42</sup>

In the case study ward the youth service had been impacted by these changes. As a result of the reduction of duplication in the local offer there are overall fewer hours of council provision than in 2010 at the council-run youth centre. However, because the youth centre had worked with a local VCS-run youth club – to ensure that where they reduced their hours the youth club would be open and offering a similar service – it was thought that the local offer had not been impacted.

<sup>42</sup> As understood from our conversation with senior officers, ‘duplication’ was identified as the provision of two or more comparable services within a similar area. What addressing this duplication entailed was closer working between the council and the VCS so that resources could, across an area, be used to best effect.

In addition to the removal of duplication, the service was being delivered with a reduced budget and reduced staffing. The youth centre's budget had reduced from £12,000 to £5,000. Two part-time posts at the youth centre had been removed through not filling vacancies. Money for site maintenance appeared to be limited; at the time of interview the heating system in the facility was not working and had not been working for some time. A repair needed to the fire escape was limiting, for reason of health and safety, the number of people that could be permitted in the building at any one time, meaning very large gatherings could not be held. However, as with the change in opening hours of the youth centre, the budget reductions were viewed by a staff member as being of little consequence to the service offer and user. Use of volunteers in the service meant that the staff reduction had no implications for the young people. Though the budget had been reduced there had been investment in the service: the youth centre had moved to a new built site, an IT suite had been added and gym equipment reupholstered. Charges for users had not been introduced or increased.

The overall result in the case study ward was that the service offer in 2014 was broadly similar to that in 2010. There are currently three youth centres or clubs: one the council-run youth centre, one the VCS-run youth club and a VCS-run youth music project. The overall range of opening times spans a 3.30pm to 9.00pm period most nights of the week. Access to the youth centre and youth club remain free of charge. A variety of activities is offered. At the youth centre there is an on-site gym, IT room and leisure area, which has pool tables, table tennis tables and table football. A few nights each week there are organised activities, there are occasional trips and the Duke of Edinburgh award is offered and is free to young people from disadvantaged families. The youth club offers media sessions, a café and general activities such as Wii and table tennis.

In addition to these youth services a detached youth team are occasionally in the area. Young people have access to a Connexions service as needed. A council-run community sports centre offers a wide-range of sports activities for a fee. A charity for homeless young people is open every day of the week. Mainly used by young people from beyond the ward, local young people can use its services if they need to. There are additional youth activities offered by VCS organisations in neighbouring wards and within walking distance. These include a project specifically for young people of BME groups.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

The picture of youth service provision here post-cuts is one of relatively small adjustments in the way the service is provided but with protection of the front line service offer.

The impression of the young people we spoke to was of a consistency in this service offer. They did not report, therefore, negative impacts of the cuts made through the youth service. They had not noticed a deterioration in the services they accessed – the youth club, the youth centre and the Connexions service – during the time they had been using them. In the group there were regular users of both the youth club and the youth centre. The young people consulted thought that these youth services were good, for example, “the youth workers appreciate us a lot” and “good things about living in [ward] is the activities and youth services that are available”. The group reported getting help with finding jobs from youth workers and Connexions. They are able to access Connexions appointments when they need them, reportedly as many as they need. One young person was involved in the youth council, another in the

Duke of Edinburgh scheme. The student involved in the latter – in other boroughs a charged for service – was accessing the scheme for free.

Young people we spoke with did not identify any council service changes that had adversely impacted youth behaviour or youth health and wellbeing outcomes, personally or among their peers. They recognised problems in the area, one young man reporting there are “people constantly on drugs”. Nonetheless, the young people we spoke with felt safe in the local area and said that the local parks and open spaces had improved in the last two years because of the addition of outdoor gym equipment. Young people’s behavioural outcomes locally, as perceived by local service staff, have not worsened. Incidence of violent crime and substance misuse had not noticeably increased. These perceptions align with borough-wide evidence relating to youth crime. The rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system aged 10-17 fell by 7 per cent between 2009/10 and 2010/11.<sup>43</sup> The under-18 conception rate fell between 2009 and 2011, by approximately a third.<sup>44 45</sup>

Service utilisation of the youth services considered here has been broadly consistent for most of the period since the cuts. Youth centre attendance had not been impacted by the within-ward change of location and opening hours, with average attendance at consistently around forty young people per evening. The VCS youth club saw a small drop in attendance following the change in opening hours which occurred with the greater coordination of council and VCS club opening times. After a few months, attendance returned to normal level and the temporary, part-time addition of a female youth worker at the VCS youth provision (funded through a short-term grant) in fact had brought more women into the service.

Overall, the young people’s main concern was employment opportunities locally. Though they did not report being impacted by local service changes, the wider economic climate was impacting them. They felt it was hard for young people to find work locally and spoke of failed attempts to secure part-time work, although they noted “loads of” volunteering opportunities. One young person commented “[i]t’s not like there are no places to work”, the problem was “employers want people with experience.”

Outcomes data indeed show hard times for young people in this area. The percentage of 16-24 year olds in Camden not in education, employment or training (NEET) rose above the London rate between 2011 and 2012.<sup>46</sup> At the same time the council’s planned spend on young people’s learning and development per young person aged 13 to 19 decreased between 2011/12 and 2012/13, from £76.13 per head to £56.03 per head.<sup>47</sup> The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals achieving 5 or more A\* to C grades at GCSE or equivalent between 2010/11 to 2012/13 fell by approximately 5 percentage points.<sup>48</sup> The trend in the London average was, in contrast, improvement (approximately 4 percentage points).

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<sup>43</sup> Ministry of Justice, Rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system per 100,000 people aged 10-17.

<sup>44</sup> ONS, Under-18 conceptions – per 1,000 girls aged 15-17.

<sup>45</sup> The falls in the rate of both first time entrants to the criminal justice system and under-18 conception are below the rate of fall in the equivalent London average figures.

<sup>46</sup> Department for Education, Young people not in education, employment or training – percentage of 16-18 year olds. Over 2011 to 2012 the NEET rate in Camden rose from 7.2 per cent to 10.2 per cent. The London rate rose from 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent.

<sup>47</sup> Audit Commission, CIPFA Children’s Services Estimates (Section 251)

<sup>48</sup> Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England.

The young people thought that more could be done for them. They had not heard, for example, of council schemes to support them into employment, such as the three day advance advertising of job openings to Camden residents. This sentiment is echoed in Camden council's resident satisfaction survey (2011/12) which shows that the council's provision for young people was a concern for residents.<sup>49</sup> Residents were asked, from a list of options, which three issues they were most concerned about. 'Not enough being done for young people' was one option. Sixteen per cent of respondents selected that option. It ranked 7<sup>th</sup> highest on a list of 20 options.

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<sup>49</sup> Presentation of residents' survey results to RCP scrutiny committee, February 2013  
<http://www.camden.gov.uk/ccm/navigation/council-and-democracy/having-your-say/residents--survey/> Accessed July 2014

## Services for Older People 65+

### *Service Changes*

Camden Council made cuts to its older people's community services. These comprised: a reassessment of eligibility for discretionary transport services; the introduction or increase of charges for those services and the cessation of the meals-on-wheels service after 2011/12. The council had also reduced its funding to VCS organisations supporting older people, including through a withdrawal of lunch club funding.<sup>50</sup> The total number of people age 65+ receiving support from Adult Social Care fell by over a quarter between 2009/10 and 2013/14.<sup>51</sup>

Services for older residents of the case study ward had changed.<sup>52</sup> We found that charges had been introduced or increased for discretionary older people's services. Older residents eligible for use of a minibus service, PlusBus, now pay a £10 annual membership fee. They pay £1 more for Taxi Card journeys. Due to withdrawal of council funding for lunch clubs, the lunch charge at the ward's VCS-run lunch club had increased by £1 per lunch, an increase of approximately 25 per cent.<sup>53</sup> This council's offer for older people includes council-run day centres.<sup>54</sup> One of these is a short journey by public transport from this ward. Free in 2010, users now pay a £2 daily charge to attend; a user who prior to the introduction of this charge had been a daily attender would now be paying £10 per week to access the service at the same level.<sup>55</sup> A larger daily charge of £25 had been introduced for people with substantial and critical care needs, to be paid from direct payments or personal means depending on financial assessment. The price of lunch at this day centre rose by 50 pence in 2011/12, an increase greater than a normal annual increase.

In addition to changes in charging, there had been service cuts or reductions. In connection with the council's reduction in funding for VCS-supplied older people's services, a VCS-run older people's day centre which had existed in the case study ward had closed. The centre had been open to all older people for no charge and had offered a lunch club. At the council-run day centres the number of activities and staff at those facilities had reduced because of budget cuts. The number of journeys an older person can take with Taxi Card was reduced by 12 per year, a reduction of 10 per cent in the total quota.

Service provision for older residents within the neighbourhood today is therefore notably different to what it was in 2010. A VCS-run lunch club remains offering a daily two hour lunch club. It offers occasional activities, such as art and craft and seated exercise, and trips, both day and residential. The lunch costs £4 and hot drinks 20p. Activities and outings are charged for (£1-£2 for activities) but are nonetheless subsidised. An annual membership fee, of less than £10, is payable in order to access the provisions at this organisation. A local VCS-run café offers a three course lunch to older people for £3.20. Additional VCS services for older people are offered in neighbouring wards and include an Age UK Camden run resource centre and health activities for older BME groups. Residents, however, can no longer go to a day centre free of charge and they are not accessing transport services on the same basis as in 2010.

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<sup>50</sup> Older people were consulted on changes to the service.

<sup>51</sup> The number of 65+ Adult Social Care service users fell by 28 per cent between these two years (Appendix 2).

<sup>52</sup> In this borough older people's services tend to be for the 60+ group, though our focus is on 65+

<sup>53</sup> This lunch club had continued to exist beyond the council's withdrawal of lunch club funding.

<sup>54</sup> The centres were and are open to residents aged 60+. Some activities are open to residents 50+.

<sup>55</sup> The £2 charge remains a subsidised rate.

## *Experiences and Impacts*

As we would expect from the several changes in older people's services noted, older people we interviewed in this neighbourhood had noticed changes in the community services they were accessing. The increases in charges for transport services and lunch clubs and the loss of the ward's VCS-run day centre were noted by the majority of the older residents interviewed. There were mixed feelings about these changes. One older resident complained, "Camden don't have any concern for people over 60", another was more positive saying, "Camden are good at looking after people if they are on their own" and "everybody says Camden is very good."

For the residents we spoke with changes in charging were more a point of complaint than a source of negative impacts. The increase in charges for the formerly free or cheaper transport services and the price increase at the local lunch club were viewed as reasonable. None of the interviewees reported reducing their use of these services as a result of price increases. There was, nevertheless, anecdotal evidence from the account of one interviewee, that older residents may not take-up charged for services if they consider them expensive (Box 5).

### **Box 5: Patrick**

Patrick, in his seventies, lives in council-run sheltered accommodation. He was recently in hospital with pneumonia. Now back at home and recovered he has enquired about getting some home care. He wants to have a cleaner two hours a week. He considers the £15 per hour charge too expensive and so will manage on his own.

Our conversations with service staff did reveal that some residents locally were reducing their service usage because of changes in charging. A 10 per cent reduction in service users at the nearby council-run day centre was attributed to the introduction of charging for that activity. For the individual no longer attending this is equivalent to a service cut. The number that left the service was considered "not huge" and most had partners and thought they would be able to manage (staff interview). But that number did include frail individuals who it was thought could now be isolated at home, not accessing a replacement service and without support (staff interview).<sup>56</sup>

Amongst our interviewees only one resident reported having lost a service. In this case it was the ward's former day centre. The closure of that day centre was a much voiced complaint and disappointment; "it's just sat there empty. It's awful that they've just got it sat there." A majority of the older people we spoke with locally were aware of the service and knew of people who had used it. It had been a focus of the older community in this area. The ex-user we interviewed had been a regular attender for several years. She had found a replacement service, the ward's remaining lunch club. Nonetheless her case (Box 6) illustrates some of the impacts of the closure on local residents.

<sup>56</sup> In such cases the service staff had sought to persuade the attendee to come on a reduced basis, had sought to keep in contact or had referred the case to social services.

### **Box 6: Janice**

Janice is in her eighties and has lived in this ward for over thirty years. Up until the ward's day centre closed Janice was a regular user.

Janice says that she misses the broad activity offer that there had been at the day centre "it really was a smashing club. There was plenty to do", "always something going on" and there were "super people running it". She also misses the community that had grown-up there. That community has now been dispersed, former users going to different day centres, such as the council-run centres, or not attending any at all.

Janice now attends the ward's remaining lunch club because it is close enough to her home to get to by foot. She appreciates the occasional outings and activities she can join-in with, will go on holiday with the group and reports that the organisation is trying to increase its offer of activities. Nonetheless, she says the activity offer is less, "here is just a diner club", "you just sit in a chair and read a paper. There's not much to do.". Without activities "it's boring just sitting around." Previously she had enjoyed the regular sing-alongs and talks at the day centre. She is now paying £1 more for her lunch.

Overall, there was some evidence then from our fieldwork of increased isolation and boredom following cuts in community services and of new or increased charges acting as a barrier to service utilisation. In the absence of indicators to track local and borough level trends in these outcomes, there is value in noting the trends in other, related outcomes data for the 65+ group alongside these qualitative stories of the impacts of service changes among older residents.<sup>57</sup> The rate of depression among adults for this borough, as noted above, shows an increase in the 2009/10 to 2011/12 period.<sup>58</sup>

We did not specifically seek to identify users or ex-users of home care services. Nevertheless, some interviewees were users of these services. All of these interviewees were also council tenants. Half the interviewees were dissatisfied with various aspects of their housing or social care. Two interviewees complained about their reablement packages. However, since people were not receiving this service prior to the cuts (reablement packages had not been introduced nationally), we cannot establish that these difficulties were following from funding reductions.

Suggested 'recession effects' included: post office closures "they've shut them all down" (older resident); rent rises had been above the rise in pension payment; rising costs of living, particularly fuel and food, were noted. The winter fuel allowance payment for older people had reduced by £100.<sup>59</sup> These pressures were a cause for complaint, but residents did not report that their lives had been adversely impacted. Regarding financial pressures, one woman joked "I will have to buy myself less chocolate!" She reflected

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<sup>57</sup> Though it is plausible that these outcomes may be linked to what we have noted about increased boredom and isolation, we are not reporting here that there is a causal link.

<sup>58</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre, Adults with depression – shows per cent of adults registered with a GP with a diagnosis of depression.

<sup>59</sup> Reported by an interviewee – their winter fuel allowance in the previous year was £400, in the most recent year it was £300.

that would be something positive; she would be glad to lose some weight. Residents also commented on change in the local area “Camden’s gone right up market these last ten years. You don’t see any working man’s cafes or pubs.” Taken together with the reduction in service-related community space (in the form of the closure of the older people’s day centre), there is a suggested impact of reduced social spaces for older people locally.

### **3. Local changes and impacts in Redbridge**

#### **Local Context**

The Redbridge case study ward is an area of concentrated poverty within what is described as a more leafy, suburban borough of Outer East London. It provides an example of a deprived ward beyond the inner city and nested within what is, overall, a lesser deprived borough.<sup>60</sup>

The changing socio-economic geography of Outer East London is reflected in the surrounding areas. Regeneration projects, which have added new sites of employment, recreation and housing development, have opened up new opportunities. These developments though have also created pressures in the local area. House prices have been increasing in connection with this regeneration as well as with the rising demand for housing in the relatively cheaper housing markets of Outer East London. The ward's nearest shopping centre has been impacted with the creation of alternative sites, notably Stratford.

In some respects, however, the case study neighbourhood stands apart from these changes. The neighbourhood supports a vibrant but low-value local economy comprising independent, small retailers who cater to the day-to-day needs of a low-income locally-focused population. A majority of the housing in the ward is owner-occupied and private rented. The proportion of housing in the ward that is social rented is considerably higher than the equivalent borough-level proportion. Activities focus around the family and neighbours. Religious sites provide another focus. They are numerous in this area. The picture is of a close-knit community. VCS activity is not as evident as in the Inner London case study. A small number of local charities provide activities catering to the local community. The composition of that community includes a high proportion of south Asian ethnicity.

It is a community, though, that is registering the pressures of recession. The impression of one service manager was that money and employment concerns within the families of the young people they worked with had increased since the recession, the interviewee having heard more stories of parents having become unemployed or of having hours reduced. There was mention of hostilities between longer-settled immigrants and more recent East European immigrants, in part for reason of competition for jobs. The close-knit nature of the community is under strain. An interviewee linked local overcrowding in housing to a perceived increase in young people spending more time out of the home and young men becoming involved in substance misuse and drug-dealing locally. There was a perception of the area not being safe, of parks as places where young people or new immigrants would go to consume alcohol. In recent years the area has become associated with prostitution. The number of betting shops has increased.

The area, however, has things in its favour. The above average performance of Redbridge schools means that young people in this neighbourhood will be more likely to leave school with five GCSEs. There may be opportunity for them to work in family businesses during or beyond education, small businesses being an important part of the local economy. The area is close to medical facilities and the amenities of a larger shopping centre, with a broad offer of national brand discount stores and leisure activities, easily accessible by foot or public transport.

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<sup>60</sup> Deprivation here is read as that indicated by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

In our interim report we reported on the strategy adopted at borough-level in regard to services for the three resident groups considered here. As context for that we also situated the borough vis-à-vis other London boroughs in regard to the size of the cut it incurred and the subsequent drop in service expenditure. To summarise, in this case, on the eve of the cuts, the council's spend per capita was relatively low (£656 per capita).<sup>61</sup> Twenty one per cent of its income came from Council Tax. On these bases, as well as considering its deprivation score, which was lower than the other two cases and many other London boroughs, we classified this borough as one of our Group 2 boroughs. This identified it as a case of a relatively less deprived and lower spending authority which had a lower proportion of its income from central government funding and more from Council Tax than Group 1 boroughs.<sup>62</sup> Income to the borough from central government fell by 31 per cent between 2009/10 and 2013/14 (real terms and excluding education and public health). Its estimated spending power fell by 19 per cent. Total Service Expenditure (less education and public health) fell by 9 per cent. The borough was led at the time by a Conservative – Liberal Democrat partnership. In May 2014 a Labour leadership was elected.

Our analysis of its overall strategy toward the cuts, read from analysis of council documentation (strategy reports and action plans, for example) identified it as fitting the fourth type of our four-type typology of London borough strategies towards the cuts. It was one of this group of outer London, lower-spending and mainly Conservative-led boroughs. These tended to emphasise the importance of efficient and responsive local government, but not to announce any particularly distinctive new service delivery approaches. This does not mean that they were doing nothing innovative or distinctive, simply that their publicly available documents at that time were not articulating an overall approach that characterised them in one of the other clusters we have identified. The message conveyed in our interviews with senior officers and Members from Redbridge was that they had, to a large extent, been able to deliver savings without adversely impacting front line services, particularly those for the most vulnerable. They had “trimmed” (Member interview) services rather than cutting parts of the provision. This borough had emphasised public consultation in its delivery of its savings strategy, through a ‘You Choose’ polling tool which asked the public to submit their view on where across the council's service provision savings should be made. It had drawn on its reserves to maintain support to parts of its discretionary youth services.

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<sup>61</sup> Officers from the Council, also Members, underlined that ‘lower spend’ was a reflection of their not being “generously” (senior officer) funded by central government. Redbridge was ‘lower spend’ because it had to be; it had had to be a “value-for-money” borough (senior officer).

<sup>62</sup> It should be noted that though Redbridge is relatively less deprived overall than either of the other two case studies there remain pockets of high deprivation within the borough.

## Services for Under Fives

### *Service changes*

Senior officers reported that front line early years services had been little affected by the council's savings programme (Fitzgerald et al., 2013). Efficiencies had been made through staffing and the service had become more focused on the most disadvantaged.

In the case study ward staffing had been the biggest change in the children's centre. Managers now run more than one site. The number of development worker posts had been reduced from an original two per site to three for the six centres in the locality. Workload has increased.<sup>63</sup> Over the last four years reliance on agency staff has been removed as agency staff were proving more expensive by the hour than in-house staff. Volunteers have been added to the service, to the value of approximately £25,000 equivalent of paid staff per year. The centre hosts trainees from a local college and has approximately thirty volunteers registered. This helps maintain the capacity of the service. Parts of the service were being delivered through other council services rather than in-house. For example, for jobs advice and support the centre refers clients to Work Redbridge.

The service has become more targeted towards populations whose children have been performing least well in school; inclusion of those groups within the children's centre activities has become a focus. Staff are delivering outreach activities within the most deprived lower super output area (LSOA) of the ward. The rationale for greater targeting as presented in the local children's centre was not the need to deliver savings but the importance of reaching the most needy families for whom interventions and support could deliver the greatest return in terms of social improvement. The universal offer remains but part of that offer is now being managed by parents themselves who, on a voluntary basis, deliver a play group catering to regular attendees. By this means the staff are able to focus on sessions which deliver outcomes improvements and bring new families into the service.

The budget was described as consistently adequate across the last four years from 2010. There was usually some money left towards the end of the year to direct to additional resources, such as books to gift to parents when they registered. Resource availability in 2014 was regarded as different to that in 2010 on the basis that there was now no spare money being put aside for future refurbishments and equipment. Staff are therefore being careful to look after the resources very well; they cannot see any time in the foreseeable future when investment in the infrastructure will be possible.

A few charges had been introduced since 2010. In a weekly programme of fifteen sessions supplied by the children's centre, two are now charged for, postnatal yoga (£1) and a toddler music session (£4). These are activities where additional resources are involved, the teacher in the yoga session and a CD and booklet for the music sessions. In addition to the children's centre provision, a parents' forum offers a volunteer staffed three-times weekly play group charged at £1. There is a £3 charge for use of a crèche. The majority of sessions offered remain free. Where charging is used in the centre, the most disadvantaged families are offered a concession (the two year old place criteria, identifying the most

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<sup>63</sup> This was in part due to increased demands from monitoring achievements and outcomes for OFSTED, but the content of posts has nonetheless expanded; the receptionist post is now also an administrator post and the Managers have lead areas across a group of centres, rather than being, as previously, more singly a service manager.

disadvantaged twenty per cent of children, are applied) or the charge may be waived where the family cannot afford it.

There were examples of service improvements over the last four years. An interviewee from the local service reported that the activity offer had improved since 2010. Through use of volunteers to provide a universal play group staff had been released to deliver sessions focused on learning, for example toddler music sessions and busy babies. There are now more outdoor activities in the programme and specialist sessions for boys and for Dads had been added. Parents, it was felt, are now more engaged with their children during the activities. A toy and book library has been added. Funds saved from employing fewer development workers were redirected to speech and language therapy and training.

In addition to the children's centre offer, a joint school and community library within the ward is open to parents with young children. A second library, a five to ten minute walk of the north of the ward, offers three under-fives story-time sessions each week. VCS provision for under-fives was not found to be extensive either in 2010 or 2014. A council grant for a mobile toy library which had served the most disadvantaged families across the borough, organised by a VCS organisation in the case study ward, had ceased. A resident reported that a drop-in for under-fives at the local clinic had likewise ceased.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

Parents were positive about the under-fives service offer locally. It was reported nonetheless, by a parent with experience of the service both pre and post cuts, that there had been a reduction in the service offer between 2009, her last use of the service, and now. She reported that the number of activities at the local children's centre was less than before 2010. This parent also said that an under-fives drop-in at the local polyclinic had ceased. There were no reported impacts of this on her family. One parent commented that there are things parents can do with their children for free around the area. She was taking her children to free museums.

In this ward our sample of parents included parents of children with Special Educational Needs. These families were using a range of children's services. Though we did not find parents within this part of the sample who had experience of the same service either side of the cuts, there were positive comments about the service associated with the addition of a SEN focused play and stay session to the local service offer. There was indication of pressures on other local services impacting families. Waiting times for health services was noted. One father said that his child had been waiting for psychiatric treatment for two years. In the meantime the family had been unable to assist the child with specialist support because they could not afford that. The child, he said, "just suffers". One mother had found it very difficult to get an appointment with a Health Visitor.<sup>64</sup>

One mother reported a service improvement in recent years – that parents have been given greater flexibility in how they spread their 15 hours of free childcare entitlement.

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<sup>64</sup> It is understood that these services were services being accessed through the NHS. NHS service provision is not the responsibility of the local authority. We report on this service here as it was noted as an area of pressure by parents of SEN under-fives.

The report of greater emphasis on learning in local children's centre activities is supported by the direction of change in Early Years Foundation Stage data.<sup>65</sup> In Redbridge, as for London more widely, the percentage of children achieving at least 78 points across all thirteen EYFS scales increased.<sup>66</sup> The rate of increase was approximately consistent between 2009/10 to 2010/11 and 2010/11 to 2011/12.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand child health as indicated by the proportion of babies born weighing less than 2500g rose above the London average rate of increase.<sup>68</sup> We have noted above a parent's comment that it was difficult to get an appointment with a Health Visitor.

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<sup>65</sup> Department for Education, EYFS profile results

<sup>66</sup> In Redbridge there was an improvement in EYFS scores from 57 per cent in 2009/10 to 63 per cent in 2011/12.

<sup>67</sup> 5 per cent in both cases (to 0 d.p.)

<sup>68</sup> ONS, Low birth weight

## Services for Young People 16-24

### *Service changes*

The account of service changes in the youth services by Members and senior officers was mixed. On the one hand, youth services had been reduced by the closure of a youth centre and Connexions became more targeted. On the other, reserves had been used to continue three discretionary services.

The case study ward has not lost any element of its youth service. This is not the area of Redbridge where a youth centre was closed. The ward has a council-run youth centre. In addition to the youth centre there is a youth bus that occasionally visits the site and, once a week, there is a drop-in service offered by Work Redbridge, providing support and advice for job seekers, within walking distance of the youth centre site.

There have nonetheless been changes in the service. The facility has fewer staff than it did in 2010. Two part-time posts were lost. As a result of this reduction in staff numbers the activity offer has been impacted, to a small extent. Skills lost from the team meant a small number of activities those staff had provided had ceased to be offered. On the other hand, the service offer had been expanded through award of a grant to the borough for music activities. A music studio was added. The overall support offered to the young people has been maintained. The centre draws on a reliable volunteer, something which has helped offset the reduction in paid staff.

Young people are not, however, accessing the youth centre in the same way that they did in 2010. At the youth centre charging was introduced in 2013. Attendees must now pay a fee of £3 per term and of 40 pence per session. The fee is waived where a young person cannot afford it. The offer of Connexions support has become more targeted.

The council-supplied youth service offer is little supplemented by the VCS locally. There is a limited VCS youth offer in the ward, though we heard of short-term programmes that had been running in recent years but due to their time-limited funding had thereafter ceased (local interviewee). Only one long-standing charity focused on young people was identified within the case study area. That facility is part of a national project and has a national, rather than local, focus in the young people it supports. VCS organisations with a focus on youth are present in neighbouring wards. Those organisations seek to support young people from across the borough or beyond. They focus on homeless youth and teenage mothers.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

None of the young people interviewed had experienced a reduction in the level or quality of youth service provision they were receiving. They had seen improvements in local open spaces they used.

All were users of the ward's youth centre. They noted that the youth centre had been partially redecorated recently. They highlighted that there had been a recent introduction of charges for use of the facility. Though interviewees admitted that they had complained among themselves about that new policy, the consensus was that they thought the charges were fair. They considered the amounts in question small and said that they could meet them from money given them by their parents or from their own income. They liked the facilities the centre offered them. Currently in exam period, the students said that the space

helped them unwind. One student noted that more significant charges for youth services could be prohibitive. That student was postponing moving on to the next stage of the Duke of Edinburgh award because he did not think he could afford it.

The young people had not heard of the Connexions service or of Work Redbridge. They reported that they received careers support from their school. They considered the support of good quality. They received help with work and university applications. They did not report a reduction in that support, though, as recent sixth form students, they were relatively new users.

Attendance at the youth centre had not been impacted by the introduction of charges. Staff reported that where a young person was not able to afford the fee, they were able to waive the charge. There is a tuck shop at the centre, also charged for. Staff said that they would also occasionally waive tuck shop charges in such cases.

Asked about other local services they used, there was no evidence of negative impacts from changes in those. A young person commented that they had limited experience of other services. One young person elaborated that he thought young people their age were occupied with school most of the time and then would be in their home environment with their families.<sup>69</sup> About half of the interviewees said they sometimes use the local library. They had not noticed a change in that service – as part of the response to the cuts that service had been put out to a community trust – other than that they thought it had become “more strict”. They could not have group discussions there now and could not take in snacks. Two of the young people had noticed that street cleansing was less thorough than a few years ago, but they did not think that that impacted them. A young woman used a local swimming pool (in a neighbouring borough). The charge had increased but that had not stopped her use of the service.

The young people felt optimistic about their future prospects. That optimism was not tied to an expectation of future opportunities in their local area – most of the young people had plans to go on to university and study for careers which would make them employable beyond it; they did not see their future opportunities connected with their immediate locality. But it could be a product of growing-up in a borough where schools are well-rated by OFSTED. The majority of the interviewees had aspirations to go to university and expected to finish sixth-form with good results. Most wanted to become doctors, engineers or IT specialists. They had a sense of having broad horizons. Two of the interviewees were considering going abroad to study, as they said they would pay less in university fees. One wanted to work internationally.

The young people did not speak of struggles in their families. Stories of parents being moved to part-time hours or of redundancies in families of local young people were only reported through the youth service staff who said they were well-acquainted with the lives of the youths using their services. They also noted that there are young people locally who do not feel positive about going to university and cannot contemplate it because of the high costs; they were being further deterred from pursuing higher education for reason of seeing friends who have attained a degree nonetheless struggling to find work and now in debt as a result of the expenses of university education. What the young people interviewed did speak of

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<sup>69</sup> Youth centre staff noted that the sample of young people captured in our focus group were among the more engaged of the centre’s attendees and were motivated in their studies. They commented that there are other young people they work with who do not fit the profile of this sample of young people, recruited on the basis of willingness to participate in the focus group activity.

though there were tensions in the local area between the Roma community and longer-standing residents, the presence of prostitution and associated crime. They did not connect these conditions with recession. That connection was made by staff and local community representatives.

Youth outcomes data somewhat reflect this mixed response, which can be summed up as quite positive on the part of the young people, less so by account of the staff and representatives of the local community. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training fell between 2011 and 2012 (from 4 per cent to 3.6 per cent). The reduction in this Redbridge-wide rate contrasts to the London-wide equivalent (percentage of NEETs rose from 4.5 per cent to 4.7 per cent) in the same period.<sup>70</sup> The percentage of 19 year olds with a level 3 qualification was constant between 2010/11 and 2011/12;<sup>71</sup> GCSE results for all pupils showed a rate of improvement over the 2010/11 to 2012/13 period similar to the London average.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand there was a fall in achievement at GCSE among free school meals pupils, whilst the trend in the London average equivalent was continued improvement.<sup>73</sup><sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Department for Education, Young people not in employment, education or training – percentage of 16-18 year olds.

<sup>71</sup> Department for Education, Attainment by Age 19. The rate was 71 per cent in both cases.

<sup>72</sup> Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England. There was a 3 percentage point improvement over 2010/11 to 2012/13, from 70.5 per cent to 73.5 per cent.

<sup>73</sup> Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England. The percentage of free schools meals pupils achieving 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE or equivalent including English and Maths fell from 56 per cent in 2011/12 to 54.2 per cent in 2012/13.

<sup>74</sup> In this period the proportion of students eligible for free school meals (at borough-level) increased. By 2013 the proportion was 2.4 percentage points higher (an increase of 15 per cent) than the equivalent figure in 2009.

## Services for Older People 65+

### *Service changes*

During the 2000s Redbridge Council made substantial changes to Adult Social Care, notably it restricted eligibility criteria to those with critical and greater substantial need. The department's savings options in 2010 were relatively limited. From 2010 forwards most of the department's savings have been delivered through reductions in staffing costs. There was nonetheless also a reduction of 15 per cent in the total number of Adult Social Care service users between 2009/10 to 2013/14.<sup>75</sup>

In the case study ward we found three main post-2010 changes in the older people's service offer. Staff reductions were one, and emerged as the key element of the savings delivered locally. Carers are now employed on 30 hour per week contracts rather than 36 hour contracts. They do a similar amount of work in less time. They now work bank holidays on standard pay rate and can work ten day consecutive shifts in any two week period. The number of staff employed within council-run sheltered housing facilities, of which there are examples in or close to the case study ward, has reduced. Vacancies there have not been filled as staff have retired; staff have been redeployed and responsibilities have expanded in administrative and managerial roles.

These 'efficiency savings' have had implications for the service offered to sheltered housing residents. The reduction in staffing has meant that residents of these facilities cannot normally, except in cases of emergency, be accompanied by the team to hospital or doctor's appointments. Family have been asked to provide that assistance instead. A second implication for residents is that staff presence at the site at weekends has been reduced. A third is that there are insufficient staff to be able to open the communal facilities at the larger of these sites to day users.

There had been efforts to offset these changes. Dentist, optician, chiropodist and blood check appointments have been made available on-site to reduce the number of visits an older person might need to make to off-site medical provision. A staff member is on call at weekends; if not in person at the site there is a warden at one of the other sheltered facilities on hand to respond. Former day users of the day centre who can no longer be catered to at council-run sites, according to staff, will have been offered replacement services if in need of those. In addition, the council had continued to invest in the service. Flats in one of the sheltered housing facilities had been modernised in the last year.

The other two changes are both reductions in council funding for community-based discretionary services for older people. At the sheltered housing facilities funding for travel for off-site activities has been cut. Fewer day trips are now offered and residents must contribute considerably more (in the region of £35 instead of a former £5 charge) toward those trips. There is a VCS-run older people's lunch club in this ward. The organisation also provides advice and welfare support to its members. At the time of senior officer interviews it was reported that funding to the VCS through the Adult Social Care department, had not reduced since 2010, it had stayed at the same level. Nonetheless, this VCS provider has had its

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<sup>75</sup> This percentage decrease is less than that of the other two case study boroughs (Appendix 2).

funding cut by approximately £14,000 in the last year.<sup>76</sup> Following this cut in funding it has introduced a £1 weekly charge for what was previously a free lunch service and it has altered the terms of membership. Lifetime membership is now more expensive. The charity is trying to offset the cut in council funding through application to other possible funding sources. The volunteers who run this organisation reported that their work load is currently very considerable.

A VCS organisation with borough-wide coverage noted reports from elderly members with carer responsibilities of carer respite hours being reduced and of more assessments being conducted over the telephone. We did not pick-up these in our conversations with residents in the case study area.

### *Experiences and Impacts*

The sample of older people interviewed were all residents of local council-run sheltered housing. It was clear that they understood that there had been changes in the services they were accessing; in interviews they made reference to “the changes”.

The change that the older people commented on most was the reduction in activities. As a result of the cut in the sheltered housing’s transport budget, the older residents were not leaving the site as often on day trips and there were, overall, fewer activities for them to participate in both on and offsite. The main impact of this change on the older people was boredom, a sense of days being spent just sitting about with nothing to do.<sup>77</sup> They reported missing the stimulation of day trips and of feeling quite miserable about the change in that offer. Not all of the interviewees were attending the lesser number of trips that are now offered, at higher charge. Not all of the interviewees considered themselves able to afford it. The example of Jane (Box 10), shows how the reduction in activities was felt by one interviewee.

#### **Box 10: Jane**

Jane is a widow in her seventies and has lived in her sheltered flat for more than ten years. Since moving into the residence she has been active in the community, involved in many of the social activities offered and an organiser of regular bingo sessions for residents.

Jane has fond memories of the many trips she has participated in with other residents of the facility. In the last twelve months however the number of day trips offered has reduced. Trips used to be charged at £5 but now are £35. Jane said of this increase that it is “beyond my means”. She had therefore not taken part in a recent trip to a music concert. When asked about changes that had impacted her she said “it is this activity business. We miss it terribly”. Jane would normally go abroad once a year with her son but for health reasons she had not been able to do so in the last twelve month period. This added to the disappointment of cuts in the activity offer in her residence.

There were suggestions in the conversations with older residents that staff reductions had been impacting the quality of the support provided. Interviewees felt that the staff were much more under pressure now

<sup>76</sup> There was a time lag of six months, and which included progression from one financial year to the next, between the council officer and Member interviews and the ward-level fieldwork.

<sup>77</sup> The percentage of adults with depression in this borough rose only 0.4 of a per cent between 2009/10 and 2011/12, similar to the change in the London-wide equivalent, 0.5 per cent. (Health and Social Care Information Centre).

than before the cuts. Not complaining about the care they received – they greatly empathised with the staff – they reported that it could take longer now to get their attention. It was noted that there were times when the site was left without an onsite supervisor and, even, that staff were less happy. Due to the staffing reductions the day facilities at the sheltered housing unit could no longer be opened to non-residents. Service utilisation therefore had been impacted. On the other hand a volunteer at the VCS-run lunch club said that the attendance rates had not changed since a lunch charge had been introduced subsequent to the change in income from council funding.

The older people we spoke with did not report any great weight of financial concerns. They had pensions and one mentioned financial support from family. They noted nonetheless that costs of living, generally, were increasing and there was evidence of associated concern as to how long pensions would last. Most could not comment on whether there had been an increase in charged for individual services as they paid a monthly bill for several services, including rent, and most did so by direct debit.

Local health services were important to the residents.<sup>78</sup> Two residents said that it was difficult to get a doctor's appointment. One man had not been given an appointment with his own GP in a year, but each visit had had to see a different doctor. He said this left him uncertain as to the condition of his health.

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<sup>78</sup> Provision of GP appointments is not the responsibility of the local authority; that is an NHS provision. They are noted here for reason of their being amongst local pressures being felt by these residents.

## **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

This final chapter provides analysis that will draw together the case study material described above and supplies concluding comments.

### **The Cuts in Reality: changes in front line services at local level**

#### *A better story of changes in council-run services than we might have expected*

At local level there were strong similarities in local service managers' reports of change in their services from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. The principal change reported by local service managers across the three wards was a reduction in staff. With one exception, namely under-fives services in the Camden neighbourhood, all of the local service managers reported a headcount reduction in the teams they oversaw, although the extent of staff reductions varied.<sup>79</sup> In under-fives services staff cuts in Redbridge and Brent had been substantial. The children's centre family development team in the case of Redbridge had reduced from two per children's centre to three for one locality (six centres). In Brent the staff previously responsible for one children's centre was now running two. In youth centres staff cuts were less extensive; a part-time staff member had not been replaced in Redbridge and Camden. In older people's provision staff reductions had occurred in the three cases. In Camden the manager for an older people's provision, previously responsible for one facility, is now managing two. In Redbridge paid carers based at a sheltered housing facility on the edge of the neighbourhood had been moved from 36 hour per week contracts to 30 hour per week contracts and the size of the administrative teams for this facility had reduced.

Reductions in the activities supplied by children's centres, youth centres and older people's day provision were also widely found. One function of all of these services is to provide local residents with educational and/or social activities. Most of the local services covered in this neighbourhood work had reduced, to greater or lesser extent, the number of their activity sessions. In under-fives provision there had been a reduction in the number of activities offered at the children's centres in both the Brent and Redbridge wards. In Brent one of the weekly activity sessions, a sing-along session, had been shortened from one hour to half an hour. The local youth centre in the Camden and Redbridge wards had also lost a session or two from their weekly programmes. In older people's services the number of activities at Camden's local day centre had reduced. The same applied to the council's main older people's facility in the Redbridge ward, a sheltered housing unit and to a council contracted provider of day services in the Brent ward.

With the exceptions of under-fives services in Brent and older people's services in Redbridge, these reductions in activities were viewed by the service managers as modest. The reductions in the youth centres, for example, meant a programmed activity could not be offered once a week, but the centres were nonetheless open for general use. The reductions in activities were linked to reduction in capacity due to staffing reductions in all cases. One manager in Brent (under-fives) and one in Redbridge (older people's

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<sup>79</sup> In the case of Camden under-fives services this finding applies specifically to council-run children's centre provision. Due to limited resources we did not explore with social workers, for example, whether there were fewer employed in this locality post 2010 than pre 2010.

services) also linked the reductions in activities to a reduction in the locally held budget (the pot of money for such things as hire of a coach for an activity, photocopying and stationery and refreshments).

Service changes, then, in all of the neighbourhoods, involved staffing and activity reductions. In all neighbourhoods there were also examples of service charges having been introduced or increased. This strategy was clearest in Redbridge where we found more evidence of charges having been introduced than in the other two neighbourhoods. In Redbridge charges had been introduced in each of the services covered. A charge of £1 was introduced at the children's centre playgroup, young people now pay £3 a term and 40p a session to attend the youth centre. Due to there being less funding for discretionary transport services, older people in Redbridge sheltered housing now pay more to participate in off-site activities (e.g. a trip that used to cost £5 now costs £35). In Camden and Brent there were fewer examples of this strategy. Neither Borough had introduced charges in under-fives services. In Camden a £2 charge (per day attended) had been introduced for use of the councils' discretionary older people's day centre and a £10 annual charge for the borough's Plus Bus service. In Brent some of the more specialist activity sessions at the youth centre are now charged for (at £1 or £2 per session); these specialist activities are post-cuts additions and represent an expansion of the overall activity offer.

*There are nonetheless areas of service provision that have been notably impacted*

Older people's services had fared relatively worst in all cases. In connection with the cuts an older people's facility had been lost from each of the neighbourhoods. In Camden a VCS run day centre had closed, in connection with reduction in funding from the Council; in Redbridge a day centre provision at a sheltered housing unit had ceased, as there was no longer enough staff to run it; in Brent a day centre open to older people (this centre was also for people with special needs) had closed. Older residents were paying more and more often to access services, amongst the examples are activities, lunch clubs and transport services. Due to reductions in council funding lunch clubs in each of the wards had increased their charges. The activity offer for this group had reduced in connection with that reduced funding to the VCS or due to budget cuts for related services, notably transport.

Youth services in all cases and by the accounts of the service managers interviewed had been relatively little impacted at the front line.<sup>80</sup> In Redbridge and Brent the difference was in the introduction of charges, which were regarded as reasonable and not on the whole prohibitive. One service manager in fact supported the introduction of a small charge for use of their youth centre on the grounds that they thought it helped young people look after the facility. The small reduction in sessions was not seen as significant and in Brent the activity offer had improved there substantially. In all cases there had been an improvement in the youth centre facility.<sup>81</sup>

The picture across the boroughs in under-fives services is more complicated. This is mainly because there was protection of the under-fives service in Camden. The case of Camden here contrasts with that of Brent where the activity offer and staffing of the children's centre had been considerably reduced; there

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<sup>80</sup> This is not to say that the same would be true for youth services in other parts of these boroughs. For example, in Redbridge, one of the borough's four youth centres had been closed as a result of the cuts (Fitzgerald et al., 2013). That youth centre was not in our case study ward.

<sup>81</sup> In Brent this was due to a lottery grant; in Redbridge this was connected to weather damage to the facility having necessitated some redecoration and in Camden it was due to a grant of money from the council to support the move to a new facility.

had not been the same policy of special protection of the service in the latter case. It was noted that changes here were very apparent to parents. In Brent the offer was still relatively “full” in part because of the availability of volunteers. Volunteers were also providing an important resource in the case of Redbridge. The reduction in the activity offer here had been less than it might have been without that low cost support. In under-fives services we have a clear example of how the decision of a council to protect a service from the impact of the cuts, relative to others, can translate into a clearly different service offer at neighbourhood level.

### *Front line staff are shouldering increased workloads and relying more on volunteers*

Large reductions, of around a third, were made to the grants income of London local authorities in 2010 (Fitzgerald et al. 2013). Overall, the changes to local services were not as extensive as we might have expected from this size of cut, with the possible exception of older people’s services. This is especially the case with two of our service areas, under-fives and youth services. Only in older people’s services do we find quite substantial changes and actual closures of buildings. We reported that senior officers and members had told us in interviews that they had largely protected the services we are considering here, and had even improved the quality of those services. It is clear from the detail above that although changes had occurred in local services, most notably staff reductions, that the picture of service change at local level broadly aligns with the accounts at central level.

What the local evidence helps clarify is why the widely used strategy of staff reductions did not translate into more substantial changes in actual services supplied to residents. Firstly, the managers emphasised that they were making strenuous efforts to protect the service as experienced by the service users. They and their teams were doing more work and had taken on additional responsibilities in most cases. They were finding ways to do as near to as much as they were doing pre-cuts on less. This echoes what was learnt from senior officers as to how they are coping at central office-level with reduced staffing (Fitzgerald et al. 2013). Secondly, service managers, as well as reportedly doing more (working longer hours and adapting to expanded roles) were in several cases drawing more on volunteers. By bringing more volunteers into these services, the service managers had been able to offset somewhat the impact of staff cuts on the front line. In children’s centres in both the Redbridge and Brent wards, the teams were using volunteers to help deliver activity programmes. The youth centres in both Camden and Redbridge were also using volunteers to offset what might have been otherwise larger reductions in the activity offer. Through staff taking on more work and through use of volunteers therefore local services for residents were being somewhat shielded.

### *There is cause for concern*

Though the picture of change in local service provision is better than we might have expected for most services considered, there had clearly been greater pressures than that snapshot picture reflects. We found examples of more substantial changes to services having been discussed, or actually implemented but afterwards reversed. In Camden where the council had managed to maintain an above statutory service offer in under-fives services, for example, a removal of the above discretionary provision of free three and four year old childcare had been implemented for one year prior to this study. The council had managed to reinstate the above statutory offer a little before this research was conducted. As senior officers noted, making savings whilst protecting the front line had not been an easy process.

The extra burden on staff and the greater reliance on volunteers found in this work could be a cause for concern as to quality, consistency or even sustainability in local service provision. Actually, there was little mention of changes in staffing impacting upon quality. Only in one case did the service manager think that the quality of the service being delivered had been impacted by staff changes. In this case the concern was that volunteers could not be expected to be as reliable as paid staff; where an activity session did require a volunteer for its delivery there was a risk that session might be cancelled.<sup>82</sup>

The research at local level also revealed that more significant changes to several of the services covered were being discussed at council level. We can reasonably expect that more extensive change is near on the horizon. About half of the local service staff we spoke to were concerned about the future of their post or of the service they were delivering given ensuing further cuts; these concerns were voiced in respect to youth services and older people's services. In one case the future of the youth service as a building based service was evidently under discussion. An important caveat then to what may be read as a rather positive account of local service provision – given the extent of the 2010 cuts – is that some front line services and posts as we have found them are insecure.

### *The picture of Voluntary and Community Sector services does not brighten the outlook*

Across the case studies council funding to the VCS providers interviewed had changed since 2010. At the time of the cuts nine of the thirteen organisations interviewed were receiving grant funding from the council to provide services for local residents.<sup>83</sup> Of these, by 2014, two had had their council funding cut and had moved to being providers of council commissioned services (both in Brent), three had had their council funding reduced (two in Redbridge, one in Camden); three had seen no change overall; two of these three, larger charities, were nonetheless being asked to deliver more for the same amount and both also reported some reductions in funding within particular projects. Lastly, one had never been funded by the council other than for short one-off projects.

Overall, the picture is of tougher times financially for the sector. There were implications for the residents supported by these organisations. We found that in all three wards VCS provided services for older people had been adversely affected: in each ward we spoke with the provider of a lunch club, all small local charities, and all had seen a reduction in council funding so had increased (Camden and Brent) or introduced (Redbridge) charging for that service. One of these lunch clubs that had provided subsidised trips also had reduced the subsidy for those. We also spoke with a larger VCS provider of older people's services in both Camden and Redbridge. In Camden a VCS provided older people's day centre in the ward had closed due to reduced council funding to the provider. In Redbridge there was greater use of charging across the services supplied.

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<sup>82</sup> The managers now using volunteers to a greater extent were nonetheless very positive about the contribution volunteers were making.

<sup>83</sup> Of the remaining four, one organisation had been established post-2010; another was a housing association funded community service. The housing association noted tighter finances as residents who were ultimately the source of funding for the community service were increasingly likely to not be able to meet their rent. Two of the organisations were umbrella organisations, not focused on providing resident services directly.

VCS providers of under-fives activities were supporting fewer families. They noted the impact of reduced Sure Start monies. In Brent a small charity that had provided support to troubled families with Sure Start funds had shifted to delivering work for the council based on referrals. The number of families this charity is supporting has reduced by approximately two thirds. In Camden a VCS provider had reduced the number of buildings it was operating from; it had integrated parts of its operation and it could support fewer clients as a result, although no part of the service had ceased. In Redbridge where the VCS provider interviewed had had a grant from the council for a mobile toy library cut, they had not been able to replace the service, hence a service cut to all of the families that had used it.

The picture for VCS-run youth activities was different. A local youth charity in Brent received a small amount of funding from the council but ninety per cent of its funding came from other sources and it had not been impacted by the cuts therefore. In Camden a small local charity providing a youth club had seen a reduction in council funding but had continued to direct sufficient money from its overall income, though reduced, to maintain the youth activities it offered. Providers noted that funding for this work tended to be project based and typically short-term. In Redbridge a project for young people run by a community centre had been very short-term, attached to a small grant from the council; there was no on-going provision.

Also, at least one charity in each of the boroughs noted being approached either by local charities that were having to close because of lack of funding, or former clients of now closed charities, to ask whether they could take on those clients. These charities all noted the difficulties here: they did not have the capacity or the particular expertise needed to step into the gap. There were comments that residents were, as a result, 'falling through the net'.

There were also implications for the organisations. Firstly, there was the sense across the interviews that the sector was having to change in order to survive. A theme was of needing to operate more as a business than a charity, although it was noted that a trend towards this pre-dated the cuts. This meant directors of the organisations were having to become more focused on administration, branding, fundraising and development. For charity directors of the small locally-grown charities this was proving a struggle. They were under pressure to put more of their time into fundraising, but had little capacity to do that if they were going to maintain the level of support to clients. This was less of a challenge for larger charities with dedicated fundraising staff on their teams.

Secondly, the sector had become more competitive, particularly for charities that were shifting to being suppliers of commissioned services (in early years and older people's services). All of the charities operating in this commissioning space noted considerable competition and uncertainties as to the future of contracts. There was competition between the councils and charities for clients. There was a sense that the local councils' decision-making processes here were not transparent enough and that quality was not adequately reflected in decision-making, costing and concepts of 'best value'.<sup>84</sup> Interviewees felt that the quality of service and local 'know-how' that local charities could provide was not matched by charities from outside the area or private sector providers and that residents may prefer to access services through

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<sup>84</sup> In our interim report we included reporting of senior officer and Member perspectives regarding their approach to the voluntary and community sector. Amongst the perspectives noted there are: that councils are governed in their commissioning by procurement rules; that councils have sought to support the VCS through this difficult period through advice and support in bidding for funds (both from the council and other sources) and that councils are on good terms with the VCS. There were examples of councils and the VCS working to a greater extent in partnership.

local home-grown charities than through direct council provision, but this was not reflected in the decision-making.

The VCS organisations we spoke with were working hard to meet the extra demands of this tougher operating environment. They reported doing more for the same or less. We also found that there was an increasing reliance on volunteers to make these charities viable – particularly clear in the two cases where the charities had moved to being suppliers of commissioned services – paid staff alone did not provide enough capacity to be able to meet the demands of delivering the service to residents. The smaller charities we spoke with who were still receiving part of their funding through a grant from the council were diversifying, or were seeking to diversify, their funding streams through selling services, notably to schools (early years and youth services). They were thinking of how they might compete in tenders for commissioned services, by working in partnership with other local charities or organisations. Through these means the charities hoped to be able to ensure their long-term sustainability.

There are clearly challenges here. From the charities we spoke with who had won work from their local authority and were getting clients through referrals, they noted the difficulties: insecurity of income and fluctuations in that based on number of referrals; uncertainty as to the renewal of contracts, competition for clients and, particularly, a mismatch between what the council was prepared to pay for a service and what it would cost the organisation to provide. These local charities who had managed to move into this new arena of being providers of commissioned services were clearly noting the “squeezing” of providers that senior officers had noted as a response strategy to the cuts. They also noted that under this funding model (i.e. income coming through commissioned services) there was no or very little scope to offer any free services; all clients were through referrals unless the charity could find a way to subsidise a free or subsidised element from another source. For those seeking to sell services, there were also difficulties: the need for dedicated staff time to focus on this and the uncertainties of consistent income; nonetheless for two small charities in Brent, both selling services to schools, this strategy was proving effective in either off-setting reductions in grant-based funding or in adding capacity.

## **Impacts on Residents**

### *Residents report adverse impacts where the more substantial service changes have occurred*

Local services have been impacted by the cuts to varying extents. In older people’s services reports of adverse impacts were widespread among the residents interviewed, and similar in nature. Across the young people interviewed there was little evidence of impacts; youth services had not yet changed to any great extent in these wards, and, in any case, it seemed any concern there might have been about changes in youth services would be well overshadowed by wider concerns about employment, the most voiced concern. In under-fives services, the degree of service change was uneven. Where there had been significant change, residents identified negative impacts on their families. In sum, the larger changes were noted and were associated with increasing pressures in these people’s lives.

In the case of older people’s services, residents had been impacted by multiple service changes: increases in charging, tightening of eligibility criteria and reductions in discretionary activities offered by lunch clubs and day centres. One message was resounding: the impact of a reduction in activities, whether for reason

of reduced availability or for reason of not being able to afford increased charges, was a major source of disappointment for older people. The loss of the day centre in the Camden neighbourhood and its rich activity offer had impacted quality of life for the former user we interviewed. The same applied to the older residents interviewed in Redbridge where the activity offer at a sheltered housing unit had reduced in connection with a cut to the transport budget. These older people were more house-bound now and had less to look forward to. The importance of such social activities to older people has been noted elsewhere: “[g]etting out of the house with a sense of purpose provided a highlight to an otherwise flat week...often considered to be more important than sources of more formal help” (Clough et al. 2007:8).

We did not capture in this work many cases of older people who have experienced loss of a care package. What we did find were some complaints about the care older people were receiving through reablement packages (Camden) and of paid carers being more pressured now (Redbridge). The number of older people with low and moderate need receiving care has reduced in recent years (Vizard, forthcoming and Appendix 2), so there would be stories as to this change also, yet there are considerable challenges in accessing those people. Such individuals are hard to reach once removed from formal service use. There will also be people who might have been offered a service pre-cuts that, post-cuts would not be made such an offer. There is a methodological challenge here of how to capture the difference a service might have made to a resident in the absence of them actually having any experience of receiving that support.

Parents of under-fives who had noted service changes – all of these were within the Redbridge and Brent sample of residents – spoke of the extra pressures reductions or loss in services were creating for their families. In Brent parents were clear that the reduction in the activity offer at the local children’s centres was a disruption for their children. Also, fewer activities to take their children to resulted in greater strain within the home environment, parents noting having to cope with behavioural issues. Concerns were voiced as to the implications of reduced activity offers at children’s centres for the children’s school readiness and performance in the Early Years Foundation stage.

Not all residents are finding replacement services where cuts are made, either for availability or affordability reasons. A majority of residents we spoke with had not substituted the activity losses in older peoples’ and children’s centre provision. Obstacles included the difficulty of sourcing affordable alternatives and the difficulty of access associated with affordability or availability of suitable transport. In these cases residents’ lives were gravitating now more towards their home space as opportunities to spend time in community spaces had diminished.

### *They also report pressures of other economic and policy changes*

All residents we spoke with were registering wider pressures of the recession and austerity in their lives. Across the neighbourhoods families with under-fives noted rising costs of living, young people spoke of the challenges of or concerns about finding work and older people noted rising food and fuel costs, and changes in health care such as longer waiting times to see doctors or not being able to see the same doctor regularly.

There were also contrasts from neighbourhood to neighbourhood reflecting the different locations of the wards. In Camden, the Inner London ward, residents reported rising competition for and cost of housing

and reluctance of private landlords to rent to housing benefit claimants. In Brent, an Outer London ward, the challenge of affording transport to reach services or jobs was raised by interviewees from all groups. It was noted that public transport charges had increased and that families in the area did not all run a car; the young people spoke of the difficulty of meeting the costs of learning to drive and then run a vehicle. In Redbridge, residents noted rising crime and prostitution in the area, there was an associated sense that the area had declined and tensions between immigrant communities were emerging, competition for jobs being given as one explanation.

### *Local context and the different decisions of Councils make a difference*

Contrasting the parents in Brent with those in Redbridge – where in both cases there were fewer activities at the children’s centres in 2014 than in 2010 – amongst the parents’ accounts in Redbridge there was more evidence that parents were finding ways to offset the cuts. One mother noted free and nearby attractions she could take her children to. In Brent the parents in the group had noted cost or availability of transport as a barrier to finding replacement provision. This neighbourhood also does not have many local amenities. In Camden, where we interviewed a former user of the now closed VCS day centre, that interviewee had managed to find a replacement service, a VCS run lunch club in the same ward. We have noted how in this area there is a larger VCS offer than in the Outer London case studies. In Brent and Redbridge we only heard reports of former users of day activities having become more isolated. An interviewee in Brent who had attended a lunch club in the neighbouring ward, which had closed, was involved in older people’s exercise classes, but had not replaced the lunch club activity.

Also, residents were not equally well-positioned to find replacement services where notable reductions in the local authority provision had occurred. Residents of Outer London communities remote from the relative wealth and density of Inner London infrastructure and VCS provision seemed in this study less well-placed to effectively respond to the cuts in local services.

## **Conclusion**

Hard times as presented by the local government funding cuts to date have not been as hard on the residents of the deprived neighbourhoods studied here as we might have expected at the announcement of those cuts in 2010. The picture overall is not one of local services having been devastated. Change across the three neighbourhoods can be summarised as: a mixed picture in the case of early years with very little front line change in the case of Camden contrasting with change in Brent and Redbridge, particularly in Brent; in youth services change was presented by managers as small in every case, there were examples also of facility improvements; in all cases for older people’s services there was significant change with introductions or increases in charges, reductions in activities and loss of some day centre services. On the whole, services have stayed open. There have been changes – services are running on fewer staff with reduced budgets, are offering modestly fewer activities, with modest charges more in evidence – but these changes are not of the magnitude we might have expected from the extent of local government spending cuts (youth centre closures and wholesale disappearance of discretionary services for example).

We know that councils made larger cuts in service budgets in other service areas (Hastings et al. 2013), (Fitzgerald et al. 2013), and there are examples of bigger changes in the same services having occurred

in different wards or boroughs. Also, it should be stressed that, in a minority of cases, we did find substantial changes: older people's services in all three areas and early years services in Brent. Older people we found were being adversely impacted. Across the case studies low intensity community services have been noticeably reduced and both managers and residents reported on the importance of community services in combating isolation and boredom for older people. We posit that this reduction in older people's community services reflects the re-focusing of social care budgets on highest needs (Burchardt, forthcoming). Parents in Brent – where children's centre activities had been significantly reduced – associated this with greater strains in the home environment. Residents were not, at large, finding substitute services.

Where service changes have been less substantial and impacts on residents were not notable, there is nonetheless cause for concern. There are now weaknesses in, as well as threats to, local service provision. Councils have not been able to take a 30 per cent cut without substantially depleting their capacity. There were widely reported uncertainties amongst local managers about the future of the service provision that as yet appears intact. And if maintenance of services locally is to rely more on VCS provision if or when more widespread service change does follow, it is questionable whether the VCS would be able to fill all the gaps that would open up in service provision. VCS service managers reported financial pressures and an increasingly difficult operating environment because of competition for fewer resources and pressure from funders that they should do more for the same.

This is not the finished story; what we have recorded should only be read as part one. Councils have said they have reached the limits of efficiency; local service managers have said they have doubts as to the future of their posts and services; in the twelve months between our two reports VCS organisations have seen reductions in their funding. Through an extended period of austerity we would expect a worse account of local service change to emerge and, with that, much harder times for these residents.

## Appendix 1: Summary of quantitative indicators of resident outcomes

### Under-fives

Outcome	Indicator(s)
<b>Health and Well-being outcomes</b>	
Child health	Low birth weight (ONS England)
Child behaviour	~
Child development	Percentage of children achieving 78 points across all 13 EYFS profile scales with at least 6 points or more in each of the Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy scales (DfE, EYFS profile results)
Parental mental health	Adults with depression (number of GP patients registered with depression as a percentage of all patients aged 18 or over on registers) (Health and Social Care Information Centre)
Parental employment	ONS, NOMIS. The percentage of economically active unemployed
Tension in home environment	~
Domestic violence	~
<b>Other impacts</b>	
School readiness	Percentage of children achieving 78 points across all 13 EYFS profile scales with at least 6 points or more in each of the Personal, Social and Emotional Development and Communication, Language and Literacy scales (DfE, EYFS profile results)

### Young people 16-24

Outcome	Indicator(s)
<b>Health and Well-being outcomes</b>	
Behavioural outcomes (e.g. antisocial behaviour )	Ministry of Justice, Rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system per 100,000 people aged 10-17
Employment, skills and income	Department for Education, GCSE and equivalent attainment by pupil characteristics in England

	Department for Education, Attainment by Age 19
	Department for Education, Young people not in employment, education or training – percentage of 16-18 year olds
Youth transition outcomes (greater youth dependency, delayed or difficult entry into labour market and own home)	Department for Education, Young people not in employment, education or training – percentage of 16-18 year olds
Family tensions	~
<b>Other impacts</b>	
Youth poverty	~
Area level crime	Ministry of Justice, Rate of first time entrants to the criminal justice system per 100,000 people aged 10-17
Homelessness	~

**Older people, 65+**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Indicator(s)</b>
<b>Health and Well-being outcomes</b>	
Ill health, accidents	~
Malnutrition	~
Increased provision of informal care	~
Social isolation and loneliness	Adults with depression – shows per cent of adults registered with a GP with a diagnosis of depression, Health and Social Care Information Centre
<b>Other impacts</b>	
Hospital admissions	~
Bed blocking	~
Treatment of older people within hospitals	~

## Appendix 2: Adult Social Care activity data

**Total number of Service Users - Number of clients receiving services during the period, provided or commissioned by the CSSRs**

LA	User category	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Brent (719)	Age 65 and over	4355	4230	4465	4685	3995	3510	3385	3900	3605
	Total	6885	7645	7480	8365	7075	6260	5845	6550	5195
Camden (702)	Age 65 and over	4105	4210	3840	3440	3680	2905	2855	2850	2655
	Total	6345	6570	6090	6050	6660	5450	5185	5180	4980
Redbridge (732)	Age 65 and over	5880	5910	6950	5925	5575	5485	4595	4920	4765
	Total	8280	8545	10360	8230	7790	7500	6325	6840	6525
London	Total	216620	220340	218210	220435	211510	194275	183180	172365	163120

Source: National Adult Social Care Intelligence Service (NASCIS) online analytical tool, Health and Social Care Information Centre (online). Available at: <https://nascis.hscic.gov.uk/Portal/Tools.aspx>, accessed July 2014.

Original source: RAP proforma P1

Notes: 1. Data for 2013/14 are provisional

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