**Camden**

**Overview**

The London Borough of Camden is one of the most diverse places in the capital – and indeed in the country. It has a population of 225,000, 34% of the population are from Black, Asian, Minority, Ethnic & Refugee (BAMER) communities, 22% non – British White (Irish, New World and Eastern Europeans) and 52% adults. The largest communities with distinctive cultural identities are the Bangladeshi, Black African, Irish, Chinese and Indian. The borough is also a place of inequality. The difference in life expectancy for those living in the richest parts of the borough compared to those in deprived wards is 13 years for men and 8 years for women. 24% of residents live in 20% of the most deprived areas of England and there is an 84% higher prevalence of serious mental illness.

In the past decade the financial landscape has changed dramatically. The Government has been pursuing a policy of austerity. This has led to large cuts in public sector funding. Camden Council expects to have to implement a further £75 million in cuts in 2015- 2018 in addition to the £93 million that had been made in 2011-2015. Central government has also introduced changes to welfare benefits that are impacting on the demographics and cohesiveness of the borough. Some areas are now too expensive for families on benefits to live in, families are moving out to cheaper areas and have to face the challenge of trying to establish new support networks. Demand for NHS services is increasing faster than population growth, Camden has the highest mental health spend in London, poor outcomes for under-fives and a below average performance for helping people recover and live with illness. The borough is also facing the pressures of a growing older population and keeping the community safe.

The overall policy context is bringing huge challenges to the sustainability of services in the borough and the maintaining of strong and cohesive communities. There is a need to develop new solutions to tackle inequality, increase economic growth and to underpin a strong and cohesive community.

Local people and organisations are actively involved in every aspect of community life in Camden.  Individuals come together to form charities, social enterprises, community organisations and self help groups in every area of life, from arts to sports, from spiritual to commercial, from community events to individual past times.  This diversity of civil society enriches the life of everyone in the borough.