
Doorstep Homeless Families Project

Strategic Plan
2023 – 2028

“Everything a family needs
under one roof and more.”

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Abbreviations

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1. Executive Summary

This Business Plan aims to set out a shared sense of direction for Doorstep with a clear strategic and operational focus. It sets out key tasks, financial and other projections for a five-year period from 2023 to 2028.

The Plan has been developed with input from service users, staff, trustees, funders and other key stakeholders.

To date, Doorstep has achieved significant successes in delivering a range of services and activities for homeless families. The prime concern of the organisation is to secure the resources to continue, maintain and develop services to meet the needs of homeless families and the local community. To succeed Doorstep needs to raise its profile and secure the resources needed by demonstrating the value of the organisation's vision, strategic objectives and impact.

The plan will remain under continuous review with a clear focus on the wider policy environment and developments in income generation. This may lead to periodic reordering of priorities. Performance against key indicators and targets will be reviewed biannually

2. Vision and Objectives.

2.1. Doorstep's vision statement:

“To provide homeless families, living in temporary accommodation in the London Borough of Camden, with access to services and the practical and emotional support that adults, children and young people need to feel secure and underpin a good quality of life. Doorstep will work to both create opportunities for families and to support families to make the best use of any opportunities which arise”.

2.2. Doorsteps key strategic objectives:

- a) To ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation through the generation of income succession planning and the development of more partnership working.
- b) To develop and deliver a range of services and activities that promote skills and new experiences and improve the quality of life for adults, young people and children.
- c) To provide progression routes for service users to gain better and stable housing, training and employment.
- d) To involve families in the design and delivery of services that promote health and wellbeing.
- e) To bring homeless families and members of the surrounding community together through a range of activities and events.
- f) To raise the profile of the organisation and demonstrate the value of its work.

3. Background

Doorstep has been delivering support services to homeless families for 41 years and has developed considerable expertise in this field.

Doorstep was set up as the Adelaide Road Project (ARP) in 1982 after a serious road accident involving a child. The child was living in temporary accommodation with no space or resources to play. ARP was set up by a steering group of concerned local people, specifically to provide practical support to 28 homeless families and children. The organisation operated under the umbrella of Voluntary Action Camden.

In 1989, ARP was invited to move to premises in the Levine and Abbots Hostel to provide services to 45 families. The organisation was also renamed Doorstep to reflect the project's accessibility to families in temporary accommodation. In 1990 Doorstep became independent of Voluntary Action Camden and set up as an independent charitable company to develop services in direct response to the expressed needs of children, young people and adults.

During the 1990's a large proportion of service users were asylum seekers and/or refugees. The nature of the service provided changed with the introduction of the 'dispersal policy', which sent asylum seekers to other parts of the UK.

The 1990's also saw some families being temporarily housed in bed and breakfast hotels but a change in policy introduced the use of Private Sector Leasing (PSL). This involved the council leasing properties in the private sector as an option for providing families with temporary accommodation. Rents were cheaper outside of central London so often families were placed further afield. This resulted in homeless families being scattered in areas where there were no support services or networks leaving families feeling very isolated. In response, Doorstep worked collaboratively with other organisations to provide mobile support, going out to families in isolated situations.

From 2009, families were encouraged to find housing in the private sector, a response to the dwindling stock of social housing.

From April 2014, Doorstep lost 100% of the core funding previously received from Camden Council for more than 20 years, due to the huge savings the Council had to make. This meant that Doorstep had to raise every penny it needed in order to keep going.

4. Current Position.

At present space within the building occupied by Doorstep is used as creatively and flexibly as possible given the restrictions of the layout. Doorstep occupies the basement of three large, terraced houses at Levine and Abbots Hostel which accommodates forty-five families. There are approximately 100 children living in the Levine and Abbots Hostel, each family has one or two rooms and where the highest occupancy per unit is six people. Doorstep's facilities are used daily, Monday to Friday, by families living in the Levine and Abbots Hostel

Doorstep's physical space is comprised of one laundry room with industrial washing machines and dryers, two large playrooms, a kitchen/dining area, two offices, two children's and three adult's toilets, a variety of spaces and cupboards for storage and large landscaped gardens. The laundry room is used to full capacity.

“The number of adults and children that Doorstep serves and the positive outcomes they are achieving, with such a small team and limited funding, is truly amazing. The grant we give could not be used to better affect helping the numerous families who would have fallen apart without their support”
– StreetSmart

5. Need for Doorstep's Services and Support.

Families attending Doorstep are homeless for a variety of reasons, including family circumstances, illness, loss of employment, domestic violence, racial harassment, financial difficulties, and due to refugee status.

There are no specific facilities for homeless families in the area. There are seven schools, two geographically based community centres and one youth facility for children and young people. The families who use Doorstep find it difficult to access these services directly. Many service users are also not aware of the specialist help available. This can cause tremendous difficulties for families, already in transition, many of whom are unfamiliar with the area and the resources available. Doorstep acts as a provider of specific services for homeless families, described by one service user as a “centre that alleviates isolation, like a home”. Doorstep also builds bridges and trust between the families, local communities, and mainstream provision.

6. 2018-2022 Key Achievements

- a. Doorstep developed strong bonds and networks in the community with businesses, schools, women's groups, statutory and voluntary agencies as well as individuals. Doorstep provided the families with access to a range of support services each month and built bridges bringing together people from different cultural backgrounds, faiths and those who are at opposite ends of the social and economic spectrum.
- b. Doorstep provided space and resources for children to play, learn, develop and to help them reach their potential. The support for children included creches, an After School Club, homework classes and a summer programme of trips and activities, Christmas and Eid parties and personalised and home baked birthday cakes for each child provided by Free Cakes for Kids in Camden. The free Laundry Service was and is viewed by families and partners as invaluable for clean clothes and saving money to spend on essentials. New dryers and washing machines were installed in 2017/18.
- c. Doorstep's premises were refurbished in 2019 over a period of five months. This created upheaval as everything had to be packed, everyone had to vacate the premises and the Summer Programme was run at Holy Trinity. Doorstep returned to the premises at the end of September and the organisation was up and running again within two weeks.
- d. In 2020 Doorstep faced the challenge of Covid -19. The families that Doorstep supported were isolated, particularly vulnerable to the virus and had no access to Doorstep's onsite support services, premises and garden. Having initiated dialogue with the families and listened to their concerns the organisation responded by establishing different ways of working. A monthly food shop was initiated where staff provided families with essentials including food and hygiene packs. Isolation was tackled by obtaining funding to purchase tablets, provide access to the internet and the resources required to participate in interactive digital activities.
- e. During Covid -19 the organisation lost some expected funding, and a major task was to not only secure funds for Doorstep's survival but also to raise funds to meet the families' needs. Partnership initiatives, as well as the kindness of many individuals and organisations, provided gifts in kind. Some very generous financial donations were made and Doorstep had unparalleled success in raising funds to meet families' specific needs.
- f. At the beginning of 2021 during the second lockdown Doorstep continued to provide support services in ways it had developed at the onset of the pandemic. In June Doorstep reopened all of the onsite services and returned to the organisation pre-covid timetable.
- g. From January to December 2022, 216 people accessed Doorstep's services, an increase of 24% on the previous year. During this period 32 new families with 68 children registered with Doorstep and 21 families with 41 children moved away, 4 to permanent social housing and 17 to private rented. Doorstep supported a total of 66 families, 75 adults and 130 children and young people. The demographic included, Syrian, Afghan, Somali, Bangladesh, Ukrainian, Ethiopian, Eritrean, Sudanese, Moroccan, Guinea Bissau and many more international countries of origin.
- h. 70% of families had English as a second language. Additional needs among the children and young people supported include severe allergies, ADHD, severe anxiety, Epidermolysis Bullosa. Autism Spectrum, Verbal Development Delay, SALT, PKU, Mobility Disorder, Epilepsy & Tourette's.
- i. Successful fundraising enabled Doorstep to recruit a full-time Parent Advocate to support parents. From March to October 2022 the Parent Advocate saw 45 individual families. 20 families were referred for the first round of Camden Council's Cost of Living Grants generating £3,000 grant awards direct to families. A further 39 families were supported for the second round with a total payment to families estimated as being in the region of £20,000.

- j. The cost-of-living crisis also had an impact on the cost of food to which Doorstep responded by providing families with food parcels and food vouchers.
- k. A new youth project with staff was started in 2022, originally planned to be launched in 2020 but postponed due to the pandemic. The project met on two evenings a week giving young people their own space to spend time with their peers away from siblings and the confines of cramped rooms.
- l. Doorstep secured resources that enabled families to have an extensive programme of holiday activities. Thirty-six families, seventy children and young people and 50 adults participated.
- m. Working in partnership with the Working Men's College, Doorstep ran a ten-week digital literacy class with 10 parents attending. This partnership also delivered maths and basket making classes which also proved popular with sixteen parents attending. Several other partnership ventures were set up to facilitate families access to other services, these initiatives included the Law Centre, Citizens Advice Camden. Early Help, Camden Carers and the Camden Advice Network.
- n. A weekly coffee morning, attended by an average of eleven adults, took place with computer access and bidding online for council housing support.
- o. A Parents Forum was established in May 2022. This met, once a month to discuss topics important to the families, to share views about Doorstep's services and areas of improvement. Among the concerns parents raised were the lack of free internet access in the hostel and the need to know about housing law and their rights.
- p. During 2022/23 Doorstep strengthened the strategic impact of the organisation in Camden by meeting senior Housing Department officers to feed in the experiences of homeless families. Doorstep also engaged and worked with other Council departments.

7. Service Users' Perspectives.

In October 2022 sixteen parents participated in focus groups to contribute to Doorstep's business plan for 2023 to 2028. They shared ideas and experiences which helped to shape the future direction of Doorstep's work.

"The staff are always very helpful, they always have time for you, emotional and physical, always open."

"Doorstep is a family."

"Like an extended family."

"People do not feel isolated."

"I was struggling when I came to Doorstep, and they cared for me as a person".

A mother with a daughter with special needs faced challenges in getting her daughter into school. The mother had the contact number but could not get anywhere.

"The family support was like opening doors."

"Help when I am told things that I did not know."

From March to November 2022 Doorstep's Parent Advocate supported over 84 individual families.

“The staff walk you through the process, help to solve problems, they are very friendly, sympathetic and uplifting.”

“The staff listen when you need to talk.”

The monthly food shop was greatly valued. This supplied potatoes, rice, cans, coffee, tea, sugar, cereal, nappies, toiletries etc.

“When I see the shopping, I am very happy.”

“It helps with meeting the stress of the cost of living.”

The After School clubs includes homework clubs twice a week and the children and young people also get help with reading and writing. This service also helps parents.

“I could not speak English when I arrived but sitting in on my son’s homework class helped me to begin to understand the language.”

The person is now able to interpret to other service users who cannot speak English.

“Cannot fault them. They provide lots of support for adults and children. They deal with any source of confusion.”

8. Future Impact of the Wider Policy Environment

In common with other charities the nature of Doorsteps work is influenced by the wider economic, social, political, legal and environmental factors that are in place at any point in time. With continued inflation, the financial pressures on the families Doorstep supports may be further exacerbated by the gap between housing benefit levels, the impact of the benefit cap, a potential rise in rent for temporary accommodation and the knock-on effect on debt amongst many other factors.

In January 2023 the “Research: Homelessness in England 2022” was published by Shelter. It reported that as of the 30th June 2022 the London Borough of Camden had an estimated 1,851 people who were homeless and living in temporary accommodation arranged by the council. 578 people were living in temporary accommodation arranged by themselves. 509 children were living in temporary accommodation. In a report published in 2023 by an NHS-funded body it was stated that “being placed in temporary housing puts children at greater risk of respiratory disorder and other health conditions”. These statistics show there is clearly still a need for temporary and permanent housing accommodation and support for homeless families in Camden.

The needs of homeless families are becoming more complex. Future conflicts in other parts of the world are likely to have an impact on the profile of homeless families that Doorstep will be supporting. Doorsteps figures also demonstrate that in the past families used to spend a long time in hostels, but by 2022 this had changed. Doorstep has experienced a more rapid turnover of families, many of whom are unsettled, and it takes the staff time to build new relationships and trust. Families who fulfil the criteria to access temporary accommodation include refugees, some women who have experienced domestic violence and children with additional needs for whom English is not their first language. The age of the children in the creche also dropped, with many being under one year of age.

In the past few years, the housing market has also changed. From 2009 families were being asked to find housing in the private sector in response to a dwindling stock of social housing. By 2022 there was very little private housing available in Camden and London as a whole. If families do secure a private tenancy, it may be only for one year after which the landlord may request an increase in rent which the family may not be able to pay. This can result in families going back into homeless family accommodation.

Private sector accommodation has declined dramatically so currently homeless families are accommodated in family hostels, staffed family hostels, unstaffed self-contained hostels and ex-social housing units. Camden Council has also embarked on the Temporary Accommodation Purchasing Programmes, TAPP 1 and 2. It also set up Camden Living, as part of the Intermediate Housing Strategy, where properties are let at an affordable rent (market rent less 20%) to support people who cannot afford to rent or mortgage a property. In 2023 Camden Council will commence the building of new temporary accommodation for families that will provide 89 units of accommodation ranging from studio flats to two-bedroom flats. This may provide Doorstep with an opportunity to secure funding to set up and run the Doorstep model of support for homeless families in the new development.

Doorstep currently places great emphasis on direct service and this is reflected in the high standards of the organisation's work. It has a very positive relationship with people and organisations that currently support the organisation in cash or in kind. However, funding is going to become more difficult to secure in the future. Consequently, Doorstep needs to increase its strategic presence and the range and strength of the networks it is involved with in order to raise its profile. In 2022 Doorstep had started to do this and in the coming years it will be important that the Director and Trustees take this work forward to engage with an array of potential funders and supporters in the public, charitable and corporate sectors.

9. Strategic Objectives and Actions for 2023 – 2028.

Following the input from service users, staff, trustees, funders and other key stakeholders a number of actions/tasks have been identified in order to take forward Doorstep's strategic objectives. A summarised version of the actions/tasks are set out in the Action Plan in section 14.

All interested parties will need to agree the priorities, agree a time frame and assign a lead for the actions/tasks before finalising the action plan for the period of the business plan. This is needed to enable Doorstep to consolidate its position with a newly appointed Director and to put in place a plan that is deliverable and clear enough to inform future funding strategy for the organisation.

9.1 Objective.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation through the generation of income, succession planning and the development of collaborative working.

Action.

a. Development of a comprehensive funding strategy for 2023-2028.

b. Develop and implement a succession plan for the post of Director.

This will involve:

- i) A review of the duties and responsibility of the current director and all other members of the staff team.

- ii) A review of Directors' job descriptions from other comparable organisations
- iii) Survey of staff, trustees and service users' skills.
- iv) Development of a staffing plan that actions the recommendations of a, b and c.
- v) Consultation on the findings of the review with staff and service users.
- vi) Recruitment to the post of Director with the post being advertised internally and externally.
- vii) Induction of the new Director.

9.2 Objective.

To develop and deliver a range of services and activities that promote skills and new experiences and improve the quality of life for adults, young people and children.

Action.

Adults.

- a. To provide access to a Parent Advocate to assist with the wide range of challenges that adults/parents face.
- b. Working in partnership with Camden Law Centre to signpost cases which require detailed knowledge in Housing, Family, and Employment Law. Camden Law Centre staff will also support the Parent Advocate to help check pre legal letters.
- c. Working in partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau Camden to support families with complex advice needs, such as significant debt. CAB has a debt specialist for the locality that Doorstep is based.
- d. Working in partnership with Camden Carers to enable members of homeless families to access specialist support for carers through training and one-off sessions for carers.
- e. Working in partnership with the Advice Network meetings to enable homeless families to be referred for specialist help.
- f. Weekly bazaars.
- g. Food Hampers or vouchers.
- h. Hygiene Hampers.

Children.

- a. To provide creche sessions for children under the age of 5.
- b. To provide an after-school club for children and young people.
- c. To provide an external tutor to provide support with homework.
- d. To enable each child to choose a customised homemade birthday cake and receive a birthday gift.

Young People.

- a. To provide a youth club facility for young people from the age of 12.
- b. Recruit a male youth worker

- c. Doorstep to work with young people to design and deliver youth club activities.
- d. To involve young people in business planning for the future.

Adults, Young People and Children.

- a. Laundry service
- b. Summer programme of activities and trips.

9.3 Objective.

To provide progression routes for service users in terms of better and stable housing, training, and employment.

Action.

- a. To secure resources to provide support to families who are moving on to help make sure the move is sustainable.
- b. Working in partnership with Working Men College to provide a programme of term time classes including ESOL, Numeracy and Understanding their Children's Homework, Arts and Crafts.
- c. Working with Camden ESOL Advice Service to place Doorstep families on to appropriate courses through their network.

9.4 Objective.

Working in partnership with other organisations to involve families in the design and delivery of services that promote health and wellbeing.

Action.

Adults, Young People and Children

In place.

- a. To provide opportunities for healthy cooking classes for children, young people and adults.

To be explored.

- b. Yoga classes
- c. Access to Swiss Cottage Sports Centre.
- d. Access to mental health support services.
- e. Access to physical health support services
- f. Access to counselling.
- g. Development of a gardening club
- h. Family holidays working with a charity that has access to such opportunities.

9.5 Objective.

To bring homeless families and members of the surrounding community together through a range of activities and events.

Action.

- a. Weekly bazaars.
- b. Community events.

9.6 Objective.

To raise the profile of the organisation, demonstrate the value of its work and provide progression routes for service users.

Action.

- a. Developing and providing a clear message to demonstrate the value of the services and support that Doorstep delivers.
- b. Advocacy and campaigning on the needs of homeless families.
- c. Developing work with corporates and other partnerships.

9.7 Objective

To raise the profile of the organisation, demonstrate the value of its work and provide progression routes for service users.

Action.

- a. To be aware of how national and local government may impact on homeless families and react accordingly.
- b. To strengthen the strategic impact of Doorstep by meeting with senior officers in Camden Council's Housing Department.
- c. To feed in the experiences homeless families are having when engaging and working with Camden Council departments.
- d. Increase partnership working with front line staff to enable better experience for families using the housing and homelessness services in the borough.
- e. To campaign to have Wi-Fi in Levine and Abbots hostels.
- f. To campaign to support the Council to bring empty properties back into the market for homeless families to use.

10. Governance and Management

10.1. Management Committee.

Doorstep will develop a recruitment pack and advertise widely with the aim of improving and maintaining diversity amongst management committee members.

Doorstep's management committee meets once every 6 weeks. Its primary role is to oversee and steer the development of the organisation by:

- a. Developing the overall strategy of Doorstep.
- b. Ensuring funding obligations are met.
- c. Monitoring the financial management of Doorstep.
- d. Monitoring and reviewing the development of Doorstep.
- e. Ensuring that policies and procedures are in place and ensuring compliance.
- f. Addressing all employment and personnel matters.

The Management Committee members are elected annually at the AGM and some are recruited during the year. Details of the members of the current Management Committee are set out below.

| Name | Position | Background/Experience |
|-----------------|-----------|---|
| Ali. F. Jabeen | Chair | Ali's focus is on the strategic development of services for the most vulnerable in our communities. She has over 20 years' experience in governance, having been a member of several trustee boards and director for several charities that support vulnerable families. Ali is a member of the 'Camden Partnership for Educational Excellence' and Chair of the strategy group for the 'Camden Parent Council'. She has extensive knowledge of the rights of the child and family law. |
| Reena Malharkar | Treasurer | Reena is a Senior Financial Services Executive with over 20 years of global asset/wealth management /pensions and insurance experience. Reena has extensive expertise in building, evaluating and implementing investment/ product strategies, setting strategic asset allocations, manager search and selection across public and private assets. Reena has a lot of experience in navigating complex negotiations and delivering results for the business. |
| Jessica Reddel | Secretary | Jess lives locally and joined Doorstep in 2023. Jess works for Streetwise Opera, an arts/homelessness charity. Jess's role at Streetwise is to provide support with finance, operations, strategy and governance. Jess also holds volunteering roles with St Mungo's and other local charities. |

| | | |
|---------------|---------|---|
| Tsedey Yilala | Trustee | Tsedey joined Doorstep in Oct 2022. She has worked in health and social care for over 20 years and is passionate about families experiencing homelessness. |
| Celia Carr | Trustee | Celia joined Doorstep as a Trustee in October 2021. She is a solicitor who formerly worked in corporate tax law, before moving to the public sector. She lives locally to Doorstep in Northwest London. |

| | | |
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| Lesley Adams | Trustee | Lesley is Company Secretary by profession She lives locally and joined Doorstep in 2018. She has been involved with several UK Charities and Committees in a fund raising and administrative capacity. |
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10.2. Staff and Volunteer Profile.

Doorstep has the following staffing and volunteer profile.

- a. One full time Director
- b. One full Parent Advocacy Worker
- c. Two part time children's workers
- d. Two sessional staff.
- e. One part time housekeeper
- f. 10 sessional volunteers weekly
- g. Approximately seventy occasional volunteers per year

There is a fortnightly staff meeting that focuses on operational matters e.g. supporting staff, informing them of developments, prioritising tasks and to ensure that the team's activities are running as planned. There is on-going dialogue between staff about service delivery and the individual support needs of each family. Additional formal planning meetings are held around specific events and activities, e.g., the summer programme.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation.

A key operational requirement of Doorstep will be to record and evaluate the organisation's achievements. Doorstep will ensure that the strategic objectives are linked to local outcomes that relate to children, young people and families. The following range of tools will be applied to monitor the work of the Doorstep Homeless Families Project.

| Type | How collected | Examples |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| Progress measures | Director to produce an annual action plan and detailed annual budget. Progress reports to each meeting of the management committee | Action plans |
| | | Database |
| | All staff and volunteers collect attendance records and a profile of those attending activities and services | Registers |
| Volume or output measures | Standardised process to be put in place | Database |
| Number of service users and activities attended. | Formal and informal focus groups | Focus groups |
| Feedback from service users | Feedback form | Customised feedback forms |
| | Feedback from service users | Focus groups |
| Outcome measures | Use of a customised outcome star | Outcome stars |
| Benefits services bring to users | Feedback from key local organisations to assess the impact of Doorstep on the lives of homeless families, children, young people and adults | Survey |
| Impact measures | Story books | Case studies |
| Long term benefits services bring to users | | Telephone questionnaire |