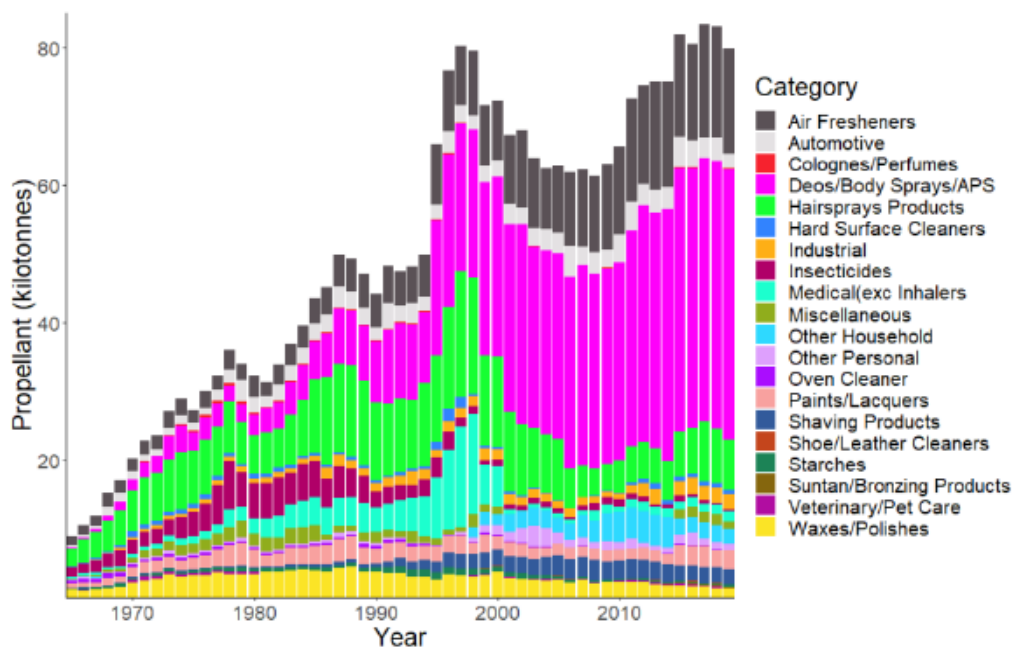


Research and community engagement in Camden

As presented to the Health & Housing Impact network by Tom Parkes, Air Quality Programme Manager, and Ian Sandford, Public Health Strategist in LB Camden.

Summary

Camden's work to date has comprised academic research and place-based community engagement. The aim is to help households better understand what air quality-related factors are within their control and equip them with the confidence and ability to take action themselves, for example around use of candles and chemical aerosols such as air fresheners or body sprays, which has increased hugely in the UK in recent years.



UK aerosol emissions by type: Yeoman and Lewis, 2021

The work was designed with acknowledgement of the social and environmental factors shaping individual behaviours. For example, high energy bills making people reluctant to open their windows when cooking, or summer heatwaves leading people to keep their windows closed to exclude hot air (which can be sensible for keeping cool but becomes problematic when homes are poorly ventilated).

Working with the London School of Economics and the University of Southern California, Camden's Air Quality team helped to distribute sensors to households to find out whether and how access to indoor air quality data would impact on people's behaviour and their receptiveness to this, compared with a control group (who received sensors but could not view the data). Subsequently, the council made sensors available to residents in Somers Town, working with local community centres and groups.

The Health and Housing Impact Network is supported by

The research: Camden Household Air Monitoring Project (CHAMP)

Led by the London School of Economics and University of Southern California, CHAMP sought to understand whether something as simple as providing visible air quality data to people could help them change behaviour. They loaned air quality (AQ) sensors, which cost around £100 each, to a random sample of 250 households including a control group for one month. This initial research indicated that such a scheme could indeed help people take action without any cost, with a potential one third reduction in harmful particulate exposure.

See the unseen

-  PM_{2.5}
-  Temperature
-  Humidity

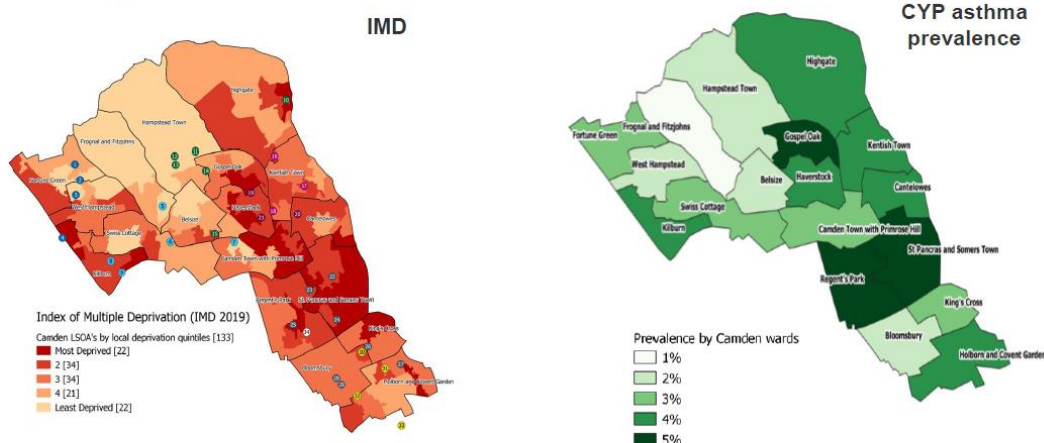


Indoor air quality sensor

Place-based sensor project in Somers Town

Somers Town is one of Camden's most deprived areas (Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019) where there is also an especially high prevalence of asthma among children and young people.

Housing as a determinant of health



camden.gov.uk



Multiple deprivation and asthma for children and young people in LB Camden: LB Camden

Replicating the CHAMP approach, the council loaned AQ sensors to households for one month on a self-referral basis, with exchanges taking place in trusted and familiar community settings. The sensor displays enabled residents to see a representation of indoor air quality, whilst the transmitting data remotely, with the council providing a brief report and analysis at the end of the loan period. Residents' awareness of indoor AQ issues was assessed with a participant survey at the start and end of the loan period, to better understand whether the project was helping to build knowledge and empower people to address indoor air pollution.

Results were positive and reassuring to participants: for example, demonstrating that there are factors within their control such as cooking behaviours and use of candles or aerosols, rather than, say, traffic outdoors, and that these have a measurable effect.

Next steps: upscaling and primary care engagement

Following the extremely positive findings from the initial research, the team behind CHAMP plan to upscale the programme to involve many more households including other parts of London. The council too is already working to expand its sensor loan scheme borough-wide and producing practical guidance which draws on experience to date.

The council is already undertaking an intensive tenant and estate engagement programme with respect to its services and AQ will become part of this. They will use the influence of existing schemes and networks such as [Community Champions](#) and [Parent Champions](#) who are employed by local voluntary sector organisations to provide peer support for public health initiatives such as smoking cessation and weight management, as well as supporting opportunities for improving general health and wellbeing.

The team is keen to maximise opportunities for cross-promotion with other services on estates as well as engaging primary care: GPs, pharmacists, health visitors and school nurses. As health visitors go into the homes of most families with a new baby, they are able to explore AQ risks and behaviours which are most relevant to their circumstances and to offer a sensor and guidance. Public health is looking to broker these connections, acknowledging that indoor AQ is a relatively new focus and one which, up until now, has relied on willing individuals such as GPs with a personal interest in respiratory illnesses.

Successes, challenges and opportunities for integrated care

CHAMP has been an effective partnership between academia and a local authority. It has generated evidence regarding indoor AQ and the role of individual behaviours as well as learning about what is needed for upscaling. Reaching people does take intensive effort. It is also essential to frame the messages to raise awareness without causing alarm, and to empower people without absolving (or appearing to absolve) the council from its housing responsibilities. To date, the project has been led by the Air Quality team within Sustainability, with Public Health support, and the plan is for further engagement with Housing.

North Central London ICS will be an important future partner, and already [promotes messages about indoor as well as outdoor air quality](#). So far, it has proven hard to secure buy-in for the project system-wide, due to competing pressures within health and social care. Camden's CHAMP project and LB Camden's community reach provide the kind of research data and practical experience which the Chief Medical Officer calls for in his [Annual Report 2022](#) as well as a robust basis for policy, strategy and standards in the future.

The relevance of the health impacts of indoor AQ to ICS objectives is not in question. In a climate of competing priorities and stretched resources, Camden's advice is to

1. focus on alignment with NHS England's [National Bundle of Care for Children and Young People with Asthma](#) and associated [ICS Deliverables](#);
2. highlight how this project has tangible outcomes in relation to both prevention and reducing health inequalities;
3. share evidence of people's receptiveness and behaviour change in practice;
4. present a solution, rather than a problem.

[Click here](#) to find out more about the Health and Housing Impact network.