



# The Evaluation Exchange



The Evaluation Exchange is a partnership between UCL and voluntary and community sector organisations that aims to improve evaluation practice. In 2021/22 the Evaluation Exchange was run by UCL with two community infrastructure organisations, Compost London, and Voluntary Action Camden, in the London Boroughs of Newham and Camden.

We match UCL postgraduate students and researchers with voluntary and community sector organisations to improve their capacity to evaluate their work. Organisations work with their small team of students and researchers from across disciplines at UCL to solve an evaluation challenge identified by the organisation.

In 2021/22, 48 postgraduate students and researchers were matched with 7 organisations in Camden and 6 organisations in Newham (total organisations = 13). Over the structured 6-month programme, we provided one-to-one support and 3 days of training focussed on evaluation methods, project planning, relationship building and problem solving.

The Evaluation Exchange builds research and evaluation skills of everyone involved. It offers a real-world application of students' and researchers' knowledge, and fosters valuable networks between UCL, the voluntary and community sector and the communities involved.

*"It's a very powerful programme that connects both academics and practitioners."* **Founding Director, Lifeafterhummus Community Benefit Society**

*"It was very practical. The students and researchers met us at the stage that our charity is at, rather than providing grandiose and unachievable goals."* **Founder & Director, Street Storage**

*"It has been such a great experience to both adapt skills from my PhD and learn new ones. I have learnt so much."*  
**UCL PhD student**

# Calthorpe Community Garden



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

An inner-city community garden that aims to improve physical and emotional well-being through different activities such as social and therapeutic horticulture, cooking classes and sport.

## What happened through the collaboration?

Calthorpe Community Garden and the UCL students worked together to come up with a way to determine how the varied elements of the garden make a difference to the people using the garden. They developed and tested on-line questionnaires and also developed a video of 'why people love Calthorpe'.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The garden now has a way to evaluate the different aspects of the garden that is clear for staff to understand and carry out.

The new video will help Calthorpe present qualitative information about the garden which is hard to capture through surveys, such as the atmosphere and role in the community.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

As researchers, we've learned to help craft concrete goals through conversations with busy stakeholders as well as set timelines and manage expectations. The experience has given us understanding of how to communicate effectively with stakeholders who are coming in with a very different perspective and orientation.

The experience gave us a better understanding of the variety and huge amount of work and dedication that goes into successful functioning of a charity organisation such as a community garden.

As individuals, we've also discovered a beautiful new spot close to UCL in the heart of Camden.



Miro planning board from the early stages of the team working together.

## Students and researchers

**Anna-Leigh Brown**  
PhD student, Neurology

**Alfred Harwood**  
PhD student, Quantum Physics

**Aleksandra Kaye**  
PhD student, History

**Yuhong Wang**  
PhD student, Urban Greenspace and Environmental Policy

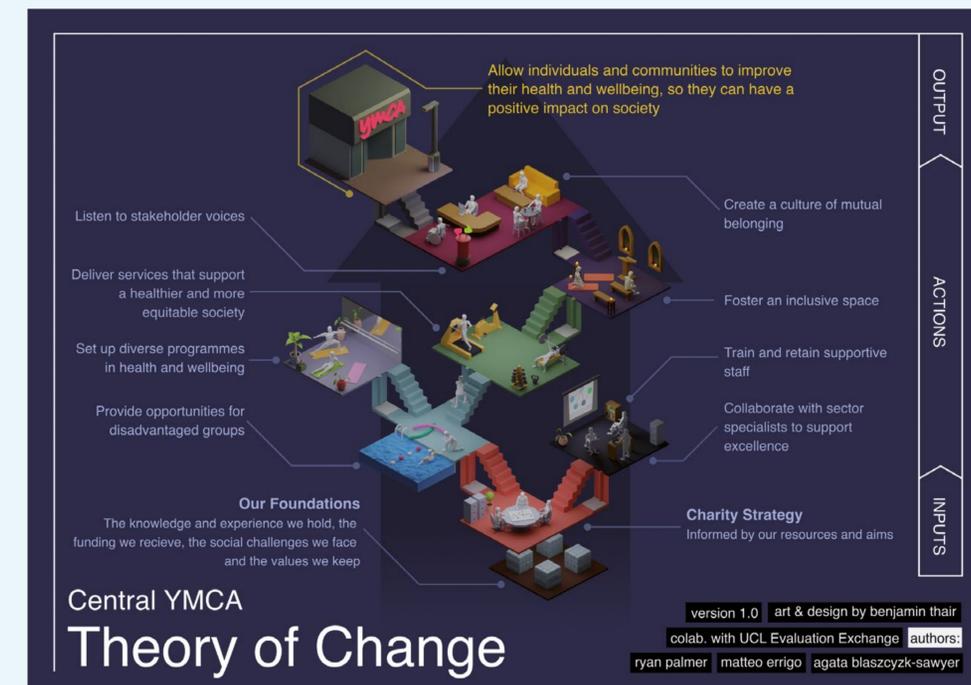
# Central YMCA



As the world's first YMCA, we are a national charity that advances the education, health and wellbeing of our communities. We break down barriers to create improved access to life changing opportunities. Our vision is to enable everyone to achieve their potential, live a fulfilled life and contribute positively to society.

## What happened through the collaboration?

Central YMCA and the students created a Theory of Change to help Central YMCA situate everything they do, in terms of activities and services, within a larger purpose.



## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The new Theory of Change will allow Central YMCA to enable and support more local communities through a consistent and high-quality approach to services offered. The Theory of Change allows the charity a long term level of consistency that will ensure Central YMCA can articulate its work across its strategy.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

The knowledge exchange allowed researchers to have a first-hand insight into how a value-driven charity like Central YMCA works. Points of contact and, mostly, differences with respect to working in an academic sector emerged, allowing the students to go back to their research work enriched with increased awareness. The project also gave an opportunity for directed creative expression that the researchers might not have otherwise had.

### Students and researchers

**Agata Blaszczyk**  
 UCL Estates

**Matteo Errigo**  
 PhD student, Chemical Engineering

**Benjamin Thair**  
 PhD student, Chemistry

# Deafroots



Deafroots' primary objective is to promote deaf awareness and to provide training and support to deaf and hard of hearing people to ensure preparedness for employment.

## What happened through the collaboration?



The student team from UCL developed a workable and practical evaluation framework for Deafroots that captures key input, indicators and outcomes. To do this the team designed and ran feedback sessions with users of Deafroots' services to uncover participants' motivation to attend programmes, their experience, what they take away from it, and what they feel they gained.

Flyer advertising feedback sessions

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The experience has led to an understanding of the lasting social and economic value created by Deafroots in the community. The process has helped the organisation review and analyse the congruency between the organisation's objectives and their clients' motivations and expectations.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

Working as a team on a project that can potentially impact another person's self-confidence and skills in their ability to secure jobs humbled us and instilled in us the awareness of how we all have a dream for a better future. As students, we learnt that creativity, bravery, and the willingness to try new ideas open up doors of opportunities.

We hope that our brief exchange with Deafroots and the deaf and hard of hearing community made the participants feel listened to, acknowledged, and motivated to continue their professional and self-enrichment journey. It was a great experience working with Deafroots. We hope our findings on what motivates participation in Deafroots' programmes fosters a better understanding and matching of clients' needs and the organisation's objectives and provides tools for future evaluations.

## Students and researchers

Susana Colinas Fischer  
PhD student, Neuroscience

Nuraishah Mokhtar  
PhD student, Security and Crime Science





# The Institute of Imagination (iOi)



The Institute of Imagination (iOi) creates a space for children and young people of all backgrounds to develop their imaginations together. The goal of the iOi is to spark the imaginations of young audiences through highly interactive events, training, partnerships and research with sciences and digital technologies.

## What happened through the collaboration?

The student and researcher team developed an organisational Theory of Change based on iOi's new organisational strategy. The team reviewed existing evaluation approaches to help identify a series of core impact measures that could be used alongside the organisation's new strategy.

The student and researcher team attended workshops conducted by the iOi and a presentation where the iOi shared its new strategy. The team then used a step-by-step Theory of Change guide by NPC (New Philanthropy Capital) to guide their work. To start the first stage of Theory of Change development, known as a 'situation analysis', the team collected information from several of iOi's strategic documents and organised it on a Miro board. The team then ran a workshop for members of iOi and proposed a series of further exercises to complete the situation analysis.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

A draft organisational Theory of Change that will help us begin to describe why, and test, if our way of working is effective.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

We learnt how to create Theories of Change, as well as the challenges involved in updating an organisational strategy and the issues tackled by the Institute of Imagination's work.

We gained experience in facilitating workshops and designing the relevant exercises to develop the Theory of Change.



The team of students and researchers have a virtual meeting

## Students and researchers

**Carlos Gómez del Tronco**  
PhD student, Islamaphobia

**Heng Hu**  
PhD student, Biochemical Engineering

**Lydia Mardell**  
PhD student, Neurology

**Sue Walters**  
Senior Lecturer, Education

# Kentish Town City Farm



Members of the student and researcher team enjoy time at Kentish Town City Farm

Kentish Town City Farm provides a vital green space for local people to connect with nature. We work with people from different backgrounds in our activities, caring for the animals and the land. Our small staff team and volunteers run activities for older people, young people and early years groups.

## What happened through the collaboration?

The aim of our time together was to understand how Kentish Town City Farm serves the local community; and understand how the farm could support environmental education and community wellbeing.

We piloted interactive signs for visitors to tell us about their experience at the farm and what they learnt. An interactive map of the farm was designed to help understand what areas of the farm people enjoy visiting the most.



Map designed as an interactive evaluation tool

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The farm now has creative and fun ways for people visiting to share how they feel about their experience and what they have learnt.

This is useful for the farm because we now have evaluation tools that are easy to use both for the people visiting the farm and our staff and volunteers. The information we collect through the tools will help us demonstrate our impact which has implications for funding as well as help us continually improve what we offer people visiting.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

Our time with Kentish Town City Farm has been a great opportunity to learn about a local community organisation and evaluate its work. It has given us a new perspective outside of an academic environment on the importance of reflection, teamwork, and flexibility to adapt and deliver research to best support Kentish Town City Farm's aims.

### Students and researchers

**Kirsty Alexander**  
Research Fellow, Medical Education

**Amanda Clery**  
PhD student, Child Health

**Natasha Hawley**  
Masters student, Gender and International Development

**Sarah Raquq**  
PhD student, Child Health



# Lifeafterhummus (LAH) Community Benefit Society



The student and researcher team meet at LAH

Lifeafterhummus (LAH) Community Benefit Society provides a range of support to local residents in Somers Town including food parcels (made up from surplus food), referrals for debt advice, grants, care navigation, welfare rights, domestic violence and employability. LAH works alongside local partners and the Council in the London Borough of Camden.

## What happened through the collaboration?

Together, Lifeafterhummus (LAH) Community Benefit Society and the UCL students and researchers, developed and tested Social Return on Investment (SROI) as an evaluation method. The aim was to understand and quantify the social, environmental and economic value that LAH creates, crucially in a monetised form.

They worked together to scope out how SROI would work in the context of LAH, collecting and analysing data, whilst developing case studies to provide illustrative, real-life examples of LAH's work.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

"It's a very powerful programme that connects both academics and practitioners. I've done lots of social enterprise training and no one has cracked SROI the way this programme has."

**Farrah Rainfly, Founding Director**

## What is the legacy for the students and researchers involved?

"It has been such a great experience to both adapt skills from my PhD and learn new ones. I have learnt so much more about the charity sector." **UCL PhD student**

"It's a very useful program to know how the NGO works and how we can measure their value using Social Return on Investment. The training, group members and organisation are amazing to work with. The experience is priceless. Many thanks!" **UCL PhD student**

## Students and researchers

**Nancy Bird**  
PhD student, Genetics, Evolution,  
and Environment

**Claire Fletcher**  
PhD student, Geography

**Eleanor Yang**  
PhD student, Sustainable Construction

**Xinyue Zhang**  
PhD candidate, Chemistry

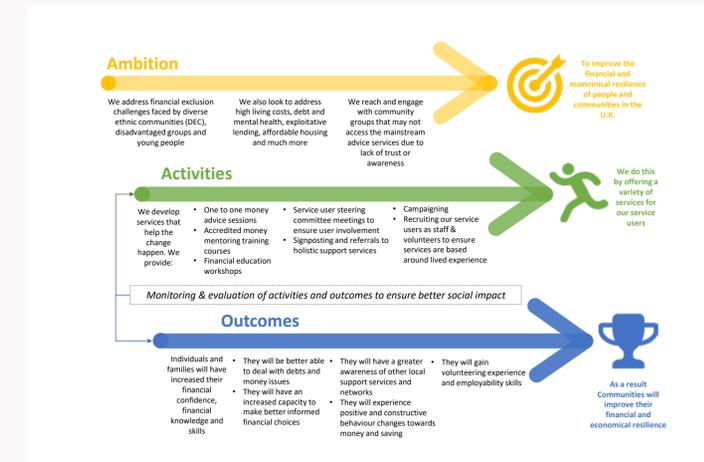
# Money A+E



Money A+E provides money advice and education to diverse ethnic communities through one-to-one advice, workshops and courses.

## What happened through the collaboration?

Together, Money A+E and the students and researchers, reviewed and updated the organisation's monitoring and evaluation processes. They focused on what would help Money A+E meet funder requirements in order to best deliver their projects. The collaboration resulted in a revised Theory of Change, and the identification of a new data collection system for the organisation's educational data.



The revised Theory of Change

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The legacy for Money A+E is a revised approach to evaluation that will guide and focus our work. We will communicate our Theory of Change to all staff, volunteers, advisory board, steering committee members and funders; and integrate our Theory of Change into our funding applications, reporting and marketing strategy.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

The academics and students working in tandem with Money A+E have gained a, or renewed their, comprehension of the social theories and technological systems wielded by NGOs. This real-world understanding is sure to improve our awareness of where we can generate the most impact in future institutional problem-solving processes as well as in the context of our wider research interests.

### Students and researchers

**Katharina Haag**  
Postdoctoral researcher,  
Global Health

**Men Heng Charlotte Im**  
PhD student,  
Information Studies

**Emma Jones**  
Lecturer, Gender  
and Education

**Hang Lai**  
PhD candidate,  
Sustainable Construction

**Lester Lyall**  
BA student, International Development  
with NGO Management, University of East  
London (UEL)



# Skills Enterprise



Skills Enterprise supports vulnerable and marginalized residents, helping them to develop skills and secure suitable employment. Their interventions and support covers: Crisis support, skills building, getting job ready, community cohesion and volunteering.



## What happened through the collaboration?

Skills Enterprise and the students worked together to develop a set of surveys for Skills Enterprise to evaluate the four core service areas outlined in their Theory of Change: Welfare, community cohesion, digital skills, and employability. They developed a 'Welcome Pack' designed for all service users to complete at the start of their journey with the organisation and at various stages following this.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The surveys enable the organisation to remain both focused and adaptable, providing Skills Enterprise with a means to measure their aims and outcomes, refine their strategy and resource allocation, and identify avenues for new approaches.

The team have developed a useful outcome measurement tool that will enable the organisation to build common strategies to increase its impact and identify where new approaches need to be built.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

We have all found producing the surveys a rewarding experience and, as student researchers, we have gained a deeper understanding of the ways in which developing clearly measured skills is often combined with an increase in personal confidence and wellbeing.

### Students and researchers

**Tolu Adebajo**  
PhD student, Mental Health

**Giulia Cardani**  
Masters student, Education and International Development

**Sameema Rahman**  
PhD student, History

**Yibo Zhao**  
PhD student, Pharmacy

# Street Storage



Street Storage provides people experiencing homelessness (including those sleeping out, in vulnerable housing situations, leaving violent home situations or in the prison system) with free, secure and accessible storage for their belongings.



## What happened through the collaboration?

We focused on developing simple tools for people using Street Storage's services to feed back on the service. The aim was to find creative and non-

intrusive ways to collate and collect data from a group for whom feedback on a service is not a priority - and for whom surveys and online forms are not an option.

The student and researcher group came up with some fantastic and creative ideas that do not strain staff time or overtake the more pressing priorities of our beneficiaries. Ideas came from the student group and from the Evaluation Exchange training sessions online (the wider team at UCL and charities working alongside them).

The group also looked at ways to collect statistical data more professionally using Salesforce and how to report the impact of this data monetarily and emotionally. It was very practical. The students and researchers met us at the stage that our charity is at, rather than providing grandiose and unachievable goals.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

We now have three or four creative feedback collation techniques in place and a solid statistical reporting system (demographics, length of storage, and outcomes). Both these can be implemented with immediate effect and are in place for the future to improve impact reporting and secure sustainable funding based on proven impact.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

We found the sign-post from the Evaluation Exchange Delivery Team to the M&E Universe resources from INTRAC very useful. While the data stage we reached was a starting point it was a really good chance to see how early planning of data collection can be inbuilt into daily practice and then lead to a useful outcome to build up a cycle. As in research it was very satisfying to see the real-life application of data, and we would be interested to do more.

## Students and researchers

**Jasmine Cockroft**  
PhD student, Psychology and  
Human Development

**Madalina Mironiuc**  
PhD student, Physics and Astronomy

**Eoin Laws-Quinn**  
PhD student, Molecular Biology



# Subco Trust



Subco Trust provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services for vulnerable Asian elders and carers in Newham.



## What happened through the collaboration?

Subco Trust and the UCL students and researchers focused on developing evaluation tools to be used on a new 'Mental Wellbeing' project. They developed and tested tools to capture: changes in mood and well-being; and service user empowerment. The methods developed were sensitive to the diverse communication needs of the users (i.e. Asian individuals), being easily translated, accessible including icons as well as text.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The programme has helped to support staff with the skills needed to be part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. The work that the team have undertaken on the Mental Wellbeing project has been used as a template by Subco Trust to streamline evaluation and reporting on our other programmes of work.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

We have learned a lot about evaluation and research in practice, and have really enjoyed working on this project as a team, so much so that we hope to continue working together in the future.

### Students and researchers

**Anthony Isiwele**  
PhD student, Mental Health Care

**Giulia Piazza**  
PhD student, Psychology and Language Science

**Mel Ramasawmy**  
Research fellow, Health Informatics

# Wac Arts



Wac Arts provide high quality arts training for young people aged 5-26. Their mission is to empower young people to change their world through the arts.

## What happened through the collaboration?

Wac Arts and the students worked together to review the evaluation tools being used by Wac Arts. Then they developed and tested accessible, simple methods to capture the outcomes from young people taking part in Wac Arts' activities to evaluate the organisation's four main aims across a range of programmes.



Emotion tracker tree    Bulls eye feedback    I feel...

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The tried and tested evaluation tools and handbook have ensured an accessible framework for evaluation at Wac Arts, that can be used by staff, volunteers, young people, their families, and carers. This new robust process enables us to measure the impact of Wac Arts provision, regardless of art forms, age group or ability.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?

"I now have greater understanding of monitoring and evaluation frameworks as well as an appreciation for creative, effective methods to capture evaluation data. It has been beneficial attending training sessions while working alongside an organisation with real evaluation needs. This has had a positive impact on my critical approach when researching the reported successes and barriers experienced by education organisations." **Hazel Baxter, PhD student**

"I came to the Evaluation Exchange with little knowledge of what evaluation is or how to actually do it. Learning more about what, why and how during the training sessions, and then being able to practically apply this knowledge as part of a team, has been really beneficial for developing my understanding and appreciation for evaluation." **Isobel Pagendam, PhD student**

"I had an opportunity to work in a problem-solving (rather than purely academic) context, which is a valuable and, alas, rare experience. I feel now much better equipped to do evaluative work than I was half a year ago, so my participation in the project was certainly useful, and I would like to keep collaborating with charities."

**David Rypel, PhD student**

## Students and researchers

**Hazel Baxter**  
 PhD student, Music Education

**Isobel Pagendam**  
 PhD student, Geography

**David Rypel**  
 PhD student, East European Studies

# Women + Health



Photo by NeONBRAND on Unsplash

Women + Health provide complementary and alternative medicine therapies and counselling to support Camden residents and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

## What happened through the collaboration?

Women + Health and the UCL students worked together to map an overview of Women + Health's services, outline current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and develop a Theory of Change for the organisation.

## What is the legacy for the organisation?

The process of working with the students to map our current monitoring and evaluation approaches and begin developing a Theory of Change has really helped us on our journey to creating an organisational culture that supports robust monitoring and evaluation.

With improved monitoring and evaluation approaches our aim is to be able to better evidence the impact of our work and secure further funding for our services.

## What is the legacy for students and researchers involved?



Women + Health's community garden

As a team we feel our involvement in the Evaluation Exchange has provided us with an insight into the collaborative nature of developing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework within a small charity. We were able to work well as a team and utilise our individual skills whilst learning from each other and gaining an understanding of the different areas involved in monitoring and evaluation.

We worked collaboratively with Women + Health, listening, and synthesising the information they provided to start creating a Theory of Change. This experience highlighted the impact of organisational processes on the practicalities of implementing and using the methodology.

## Students and researchers

**Callie Daniels-Howell**  
PhD student, Global Health

**Rosie Margolis**  
MSc student, Political Science

**Meryl Westlake**  
PhD student, Psychology and Language Sciences