

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEDNESDAY, 13 MARCH 2024 AT 6.30 PM
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, CAMDEN TOWN HALL, JUDD STREET, LONDON, WC1H 9JE

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MEMBERS

Councillor Jenny Headlam-Wells (Chair) (L)

Councillors Lotis Bautista (L), Matt Cooper (L), Julian Fulbrook (L),
Sylvia McNamara (L), Tom Simon (LD), Shiva Tiwari (L),
Nanouche Umeadi (L)

Co-opted Members Aya Elgool, Margaret Harvey, Sarah Jafri, Reverend
Guy Pope, Samir Qurashi and Dr Rachel Wrangham

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillors Chung (LD), Tommy Gale (L), Samata Khatoon (L),
Izzy Lenga (L), Jenny Mulholland (L), Nazma Rahman (L) and
James Slater (L)

L = Labour, LD = Liberal Democrat

Issued on: Tuesday, 5 March 2024

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CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2024

THERE ARE NO PRIVATE REPORTS

AGENDA

Wards

- 1. APOLOGIES**

- 2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA**

- 3. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

Broadcast of the meeting

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If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to having your contributions recorded and broadcast, including video when switched on, and to the use of those sound recordings and images for webcasting and/or training purposes'.

Any Other Announcements

- 4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

Requests to speak at the Committee on a matter within its terms of reference must be made in writing to the clerk named on the front of this agenda by 5pm two working days before the meeting.

- 5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT**

6. CABINET ADVISER REPORT ON OPENING UP ACCESS TO SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE **All Wards**

Report of the Cabinet Adviser on Opening Up Access to Sport for Young People.

(Pages 9 - 40)

This report contains the findings and recommendations of Councillor Camron Aref-Adib in his role as Cabinet Adviser on Youth Mission.

7. CABINET MEMBER FOR BEST START FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES' RESPONSE ON THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY YEARS AND KEY STAGE 1 CHILDREN IN CAMDEN **All Wards**

(Pages 41 - 50)

Report of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

In February 2023, a scrutiny panel [report](#) which investigated the impact of Covid-19 on the language development of Early Years and Key Stage 1 children in Camden was presented to the CSF Scrutiny Committee. The scrutiny panel was made up of elected members and co-opted members from the CSF Scrutiny Committee. The report requested that the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families prepare a response to the recommendations from the investigation and to report back to the committee.

The findings of this enquiry revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic had led to a language delay in Early Years in Camden, which could have ramifications for later academic attainment and is likely to disproportionately impact disadvantaged children. This report contains the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families' response to these recommendations.

The Scrutiny Panel's inquiry and praise for the service was gratefully received. Most recommendations are agreed upon. Several recommendations advocate for key members to communicate to national government about identified areas for improvement and/or additional funding. In light of this, Cllr Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, is actively engaging in ongoing discussions with Cllr Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council, on how best to take these recommendations forward.

8. CABINET ADVISER REPORT ON CHILD HUNGER AND EXPANDING FREE SCHOOL MEALS **All Wards**

Report of the Cabinet Adviser for Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals.

(Pages 51 - 68)

The Cabinet Adviser on Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals here provides the Committee with their report, including recommendations, for discussion.

9. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) PROVISION PANEL UPDATE **All Wards**

(Pages 69 - 74)

Report of the Chair of the SEND Provision Panel.

The purpose of the report is to update members of the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Scrutiny committee regarding the progress so far of the SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel. It summarises the key findings from interviews up to December and outlines the next steps being followed up through interviews, workshop, and meetings this spring up to April.

10. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2023/24 AND PROVISIONAL WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25 **All Wards**

(Pages 75 - 84)

Report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.

This report provides an outline of the 2023/24 work programme (Appendix 1) and provides an update on actions requested at previous meetings (Appendix 2). This report also provides an outline of the 2024/25 provisional work programme (Appendix 3).

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES

The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the provisional future meeting dates for the 2024-25 municipal year:

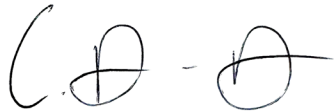
- 6.30pm, Tuesday 16 July 2024
- 6.30pm, Tuesday 8 October 2024
- 6.30pm, Monday 11 November 2024
- 6.30pm, Tuesday 10 December 2024
- 6.30pm, Tuesday 14 January 2025
- 6.30pm, Monday 24 February 2025

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT

AGENDA ENDS

The date of the next meeting will be Tuesday, 16 July 2024 at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE.

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Cabinet Adviser Report on Opening Up Access to Sport for Young People	
REPORT OF Cabinet Adviser on Opening Up Access to Sport for Young People	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools, and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 13 March 2024
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report contains the findings and recommendations of Councillor Camron Aref-Adib in his role as Cabinet Adviser on Youth Mission.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Clarissa Frias, Cabinet Officer London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG clarissa.frias@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Children, Schools, and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Note the report of Councillor Camron Aref-Adib, Cabinet Adviser for Youth Mission; and 2 Discuss and comment on the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser, which will be incorporated in a report to Cabinet. 	



Signed by: Councillor Camron Aref-Adib, Cabinet Adviser on Opening Up Access to Sport for Young People

Date: 28 February 2024

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The Leader and Cabinet of Camden Council established four Cabinet Adviser roles to provide evidence-based recommendations and policymaking support to the Cabinet of the Council. The Cabinet Advisers are appointed by the Leader in conjunction with the wider Cabinet and Committee appointments made each year. The report appointing Cabinet Advisers for the 2023/24 municipal year can be found as a Single Member Decision by the Leader of the Council in June 2023.
- 1.2 Cabinet Advisers are to be appointed yearly to engage, research, and develop recommendations in a particular policy area, working with Cabinet Members, wider elected members, and the community.
- 1.3 The Cabinet Adviser roles are non-executive roles and do not sit as part of the Cabinet. They do not have decision-making powers and are limited to collaboration and recommendation-making to the Cabinet and relevant portfolio holder. Cabinet Advisers are expected to present their findings to Scrutiny in its policy and oversight function to provide opportunities for discussion of their findings and for the relevant Cabinet Member(s) to respond.
- 1.4 Following this, their report will go to Cabinet, alongside a report outlining the views of scrutiny and a response from the relevant Cabinet Member. This will allow Cabinet to consider the report, the views of Scrutiny and the Cabinet Member together; and formally decide whether to accept the recommendations.
- 1.5 Councillor Camron Aref-Adib was appointed as the Cabinet Adviser on Opening up Access to Sport for Young People, to work alongside Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member for Young People and Culture. This report provides the findings and recommendations of Councillor Aref-Adib in support of Camden's youth mission to ensure that every young person has access to economic opportunity to be safe and secure. Sport can play a major role in supporting young people's wellbeing and confidence, and in turn their ability to access economic opportunities. This report is particularly focused on opening up access to sport for those under the age of 18 in Camden by removing the existing barriers to participation. Those under the age of 18 are referred to in this report as 'children', 'youth', and 'young people'.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The benefits of sport and physical activity for young people cannot be overestimated. From the clear health benefits to the role sport can play in tackling anti-social behaviour, such as boosting confidence and teamwork, and increasing employability, participation in regular

sporting activity can have a transformative effect on the lives of young people.

2.2 Indeed, the latest UK Chief Medical Officer's physical activity guidelines state:

"If physical activity were a drug, we would refer to it as a miracle cure, due to the great many illnesses it can prevent and treat".¹

2.3 Meanwhile, the International Labour Organisation has directly highlighted how sport promotes youth employment, by enhancing confidence and developing soft skills ranging from teamwork, dedication, and creativity.² Further, the NGO, Sport and Dev.org, presents research that shows that young people who volunteer or participate in sport often have greater success in gaining employment.³

2.4 Additionally, the British Active Student survey found that 90% of students agreed that involvement in physical activity or sport improved their employability or university prospects.⁴

2.5 This background highlights the critical role that sport can play in advancing Camden's youth mission which aims to ensure that by 2025, every young person has access to economic opportunities to be safe and secure.

2.6 Of course, opening up sport alone cannot secure the success of this mission. Yet, all too often, it is overlooked as a key policy tool in supporting young people and has been labelled by campaigners as an "open goal".⁵

2.7 Despite the clear benefits of physical activity to children, their access to sporting and physical activity opportunities remain unequal. Data from Sport England highlights the significant disparity in the levels of physical activity among children whose families are in the top 10% of annual income in England, compared to those in the bottom 10%:

¹ "UK chief Medical Officers' physical activity guidelines", 2019, *Department of Health and Social Care*

² "How can sport help to promote youth unemployment", 2014, *International Labour Organisation (ILO)*

³ "Sport can build young people's employability skills", 2021, *Sport and dev.org*

⁴ "Physical active students have improved wellbeing and social connections, new survey from UKactive and partners shows", 2020, *Association of colleges*

⁵ " 'An open goal': Sports stars urge policymakers to build on growing investment in sport for development, 2023, *Sport and dev.org*

49.1% of children in the top 10% of income are classed as active, compared to 41.7% of those in the bottom 10%.⁶

- 2.8 Moreover, the inequality in access extends to other demographics including gender. The latest data from Sports England highlights that 49.8% of boys are active, compared to 44.9% of girls.⁷
- 2.9 This analysis shows the scale of the challenge that policymakers face to level the playing field when it comes to access to sport.
- 2.10 This report will analyse the current equality of access for children in Camden to sporting and physical activity opportunities, and use this analysis to recommend plausible and concrete actions that will help level the playing field.
- 2.11 As someone who grew up in Camden and was fortunate enough to regularly participate in sports, including but not limited to being a member of Highgate Newtown Football Club, winning a Camden School Sport's Association tournament in primary school, and visiting and playing cricket at Lord's Cricket Ground with New End School's cricket team, this holds a personal significance for me. Participating in these physical activities had a profound impact on my personal and professional development, and I want to ensure that all children in Camden are afforded the same access to sport that I experienced growing up here.

3. Camden's current sport offer

Camden offers several ways for children to get involved in physical activity, including:

3.1 Provision in schools

Sport and physical activity are offered in schools before, during, and after the school day. Camden's sport and physical activity service provides optional service packages through a traded services agreement with primary schools. Through schools' participation in the Healthy School Programme, Camden's Early Years School and Families Team support schools to meet the curriculum requirement for at least two hours of physical education/activity per week for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2; and a minimum of 90 minutes (with the aim of at least two hours) for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4.

⁶ "Active lives dataset", 2022, Sport England

⁷ "Active lives dataset", 2022, Sport England

3.2 Leisure centres

Greenwich Leisure Limited (GLL), under the brand Better, has six leisure centres in Camden: Pancras Square Leisure, Swiss Cottage Leisure, Talacre Community Sports Centre, Kentish Town Sports Centre, Oasis Sports Centre, and King's Cross Fitness. These leisure centres offer a range of activities from swimming and gymnastics, to football and fitness classes.

3.3 Camden Council's sport and physical activity service

Camden Council's sport and physical activity service provides a year-round range of supervised activities, competitions, community outreach activities, and targeted programmes for girls. The service also provides a sports education programme for 16+ students not in education, employment, or training (NEET).

3.4 Voluntary and community sector

Local sports clubs and community and youth organisations play a major role in providing a quality and safe environment for children to participate in physical activity in Camden. To demonstrate the scale of this activity, in 2022, the Camden Community Centre Consortium (C4) delivered a total of 55,000 sport and physical activity opportunities to Camden residents. Meanwhile, the Young Camden Foundation supports 167 Camden-based youth organisations, of which 38 offer opportunities to participate in sport.

3.5 Multi-use game areas (MUGAs) and outdoor gyms

The full list of multi-use game areas (MUGAs) in Camden's open spaces and housing estates, including the cost associated with use, is set out in the appendix. Of the 83 sites with MUGAs, 64 are free, and this figure goes up to 66 when including those that are free to under 18s at certain times. There are also 13 outdoor gyms in Camden.

3.6 Parks and green spaces

Regent's Park, Parliament Hill and Hampstead Heath, Primrose Hill, Waterlow Park, Kilburn Grange Park, Lincoln Inn's Fields, Cartwright Gardens, Maygrove Peace Park, and Canteloves Gardens offer Camden residents the opportunity to participate in a range of sports. These include football (Regent's Park), tennis (Regent's Park, Parliament Hill, Waterlow Park, Kilburn Grange Park, Lincoln Inn's Fields, and Cartwright Gardens), cricket (Regent's Park), athletics (Parliament Hill), basketball (Argyle Square, Maygrove Peace Park, and Canteloves Gardens), and outdoor gyms (a range of sites including Primrose Hill, Canteloves Gardens, and Maygrove Peace Park). Among these parks and green spaces, Waterlow Park, Kilburn

Grange Park, and Lincoln Inn's Fields are managed by Camden Council.

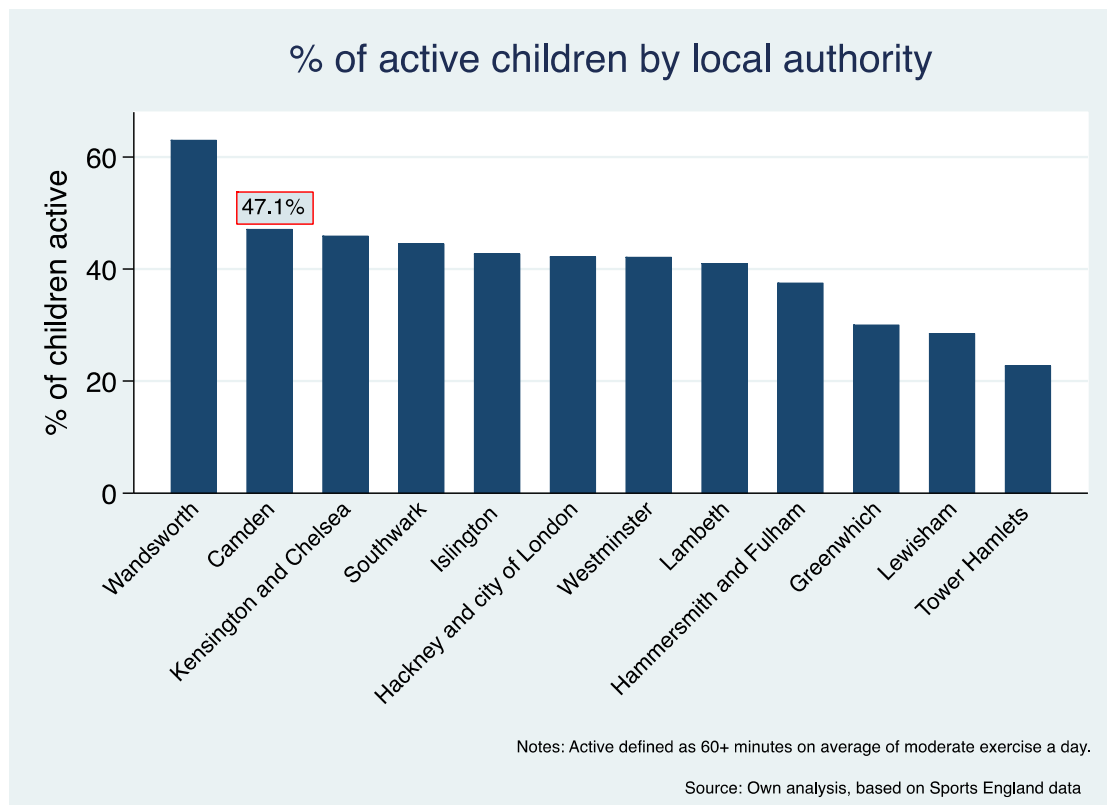
- 3.7 All of the above form part of Camden's physical activity offer. Camden Council's physical activity service brings these different stakeholders together to connect them strategically and improve access to services for children.
- 3.8 The centre of this strategic activity is Pro-Active Camden (PAC), a voluntary strategic partnership body for the development of opportunities for sport and physical activity in Camden.

4. The state of play: An analysis of the data

4.1 How does Camden compare?

Compared to inner city London local authorities, Camden performs well with respect to the overall numbers of active children (defined as, on average, 60+ minutes of moderate exercise a day). Analysing data from Sport England, Figure 1 below highlights that Camden ranks second in terms of the percentage of active children, with only Wandsworth performing better.

Figure 1



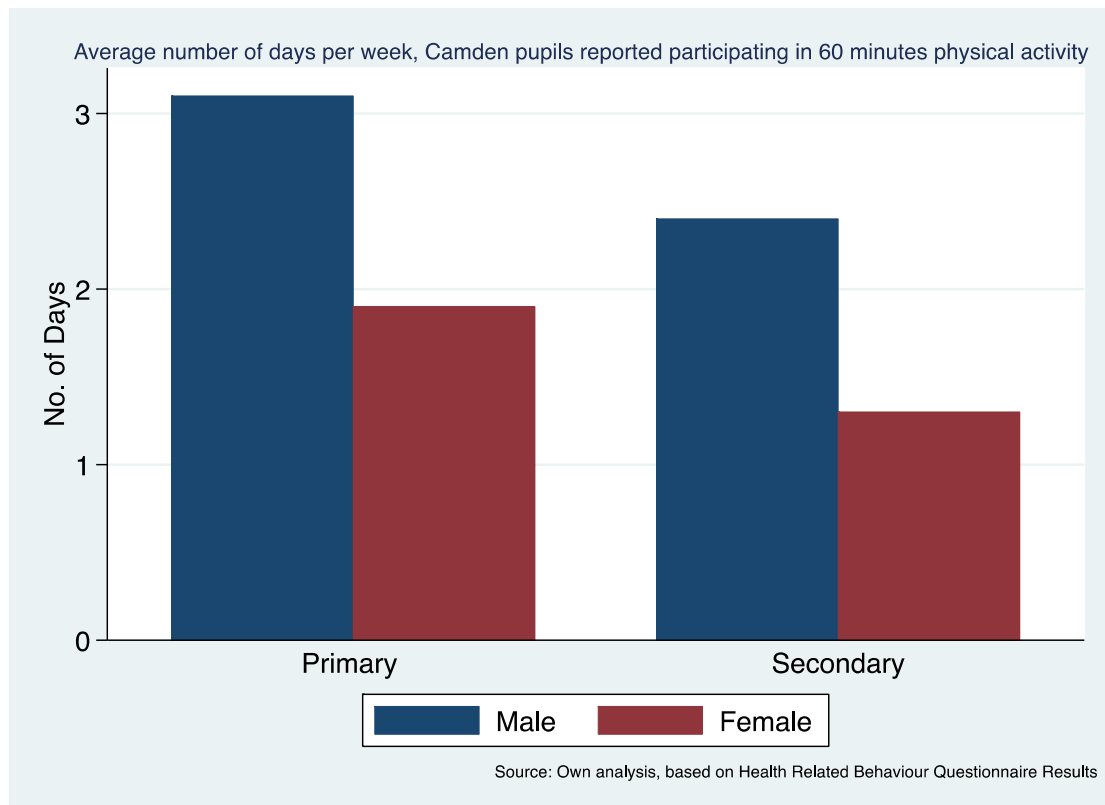
However, digging deeper into the data shows that, whilst the overall outlook may seem positive, significant inequities in access to sport persist in Camden.

4.2 Gender

4.2.1 Similar to the national picture, physical activity amongst girls in Camden is significantly lower than that of boys. An analysis of the results from the Health Behaviour Related Questionnaire, completed by 1307 primary school pupils and 1312 secondary school pupils in 2021/22 in Camden, shows the scale of the challenge.

4.2.2 The results, presented in Figure 2, show that boys participate in physical activity over one day a week more than girls in both primary and secondary school. Furthermore, alarmingly, there is a sharp drop in the amount of physical activity undertaken by both boys and girls between primary and secondary school.

Figure 2

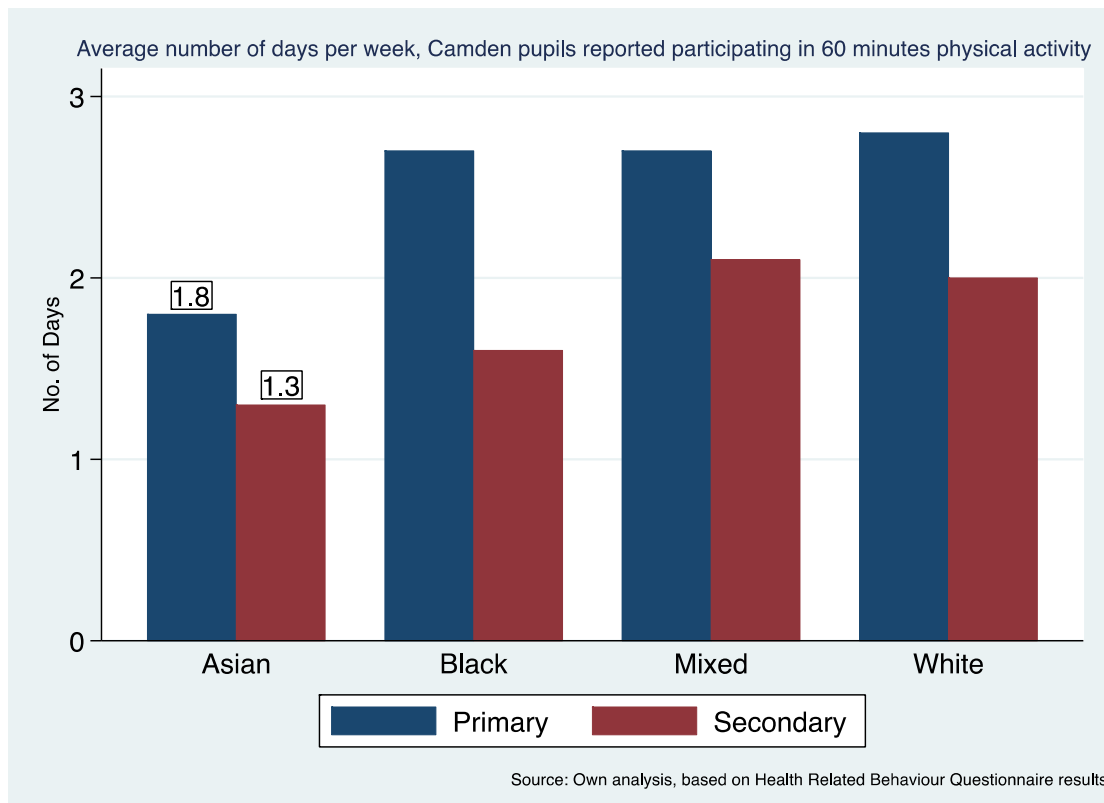


4.2.3 There has also been a worrying drop in the number of Year 6 girls in Camden schools reporting high self-esteem, with just 21% reporting high self-esteem in the latest Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire compared to 39% in 2017. This lack of self-esteem can then have a knock-on effect in reducing participation in activities such as sport.

4.3 Ethnicity

4.3.1 When it comes to ethnicity, the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire also reveals some worrying results. Specifically, participation in physical activity among Asian children in Camden is significantly lower than that of their counterparts in both primary and secondary schools. Asian children in Camden secondary schools report participating in 60 minutes of physical activity just 1.3 days a week.

Figure 3



4.3.2 Delving deeper, the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity is vital to note. For example, of the 38 participants at Camden’s weekly wildcat girls football programme last year, there was not a single participant from a Somali or Bangladeshi background. This intersectionality is explored further in Section 5.6.

4.4 Leisure centre membership

4.4.1 Child membership of Camden leisure centres currently stands at 5,393 members. Alarming, this marks a decline of 34.9% since 2019. This decrease is consistent with a general fall in membership of 38.5% over the same period. Whilst the pandemic undoubtedly contributed to this decline, the decrease in both general and child membership still raises concerns.

4.5 Disability

- 4.5.1 The most recent census data from 2021 show that 15.2% of Camden’s population are considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.5.2 Worryingly, a consultation carried out by the London Inclusion Sports Academy in 2023 found that children living with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) in Camden are three times more likely to be inactive than their peers.
- 4.5.3 This analysis has shown that whilst Camden is performing well relative to our counterparts with respect to the overall numbers of active children, the overarching data masks significant discrepancies between certain groups. The limited physical activity among girls, individuals from Asian backgrounds, and those with disabilities is particularly concerning. This highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions aimed at expanding access to sports for all residents in the borough.

5. **Identifying the barriers**

After conducting roundtables with a variety of local sports clubs, including football, athletics, and hockey; engaging with the London Inclusion Sports Academy; collaborating with schools; and conducting a survey of 147 pupils at Maria Fidelis School and Parliament Hill School, similar key barriers that young people in Camden face when accessing sports came up consistently. These barriers are thematically grouped below. The quotes at the beginning of each subsection are taken from the roundtables and survey responses.

5.1 Affordability

“It’s the kids whose parents have more money or time who can play.”

“My parents have too much stuff to do and can’t afford to buy the kit”.

- 5.1.1 Sport can be expensive and despite the significant efforts of the Council, affordability remains one of the biggest barriers. Research from London Sport this year found that 38% of Londoners stated that the cost-of-living crisis has negatively affected their ability to exercise.⁸ This figure rises to 57% amongst ethnic minority Londoners and 48% among disabled Londoners.
- 5.1.2 Camden has 64 MUGAs that are free, a figure which increases to 66 when you include Coram’s Fields, which is free for under-18s, and

⁸ “Cost-of-living and its impact on sport and physical activity”, 2023, *London Sport*

Castlehaven Community Centre sports pitch, which is free from 4pm to 6pm on weekdays for under-18s. Yet, despite this provision, affordability was mentioned by both local sports clubs and pupils as one of the primary barriers limiting access.

- 5.1.3 Opportunities for free informal sport participation are plentiful, but the challenge is the cost associated with formal sports participations and competitions. Many of the sports clubs in Camden offer sport for young people at discretionary rates or even entirely free. However, this puts significant strain on the clubs, with one remarking that almost their entire funding goes on pitches, which is evidently unsustainable.
- 5.1.4 Furthermore, high upfront costs for equipment in sports such as hockey presents a major challenge in opening up access. Significantly, the impact of equipment cost even spreads to sports with lower upfront costs, such as football, with one local club stating that some children are attending training and games in trainers rather than football boots.
- 5.1.5 Local sports clubs also noted that many of the facilities in Camden are run by third parties as opposed to the Council itself, stating that this could often lead to high prices. There was a broad consensus among clubs that the more facilities run by the Council in-house, the better for affordability.
- 5.1.6 Analysing the table presented in the appendix, it's evident that prices for the MUGAs that charge in Camden vary significantly. The challenge arises from the multitude of providers - GLL, schools, charities, and community centres - each offering different pricing structures, making a uniform pricing system almost impossible.
- 5.1.7 One of the key pricing points is the rates charged by GLL, who runs the leisure centres in Camden. Community clubs are charged a lower rate of £80.40 per hour for MUGAs operated by GLL, whilst those who purchase an annual membership charged £101.30 per hour, and non-members pay £128.50 per hour. This pricing structure generally reflects GLL's model of charging higher rates for groups that are able to pay, in order to subsidise others. However, given the social value that many of our community clubs provide, it can be questioned whether this subsidy is sufficient. For instance, Coram's Fields, undoubtedly one of the highest-quality MUGAs in the borough and managed by the Coram's Fields and Harmsworth Memorial Playground charity, is able to offer its facilities completely free for those under 19, covering costs through charges to adults. Whilst this pricing model requires striking a difficult balance, a review is necessary to determine whether GLL is achieving this balance as effectively as other providers, such as Coram's Fields.
- 5.1.8 Moreover, the sheer range in pricing can make it extremely difficult for consumers, and leave some spaces underutilised. Some operators

offer different prices for off-peak and peak times, whilst others provide concessionary rates for various groups. Additionally, some operators offer memberships, encompassing a wide array of options. This variety can make it very challenging for parents and clubs to determine the most cost-effective choice. Consequently, amidst this confusion, they may choose not to select any option at all.

5.1.9 Ultimately, it is difficult to influence pricing of external providers which highlights why many clubs are frustrated at the limited number of in-house Council-run facilities. Camden is not alone in this regard. Indeed, many of the clubs mentioned that they use facilities in nearby local authorities, experiencing similar frustrations regarding pricing there.

5.1.10 Where we can influence pricing, particularly in our leisure centres, it is imperative that we keep this under constant review. The broad model of subsidising young people and community organisations, through higher prices to adults, is the right one. However, questions remain whether we should go further by providing greater subsidies, as well as simplifying our pricing structure, to support young people and community organisations to make sports more affordable and available.

5.2 Access

“How can we build a community here if we have to play in Hackney or Enfield?”

5.2.1 The difficulty in securing facilities locally was raised by a number of local clubs.

5.2.2 Local clubs were frustrated that they felt they were not being given priority in securing pitch access in Camden and neighbouring local authorities, despite the social value that these clubs provide by offering young people the opportunity to play competitive sport for free or at a very low cost.

5.2.3 This has led to some clubs being forced to use facilities as far as Enfield and Hackney, which in turn acts as a barrier to participation for the local population in Camden.

5.2.4 It is imperative to ensure that our local clubs, which are doing so much good work in the community when it comes to opening up access to sports, have access to the facilities that enable them to do so.

5.2.5 During the 2022 Camden Youth Review, one theme that emerged from the workshops was the impression that young people had:

facilities and space for sports activities in Camden are not shared fairly among the community.⁹

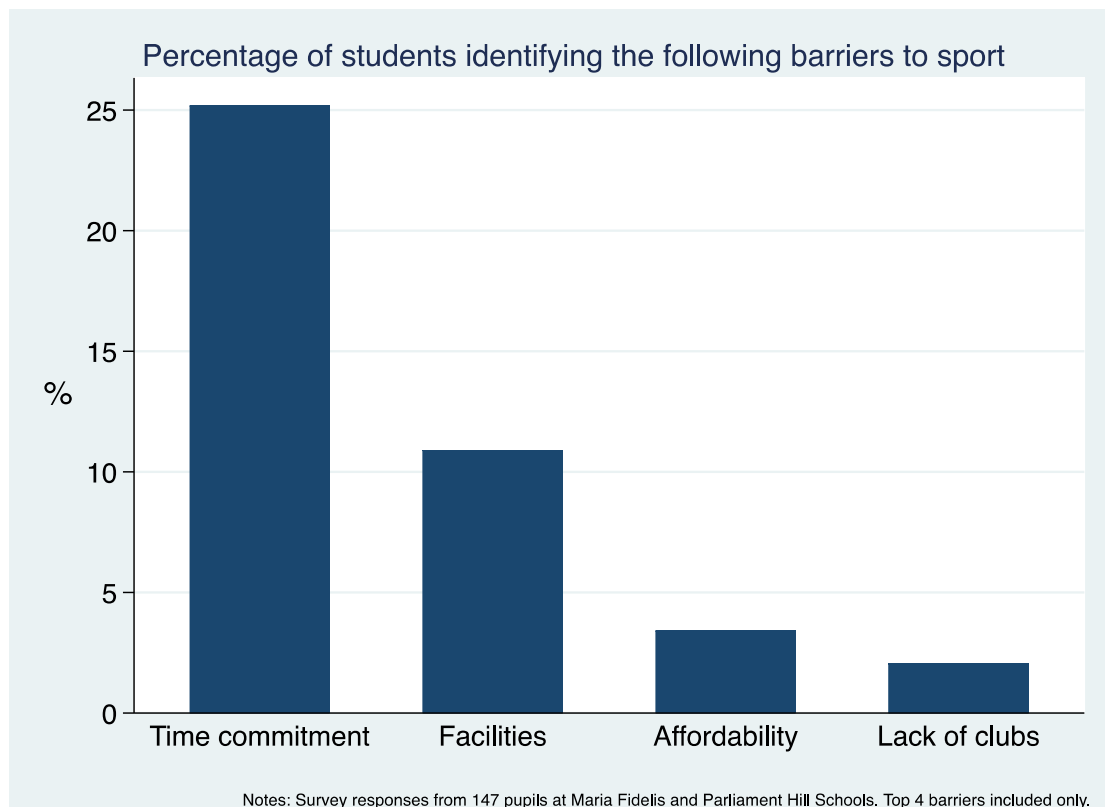
5.3 Quality of facilities

“The state of the MUGAs in Islington is much better.”

5.3.1 The quality of the facility is really important for young people. For instance, there are certain sports that many children do not want to play on a tarmac surface.

5.3.2 The lack and quality of facilities was the second highest barrier to sports participation identified by students from Maria Fidelis and Parliament Hill, behind only time commitment, as shown in figure 4.

Figure 4



5.3.3 In a roundtable discussion, one club noted the poor quality of the surfaces of Camden's MUGAs as a barrier to informal sports participation. Indeed, the Football Foundation's Camden plan report, published in 2019, identified 10 MUGAs in Camden in need of improvement. These were the MUGAs at Acland Burghley and Regent High schools, Malden Road MUGA, Castlehaven Community Centre, Kilburn Grange Park, Bucklebury MUGA, Maygrove Peace

⁹ Cabinet member for young people, equalities and cohesion, "Youth review: Findings and recommendations for a new Camden offer for young people", 2022

Park, Lymington Road Estate MUGA, Alexandra and Ainsworth Rowley Estate MUGA, and Peckwater Estate MUGA.¹⁰ Of these MUGAs, Lymington, Kilburn Grange Park, and Alexandra and Ainsworth were renewed in 2023.

- 5.3.4 Furthermore, there are a limited number of MUGAs that are 3G or 4G. These are artificial surfaces that replicate a good standard natural turf pitch. In Camden, there are only 5 facilities with 3G MUGAs, compared to 15 in Islington. Research from the Football Foundation suggests that these surfaces can increase levels of use up to 20 times compared to non-3G surfaces, demonstrating the economic as well as social return on investment they provide.¹¹ It must be acknowledged that this is football-focused in terms of usage, given that 3G is not suitable for other sports such as basketball.
- 5.3.5 Yet, there are other non-tarmac surfaces, such as astro turf, that are compatible with football and a wide array of other sports. The lack of astro turf in the borough was specifically identified by a number of pupils at Maria Fidelis in their survey responses.
- 5.3.6 It was also noted in one roundtable with local sports clubs that some of the best facilities in the borough are within private schools, and that more could be done to push them to open up access to these facilities.
- 5.3.7 Talacre Sports Centre has a world-class gymnastics facility and it is no wonder that demand for it is oversubscribed. This oversubscription will be partly addressed through a 20% expansion of provision at the site via the Council's successful levelling-up funding bid.
- 5.3.8 Quality matters for take-up, and whilst Camden has some outstanding facilities, notably Talacre, it is clear that the state of our MUGAs across the borough can be significantly improved.

5.4 Safety

"Getting children to the club is a nightmare in winter."

- 5.4.1 Clubs noted that in winter months, it is especially difficult to get children to the facilities for after-school activities with parents concerned for their safety.
- 5.4.2 One club noted that many children's parents are unable to attend competitions, tournaments, or other events with them, and therefore a coach is often required to meet the children prior to the event to

¹⁰ "Local football facility plan: Camden", 2019, *Football Foundation*

¹¹ "Local football facility plan: Camden", 2019, *Football Foundation*;

accompany them. This puts added strain on the club and limits the number of events they can facilitate access to. The 2022 Camden Youth Review identified the timing of activities as extremely important for young people.¹²

5.4.3 Addressing safety concerns in terms of travel to and from sporting venues is critical to opening up access to sport.

5.5 SEND provision

“We need to make sure we are reaching the corners of society.”

5.5.1 There is a lot of good work in Camden, providing sporting opportunities for children with SEND. Camden Disability Sport and Physical Activity Network plays a key role in coordinating this.

5.5.2 In particular, the football offer via Camden Disabled Football Club (16+), London Inclusion Sport Academy, and the Camden and Islington Youth Football League has strong take-up, as well as Camden’s annual disability access day.

5.5.3 However, it was clear from discussions with members of Camden’s Disability Sport and Physical Activity Network that there is a need for more provision, particularly during holidays and weekends. There was a consensus that much of what is being offered in terms of SEND sporting provision for young people in Camden is good, but there simply isn’t enough of it.

5.5.4 Moreover, one member of Camden’s Disability Sport and Physical Activity Network noted that provision beyond football needs to be expanded, as a priority.

5.5.5 GLL has a critical role to play here. Some of the SEND services that were offered regularly at our leisure centres before the pandemic have been cut, such as Active for All at Talacre, which used to have over 30 attendees regularly (now Active for All is just an annual event). It is imperative that our leisure centres are able to provide suitable provision for SEND children.

5.5.6 Concerns were raised by members of the Disability Sport and Physical Activity Network that the SEND provision at GLL-run leisure centres is limited to none.

5.5.7 The key for SEND provision is to scale up projects that are already working and ensure that our leisure centres are able to provide the specialist provision that is necessary. SEND sporting provision should

¹² Cabinet member for young people, equalities and cohesion, “Youth review: Findings and recommendations for a new Camden offer for young people”, 2022

be able to be accessed from the general and main sporting providers, not just through specialist initiatives and programmes sitting outside of the main sporting infrastructure.

5.6 Confidence, enjoyment, and social value

“I want to be with my friends then I will feel comfortable.”

“The ball never comes to me.”

- 5.6.1 Sometimes overlooked, enjoyment itself is critical to opening up access to sport. If a young person does not enjoy or is not confident at participating in sport, no matter what you do to tackle the other barriers, they are unlikely to take it up.
- 5.6.2 In Camden, the data show that enjoyment in physical activity varies greatly between primary and secondary schools, and especially amongst different ethnic groups. In Camden’s Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HBRQ) from 2021/2022, just 65% of Asian children in secondary school reported enjoying participating in physical activity, compared to 81% of white and 78% of black pupils.
- 5.6.3 Moreover, Asian children account for just 10% of Camden’s leisure centre membership in the 0-12 years age bracket, despite accounting for 17% of the total population, demonstrating the impact that this lack of enjoyment could be making.
- 5.6.4 Meanwhile, the drop in reported enjoyment of all ethnic groups between primary and secondary schools is significant. At primary school level, 87% of children in Camden report enjoying physical activity, dropping to 77% in secondary school.
- 5.6.5 Mirroring this change in participation, one local sports club reported a high drop-out rate of girls at the club as they move from primary to secondary school, although of course this could be for a range of reasons not limited to enjoyment alone.
- 5.6.6 Evidently, this lack of enjoyment of physical activity amongst certain groups is acting as a major barrier to participation, contributing to some of the results presented in Section 4. In particular, around lower physical activity levels within the Asian community.
- 5.6.7 What is particularly noteworthy is that the biggest barrier to sport identified by students at Maria Fidelis and Parliament Hill was the time commitment, as shown in Figure 4. 25% of all respondents said that time commitment was a barrier to them participating in more physical activity. However, not a single boy identified time commitment as a barrier, meaning this percentage is entirely comprised of girls’ responses. In fact, nearly one in three girls stated that time commitment was stopping them from taking part in more physical

activity. This view could be partly driven by a lack of enthusiasm for sports, viewing it as something that takes up time, rather than something to look forward to and enjoy. It could also be driven by other factors such as changing requirements. Previous research has highlighted that while boys can play sports such as football at break time in their uniform or the clothes they are already wearing, girls often feel the need or want to change before playing sports at break time, which creates an additional barrier.¹³

- 5.6.8 To create enjoyment where it does not currently exist, and to maintain it through the transition to secondary from primary school, is extremely difficult. This requires radical thinking around issues such as coaching and mentoring, and looking beyond traditional sports to alternative ones.

6. Breaking down the barriers: Policy recommendations

The following six recommendations are put forward to open up access to sport for those under the age of 18 in Camden. While these recommendations do not address all the barriers to physical activity participation for young people, they represent a critical starting point. The recommendations are ordered from the low-hanging fruit first, i.e., the easiest to achieve, to the hardest to achieve last.

- 6.1 Revamping our MUGAs: Reform our audit process and prioritise resurfacing those in need
- 6.1.1 Of the 10 MUGAs identified in the Football Foundation's Camden Local Plan in 2019, only Alexandra and Ainsworth Rowley Estate MUGA has been resurfaced with a 3G surface.
- 6.1.2 The Council needs to urgently reform the audit process assessing the state of our MUGAs. Currently, the only requirement is that the MUGAs pass health and safety conditions. Functionality and whether the MUGA is in a fit state to encourage use is not considered, allowing our MUGAs to deteriorate badly and become unused. The level of deterioration that the MUGA in Kilburn Grange Park reached before refurbishment is a perfect example of this. The surface was uneven, falling apart, and deteriorated to the point where the Council had to cease taking evening bookings. It was only recently that it was finally resurfaced.
- 6.1.3 The audit process must also acknowledge inequalities within the borough. Of the 8 MUGAs in estates and green spaces identified as

¹³ The Guardian, "By secondary school it's too late' – readers on promoting girls' school sport", November 2017

priorities for investment by the Football Foundation (presented in Section 5.3.3), over half are in our most deprived wards.

- 6.1.4 We also need a greater emphasis on non-tarmac surfaces. We know that there are certain sports children do not want to play on a tarmac surface. Of the respondents at Maria Fidelis, 20% specifically mentioned the lack of astro turf, i.e., a non-tarmac playing surface, as a primary barrier to sports participation. In this regard, Camden is significantly behind our neighbouring boroughs. Islington has three times as many MUGAs with 3G surfaces (non-tarmac) as Camden.
- 6.1.5 By improving the state of our MUGAs, particularly on housing estates, we can encourage informal sports participation. However, considering the pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), funding for improving the MUGAs on our estates is tight. It is important that we explore alternative funding sources, such as through the Football Foundation, Sport England, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding, and S106 funding. In the words of one community club, we need to ‘teach kids to have high expectations’, and the current state of some of our MUGAs does not fulfil this goal, as illustrated by the picture below of the MUGA at Spencer Rise Estate in my own ward, taken in December 2023.



Notes: Spencer Rise Estate MUGA, December 2023

6.2 Remodel the Camden Active Mark (CAM) to help with access and affordability

- 6.2.1 The Camden Active Mark (CAM) is a progressive framework for organisations providing sporting and physical activity opportunities in Camden. It aims to support community organisations in providing quality sport and physical activity and has three levels, dependent on the activities of the club: basic (known as development), middle (known as beacon), and advanced (known as beacon+). The benefits of having a Camden Active Mark are listed on the Council's website as follows:
- Opportunity to review current policies and processes to make potential improvements.
 - Increased chances of successful funding applications.
 - Receive a letter of support from Camden Council Sport and Physical Activity Team.
 - Be part of a collective effort to ensure sport and physical activities are safe for residents of all ages and backgrounds.
 - Officer support and guidance to achieve each level.
 - Support for identifying and applying for funding grants.
 - Activities promoted through partners and colleagues for delivery.
 - Access to appropriate training and resources.
 - Included within official Camden marketing and promotion.
 - Opportunities to be part of London Youth Games representing Camden.
 - Part of an exclusive email list to receive information on funding, programmes, and initiatives first.
- 6.2.2 At present, there are just nine sports clubs with a CAM, suggesting either that clubs are unaware of it or feel that the benefits to it are minimal. There are challenges around administering the CAM and keeping it up to date, and whilst there used to be a dedicated council officer responsible for the CAM, there has been a vacancy for this position over the last 3 years.
- 6.2.3 The CAM should be drastically remodelled to help tackle two of the critical barriers to sports participation: affordability and access.
- 6.2.4 The CAM should be made simpler with levels easier to understand than 'development', 'beacon', and 'beacon+'. Most importantly, the CAM needs to grow in outreach and have tangible benefits to clubs through access and affordability.
- 6.2.5 The Council should work with sports facilities in the borough to help secure access at affordable rates for clubs with the CAM, based on the social value these sports and youth clubs provide to the community. This support would then incentivise, in a ripple-effect,

more clubs to apply to have CAM status. It will also have the twin effect of ensuring all our facilities, whether run by GLL or other providers, are used at high capacity throughout the year.

6.2.6 By reforming the CAM along these lines, whilst also expanding it, the Council will create a clear structure and pathway to setting up a local sports or youth club, identified as a key challenge that faced many local organisations when they launched.

6.2.7 It will also help secure access at affordable rates to our facilities for our local clubs who are delivering so much for young people in the borough and ensure they are on a sustainable footing.

6.3 Scale what's working, particularly around SEND provision

6.3.1 There is plenty that Camden is doing right in the sector, with many fantastic projects underway. There is no need to reinvent the wheel and if we can appropriately scale some of these, this will go a long way in opening up access. The key area where we need to scale is our SEND provision.

6.3.2 From gymnastics for children with special needs at Talacre, to football sessions at Camden and Islington Youth Football Club for children with SEND, and from the disability swimming sessions at our leisure centres to London Inclusion Sports Academy's sports open days, there is much to celebrate regarding the existing SEND provision in the borough. However, ultimately the challenge lies in the fact that there is not enough of it. The Council should work with providers like the London Inclusion Sports Academy to scale up their provision for SEND children, whilst also holding GLL to account on their specialist provision for SEND in our leisure centres. This also extends to holiday provision, with a legacy report published by the Young Camden Foundation, recommending that Camden Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme should have a greater focus on SEND inclusion.¹⁴

6.3.3 One particularly good news is the successful £7.7 million levelling-up funding bid by Camden Council, which includes expanding the outstanding gymnastics facility at Talacre. This will result in more gymnastics provision in Camden, including for SEND children, in one of the most oversubscribed facilities in the borough.

6.3.4 A further project to consider scaling up is a pilot project focused on girls' physical activity taking place in Hawley Primary School. This project, co-designed and delivered by Camden's Early Years School and Families Team, Sports and Physical Activity Service, and Hawley Primary School Senior Leadership Team, aims to reduce the number

¹⁴ "Camden summer holiday activities and food programme: Legacy report", 2021, *Young Camden Foundation*

of young girls dropping out of physical activity participation through a preventative approach. The project targets reducing the impact of the transition from primary to secondary schools, where we see a large drop-out rate of girls in physical activity, as shown in Section 4.2.2.

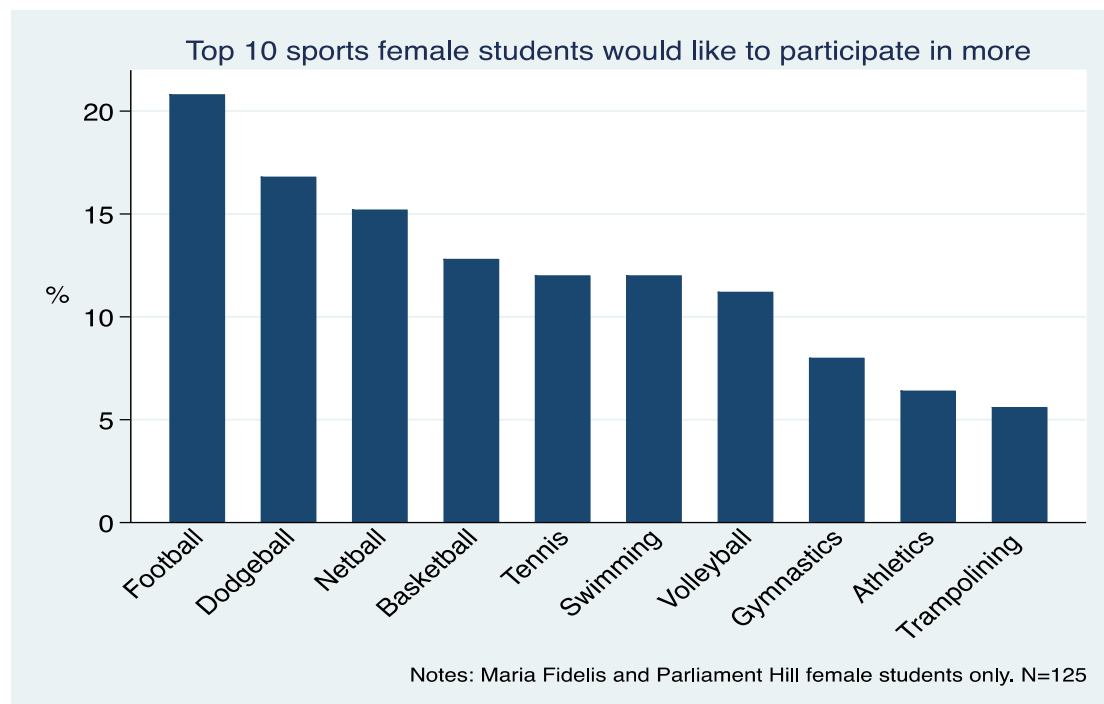
- 6.3.5 From September 2022, all Year 5 girls (15 pupils) at Hawley Primary School have been attending 8-10 physical activity sessions per term. These sessions are conducted by a female multi-sports coach during school tutor time from 3pm to 4pm. The group had the opportunity to pick different sports or activities they'd like to try over the year, delivered in partnership with local activity providers which included boxing, skateboarding, and football. Key to the project is the choice it provides the girls and the range of activities they can undertake. After each new sport and activity, the girls have an opportunity to reflect on its effect on their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 6.3.6 The project ran in the 2022/23 school year, and the monitoring and evaluation shows that the project has had a lasting positive effect on the girls, with overwhelming positive responses recorded in terms of increased enjoyment in physical activity (73%), increased confidence in trying new physical activity (80%), and physical activity skills (80%). Teachers and parents also remarked that some of the quieter girls came into their own growing in confidence and stepping up in classroom situations.
- 6.3.7 Scaling and refining this project, such as by incorporating sessions focused on friendships and relationships, will undoubtedly pose a challenge. Nevertheless, it presents an exciting opportunity to address the high drop-out rate of physical activity observed among girls in this age group.
- 6.4 Spearhead a recruitment drive for coaches from underrepresented groups
 - 6.4.1 Camden needs to consistently evaluate our workforce and the role models we are providing. If we aim to increase the participation of Asian children in physical activity, as highlighted in Section 4.3 to be significantly below their counterparts in Camden, we need to recruit more Asian coaches and mentors.
 - 6.4.2 This is a significant challenge. In Camden's Sports Education and Training Programme, which targets 16-19-year-olds aspiring for careers in sport and physical activity, only 2% of participants in 2022 were from Asian backgrounds. However, this figure has increased to 7% in the 2023 intake.

- 6.4.3 Camden is not unique in facing this challenge. Indeed, latest data from the FA show that just 2.7% of football coaches in England were from Asian backgrounds.¹⁵
- 6.4.4 I am pleased that following discussions with Camden officers in 2022 and 2023, the Council is currently looking into the reasons for the underrepresentation of Camden’s South Asian community in taking up local sports offers.
- 6.4.5 We need a drive to promote more local Asian male and female role models in sports, prioritising community outreach into our underrepresented communities, whilst also ensuring that all children are aware of Camden’s Sports Education and Training programme offer.

6.5 Modernise through alternative sports delivery

6.5.1 A diversified sports offer is critical to opening up access to sport. Figure 5 below presents the top 10 sports that female students at Maria Fidelis and Parliament Hill stated they wanted to participate more in. Admittedly, traditional sports remain very popular in the borough. Football is the sport that the largest number of girls want to take part in more. However, it is crucial that we expand our physical activity offer to alternative sports if we are to increase uptake amongst those children not currently active.

Figure 5



¹⁵ “A year 3 update on our Asian inclusion strategy”, 2023, *The FA*

- 6.5.2 The responses from the 125 female students demonstrate the vast breadth of sports that are appealing to young people. In total, 19 different sports were identified as sports the students would like to take part more in, and Figure 5 presents just a snapshot of this.
- 6.5.3 Many of these are less traditional sports such as dodgeball and trampolining, where our offer is limited in Camden. The range of responses highlights the need to consistently innovate and modernise our sports offer in Camden.
- 6.5.4 The popularity of dodgeball is a particularly interesting area to look at. This could be related to the low barrier to participation – minimal equipment is required and there is unlikely to be a necessity to change before playing, making it a low-effort sport to engage in. There could be a correlation between the popularity of this sport with girls who also identified time commitment as their biggest barrier to participation in sport, highlighted in Figure 4.
- 6.5.5 Another area to look at is the delivery of a BMX track. Camden does not currently have a track and a report on open spaces in Camden from 2014 identified the benefits and demand for a BMX track in the borough. This is not just to increase physical wellbeing but also as a safe space for young people to socialise. However, given this report is from 2014, a more up-to-date needs assessment should be carried out before any such track is developed in Camden.
- 6.5.6 Furthermore, as part of the Hawley Primary School project discussed in Section 6.3.3, girls in Year 5 at the school took part in an activity with a skateboarding company. This proved extremely popular despite few of the girls having taken part in the activity before, highlighting the benefits from engaging children in alternative sports and the growing demand for skate parks in the borough.
- 6.5.7 The Council should also look at restoring existing facilities that provide less traditional sports, such as the climbing wall at Swiss Cottage leisure centre.
- 6.5.8 Sports clubs can act as a second family to children. It is vital that those children who might not enjoy the most popular traditional sports, such as football, are able to find alternative clubs and activities that they enjoy. Modernising our sports delivery can make this happen. There are plenty of avenues to explore and the potential delivery of a BMX track, additional skate parks, and restoring Swiss Cottage leisure centre's climbing wall are good places to start.
- 6.6 Explore opportunities for an 11-a-side 3G football pitch in Camden as and when additional land and development opportunities become available.

- 6.6.1 Football remains the most popular sport in the country, and its popularity has increased significantly among girls, not least shown by the responses from female students at Maria Fidelis and Parliament Hill shown in Figure 5.
- 6.6.2 The lack of 11-a-side football provision in the borough will not be solved overnight, and this recommendation is very much one for the long-term.
- 6.6.3 Camden currently does not have any 11-a-side 3G football pitches, with Coram's Fields the largest football site in the borough split into three 8-a-side pitches. Neighbouring Islington has three full sized 3G pitches (two at Market Road and one at Whittington Park). Westminster has one pitch of this type at the Paddington Recreation Ground. In fact, Camden is the only inner-city London borough without at least one standard figuration 11-a-side 3G facility.
- 6.6.4 Whilst there is significant excess demand for 11-a-side facilities across north London, we are fortunate that the facilities in Islington are close to the Camden border. The Council does retain the freehold of the football pitches at Chase Lodge in Mill Hill, which are under a long-term leasehold to Hampstead Town Football Club.
- 6.6.5 Nevertheless, the lack of provision for 11-a-side football within Camden remains an issue. Parliament Hill football pitch has consistently experienced drainage issues, restricting its availability. Although the Parliament Hill master plan aims to tackle this problem, as of now, no funding has been allocated for its implementation. Regent's Park currently has one hybrid pitch (which combines natural and synthetic grass) and plans to install a second one in the spring. It would be beneficial for Parliament Hill to analyse the successes of these pitches.
- 6.6.6 We face an acute housing crisis in Camden and the priority for land development should always be the provision of affordable housing. However, as land and development opportunities become available, the Council should also bear in mind the lack of 11-a-side provision and explore potential avenues for the development of an 11-a-side 3G football pitch, which will help ease the excess demand and open up access.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Tackling the inequalities in access to sport for young people in Camden will have far-reaching benefits. From enhancing both physical and mental health to fostering employment skills through participation in physical activities, expanding access to sports is a readily available opportunity too frequently overlooked in policy.

- 7.2 There is much that Camden is getting right in boosting young people's sports participation, not least shown by the fact that we are second in inner city London in terms of the percentage of active children.
- 7.3 However, much remains to be done, as underscored by the disparities in gender, ethnicity, and disability evident in children's sports participation in Camden. This report has delved deeper into these inequalities and produced a series of recommendations. These recommendations aim to break down barriers to sports, ensuring that access is opened up to more young people, thus bringing along numerous added benefits. The demand from young people is evident, – over half (53%) of respondents at Maria Fidelis and Parliament Hill schools stated that they wanted to participate in more physical activities. Camden must tap into and harness this demand.

8. Acknowledgments

- 8.1 There are a host of local voluntary and community sector organisations, coaches, and teachers who I would like to thank for their ideas and input on this report, in particular:

Tom Coughlan, Head of Communities, London Inclusion Sports Academy

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Camden United FC

Camden and Islington United FC (CANDI)

Hampstead and Westminster Hockey Club

Highgate Harriers

Maria Fidelis School

Parliament Hill School

West Hampstead Hockey Club

- 8.2 I would also like to thank the following council officers for their support: Oliver Jones, Justin Hill, Nigel Robinson, Ben Dorsett, Deborah Bush, Mike Mortlock, Liz West, and Clarissa Frias.
- 8.3 Finally, I would like to thank Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member for Young People and Culture, for her advice and guidance during my role; as well as Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet

Member for Best Start for Children and Families, for his support in connecting me to meetings since my election in May 2022, particularly on a topic I am extremely passionate about.

9. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Director of Finance has been consulted and comments are incorporated within the body of the report.

10. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the report and has no comments to add to the report.

11. Environmental Implications

All the programmes and work outlined in this report have positive environmental implications for Camden and are built from, or strongly aligned with, the Camden Climate Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and Clean Air Action Plan.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 - List of multi-use game areas (MUGAs) in Camden's open spaces and housing estates.

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Appendix 1 - List of multi-use game areas (MUGAs) in Camden's open spaces and housing estates

Feature	Landowner	Site	Fees/charges
MUGA	Housing	Abbey Road Estate - Sandbourne (Langtry Walk)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Agar Grove	Free
MUGA	Housing (managed as public park)	Alexandra & Ainsworth Estate - 43 Langley Walk / Rowley Way	Free
MUGA	Housing	Amphill Square Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Augustus House Estate 1-60 (across, Stanhope St)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Bourne Estate - Nigel House 1-48 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Bray House Estate - Bray 1-3, 7-161 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Broadfield Estate 1	Free
MUGA	Housing	Burnham House Estate 1-161 Burnham (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Clarence Way Estate - Candida Court Playground	Free
MUGA	Housing	Clarence Way Estate (Castlehaven) - Lorraine Court - off the estate - near the church	Free
MUGA	Housing	Constable House	Free
MUGA	Housing	Curnock St Estate - Conningsborough / Ravenscar / Trimdon	Free
MUGA	Housing	Curnock St Estate - Goldthorpe / Mexborough / Darfield	Free
MUGA	Housing	Dorney Estate 1-158 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Dudley Court Estate 1-93 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Dunboyne Road Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Goldington St Estate - Cecil Rhodes House 1-	Free

		72 (cons) (Pancras Road)	
MUGA	Housing	Harben Road Estate 1	Free
MUGA	Housing	Highgate New Town Estate (also known as Whittington Estate)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Hillgrove Estate 1 - Tayler Court - Freeling House 9-18 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Hillgrove Estate 2 - Dobson Close 11-78 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Ingestre Road Estate - Grange Mill / Grangemill 1-43 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Kenbrook House Estate 1-95 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Kilburn Gate Estate 1-93 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Kiln Place Estate 1-164 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Kingsgate Road Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Lamble Street Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Lawn Road (Belsize Park Area)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Lismore Circus Extension	Free
MUGA	Housing	Lymington Road Estate - Crown Close	Free
MUGA	Housing	Malden Road	Free
MUGA	Housing	Mayford Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Mortimer Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	NW5 Play Project - Islip Street	Free
MUGA	Housing	Ossulston Estate 1 - Levita House 1-21 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Peckwater Estate – Appleford	Free
MUGA	Housing	Primrose Hill Court Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Raglan Street Estate - Monmouth House 1-50 (cons)	Free

MUGA	Housing	Regents Park Estate 1 - Bucklebury House	Free
MUGA	Housing	Regents Park Estate 1 - Pangbourne 1-28	Free
MUGA	Housing	South End Close Estate - Block B	Free
MUGA	Housing	Spencer Rise Estate - Churchill Road - 1-11 (cons) Churchill Road / 50-90 (even) Spencer Rise Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	St Silas Street Estate 2 (North) - Halstow	Free
MUGA	Housing	Taplow House 1-161 (cons)	Free
MUGA	Housing	Templar House Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Torriano Estate	Free
MUGA	Housing	Weedington Road Estate 2 - 2-104 Wellesley Road	Free
MUGA	Housing	West Kentish Town 1 (L)	Free
MUGA	Parks	St Giles Churchyard	Free
MUGA	Parks	Argyle Square Gardens	Free
MUGA	Parks	Wicklow Street Open Space	Free
MUGA	Parks	Cumberland Old Market Open Space	Free
MUGA	Parks	Three Point Park	Free
MUGA	Parks	Talacre Open Space	Free
MUGA	Parks	Kilburn Grange Park	Free
MUGA	Parks	Sumatra Road Open Space	Free
MUGA	Parks	Iverson Road Open Space	Free
MUGA	Parks	Maygrove Peace Park	Free
MUGA	Tenant Managed Properties	Ferdinand Estate - Rugmere House - Tottonhall	Free
MUGA	Tenant Managed Properties	Godwin & Crowndale Street Estate - Godwin Court	Free

MUGA	Housing	Westcroft Way Estate 1 - Kent Hall	Free
MUGA	Housing	Willingham Close Estate / Kennistoun House Estate 1-62	Free
MUGA	Tenant Managed Properties	Maiden Lane Estate - St James Gate	Free
MUGA x 3	Not managed by LBC	Coram's Fields	Free of charge to those under the age of 19 years and at a 50% discount for 20-25-year-olds. / Adult pitch bookings start at £120 p/hr.
MUGA	Not managed by LBC	Castlehaven Open Space	Free for under-18s, 16:00 to 18:00, Monday-Friday. £40-55 p/hr weekdays, £65 p/h weekends
MUGA	Not managed by LBC	Fortune Green Play Centre	£40 p/hr
MUGA	School - Not managed by LBC	The Camden School for Girls	£50 p/hr, available from 9.00am to 3.00pm Saturday and Sunday.
MUGA	Not managed by LBC	Calthorpe Project Community Garden	Between 09:00 to 17:30 - £40 p/hr whilst between 17.30 to 21.30 - £65 p/hr
MUGA	Not managed by LBC	Somers Town Community Sports Centre	Full Outdoor MUGA - 3 Pitches 60 x 19 £120 p/hr and Outdoor MUGA Pitch 37 x 19 Weekday £40.00 p/hr
MUGA	GLL	Canteloves Gardens	Non - member £128.50 p/hr Member £101.30 p/hr Community Club rate £80.40 p/hr
Sports Court	GLL	Talacre Open Space	Non - member £128.50 p/hr Member £101.30 p/hr Community Club rate £80.40 p/hr
MUGA	GLL	Swiss Cottage Open Space - Avenue Road	Non - member £128.50 p/hr Member £101.30 p/hr Community Club rate £80.40 p/hr

MUGA	Parks (Managed by Fitzrovia Youth in Action)	The Warren	Off peak £60 p/hr Peak Hours from £105 p/hr
Netball pitch	School - Not managed by LBC	Parliament Hill School	Prices from £30 p/hr for evening and weekend bookings. Holiday bookings - daily rate from £350 per day.
MUGA	School - Not managed by LBC	Acland Burghley	Prices from £33 p/hr for evening and weekend bookings. Holiday bookings - daily rate from £350 per day.
Football pitch	School - Not managed by LBC	Parliament Hill School	Prices from £40 p/hr for evening and weekend bookings. Holiday bookings - daily rate from £350 per day.
MUGA	School - Not managed by LBC	Fleet Road Primary School managed by - Kajima	Standard - £82.62 p/hr Concession - £55.47 p/hr Weekends rate £55.47 p/hr Discount approx. 33% for partner clubs and weekends
MUGA	School - Not managed by LBC	La Sainte Union School	£20 p/hr Block book 10 sessions, £15 p/hr
MUGA (9-side football pitch)	School - Not managed by LBC	Haverstock School	Prices from £70 p/hr
MUGA	School - Not managed by LBC	William Ellis School	N/A

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
<p>REPORT TITLE Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families’ response on the investigation into the impact of Covid-19 on the language development of Early Years and Key Stage 1 children in Camden</p>	
<p>REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families</p>	
<p>FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee</p>	<p>DATE 13 March 2024</p>
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>In February 2023, a scrutiny panel report which investigated the impact of Covid-19 on the language development of Early Years and Key Stage 1 children in Camden was presented to the CSF Scrutiny Committee. The scrutiny panel was made up of elected members and co-opted members from the CSF Scrutiny Committee. The report requested that the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families prepare a response to the recommendations from the investigation and to report back to the committee.</p> <p>The findings of this enquiry revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic had led to a language delay in Early Years in Camden, which could have ramifications for later academic attainment and is likely to disproportionately impact disadvantaged children. This report contains the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families’ response to these recommendations.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Panel’s inquiry and praise for the service was gratefully received. Most recommendations are agreed upon. Several recommendations advocate for key members to communicate to national government about identified areas for improvement and/or additional funding. In light of this, Cllr Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, is actively engaging in ongoing discussions with Cllr Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council, on how best to take these recommendations forward.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p>	

Contact Officer:

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RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is asked to note the report.



Signed:

Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families

Date: 1 March 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. In February 2023, a report which investigated the impact of Covid-19 on the language development of Early Years and Key Stage 1 children in Camden was presented to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee. The findings of this enquiry revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic had induced a language delay in Early Years in Camden, which could have ramifications for later academic attainment, and which was likely to disproportionately impact disadvantaged children.
- 1.2. Following their enquiry, the panel outlined a series of 13 recommendations, which are listed in a table in Appendix 1, alongside the Cabinet Member's response on how these recommendations are being taken forward.
- 1.3. Several recommendations advocate for key members – The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee – to communicate to national government about identified areas for improvement and/or additional funding. In light of this, Cllr Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, is actively engaging in ongoing discussions with Cllr Georgia Gould, Leader of the Council, on how best to take these recommendations forward.

2. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

3. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

4. Environmental Implications

This proposal has no environmental implications.

5. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses.

REPORT ENDS

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Appendix 1- Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses

Recommendation number	Recommendation	Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families' response
1	<p>The study has shown there need to be more trained, experienced teachers to provide targeted intervention for young children. This is a national government resourcing issue. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should write to the Secretary of State for Education to request increased funding for education so that schools have sufficient resources to provide the appropriate specialist support that will enable every child, including those with special educational needs or social, emotional, and mental health needs, to fulfil their potential.</p>	<p>We agree that more national funding is needed to support early education, with a particular need to focus on communication and language development especially. However, additional funding has been provided through the Family Hub grant, which has enabled further high-quality professional development for school nursery staff to support children's communication and language development.</p> <p>A specialist teacher has also been appointed to support the roll-out of Camden Kids Talk screening and interventions in school nurseries and the scope of support offered by the Inclusive Intervention Team has been increased to include school nurseries and the reception year.</p>
2	<p>There is a clear need to recruit and retain good experienced Early Years staff. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should begin a Camden campaign to raise the status of what it is to be an Early Years practitioner in Camden and to recognise that it is a sound career choice.</p>	<p>Regrettably, the national funding provided for early education places through the free entitlement is not sufficient to pay a salary that reflects the importance of early years practitioners in shaping lifelong outcomes for children. However, Camden continues to support its settings with recruitment and vacancies are shared through the Provider forum. A new early years recruitment campaign is also underway, which will run alongside national materials. We recognise that there is still more to do and will continue to explore opportunities to promote early years as a career.</p>

Appendix 1- Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses

<p>3</p>	<p>There is a need for an organised cadre of volunteers to be introduced into all Camden Primary Schools and Early Years settings to help with toileting and physical development, such as climbing and balancing. There would be a brief period of training built in so the volunteers can develop and extend the language of the Covid-19-born children, especially those born into disadvantaged backgrounds. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should begin a Camden campaign to recruit, manage and monitor such a team.</p>	<p>The effective support of children's learning requires appropriate training and evidence shows that there is a strong correlation between staff qualifications and outcomes for children, so we do not support this recommendation. However, we do recognise the important role that volunteers, such as Camden's parent champions, play in encouraging take-up of the free entitlements and their impact in increasing the take up of 2-year-old places, which now stands at 84% - the highest ever achieved in Camden.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Similarly, there is a need for more Speech Therapists to help parents of children aged 0-5 years. There are long waiting lists for children in Camden to access speech therapy support. This is a national government resourcing issue. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should write to the Minister of Health to ask for increased funding for speech therapists so that families, Nurseries, and schools have sufficient resources to provide the appropriate specialist support to enable every child, including those with special educational needs or social, emotional, and mental health needs, to fulfil their potential.</p>	<p>Camden currently has a waiting list for specialist provision, as the number of referrals has risen significantly and there is an ongoing need to recruit more speech and language therapists both nationally and locally. Regrettably, there are insufficient trained speech and language therapists, with 21% of SLT posts currently vacant.</p> <p>However, despite this, the Camden KidsTalk project is introducing a stronger approach to prevention and early intervention, which will see all Camden children screened for speech and language delay at the one-year health review and strategies to encourage language development shared with parents.</p>

Appendix 1- Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses

5	<p>There is a clear issue of language delay among those Camden children from disadvantaged backgrounds. This will impact on schools' ability to show academic success with their primary-aged children, according to central government measures, even though the schools will doubtless continue to succeed in helping children make considerable progress. Despite Ofsted and the Westminster APPG on Oracy highlighting this, teachers reported that they saw little evidence of government recognition of the severity of these issues. Teachers want the government to publicly recognise that this cohort of children are badly impacted, they are behind, and they need a national catch-up period which does not consist of more of the same, i.e., phonics. It is clear that SATs tests will impact unfairly on many children in this cohort. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should write to the Secretary of State for Education to ask for the public recognition, a catch-up period, and a change in the way results of SATs at KS2 are published. Alternatively, that SATs at KS2 are suspended for this cohort of children. This catch-up period needs to protect curriculum time for the social, emotional, and physical development of our Early Years children.</p>	<p>We agree with the need for a national catch-up period.</p>
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Appendix 1- Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses

<p>6</p>	<p>The parents of children who seemed to be developing differently from others had a feeling of being abandoned by all the services - Health Visitors, nurses, and GPs. While it is clear that there should be national guidance on key developmental milestones, with advice on what to do if your child is not developing at the expected rate, this report recommends that the Executive Director Supporting People should ensure that the materials for Camden Kids Talk are made available to all new parents.</p>	<p>Camden KidsTalk resources are now shared with parents at the one-year health review and are accessible via families@camden.gov.uk, the council's new Family Hub website, and via a padlet which is promoted through QR codes at local centres and nurseries. In addition, a 'Top Ten Tips' poster has been developed and is being distributed to venues that parents visit.</p> <p>The new 'Best Start for Baby' service, which invites parents to attend a session with a Health Visitor every 3 months in their child's first year, presents a significant opportunity to share resources that support communication and language development. This service will be run Borough-wide by the end of March 2024. SEND support through the Family Hubs is also developing, with specialist Stay and Play sessions, sensory rooms, monthly drop-ins with SENDIAS, family support and benefits advice available.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>The recent Camden Council Report (2022) on the disproportionate effects of Covid on Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority children commits the borough to 'work directly, and with our partners, to rapidly increase access to digital devices and resources to support the reduction of the disadvantage gap in education', and 'to use the new Education Strategy to tackle disproportionality in attainment'. As Building Back Stronger: Camden's Education Strategy to 2030 (2022) claims, 'Inequalities cannot be tackled without addressing racism...Education should be at the forefront of breaking down barriers established by racism'. This report recommends that this</p>	<p>The service is working to increase understanding of disproportionality, with Public Health colleagues launching a new Family Hub delivery strand focusing on equity and inclusion. We recognise that the current recording of children's ethnicity at birth is inconsistent, which inhibits the ability to report accurately on disproportionality. Health partners are committed to achieving universal completion on records.</p>

Appendix 1- Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses

	message is widely disseminated to Early Years and Key Stage 1 providers in Camden.	
8	There is clearly insufficient funding to support the growing demand for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should lobby the Secretary of State for Education urgently in the strongest terms for more money for SEND now. This would be for all pupils, but especially for this Covid-born cohort.	We agree that additional national funding is needed to support the growing demand for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
9	The practitioners were unanimous in seeing the beneficial results of children from disadvantaged backgrounds attending Nursery or Pre-School. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and the Chair of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee should lobby the Secretary of State for Education and the Treasury to ensure that the current three-years-old funding be available to all pre-schoolchildren.	In March 2023, the government announced extensions to the free entitlements. Phased in from April 2024 until April 2025, the one- and two-year-old children of working parents will be entitled to funded hours of early education. Whilst new funding is positive, there is a concern that a focus on the children of working parents may increase the inequality gap in educational attainment.
10	The leadership in local government in Camden shown by the Chief Executive, the Director of Children's Services and Deputy Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council, and the Director of Early Intervention and Prevention is outstanding and should be commended. The recommendations contained in the Literature Search addressed to local government are all in place in Camden, including having a Named Lead for Early Years intervention.	We are grateful for, and agree with, the panel's recognition of our Early Years leadership team and our commitment to continually invest in this area, recognising its importance in delivering positive outcomes for Camden's children and families.

Appendix 1- Recommendations and Cabinet Members' Responses

11	The sharing of best practice through Camden Learning Early Years Partnerships and the Camden Family of Schools is excellent and should continue to be supported and funded.	We are grateful for, and agree with, the panel's recognition of the value and effectiveness of sharing best practice through Camden Learning Early Years Partnerships and the Camden Family of Schools.
12	Camden Council should be commended for its Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund that has been ear-marked to support families in need in the financial year April 2022 - April 2023. This initiative is clearly going some way to alleviate the hardship many families are facing, which results in some of our Camden Early Years children going hungry. It is strongly recommended that Camden Council continues the Cost-of-Living Fund into the financial year April 2023 - April 2024.	This has continued. Overall, since the Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund launched in September 2022, we have received 12,820 applications. Residents have applied for the fund to meet an array of emergency essential needs, ranging from energy bills to food expenditure, or for energy efficiency improvements products. Of those applications, 87% have been approved and £3.8m in awards have been given to our residents.
13	It is recommended that this initial research project is repeated, with a more in-depth set of interviews, in two years' time to track the 'Covid- generation children' and assess the impact of the pandemic on their progress in 2025.	We agree with the recommendation to revisit this research project but would propose expanding its scope to include children's health and SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) services. We would also suggest conducting the study with the same cohort of children and commissioning a specialist children's research organisation, to enable a comprehensive assessment of the impact of the pandemic on the progress of the 'Covid-generation children' in 2025.

Agenda Item 8

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE: Cabinet Adviser Report on Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals	
REPORT OF: Cabinet Adviser on Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE: 13 March 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT: The Cabinet Adviser on Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals here provides the Committee with their report, including recommendations, for discussion. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to information: No documents that are required to be listed were used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Nathan Koskella, Cabinet Officer, The Cabinet Office Camden Council, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG Nathan.Koskella@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS: The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to: (i) Note and comment on the report, including recommendations. (ii) Note the proposal to bring a Cabinet Report as a response to the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser within the next year.	



Signed by:

Councillor Sharon Hardwick, Cabinet Adviser on Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals

Date: 28 February 2024

Section 1: Background to the Report

- 1.1. The Leader of the Council appointed four Cabinet Advisers for municipal year 2023-2024 to provide evidence-based recommendations and policy-making support to the Cabinet.
- 1.2. The Cabinet Advisers are appointed by the Leader, in conjunction with the wider Cabinet, to engage, research, and develop recommendations in a particular policy area, working with one or more Cabinet Members, other Councillors, groups across Camden and the wider community.
- 1.3. These posts are non-executive roles and do not sit as part of the Cabinet. While they do not have decision-making powers and are limited to collaboration and recommendations, the Leader and Cabinet have committed to thoughtful consideration of their findings and recommendations.
- 1.4. Cabinet Advisers present their findings in a report to Scrutiny in its policy and oversight function to provide an opportunity for discussion of their findings. Following this, this report will go to Cabinet, alongside a report outlining a response, including feedback gained from scrutiny, from the relevant Cabinet member. This will allow Cabinet to consider the report, the views of Scrutiny and the Cabinet member together and formally decide whether to accept the recommendations.
- 1.5. Cllr Sharon Hardwick was appointed to the role with a brief on Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals.

Section 2: Purpose of the Report

- 2.1. I, Cllr Hardwick, set out to explore how Camden Council can better serve Camden secondary school pupils and families through the wider uptake of free school meals (FSM).
- 2.2. I will be looking at how Camden can improve the take-up for secondary school free school meals and continue to mobilise efforts to take on child hunger across the borough.
- 2.3. Camden has already expanded investment in breakfast clubs, provided vouchers to tackle holiday hunger and is now piloting an extension of access to free school meals for secondary school children in three Camden secondary schools.
- 2.4. As someone who benefitted from free school meals, I want to examine how we can make this a whole school and community effort to improve nutrition and sustainability alongside tackling hunger. I also look below at how we can improve take-up for secondary school free school meals to challenge child hunger.

- 2.5. The Camden Food Mission identifies that food security is a foundation of children's and young people's flourishing lives. This report aims to look at the barriers to this mission through the provision of free school meals (FSM) for eligible children and young people and address the quantifiers for that eligibility.
- 2.6. I would like to thank all the officers and teaching and pastoral staff who have imparted their knowledge and learnings throughout this advisory role—Camden has such passionate and dedicated teams.

Section 3: My Priorities and Experience

- 3.1. Food poverty is poverty.
- 3.2. I have prepared this report with the lived experience of someone who benefitted from free school meals. There are a number of issues related to poverty that correlate with child hunger and also negatively affect our young people such as the affordability of school clothing, fuel poverty, hygiene and sanitary poverty.
- 3.3. Experience poverty is another hidden issue: poverty equals insecurity and even the announcement of school trips can induce anxiety in a child from a poor background. While I will not explicitly be looking into the wider impact of poverty, these issues should be borne in mind when we are designing the free school meal application paperwork so that children and families can be supported where there is need even if they do not hit the formal FSM threshold.
- 3.4. The additional help I received from my local authority, as a child, was invaluable—from hot, nutritious meals to the generosity of a head teacher quietly replacing a worn-out school uniform and reassuring my mother that there was no cost to be levied.
- 3.5. As a council we similarly have the power to help our young people lead rewarding lives, and food is the very foundation of this.
- 3.6. Camden's Food Mission is working toward 2030, where the aim is that everyone in Camden eats a healthy, nutritious, and sustainable meal every day, with good quality, affordable food that is good for them and the planet.
- 3.7. Eating a healthy, nutritious meal supports pupils with their learning and has been shown to improve behaviour and academic achievements. A well-fed student is more likely to be engaged and focused in class. Hungry children struggle to concentrate and learn, which can lead to lower educational outcomes. By offering free school meals, we can enhance the educational opportunities and outcomes of our young Camdenites and take one more worry away from parents and carers.

No Child Left Behind

3.8. In the **We Make Camden: State of the Borough report of 2023**, we state that:

- Camden is a borough where every child has the best start in life
- Camden actively tackles injustice and inequality, creating safe, strong, and open communities where everyone can contribute
- Camden communities support good health, wellbeing, and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well and age well

We can only deliver these outcomes by tackling poverty and child hunger to not only give every child the best start in life, but an equal start. The report further notes the impact of poverty on some of our families where ‘the cost-of-living crisis means too many families in Camden are living from one pay cheque to the next. Growing up in poverty impacts on every aspect of a child’s life. A safe, supportive, and encouraging environment is essential for children’s development.’ See <https://www.wemakecamden.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/State-of-Borough-report-web.pdf>.

3.9. Since 2018, Camden’s free school meal (FSM) eligibility rate has increased dramatically, rising from 25% of pupils to 41% of pupils in 2021/22. Pupil eligibility in other London boroughs has also increased in this period, but by a smaller rate than that seen in Camden. Camden’s 2021/22 free school meal eligibility rate is the second highest in Inner London behind only Islington (42.6%), above the Inner London average of 33% and substantially above the average London eligibility rate of 11%.

3.10. Eligibility for FSM has been rising amongst all children in Camden, regardless of ethnicity. Black children in Camden have consistently had the highest eligibility rate compared with other ethnic groups and in 2021/22 over half of black children in Camden were eligible for free school meals.

Section 4: Who is eligible for free school meals?

4.1. The Living Wage Foundation has calculated that a Londoner should be earning £13.15 to be considered to be earning the London Living Wage. This takes into consideration the higher expenses of living and working in this city. Based on a 35-hour-per-week contract, this equates to a salary of £23,933 with the UK Living Wage (ex-London) at £21,840. This is the suggested wage of an individual and does not take into account any family or caring responsibilities. See <https://www.livingwage.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/Living-Wage-briefing-note.pdf>.

4.2. Eligibility for access to free school meals is set by the Government and for entitlement, applicants need to meet certain criteria in order to be accepted. These guidelines are taken from the Department of Education guidance, “Free school meals:

- Free school meals are available to pupils in receipt of, or whose parents are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guarantee element of Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
 - If you receive Working Tax Credit you will not be entitled to free school meals unless you have: stopped work in the last 4 weeks or reduced your hours to less than 16 hours in the last 4 weeks

(From "Guidance for local authorities, maintained schools, academies and free schools", February 2023. See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63d92829d3bf7f251e968cd/b/Free_school_meals.pdf)

- 4.3. Food insecurity is driven by families not having enough money to meet their needs each month. Access to FSM for a family is gauged at a very low income for London residents. This leaves some of our residents in a vulnerable and borderline situation where they potentially earn more than the guidelines allow for but are up to £7,500 adrift of earning the London Living Wage, or £5,650 away from the UK Living Wage—these are cited as the very minimum that is seen as a liveable salary.
- 4.4. In the meantime, since 2021 the cost of household essentials such as food and energy bills, has risen sharply. These cost increases affect low-income households disproportionately. Camden has worked to address this with the Cost-of-Living Crisis Fund supporting residents with funding and advice.
- 4.5. In Camden, almost one in three children live in poverty. Access to free school meals saves families around £1000 per year for each child. Eligible children and young people can also receive school holiday food provision thanks to investment by the Mayor of London and Camden. Hunger does not stop just because the school term has ended.
- 4.6. **Pupil premium:** For every child who is eligible for a free school meal, a school receives extra funding, known as pupil premium. It is a means to address the current underlying inequalities between children eligible for free school meals (FSM) and their peers by ensuring that funding to tackle disadvantage reaches the pupils who need it most.
- 4.7. **What food provision does Camden offer FSM eligible children and young people?** Camden provides free breakfasts across schools. All schools provide free places for pupils on FSM (as a minimum) with extended free

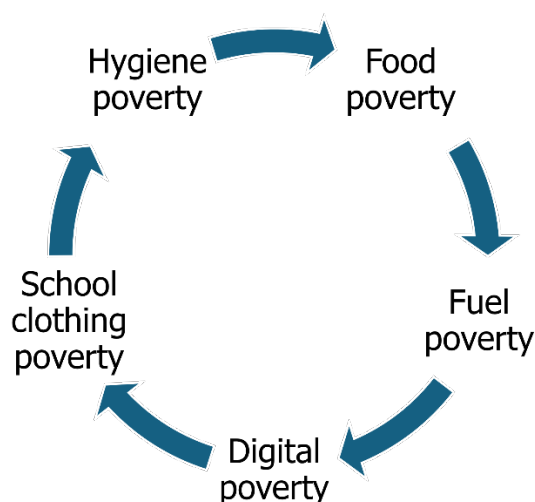
breakfast provision to the vast majority of schools.

- 4.8. Camden has invested significantly in seeking to reduce child hunger and family food insecurity when schools are closed. Over the past 18 months Camden has distributed over £2.5m in food vouchers for children and families over the school holiday periods and by rolling out its Investment in the Holiday Activity and Food Programme.

Section 5: Schools Workshop – Crisis Support in Schools

- 5.1. I attended this crisis support workshop—along with pastoral leads from a number of schools across Camden and the Camden team working on child hunger—to look at the work the council is doing to try and support schools and families during the cost-of-living crisis, and to share feedback, experiences, and ideas.
- 5.2. During our discussions we looked at poverty and deprivation across the borough including the provision of free school meals and the issue of child hunger.
- 5.3. Food poverty is poverty which impacts on all aspects of a child and their family’s life. By signposting families to apply for free school meals and pupil premium we can help that family navigate crucial support. We agreed that where there is poverty in one area, it will also be present in other areas directly impacting a child’s life.
- 5.4. The graph below illustrates that poverty cycle. Only by intervening to break the cycle can we honour our Camden promise that no child is left behind.

Effect of poverty on children and young people



- 5.5. The correlation of need for the FSM pupil is all of the above issues with the addition of events such as access to school trips, book ownership and access

to a device. These are for another paper, but these issues are intrinsically wrapped up in the cycle of need (and anxiety) and importantly, equality.

Section 6: Camden’s Test and Learn Pilot

- 6.1. Camden is making great strides in its approach to addressing hunger in secondary schools and is currently supporting children and families across the borough with the introduction of a ‘test and learn’ pilot programme that is being piloted in three of the borough’s secondary schools.
- 6.2. This innovative approach will enable the maximisation of the opportunities during the school day to address hunger and build a better understanding of those families who are on the fringes of FSM eligibility and to potentially extend the offer for a trial period in the future.
- 6.3. Camden Test and Learn sees teams from Camden Learning, Health and Wellbeing and the Strategy and Design teams working collaboratively to address hunger in secondary schools. The project aims are to understand the issues schools and families experience with the free school meal offer, and to develop and test solutions in three Camden secondary schools. Three project objectives have been identified:
- Maximise applications to FSMs by ensuring that all families that are eligible are encouraged to, and have the necessary support to apply.
 - Maximise the uptake of FSMs at Camden secondary schools.
 - Understand the needs of and provide support to those families that are not eligible for the national FSM scheme, but still experience food insecurity
- 6.4. The table below outlines the current number of children who take up free school meals, the number of children who do not quite qualify but would if the uplift were to be implemented, and the total number of children across our Camden secondary schools in 2023:

School	Count of current FSM-eligible pupils	Count of not FSM eligible but 'Potentially Eligible' pupils	Possible maximised FSM-eligible - assuming all 'possibly eligible' make successful applications	Total, number of all pupils in Camden secondary schools (2023)
Acland	374	50	424	1163
Burghley	208	50	258	1047
Camden School for Girls	522	140	662	1319

Haverstock	584	124	708	982
La Sainte Union	241	86	327	817
Maria Fidelis	404	120	524	832
Parliament Hill	424	77	501	1249
Regent High	666	143	809	1079
UCL Academy	432	145	577	1171
William Ellis	336	80	416	904
TOTAL	4191	1015	5206	10563

- 6.5. The project started in April 2023. Research has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders. The project team have conducted interviews and workshops with a diverse group of parents, young people, community partners, and other local authorities.
- 6.6. An external research organisation that specialises in working with underrepresented audiences, Word on the Curb, has completed observations and workshops with young people in two partnering Camden secondary schools – Regent High and Haverstock - to understand issues with FSM uptake. The team have also visited an additional 3 secondary schools (Parliament Hill, Hampstead, and William Ellis) to gather a broader picture. Initial findings from focus groups, lunchtime observations and 1:1 conversations suggest that, whilst relevant, stigma associated with being on free school meals did not appear to be a significant barrier to uptake of FSM.
- 6.7. Research participants did however focus on improving food taste and quality, and the physical environments in school where lunch is eaten. While some of the issues affecting uptake of FSM seem common across schools, other issues were much more school-specific such as the small size of canteen resulting in long queues, or different lunchtime schedules affecting eating habits.
- 6.8. **Word on the Curb feedback:** By talking directly to our young people and school staff, Word on the Curb gained valuable insights into barriers to FSM uptake. Here is some of the feedback that came back from their research:
- 6.9. **Awareness of the FSM offer:** “The kids don’t know what it is [the ‘meal deal’ offer]. It’s on a tiny sign in the canteen and no one can see it. A lot of kids don’t know they can get a dessert with the meal deal, so they’re missing out... I’m always on lunch duty and last term I had put it outside so that when the kids are queuing up, they can have a look before they get into the busy canteen, but I was told it had to go back inside the canteen...” (Lunchtime Duty Staff, Regent High)
- 6.10. **On cultural and religious needs, and on taste:** “It’s a bit unfair for some kids due to their religion if there aren’t enough food options for them. Some of my friends can’t eat meat in this school because it’s not halal... so they just don’t eat.” (Student, Haverstock)

“I’d like to change the flavour and add some spice because the meals are so bland and there’s not much seasoning.” (Student, Regent High)

- 6.11. **On portion size:** “I don’t think they give big enough portions... one day they’ll give you a good amount, the next day they’ll give you barely anything. Sometimes I eat lunch and I’m still hungry.” (Student, Haverstock)

“It’s shocking sometimes how small the portion sizes are, I don’t think it’s filling enough for a growing child...” (Pastoral Staff, Haverstock)

“I’d like to change the flavour and add some spice because the meals are so bland and there’s not much seasoning.” (Student, Regent High)

- 6.12. **On autonomy and feedback:** “It would be good to give feedback on school meals because the school removes things that we like without letting us know.” Student, Haverstock. Students don’t feel that they have a voice in decisions around school meals. They want a platform to provide regular formal feedback and the chance to shape school meal choices.

Section 7: Visit to a Camden secondary school

- 7.1. I visited one of Camden’s secondary schools with Camden officers from Public Health, Education and the Strategy and Design teams who are working together on the Test and Learn project.
- 7.2. This was a fact-finding mission where we met the head teacher, pastoral staff and Caterlink staff. It was an opportunity to see for ourselves the two physical environments where school meals are served, to make observations on the service itself and watch pupil take up of school meals during the school lunch hour.
- 7.3. We had an in-depth discussion on hunger, food provision both pre-school and at lunchtime and food education in the school. We also observed a class of boys and girls (70/30 split) taking part in a cookery class where they were preparing and cooking a curry and rice from scratch and learning about nutrition.
- 7.4. There are 1,163 children at this school of which 374 are eligible for FSM. This would rise to 424 if an extended offer beyond national FSM was implemented.

Food service operation

- 7.5. **Breakfast:** The school breakfast club is open to everyone. The school provides bagels to all. The head teacher is aware that some pupils may well have had breakfast at home and then come in and have another one but wants to run the breakfast as a universal offer to ensure that all pupils start the day with food inside them.

- 7.6. **Lunch:** There are two ways that pupils access their lunch. They have the option of a Grab and Go lighter lunch or the more traditional canteen setting where food is plated, and pupils sit at tables communally to eat a cooked meal.
- 7.7. **Menu:** Grab and Go has a sandwich offer with a home-made biscuit or a piece of fruit for £2.65. The canteen has a wide selection of main courses or a more informal option which would be something like a panini or a baked potato. The £2.65 FSM allowance gives a pupil access to a 'Meal Deal' hot main, a side dish and a dessert, which could be a piece of fruit.
- 7.8. In terms of teaching the pupils about seasonality and food provenance there are colourful and informative posters displayed in the canteen and in the Grab and Go areas. I think it is useful to detail some of these as it demonstrates that the school and the food provider (Caterlink) see the importance of sharing this information. It is a smart way to highlight the food that is on offer in terms of nutrition and healthy choices as well as to educate the children on its provenance, sustainability, and ethical procurement - in line with our Food Mission. The posters included:
- Bananas** – detailing important nutritional information as well as explaining the concept of Fairtrade and how the fruit conforms to certain social, economic and environmental standards
- Butternut squash** – again nutritional information, signposting that it is a seasonal vegetable and then an interesting trivia fact about the Guinness Book of Records largest recorded butternut squash (960 kg).
- Harvest Festival** poster – “A celebration of the harvest and food grown on the land in the UK. As the days get colder and shorter, it's time to fuel up – comfort foods, hearty foods, foods that are good for the soul.
- 7.9. It struck me that in an urban school population where children are not exposed to food growing in their daily lives this puts their food into context. Additionally, where the harvest festival information speaks about 'comfort food' it is through the lens of fresh products, reinforcing a healthy approach and healthy choices to eating.
- 7.10. **Pupils with additional needs:** this secondary school has 80-90 pupils with additional needs at any one time, some with exceptional needs. The school schedules students with additional needs to access the hall before the rest of the school so that they are able to navigate their choices and dine in a quieter and less populated hall. This is a great innovation as other schools have reported that it can be difficult to get these pupils to take up their school meal.
- 7.11. **Accessing the meal:** The system to a point is very smooth. All pupils regardless of how they pay for their meal use a fingerprint or a code to access the serving counter. The signage could be confusing for younger transitioning children (Year 11s) on FSM. FSM recipients could be identified as they are limited to the meal deal with their allowance.

- 7.12. The headteacher is satisfied with the provider, they are responsive, and their personnel respect the children and are responsive.
- 7.13. Pupils are not currently involved in menu planning, but the school does run occasional canteen surveys.
- 7.14. FSM take up at the school is around 70%.
- 7.15. The head teacher is seconded to a Tower Hamlets school where FSM is universally provided. His opinion is that the quality of food has degenerated and would be more welcoming to that possibility at the school I visited if the kitchen and serving area were improved.
- 7.16. **The canteen environment:** There is limited space in the school canteen, and it can be a noisy room. There are other break out spaces around the school where children who Grab and go or bring in a packed lunch can sit and eat. Pupils are expected to sit down to eat their lunch and make sure they clear their tables after they have eaten. There are jugs of water on glasses on every table, so all children have access to a free drink with their meal.
- 7.17. The queuing area for the Grab and Go serving area is outdoor and open to all weathers with no protection. This could easily be remedied with a protective canopy on the surrounding fencing.
- 7.18. **Awareness of the food offer:** The signposting to the food offer was not immediately clear. There is a Meal Deal on offer in the main canteen and in the Grab and Go area. 'Meal Deal' is written in a large script, but the detail is small and at the bottom of the poster so a newer, younger pupil may not understand what their FSM allowance affords them.
- 7.19. It was not immediately obvious what and dietary options are available. Staff members had differing perceptions of students' awareness of the 'meal deal'.

Section 8: Barriers to Free School Meals Uptake

- 8.1. **Further learnings from the Crisis Support in Schools workshop:** During the workshop we had an extended discussion on how to reach families who may be unaware of additional support for their children and even if they do, how do we take away the barriers to them applying?
- 8.2. Not everyone who is eligible for free school meals has applied for them, so some families are missing out on this, additionally schools are then missing out on pupil premium funding. This can be down to issues such as families not knowing that they are eligible, not knowing about the other benefits of applying such as pupil premium and holiday vouchers or a language barrier.
- 8.3. Not everyone who would benefit from having the support of FSM can get it as they don't meet the threshold for FSM under the current national offer.

- 8.4. The discussion also revealed that there is not a consistent approach to promoting and supporting FSM across all Camden schools. The process varies school by school with some directly intervening to support families where others do not.
- 8.5. In 2023 there was a dedicated officer supporting free school meals applications, but this officer was only available during term-time. It was felt that parents and carers need access to information, ideally all year round, but especially over the summer break when children are about to transition from primary to secondary school.
- 8.6. Teaching and administrative staff from the borough's primary and secondary schools as well as attendant officers agreed that one of the chief recommendations from the workshop would be to simplify and minimise the application process both for families and for the school. Where possible a priority would be to make as much of this information and application process available in the main languages spoken in Camden.
- 8.7. Also under discussion in this session was the fact that while there does not seem to be a sense of shame about taking up FSM by our children, there may be resistance and a feeling of being stigmatised by some of the parents and carers in our communities and it is the role of Camden and the schools to work reposition this thinking.
- 8.8. Together we need to emphasise right of every Camden citizen to eat well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food. Through positive reinforcement in communications from Camden and schools, we can work together to destigmatise this aspect of FSM as an act of charity and use the ethos of the Food Mission to assert that the access to healthy and nutritious food is a fundamental right for all Camden children.
- 8.9. **Lack of awareness & misconceptions** :There is anecdotal evidence that some parents and carers who can 'get by' feel that they do not want to take the assistance of free school meals from those who may need it more. This is where intervention via clearer communication by Camden and schools could promote how the access to free school meals and the pupil premium works to those families who are eligible.
- 8.10. Other barriers under discussion included:
- Support with digital access: Not all families have access to a device
 - Fear of rejection: Some families may be just on the edge of eligibility and are, or have previously been, rejected. Currently there is no follow-up from the Council to check if circumstances and eligibility have changed
 - Families may distrust the process: Some families may feel insecure about their citizenship and are suspicious of sharing their details with the school, the council or any other authority
 - Culturally appropriate menu: This is an issue with parents signing up, and with children unsure if they are able to consume some food on the menu

8.11. **Barriers from the pupils' perspective:**

- Food is not always appetising
- Food is not always a good quality
- Portion sizes can be small
- They are not aware that their food is culturally appropriate: for example, provision of halal food
- The queue for school meal is too long, so it takes too long to get the meal which means there is no time to socialise with friends

8.12. **Extending access to FSM and practical school needs:** If we are to extend access to FSM, especially if this becomes universal, there is a lot of work to be done on the serving and seating areas in the schools. We would need to audit the need and ensure that any increased FSM take-up can be accommodated. There also needs to be accommodation planned in for children with additional needs.

Section 9: Cabinet Adviser's Recommendations

9.1. There are a number of recommendations that have come to mind while I have been writing this report. These have resulted from my own observations and experience, and from the responses of the children, parents and carers, and reflections from school personnel. Some will be easier to implement than others and some will have major budgetary implications. None of these have been costed, so they are recommended subject to viability checks.

Recommendation 1: A longer-term recommendation: in an ideal world my only recommendation would be that we **make FSM universal in Camden secondary schools**.

9.2. Access to a free school meal ensures that all children, regardless of their family's financial situation, have equal access to the same resources. This fosters a sense of social equality and prevents stigmatisation of those receiving assistance. A balanced diet is essential for the physical and cognitive development of adolescents. Free school meals guarantee that students have access to nutritious food, promoting their long-term health and well-being. This, in turn, reduces the burden on the healthcare system.

9.3. No child should go to school hungry. And universal free school meals would vastly improve the life chances of our young people in the borough.

9.4. Practically, there are a number of hurdles (which I have touched on in the report) before this could be implemented. Camden would need to implement a full audit of the services as they stand and assess how the school could implement this. For example, kitchen capacity (can the kitchen or the catering supplier provide the number of meals required?) and (Is the serving area able to accommodate the increase in take-up?)

9.5. Additionally, this would likely place a financial burden on the Borough.

Recommendation 2: Thus, my interim recommendation is to **implement the Test and Learn pilot across all our secondary schools, lifting our free school meal provision of 4,191 pupils to 5,206.**

9.6. A discretionary local offer with a higher threshold would support an additional 1,015 children with FSM, benefitting more than 50% of our secondary school children. As I have previously outlined, there are many residents in our borough who earn above the FSM eligibility threshold, but well below the London Living Wage. With a lifted offer we need to set the threshold of the Camden offer. There are existing benchmarks that could advise us, in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

9.7. In Scotland, families can apply for free school meals if they receive child tax credit or working tax credit and their income is less than £17,005. If they receive both child credit and working tax credit, then their income must be lower than £7,920 to receive free school meals. The household threshold for universal credit claimants is £660 a month.

9.8. In Northern Ireland, that threshold is £14,000 a year. Families can also claim school lunches if their child has special educational needs and requires a special diet, or if they board at a special school. See <https://www.bigissue.com/news/social-justice/free-school-meals-everything-you-need-to-know/>

Recommendation 3: Lobby the Government for additional funding and to make a positive investment in our children. This issue is as much about food security as it is an about establishing equal opportunities for all our children and in their future health outcomes.

9.9. I note that in Finland, Estonia and Sweden, all secondary school students receive universal free school meals. Finland's guidance on the provision of free school meals is titled 'School meals in Finland: Investment in learning'. Section 31 of Finland's Basic Education Act states that 'pupils attending school must be provided with a properly organised and supervised, balanced meal free of charge every school day.' This is the level to which we should aspire and lobby for. See generally https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/school_meals_in_finland.pdf.

Quicker Wins:

Recommendation 4: Simplify and minimise the FSM application system both for families and schools.

9.10. We could do this by requiring **all** parents and guardians whose children go to school in Camden to register for the Free School Meal/Pupil Premium scheme. This allows Camden to identify not only eligible children, but those families just outside the FSM threshold who could be signposted to additional support for their children and may have food poverty related needs. Some suggestions could be:

- Application process made accessible in a selection of languages that are used by some communities in Camden. At the very minimum the process should offer a clear explanation of what is on offer. It should also flag access to support to fill in the form for those with language, literacy or additional needs
- Access to a dedicated Free School Meal support officer available all year round and especially during the summer break. This gives applicants access to expert guidance on completing the application. It also allows Camden to advise residents on other support services and will help them navigate other benefits
- Access to officers with additional languages
- Automatic 3-to-6-month follow-up to see if financial circumstances have changed for families identified as being just outside the threshold of eligibility
- Communicate and educate. Share the learnings of the positive outcomes of free school meals for children, explain the importance of the pupil premium and the positive impact it can have on the school to all parents and carers, regardless of need.
- Promote our Food Mission and emphasise that access to healthy and nutritious food is regarded as a fundamental right for all Camden children. By providing food stability our children will have the energy to develop and fly.

Recommendation 5: Top-up the £2.65 FSM allowance to allow pupils to purchase a snack in the morning break, or more items at lunchtime.

Recommendation 6: Make the free school meal offer clearer and more logical for pupils.

9.11. From the extensive research carried out by officers and from observing signage in the food serving area, it is not easy to understand what the free school allowance entitles a student to in a meal session.

9.12. This information needs to be clearly communicated prior to the start of the academic year especially to the families of transition Year 7s and children with additional needs. Our children should be confident to access their school meal when they start their new school. This information share could have positive

outcomes for their continuing relationship with school meals during their time at that school.

Recommendation 7: Raise the FSM eligibility criteria for secondary school pupils.

9.13. While the Mayor of London continues to fund primary school children's free school meals, we should raise the FSM eligibility criteria for secondary school pupils. This would allow more children on the threshold gain access to this support. I envisage this being operated in the same way as residents accessing the Camden Cost of Living Crisis support.

Recommendation 8: Set up a small contingency fund to cover the first few weeks of the academic year where historically there have been issues with some families' FSM allowance not being set up on Parent Pay at the start of term.

9.14. This issue can cause anxiety for both parents and children. We should build in this contingency and trust the families and children by preloading the pupil's FSM monies to avoid stigmatising pupils.

Recommendation 9: Extend the school breakfast offer to the morning break period or provide a fruit bowl, so that all children have access to a healthy snack at break time.

Recommendation 10: Recognise children and young people's agency in the process of planning school meal provision in the future, by co-creating menus with pupils alongside nutritionists and the catering provider to improve food taste, quality, portion size, and address any cultural or religious issues. The current schools catering contract lasts until April 2025 with a new catering offer to be developed on behalf of schools.

Recommendation 11: Work with voluntary organisations, community leaders, family support workers and faith leaders to reassure parents and carers who are suspicious of the free school meal/pupil premium application process so that they buy-in to the benefits for their children.

Recommendation 12: Perform a full audit/survey of school dining rooms and kitchens across the secondary school estate.

9.15. The research and evidence from pupils and school staff has identified the environment to be as much an issue as the food itself when looking at uptake. This can be a problem with space, with long queues and the physical capacity to seat those pupils wanting to access their school meal. It is also an issue that some of the young people have raised where they want to take their meal and socialise with their peers in a welcoming environment. Additionally, some children need a quieter space in less busy areas to take their meals.

- 9.16. Finally, by drawing up a detailed survey of canteens there may be some quick fixes that could be made. For example, at the secondary school I visited children queue for grab and go outside with no weather protection the simple addition of a canopy would make the experience more conducive to FSM uptake.

Medium-term Recommendation:

Recommendation 13: Educate more about food provenance and work with schools to establish area where pupils can have the experience of gardening and work on seed-to-plate initiatives. We are an inner-city borough where many children live in flats and do not have access to green space.

Section 10: Conclusion

- 10.1. The provision of free school meals for secondary school-aged children in London should not be viewed as an act of kindness; it is a strategic and humane approach to address child poverty, improve educational outcomes for Camden children, and to help nurture a healthier and more equitable society.
- 10.2. Access to free school meals and the supporting benefits that pupil premium can unlock is an important investment in the future of our borough's children, ensuring that no child is left behind due to economic hardship.

11. Finance Comments

The Director of Finance comments that decisions to invest additional resources in nutritional support for children and their families would need to be considered within the context of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

12. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor


The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on this report and has no comments to add to this report.

13. Environmental Implications

This report to the Committee should contain no additional environmental implications for Camden.

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Provision Panel Update	
REPORT OF Chair of the SEND Provision Panel	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 13 March 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT The purpose of the report is to update members of the Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Scrutiny committee regarding the progress so far of the SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel. It summarises the key findings from interviews up to December and outlines the next steps being followed up through interviews, workshop, and meetings this spring up to April. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Hannah Raffin, Project Manager - Children's Social Care, Supporting People Strategy, London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG 020 7974 2977 / hannah.raffin@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATION The Committee is asked to comment on and note the report.	


 Signed:
 Councillor Sylvia McNamara

Date: 1 March 2024

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to update members of the CSF Scrutiny committee regarding the progress so far of the SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.2. It summarises the key findings from interviews up to December and outlines the next steps being followed up through interviews, workshop, and meetings this spring up to April. It is brought to the full CSF committee to receive comments and suggestions to inform the next stage of the research.

2. Interviews carried out so far

- Vikram Hansrani Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion on 3 October 2023
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) on 30 October 2023
- SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) finance on 31 October 2023
- Children and Young People with Disabilities (CYPDS) service on 13 November 2023
- Children's Integrated Commissioning on 2 November 2023
- Senior Advisor SEND Camden Learning on 9 November 2023
- Camden Special Parents Forum on 6 December 2023
- SEND engagement and quality
- Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG) Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENDSCO) Cluster co-ordinator on 31 January 2024

3. Meetings attended

- 2.1. SENDCOs meeting - Questions and Answers session on 14 December 2023
- 2.2. Autism Partnership Board - Observed and spoke about the special panel on 6 December 2023

4. Analytical Framework

- 4.1. Following the interviews carried out in the period October to September, this Analytical Framework was created for the panel to discuss at a panel meeting on December 13th 2023. This was accompanied by a suggested set of questions to pursue.
- 4.2. The table below contains emerging insights based on the analytical framework previously identified.

	Diagnosis	Provision/ Funding	Outcomes	Mild/ Moderate/ Severe need	Institutions
Effectiveness	Depends on condition being diagnosed. Not all diagnosis available to all. For example, dyslexia assessment.	Some excellent provision but depends on level of need. Problematic school-to-school differences. Effectiveness may be reduced by delays. Budget issues (what should be ordinarily available; what from notional SEND budget) sometimes reduce timeliness and effectiveness of provision.	No data for outcome measures re ENG such as pupil progress/attainment. In general, not much information so far available about effectiveness of outcomes - genuinely hard to measure. Issue of primary/secondary transfer.	More attention needed to this. Interviewees note a shortage of out-of-school provision for PSLD YP. Also risk of CYP without EHCPs not getting appropriate provision. Further exploration of gaps in provision needed. Family payment	Officers generally believe Camden practice is comparatively good, and that SEND is comparatively well-funded. They acknowledge that funding is still insufficient to meet need and waiting times (sometimes NHS-dependent) are too long. There is a question about how a generally good service can bear to look at and address cases where things have not gone well.
Efficiency	Diagnosis and assessment are slower than wished, and sometimes not available to all families.	Insufficient funding. SEN K students may lose out. Difficult to 'justify' high levels of funding needed for some highly beneficial interventions for PSLD young people 'Need a more efficient use of the adults in the schools.'	Nobody has so far suggested that good outcomes could be achieved more cheaply. Concern is more about lack of resources. Improved communication between parents and schools cited as a desired outcome for all including children.	context of lack of carers or places to take children especially PMLD young people to looks inappropriate.	
Equity	Lack of data regarding extent to which different communities coming forward or regarding SEN as stigma Evidence of some parents paying for private assessments eg dyslexia - what does/should this then mean in terms of (limited) provision?	Some questions about equitable access to independent specialist schools.	Co production between parents and teachers/Educational Psychologists of expected outcomes on plans would lead to less unrest.		
Accountability	Problematically divided between school, NHS and LA. Private diagnoses complicate things further (quality, speed).	Concerns about ENG accountability. Lack of monitoring of quality of plans.	Schools not accountable for SEND spending. LA is not acting as accountable for SEND provision. Important to distinguish bn accountability for money and for outcomes.		
Appropriacy	Early Years diagnosis delayed under 'developmental' heading. Reception children being left on part time timetables (often due to wrong placement)	Concerns about ENG appropriacy given lack of therapists and inconsistent knowledge and understanding re ENG itself and SEN between schools	Exclusions of children with EHCPs seen as indication of inappropriate provision.		
Sufficiency	Evidently insufficient to meet need; waiting times are so long that interventions may not be timely. Referrals are rising. School cohorts are changing.	Interventions and placements for children with high Needs not there Insufficient therapists across the board. Insufficient teachers/classes too large/TAs to carry out interventions effectively in schools			

5. Suggested questions for further investigation

5.1. ENG and Clusters

Continue to investigate how, why and whether these two Camden-specific mechanisms are producing positive outcomes. Could more be done to use Clusters as better peer support mechanisms? Is the right evidence is being collected, to allow evaluation and improvement?

5.2. Equity

Focus on this across the piece, looking both at equity/inequity for CYP, but also for schools (in terms of the numbers of children they provide for etc.) How can all families be engaged regardless of wealth/language/cultural background?

5.3. Quality and consistency

Quality and consistency have been mentioned several times – currently, quality of practice is not consistent, which seems to make things harder for parents.

5.4. Outcomes

Continue to work to clarify what is meant by a ‘good outcome’ by different stakeholders. What data is/could be collected? How are outcomes linked to interventions?

5.5. What is missing?

Interviewees suggest that there is an absence/gap in provision. This should be investigated further, notably whether it is possible to have clarity and honesty with parents about what they can expect from ‘ordinarily available’/ENG/EHCP and what the thresholds for each are. This would require consistency across schools.

5.6. Information and communication

Seek out best/alternative practice examples of information packs/communication with parents, of children with different needs, and different levels of need.

5.7. What can be done to educate, support and empower parents?

Interviewees agree on the central role of parents (in knowing/supporting their CYP). What is the evidence of good practice in supporting parents to support their CYP, which could reduce adversarialism, increase flexibility and responsiveness?

5.8. Addressing trauma

What can be done to support parents, children and officers to address and deal with (their own) trauma, as a way of moving forward?

6. **Next steps as agreed by the panel**

6.1. The key next steps will be to meet with parents and schools to get their perspectives and to answer questions above and to triangulate findings.

6.2. The table below outlines scheduled meeting attendance, visits and workshops; as well as other activities to be scheduled.

Activity	Dates (February – March 2024)
Observed Schools Forum online	6 February 2024
Royal Free Hospital visit	9 February 2024
Special Parents Forum 1	27 February 2024
Netley School visit	28 February 2024
Acland Burghley School visit	4 March 2024
Special Parents Forum 2	6 March 2024
MOSAIC (Integrated Service for Children and Young People with a Disability)	25 March 2024
Panel hosting a workshop for 10 special schools and resource hubs	25 March 2024
To be scheduled	
Survey of SENDCOs and Headteachers	
Find a way to speak directly to smaller groups of classroom teachers	
Visits to other boroughs (best practice, neighbours etc)	

7. **Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

The Director of Finance has no comment to make in the context of this report.

8. **Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the report and has no comment to add to the report.

9. **Environmental Implications**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

REPORT ENDS

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme and Action Tracker 2023/24 and Provisional Work Programme 2024/25	
REPORT OF: Executive Director, Children and Learning	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE: 13 March 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT: This report provides an outline of the 2023/24 work programme (Appendix 1) and provides an update on actions requested at previous meetings (Appendix 2). This report also provides an outline of the 2024/25 provisional work programme (Appendix 3). Local Government Act 1972 – Access to information: No documents that are required to be listed were used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Hannah Raffin, Project Manager - Children's Social Care, Supporting People Strategy, London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG 020 7974 2977 / hannah.raffin@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS: The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to: a) note the Committee’s Work Programme for 2023-24 (Appendix 1) and b) note the Committee’s Action Tracker (Appendix 2) and c) consider and note the Committee’s Provisional Work Programme for 2024-2025 (Appendix 3) and propose any amendments.	


 Signed by:
 Tim Aldridge, Executive Director, Children and Learning

Date: 29 February 2024

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 A work programme of key reports for the year 2023/24 is set out in Appendix 1. Suggestions and proposals from each meeting can be incorporated into the programme as the year progresses. Relevant Cabinet Reports will also be considered throughout the year by the committee before they are taken to Cabinet.
- 1.2 An action tracker of Committee Member queries at meetings that require an action following the meeting is set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.3 A provisional work programme of key reports for the year 2024-2025 is set out in Appendix 3. Suggestions and proposals can be incorporated following this meeting. There will also be Work Planning Session scheduled for this Committee in the upcoming months which will be dedicated to hearing members' suggestions and proposals for the 2024-2024 Work Programme.

2. Meeting dates of 2023/24 municipal year

- Tuesday 11 July 2023
- Thursday 7 September 2023
- Thursday 9 November 2023
- Tuesday 19 December 2023
- Thursday 18 January 2024
- Monday 26 February 2024
- **Wednesday 13 March 2024 (additional meeting)**

3. Legal comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough Solicitor has considered the report and has no comments to add to the report.

4. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make.

5. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – CSF Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24

Appendix 2 – CSF Scrutiny Committee Action Tracker 2023-24

Appendix 3 – CSF Scrutiny Committee Provisional Work Programme 2024-2025

Appendix 1 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24

Tuesday 11 July 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Members' Updates • Camden Learning Commission (Cabinet report) • School Finance Report • Corporate Performance Report – End of Year 2023/24
Thursday 7 September 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Members' Updates • A summary of Camden's provisional examination results 2023 • Camden SEND Update • Scrutiny Panel Proposal Report
Thursday 9 November 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member Update (Young People) • Cabinet Member Annual Report - Best Start for Children and Families • Annual School Places Planning Report 2023 • Children's Services Annual Complaints Report 2022/23
Tuesday 19 December 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member Update (Best Start) • Cabinet Member Annual Report - Young People and Culture • Camden Youth Justice Plan 2023-25 (Cabinet Report) • CSCP Annual Report 2022/23 / Business Plan 2023/24 • Corporate Performance Report – Mid-Year 2023/24
Thursday 18 January 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Members' Update (Best Start & Young People) • Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2022-23 • Young Inspector's Report on a Children's Service • Camden Early Years Update • SEND Scrutiny Panel Update
Monday 26 February 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Member's for Young People and Culture Portfolio Update • Achievement and Standards Report 2023 (including update on Education Strategy 'Building Back Stronger') • School Future Options • Annual Adolescent Health Report 2023
Wednesday 13 March 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet Advisor Report 'Child Hunger and Expanding Free School Meals' • Cabinet Advisor Report 'Opening Up Access to Sport for Young People' • SEND Scrutiny Panel Update • Scrutiny Panel Response Report – The impact of Covid-19 on early language development
Forward Plan 2024-25
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEND Annual Report • SEND Scrutiny Panel Final Report • Annual Health Report on Children, Young People and Families 2023-2024 • Persistence Absence Report • Young Inspectors' Recommendations Progress Report

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Appendix 2 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Action Tracker 2023-24

No.	Meeting date	Item	Action	Action by	Status
1 – 23/24	11 July 2023	Item 9 - Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture	To provide a written response to the Committee setting out how the Council is responding to youth smoking and vaping concerns	Kirsten Watters, Director of Health & Well-being	Completed
2 -23/24	11 July 2023	Item 11 - Corporate Performance Report Quarter 4/End Of Year 2022-23	To provide a written response to the Committee setting out the Rebuilding Bridges project.	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed
3 – 23/24	11 July 2023	Item 11 - Corporate Performance Report Quarter 4/End Of Year 2022-23	To provide a written response to the Committee explaining the trends and reasons for exclusion in secondary schools	Stephen Hall, Chief Executive of Camden Learning	Completed
4 – 23/24	11 July 2023	Item 11 - Corporate Performance Report Quarter 4/End Of Year 2022-23	To provide a written response to the Committee detailing further information and the number of children living in temporary accommodation in Camden	Glendine Shepherd, Director of Housing	Completed
5 – 23/24	7 September 2023	Item 10 - Camden Local Area SEND Strategy Update	Officers agreed to share statistics on the patterns on Camden SEND provision with the Committee	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed
6 – 23/24	9 November 2023	Item 8, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families Annual Report	To set out what Camden Learning is doing support schools who were underachieving.	Stephen Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning	Completed
7 – 23/24	9 November 2023	Item 8, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children	To provide statistics and trends on how Camden compared to other London boroughs on the number of family contacts who are referred to Early Help Family Support.	Rashida Baig, Director of Children's	Completed

		and Families Annual Report		Prevention, Safeguarding and Family Help	
8 – 23/24	9 November 2023	Item 9, Update of the Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture	To provide further information on why the keeping young people safe risk on the Principal Risk Report 2023, considered by the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee on 8 November 2023, had been de-escalated from principal risk status.	Tim Aldridge, Executive Director, Children and Learning	Completed
9 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 7 - Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership – Annual Report 2022-23	To provide further information on the proportion of Early Help referrals which fall under Early Years and whether there is a similar trend of increase and/or disproportionality as seen in Youth Early Help referrals (<i>section 7 of the report</i>).	Rashida Baig, Director of Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	Completed
10 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 7 - Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership – Annual Report 2022-23	To provide further information on Camden’s systems in supporting vulnerable children in elective home education and if there was any learning from external good practice.	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed
11 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 8 - Annual Report of The Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture: December 2023	To circulate the Council’s annual health report ‘Step into Our Shoes’ on adolescent health.	Kirsten Watters, Director of Public Health	Completed
12 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 8 - Annual Report of The Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture: December 2023	To provide case studies on Youth Early Help family casework interventions.	Rashida Baig, Director of Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	Completed
13 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 8 - Annual Report of The Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture: December 2023	To provide case studies, statistics and information on the nature of the cases the Youth Justice Service Prevent Teams receive.	Rashida Baig, Director of Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	Completed

14 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 9 - Update of the Cabinet Member For Best Start for Children and Families	To provide information on what was learnt at the Inclusion Forum on 28 November 2023, which explored High Needs Funding models that facilitate timely interventions for children with exceptional special educational needs, and how good models discussed at the Forum can be brought to Camden.	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed
15 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 9 - Update of the Cabinet Member For Best Start for Children and Families	To provide information on what Camden was doing to regulate the sale of vapes and alcohol to prevent children from acquiring them.	Jamie Akinola, Director of Public Safety	Completed
16 – 23/24	19 December 2023	Item 10 - Camden Youth Justice Plan 2023-25	To provide clarification on the statistics within the Camden Youth Justice Service Plan 2022/23, Education section, Statutory School age: Up to age 16 cohort June 2023 section (page 150 of the CSF agenda) on the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) What are the five out of 17 children of statutory school age doing who were not being offered the mandatory 25 hours? b) Why are some children taking up less than the 25 hours? c) What kind of provision is being offered to those children with an EHCP? d) What is the category of 10 children, of which three have EHCPs? 	Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	Completed
17 – 23/24	18 January 2024	Item 7 – Young Inspector's report 2023	Officers confirmed they would provide the Committee with further analysis of the demographics and diversity of looked after children compared to the general population of Camden.	Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	

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Appendix 3 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Provisional Work Programme 2024-25

Tuesday 16 July 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Best Start for Children and Families• SEND Annual Report• SEND Scrutiny Panel Final Report• Annual Health Report on Children, Young People and Families 2023-2024• Insight, Learning and Impact Report – End of Year 2023-2024• Schools Finance Report
Tuesday 8 October 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Young People and Culture• A summary of Camden’s provisional examination results 2024• Young Inspectors’ Recommendations Progress Report• Persistent Absence Report
11 November 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Annual Report - Best Start for Children and Families• Annual School Places Planning Report 2024• Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report 2023/24
10 December 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Annual Report - Young People and Culture• CSCP Annual Report 2023/24 / Business Plan 2024/25• Insight, Learning and Impact Report – Mid-Year 2024/25
14 January 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Best Start for Children and Families• Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2023-24• Young Inspector’s Report on a Children’s Service• Camden Early Years Update
24 February 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Young People and Culture• School Future Options

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