

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 8TH OCTOBER, 2024** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Councillors Lotis Bautista (Chair), Julian Fulbrook, Jenny Headlam-Wells, Sylvia McNamara, Nazra Rahman (substitute), Tom Simon, Shiva Tiwari and Nanouche Umeadi.

Co-opted Member Zarin Bakhshzaad.

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillor Matt Cooper.

Co-opted Members Margaret Harvey, Sarah Jafri and Dr Rachel Wrangham.

### **ALSO PRESENT**

Councillor Anna Burrage, Member of the Health and Adult Social Care (HASC) Scrutiny Committee

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

Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member for Young People and Culture

Councillor Larrine Revah, Chair of the HASC Scrutiny Committee

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Margaret Harvey, Sarah Jafri and Dr Rachel Wrangham.

Councillor Nazra Raman was attending as a substitute Committee Member.

#### **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**

There were no declarations.

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS (IF ANY)**

#### **Broadcast of the meeting**

The Chair announced the following: “In addition to the rights by law that the public and press have to record this meeting, I would like to remind everyone that this meeting is being broadcast live by the Council to the Internet and can be viewed on our website for six months after the meeting. After that time, webcasts are archived and can be made available upon request.

If you have asked to address the meeting, you are deemed to be consenting to being filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes. If you are addressing the Committee your contribution will be recorded and broadcast.”

### **4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)**

A deputation statement relating to Free School Meals (FSM), published within the supplementary agenda, was presented by Rachel Dooley and Kimberly Turner. The statement expressed concerns that the Council was not effectively ensuring registration for children entitled to FSM. They also believed there was not an accessible offer around FSM in Camden due to the lack of policy to support the application and delivery of the scheme for children not in school. There were three areas the deputees wanted the Council take action on were set out in the deputation statement.

The Chair thanked the deputees for their presentation and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- Councillor Nanouche Umeadi, Associate Cabinet Member for Educational Inequalities, stated that Camden was already championing FSM before the Mayor of London announcement of support packages across London. Camden was one of the few boroughs that continued to fund extended FSM schemes after the Mayor’s London-wide support packages ended. She acknowledged the issue of children who were entitled for FSM not registering, which could be for a number of reasons, and the Council was reviewing this challenge in detail and working with parents and community groups. Councillor Nanouche Umeadi stressed the importance of viewing FSM as food for a child and keeping children out of poverty and not vouchers for schools. The deputees clarified that their primary concern was the lack of FSM provision for children not in school, which particularly affected SEND children.
- Members said the points raised in the statement were important and the Committee requested a written response.

**Action By - Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion**

**5. MINUTES**

In advance of the meeting the Clerk was notified of an inaccuracy in the action item recorded at the last meeting. The action recorded on page 15 of the agenda should ask whether children on the waiting list for MOSAIC diagnosis were eligible to receive speech and language therapy (SALT) support. The revised action would be resubmitted for a written response.

**RESOLVED -**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2024, subject to the correction, be agreed as an accurate record.

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

There was no urgent business.

**7. AN INVESTIGATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CHILDREN'S SEND PROVISION IN CAMDEN**

Consideration was given to the report of the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Provision Scrutiny Panel.

Councillor McNamara presented the final report of the SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel, summarised the highlights of the investigation, the key lines of inquiry and the findings. The report included findings from over 30 interviews with individuals and groups, along with insights gathered from three sets of questionnaires. The Panel emphasised that SEND provision was an issue of justice, equality, health, and the future of SEND young people. The Panel sought to identify guiding principles as well as specific solutions, noting a lack of consensus on ways forward, but acknowledged the significant pain and dissatisfaction within the system.

The Chair thanked the Panel for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- Councillor Burrage, Member of the HASC Scrutiny Committee invited as a guest scrutiny committee member to the meeting, thanked the panel for their comprehensive work and highlighted the importance of focusing on under-diagnosed conditions, particularly attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They noted that, while autism diagnosis had seen improvements, ADHD was often overlooked, despite affecting a significantly larger number of children. The

Member stressed that the council should prioritize efforts to identify children with ADHD, given its significant impact on learning and development.

- Councillor Larrine Revah, Chair of the HASC Scrutiny Committee invited as a guest scrutiny committee member to the meeting, acknowledged the extensive work carried out by the panel, but questioned what tangible outcomes could be expected to emerge from the recommendations. Specifically, the Member asked what changes were being planned or had already been implemented to improve support for both SEND children and their families. The Member referenced personal experience, noting that many children were not receiving a diagnosis until late into their school years, which left parents struggling to navigate the system. Councillor McNamara confirmed that 39 recommendations had been made following the Panel's investigation, with 30 being specific to Camden and 9 on a national level which were more aimed at higher level ambitions on how to achieve a fair and inclusive education system. A striking part of the research was the cliff edge young people experienced in their provision when they finished school, which parents were highly anxious about, and there was not a clear pathway for young SEND people when reaching adulthood.
- Councillor McNamara confirmed that the Council's work to improve SEND provision had already begun. A reason the Panel decided to extend the work over two political years was to accommodate new officers joining their post in key SEND positions and the evolving pace of changes in the Camden SEND services. Both the panel and headteachers were pleased with the development of the SEND implementation plan developed by officers, not simply a vision statement, but a plan with specific outcomes and deadlines, which was likely to form part of the Cabinet Member's response report in February 2025.
- Councillor McNamara said that a statistic the Panel was highly concerned about was the 86-week average wait time for autism and ADHD diagnosis which resulted in the recommendation for health services.
- A Member praised the Panel's investigation, stating that the thought and sensitivity to the topic emanated from the report, and they hoped that the recommendations would lead to changes that were needed in this challenging area. They stated that one issue that was discussed at this Committee last year was poorer SEND diagnosis in girls, which was not a specific issue to Camden, and they would like to see how Camden could have an impact to improve those outcomes.
- Councillor Rahman, CSF Scrutiny Committee substitute Member, raised concern over the long wait times for SEND diagnosis. They inquired about how families were supported before assessments and the start of legally entitled support. In response, Councillor McNamara outlined the recommendations which would respond to this issue, including the provision of speech and language therapy and counselling during the wait time. Through the investigation it was clear that officers wanted to be more supportive to families. All therapists were employed by the health system and it had been identified that this was a key blockage area. It was also apparent from speaking to parents that they themselves needed more support having reported stress due to having to fight for support for their children. In response to that comment, a Member noted the stark parallel with the Carers

Action Plan, discussed at Council on 22 July 2024, and the questions around who cared for carers.

- The Executive Director for Children and Learning stated the report presented good insights and recommendations and that a response would be provided in the report in February 2025, with an aim in demonstrating the direction of travel and how the Council would work with the wider system.
- In response to a Co-opted Member asking if there were opportunities for the Council to work with private health care providers to reduce waiting times for diagnoses to those most in need, it was confirmed that there was a shortage in therapists and blockage in the whole system due to a recruitment crisis and there was a challenge in the amount of resources available to the Council to tackle this issue.
- In response to questions asked by the Chair of the HASC Scrutiny Committee on how children were being supported who were not attending school due to SEND needs and were not formally diagnosed due to parents struggling through the system, officers were asked to provide a written response.

**Action By - Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee

1. note the report; and
2. agree to request the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families to prepare a response to the SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel's recommendations, to report back to a future Committee.

**8. UPDATE ON PROVISIONAL SCHOOL EXAM RESULTS 2024**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning.

Stephen Hall (Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning), accompanied by Dame Christine Gilbert (Independent Chair of Camden Learning), presented the report which outlined the provisional school attainment headlines. The presentation slides included headline provisional data on the Foundation Stage Profile (FSP); Year 1 and Year 2 Phonics; Key Stage Two (KS2) combined and separate reading, writing and maths results; KS4 standard, strong and entry pass rates; and KS5 A-Levels results. There was no KS1 or KS3 data because it was not statutory to collect. It was noted that the provisional results should be looked at with caution because it was provisional data shared by schools themselves. There would be more detailed data and analysis for different groups of children's attainment results in the February 2025 report.

The Chair thanked Camden Learning for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member stated that it would be more useful to be given the disadvantage gap comparing this year's Camden gap to Camden's gap in multiple previous years, rather than only comparing this year's Camden gap to the last year national gap. It was confirmed Camden Learning would take that feedback away. A Member asked for an impact assessment on the 'every child a reader' initiative. In response, it was confirmed it was still fairly early in the initiative, which was complex to measure particularly with the absence of KS1 results, but the phonics measures had shown year on year improvement.
- In response to a Member asking why KS2 maths results were low, it was explained that the results were not low and a 2-3% drop on the previous year was not statistically significant, with the results remaining above London and national average.
- A Member noted the KS4 disadvantage gap was poor in Camden and nationally. The disadvantage gap figures included children who needed SEND support and were from a disadvantaged background, thus taking exams in mainstream schools. The figures framed that Camden was performing better than last years' national average. It was confirmed this was an area that needed further analysis and Camden Learning was speaking to schools about the intersectionality, poor attenders, and other complex metrics and factors which impacted on the disadvantage gap. This issue was difficult to unpick and there was not an easy answer. In response to a Member, it was also noted that it was not possible to say yet if changes to curriculums or assessments had impacted this area.
- It was confirmed that the data included all types of school in the borough apart from private schools.
- A Member asked for more data on the trends and developments in KS5 results. It was confirmed Camden Learning would provide that data in the February 2025 report.
- In relation to KS4 and KS5 results stalling over time and below ambition, a Member stated that was a not a new issue. The Member asked if there was broader work to be done in looking what happens in the five years between KS3 and KS4 to understand where it was children were stumbling. In response, it was stated that some schools were performing very well and others less so. Many resources were being focussed in this area and learning being reviewed from high performing schools. Camden Learning aimed to promote more collaboration and improve connections between KS5 settings, similar to the collaboration observed among Camden schools. For KS3, Camden Learning was looking at pathways, curriculum design, and the quality of teaching. In response to a question asking what distinguished the better performing schools, it was stated strong performing schools had strong leadership, high expectations, and high-quality teaching. The two best performing schools in the borough were girls schools and girls outperformed boys in the data.
- In relation to GCSE pass grades, it was stated that the national results were distressing, where only 60% of the country were achieving the expected standard and different parts of the country were skewed in performance. London

performed better than nationally which was due additional resources and focus. When comparing Camden to other London boroughs, certain areas with significantly more or less deprivation or differing issues may not serve as fair benchmarks. It was most important for Camden to compare itself to the statistical neighbours in London and looking to learning from other London boroughs. There would be further data to share in February in this area.

- It was confirmed there was an ongoing national curriculum and assessment review which Camden was feeding into and would be speaking from the lens of various stakeholders. It was stated that Camden would feed in using evidence-based learning initiatives and not just untested ideas.
- A Member commented that there was a huge amount of churn of children in and out of the borough at each level of education, which should be considered when comparing Camden data between key stages. Camden faced inequality in children's levels of disadvantage from the start of early education. Primary schools were, however, providing strong support to help more disadvantaged children succeed.
- A Member asked if analysis could be provided on the levels of attainment results of those pupils who were already in Camden and those arriving, also to specifically see if it was high performing students arriving in the borough. It was confirmed that mobility data could be drawn from the admissions team, however it was noted that academic progress was not always linear, and students had varied educational experiences.
- A Co-opted Member asked if comparative data benchmarks higher than the London standard could be aimed for, such as independent school results, because ultimately the children would be entering the same workforce. The attainment for private schools was much higher, and that was a gap Camden should want to close. In response, it was confirmed that Camden wanted to be ambitious and aim for the highest benchmark, and at this point in time that was aiming for above the London benchmark. Independent schools were self-selecting, whereas the state sector had many other challenges to compete with which impacted results and it was a different context of pupils. Different schools across the borough had different ambitions with different targets depending on their context. A Member stated that schools had different bases of children, with some schools having many parents who were able to pay for extra tuition and other schools where there was a high proportion of children eligible for pupil premium. In response, it was stated that Camden Learning was looking to see where schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged children were performing well, and learn from their strong teaching and learning models, good curriculum design and high aspirations. Camden schools were good at working as a family of schools, where some schools lead initiatives which other schools could successfully model which improved outcomes for all. A Member requested examples in the validated report of school initiatives and analysis of their impact.
- A Member asked what happened to young people who did not achieve A-Levels or other qualifications. In response, it was stated that Camden Learning did not hold data on post-KS5 destinations as it was beyond their remit, however there was a rich discussion in post-16 destinations. A prospectus had been developed which presented options of academic and vocational pathways to help young

people choose their next steps. There would be further data to support discussion in this area in the February report.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee note and comment on the contents of the presentation in the context of the ambition and aims of the Camden Education Strategy.

**9. STOCKTAKE ON CAMDEN'S APPROACH TO PARTICIPATION AND CO-PRODUCTION WITH CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, and Nana Bonsu (Director of Relational Practice) introduced and summarised the report. This report set out the steps Camden was taking to put children, young people's and families' views and wishes at the heart of children's services; outlined areas where participation and co-production could be strengthened; and highlighted issues for discussion. Camden's children's services participation had many strengths with many different approaches and in the next steps Camden wanted to strengthen the governance and oversight of participation approaches and ensure continuous development of participation practice and representation at all levels.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member commended the report and said they were keen to see developments in relational practice in the SEND area, which was demonstrated in the recommendations of the SEND Provision Panel final report. In response, it was confirmed that relational practice was to be applied to the whole Council. Regulatory practices in Councils created silo working and the aim was to bring together core values and working together, which would include SEND services.
- A Member asked how outcomes would be measured and stated that there needed to be a framework. In response, it was confirmed that there would be a framework, supported by introducing the governance model, to measure if what they were doing was having a purposeful impact on the people they served.
- A Member welcomed the ambition to build on the current successes and ask if Camden was looking at good work from other local authorities. In response, it was confirmed that part of the work of the Camden Centre for Relational Practice was a part of a sector-led partnership work with the Department for Education (DfE) which gave Camden the opportunity to look at other local authority practices. As part of this work Camden would be working with North East Lincolnshire and Wokingham to look at what was successful in relational infrastructures.



- In relation to section 3.4, a Member asked for more information on the 'Mind of My Own' app. In response, it was stated that the app was for children and young people to use in their lifetime to record how their feeling. Social workers could then respond, using a familiar digital format suited to the social media age. The pilot of the app was successful and the app would be launched in the autumn. Officers would be looking closely to see how this app could teach and inform different methods of engagement with children more creatively and capturing different participation practices.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee comment on and note the report.

**10. YOUTH JUSTICE PLAN 2023-2025 MIDPOINT REVIEW**

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Members for Young People & Culture, Safer Communities, and Best Start for Children & Families

Tim Cosh, Head of Integrated Youth Services, and Charlotte Matthews, Youth Offending Service Manager, summarised the report which set out the priorities of the 2023-2025 plan, updated on performance at the midpoint for the Youth Justice Service (YJS), provided an overview of progress from the previous plan, and referenced national and regional priorities and how Camden sought to deliver on priorities. The service was keen to receive feedback on how to improve.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member stated that there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour in the borough and asked if this trend was visible in the work of the YJS. In response, it was stated that for a child to be flagged to their service certain milestones had to be activated and an indication a child was at risk, which may not be triggered with anti-social behaviour. There were youth early help programmes, which meant an offence did not have to take place for their team to work with a child, and there was work taking place in over-18s spaces. Their service worked with voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners and localities and their relationship with schools was important, because it was imperative to identify any barriers in delays of children getting referred to the YJS
- In relation to section 8.1, a Member praised the adultification training rolled out to youth justice services. The Member asked if the Deferred Exclusion Programme was working. In response, it was stated that the work taking place was about managing impact and from a relationship standpoint with schools. Children and parents had to want to engage with the programme after being referred by the school. Usually the outcome was that it was best for the child to stay in schooling and looking at a managed move, and it had been shown that children responded well to the programme. There had been positive feedback from parents and the service wanted to raise the profile of the programme. Schools were informed

about the programme via headteacher forums and bulletins and via inclusion leads.

- In response to a Member's question, it was confirmed that the ambition was for there to be zero school exclusions resulting from incidents involving fighting or possession of drugs, however it was noted that schools needed to protect all children.
- In relation to section 15.3, housing challenges, a Member asked how the issue of poor housing situations had the potential to contribute to the risk of criminalisation of children and how that could be mitigated. In response, it was confirmed that the role of housing was important and the service would mitigate the impact where they could and there was ongoing work to reduce the impact on families living in temporary accommodation.
- In relation to section 15.1, the reduction in Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support for the YJS, officers confirmed that to respond to those challenges they were working closely with the CAMHS team with the reduced resources and were trying to be more creative with what resources were available, because mental health support was important for children in custody. There had already been progress in the ongoing work and there were multiple approaches they were engaging with children, as the challenges was not just about resources but culture. There was not a one size fits all solution for mental health support for children and the offer needed to sometimes be less prescriptive. It was important for mental health professionals to be involved in support, however there also needed to be trusted relationships for children to feel supported. Project 10/10 was delivering mental health support practice son a peer-led model and positive outcomes had been seen for children referred onto this programme.
- In response to Members, officers said they would share with the Committee further performance data (to include year on year trends and breakdowns), case studies, and further information about Project 10/10. Officers said they were happy to receive feedback on the first iteration of this report on what Members would like to be included – the data trends were available and there were case studies of human stories they could share.

#### **Action By - Executive Director, Children and Learning**

- The Cabinet Member for thanked Members for their feedback on reporting and praised the service for their hard work and innovation and produced great results for young people.
- A Member asked how the service could improve the voice of young people in their work. In response, it was confirmed that they were working with apprentices and trainees to enhance this area because officers were aware they were not best placed themselves to inform this workstream without input. There were stories of young people who had been through the justice system and later in their life set up business and who now worked with young people to inspire others with their story. Officers could over professionalise a situation and they wanted to develop their methods and replicate well received engagement to hear voices of young people and capture the voices that were missing. To hear those

voices, creativity was needed and the help of others who were able to connect with high-risk children. It was early in the process in developing this area.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the Committee note the report.

**11. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2024/25**

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.

Tim Aldridge, Executive Director Children and Learning, summarised the work programme.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES**

The next meeting would be on 11 November 2024. The remaining meeting dates for the 2024/25 municipal were noted.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT**

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**