

CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 14 JANUARY 2025 AT 6.30 PM
COMMITTEE ROOM 2, TOWN HALL, JUDD STREET, LONDON WC1H 9JE

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MEMBERS

Councillor Lotis Bautista (Chair) (L)
Councillors Matt Cooper (L), Julian Fulbrook (L), Jenny Headlam-Wells (L), Patricia Leman (L), Sylvia McNamara (L), Tom Simon (LD) and Nanouche Umeadi (L)
Co-opted Members Camden Youth Council representative, Margaret Harvey, Sarah Jafri and Dr Rachel Wrangham

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Councillors Linda 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, C = Conservative

Issued on: Monday, 6 January 2025

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CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 JANUARY 2025

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

The Chair to announce 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 twelve 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 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. MINUTES

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024. (Pages 7 - 20)

7. YOUNG INSPECTORS REPORT 2024 AND PROGRESS UPDATE ON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE YOUNG INSPECTORS REPORT 2023

All Wards
(Pages 21 - 38)

Report of the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion and the Director of Relational Practice.

This report sets out the findings, key messages, and recommendations of the Young Inspectors inspection of the Virtual School for children looked after and previously looked after.

The main focus of the young inspection was:

- To find out about the experience of children and young people of the support they receive from the Virtual School.
- To identify main themes based on the feedback from focus group discussions with young people and members of the Virtual School staff.
- To develop recommendations for the Virtual School based on the feedback from these focus group discussions.

The conclusions that emerged from the Young Inspectors gave rise to six key recommendations for the Virtual School for children looked after and previously looked after.

The report also includes a summary of action taken to implement the Young Inspectors Report 2023 recommendations.

8. CORPORATE PARENTING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

All Wards

Report of the Executive Director of Children and Learning. (Pages 39 - 60)

This report sets out the annual report on corporate parenting and provides an overview of the achievement, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Camden's children in care and care experienced young who are placed both in borough and outside the borough. The report also sets out the priorities for 2025 and covers the period from December 2023 to November 2024.

- 9. FAMILY HUBS, FAMILY HELP AND START WELL REPORT** **All Wards**
- Report of the Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding and Director of Health and Wellbeing. (Pages 61 - 80)
- The report provides updates to the Children, Schools and Families Committee on four interconnected programmes of work under the aegis of the recently-formed Children and Learning Directorate: Family Hubs, Family Help, Start Well, and the cross-cutting Child Health Equity programme. Each section provides background/ context to the work including information on our population's needs and governance arrangements; key updates from the last 12 months; challenges; and next steps for the coming year.
- 10. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER** (Pages 81 - 90)
- Report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.
- This report provides an outline of the 2024-25 work programme (Appendix 1), the 2025-26 provisional work programme (Appendix 2), and an update on actions requested at previous meetings (Appendix 3).
- 11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES**
- The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the final meeting date of the 2024/25 municipal year: Monday, 24 February 2025.
- The provisional meeting dates for the 2025/26 municipal year will be publicly available in due course.
- 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT**

AGENDA ENDS

The date of the next meeting will be Monday, 24 February 2025 at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE.

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **TUESDAY, 10TH DECEMBER, 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, Patricia Leman, Sylvia McNamara, Tom Simon and Nanouche Umeadi.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillor Matt Cooper and Co-opted Members Zarin Bakhshzaad, Margaret Harvey, Sarah Jafri, and Dr Rachel Wrangham.

ALSO PRESENT

Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families
Councillor Sabrina Francis, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture

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 Zarin Bakhshzaad, Councillor Matt Cooper and Dr Rachel Wrangham.

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.

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4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

There were no deputations.

5. MINUTES

As matters arising, a Member asked for an update on when further information would be shared with the Committee on strategic place planning, as discussed on item 8 at the previous meeting (2024 School Place Planning Report). Officers acknowledged the feedback at the previous meeting regarding the integration of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school place planning into the wider place planning work. They assured the Committee that discussions on this topic were ongoing, including within the School Place Planning Group (which involved school leaders and teachers) and the Place Planning Board (chaired by the Executive Director Children and Learning). It was explained that any recommendations for proposed changes would follow the standard democratic processes, and the Committee would have an opportunity to review proposals at the appropriate time. It was emphasised the importance of involving officers from across Council departments to assess the wider impacts of place planning decisions to mitigate negative effects on communities and to optimise the use of community assets. It was also highlighted the role of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) on SEND place planning, which would be considered as part of future plans. The next update would be provided in autumn 2025 and no further updates were available at this stage. Officers clarified that no formal decisions would be made ahead of September 2025, the timeline was much longer, and any plan would be shared with the Committee well in advance of any proposals being formally agreed.

RESOLVED -

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2024 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. CAMDEN SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP (CSCP) - ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

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

Tim Aldridge (Executive Director Children and Learning) presented the report. Other partners in attendance were David Pennington (Director of Safeguarding, North Central London Integrated Care System), Emma Barker (Detective Superintendent, Central North Basic Command Unit), Stephen Hall (Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning) and Robert McCulloch-Graham (Camden's Independent Scrutineer). The report provided a strategic oversight of the quality and performance of the multiagency safeguarding efforts and an assessment of local services performance and effectiveness, highlighting areas of strength and weakness. The report also outlined how the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements were evaluated and detailed the actions being taken to enhance safeguarding practices aiming to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.

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

- In relation to the second key question for the Committee in section 2, a Member asked what the impacts of a collaborative working culture and an open and transparent safeguarding culture were. They also asked if partners were aware if safeguarding issues decreased as a result from collaborative working. The following responses was given:
 - It was confirmed that the report demonstrated how statutory duties were being met and highlighted the importance of collaboration. However, it was noted that external drivers, such as the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and poverty, had significantly contributed to harm in communities – which were factors beyond the partnership's control. While the partnership could not guarantee any reduction in incidents, it remained committed to better identifying, responding to, and preventing issues from worsening.
 - The importance of learning together as a partnership and understanding complex areas such as neglect was emphasised, particularly in distinguishing between families who were struggling and those unable to manage adequately.
 - Encouraging collaboration across services and fostering an environment where individuals felt confident in reporting concerns, including a willingness to challenge others and accept accountability, was also highlighted as crucial and considered vital for improving safeguarding outcomes.
 - Evidence of the partnership's effectiveness could be observed in reviews, feedback on incidents and near misses, which helped inform future proactive responses.
 - The importance of transparency and shared values within the partnership was important and Camden's culture of openness was evident in its meetings and

responses to incidents. The complexity of safeguarding and the various external factors influencing outcomes were acknowledged, with an emphasis that, while no guarantees could be made, a lack of transparency could lead to poor practice.

- Camden had a strong national reputation for its safeguarding culture however there was a need for continued vigilance to maintain positive relationships and community impact, given that staff and circumstances could change over time.
- A Member noted that while the report mentioned sexual and physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect might be harder for young people to identify in their own situation, as they might not have had the necessary terminology to recognise these issues. Officers explained that the Department for Education (DfE) provided clear legal definitions of neglect, and that pan-London child protection procedures were in place. Neglect referred to children suffering significant harm from their living circumstance and their quality of care did not support them to thrive. There were different types of harm, such as parental mental health issues and domestic abuse, which often overlapped and could not be considered in isolation. Officers acknowledged the complexity of the issue, noting that it had sometimes been difficult to assess the severity of a family's situation and its impact on children. Officers highlighted the importance of staff training, multi-agency discussions, and appropriate professional supervision, as well as the need for time to reflect on cases. It was emphasised that everyone had a responsibility to identify and report neglect. Teaching staff on the frontline also received messaging about support in understanding how to report concerns and ensure children had safe ways to speak up and a safe avenue to communicate with a trusted adult.
- A Member asked what the findings from the health-related behaviour questionnaire were which led to the CSCP commissioning new training on understanding and safeguarding LGBTQ+ children and young people.
- A Member asked for more information about the partnerships approach to intersectionality. In response it was explained that, regardless of discipline, part of professional development involved understanding the community being served. Camden was home to people from diverse backgrounds, each with intersectional identities. It was important not to make assumptions about a family's experiences or perspectives, and that professionals should work with families to understand their diverse histories to support their ability to access services. While not always straightforward, it was emphasised that addressing these issues had been a key aspect of supervision, training, and learning from case reviews, particularly when insufficient attention had been given to someone's protected characteristics. A focus on intersectionality was part of multi-agency meetings and ongoing work, including social workers learning about systemic family therapy. Across the partnership there was a challenge of supporting everyone to remain professionally curious, noting that this required continuous effort. Many individuals had only partial viewpoints of a situation, and it was important to find ways for partners to share the right and correct information to achieve better outcomes.

- A Member highlighted that being curious and courageous seemed like a big challenge and asked how these qualities could be demonstrated in practice. The following responses were given:
 - Officers responded that from a social worker's perspective, this area was about how well-prepared social workers were when engaging with families, especially in multi-agency discussions. It was emphasised that curiosity involved how social workers engaged with families, the building of empathy and trust, while ensuring that families understood the intent behind their questions, which should not feel prying or unhelpful. Courage was required when working with families by asking questions that may seem intrusive, and when engaging in professional conversations, particularly when there was conflict or differing opinions among disciplines. Social workers needed the courage to challenge their own understanding and to ensure they were addressing situations with the right intent.
 - It was stated that within the Metropolitan Police Services (MPS) Children's Strategy, the Child First policy included clear objectives focused on treating the child as a priority, listening to the child's voice, and encouraging professional curiosity. A comprehensive training programme had been established for new MPS staff to ensure consistency and expertise when interacting with children and there was now a greater emphasis on upskilling MPS officers. There had been a significant increase in the number of officers in MPS child protection teams, with minimal vacancies, and that the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) had nearly 100% of its posts filled. In response to a Member asking if the new training had impacted how officers dealt with young people in Camden, it was explained that impacts could be seen in examples of improvements in handling cases involving missing children, which had previously been flagged as a government concern. It was noted that there had been training rolled out to strengthen a higher recognition of risk for high-risk children. The latest government report on the subject was due to be published in January 2025 and positive feedback of the MPS was expected.
- A Member asked what the difference and relation was between relational safeguarding and systemic social work. Officers explained that relational safeguarding was an approach used across partnerships, enhancing strong relationships between agencies and communities to achieve better outcomes. Trust, clear expectations, and the ability to challenge were key to creating an effective environment. Systemic practice was a set of tools within the broader approach, focusing on how to understand and hypothesise about families through a systemic family approach. This approach included direct work tools, which were particularly useful for frontline social workers. In the Council, a new Director for Relational Practice had joined in June 2024 and had published a new practice framework. The Director had already met with many practitioners in the Children and Learning directorate and were building a team of relationally trained practitioners to support the effort to apply the relational practice model coherently.
- A Member noted that while the CSCP appeared to be cost-effective, its success relied on the involvement of partners, many of whom were also facing their own

financial challenges. They asked whether this financial strain could undermine the effectiveness of the work carried out by partners. The following responses were given:

- It was confirmed that the cost-of-living crisis had increased safeguarding concerns, and while all partners remained fully committed to safeguarding, they were being asked to do more with fewer resources.
- An example was shared that a group of GPs in Camden who were under pressure in primary care but still prioritised safeguarding. These GPs, who were safeguarding leads, took time out of their practice to discuss safeguarding issues, focussed on asking curious questions and looking ahead to how early intervention could help. Part of supporting curiosity involved prompting professionals to ask about domestic abuse and suicide, ensuring that all systems could help keep safeguarding at the forefront.
- It was noted that the Police Commissioner had announced that exploitation would remain a high priority for the MPS, supported by investment in safeguarding teams and public protection being protected from government cuts.
- There was a commitment to maintain funding within the partnership, though it was acknowledged it would be affected in different ways. The Council was prioritising safeguarding, investing in strengthening the practice model, which would translate into improved practice and reduction in risk.
- The high costs of getting things wrong in safeguarding was emphasised, as the demand for services would increase significantly if safeguarding efforts at an earlier stage failed. The importance of securing funding for prevention and early intervention was emphasised, as stopping funding would ultimately be at the peril of the services.

RESOLVED -

THAT the Committee:

1. Comment on and note the outcomes achieved by the CSCP set out in the 2023-24 Annual Report (Appendix 1) and the CSCP objectives set out in the Business Plan (Appendix 2)
2. Provide feedback to the local statutory safeguarding partners for children.
3. Note the report.

8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR JOBS, YOUNG PEOPLE & CULTURE: DECEMBER 2024

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture.

Councillor Sabrina Francis (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture) introduced and summarised the report. The report covered the following areas in the portfolio: key initiatives and strategic priorities aimed at taking an early intervention and prevention approach to youth violence while addressing disproportionality, the

voice of children and families, the culture offer, responding to social inequality, and an inclusive economy and jobs.

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

- A Member requested more information about Universal Basic Income (UBI) pilots. The Cabinet Member explained that the initiative was in its early stages, with five cohorts identified, highlighting that young people in care could benefit the most. Officers referenced the UBI scheme in Wales for care leavers, stating that they were still learning from its outcomes. An external organisation had been commissioned to explore what a UBI pilot could look like for Camden, focusing on a subset of care leavers. The pilot would aim to assess the impact of UBI on improving outcomes, ensuring more effective use of resources, and influencing life courses. Over the coming months, options would be developed, leading to a decision on whether to proceed. It was also noted that the pilot could attract national or philanthropic interest and played a part of Camden's mission to research innovative approaches.
- A Member raised concerns about the increasing number of families in temporary accommodation and asked whether this affected the Jobs, Young People & Culture portfolio. The Cabinet Member stated that housing significantly impacted young people's outcomes and noted that senior officers had been invited to the Camden Missions meetings to address the issue. The Cabinet Member explained that a sense of space could influence autonomy and behaviour of a young person, highlighting the interconnectedness of Housing with all portfolios.
- A Member highlighted the importance of youth clubs and youth workers, referencing encouraging research that suggested youth clubs remained highly relevant and impactful. They asked how youth work was recognised in Camden. The Cabinet Member praised the breadth of services that youth clubs across Camden offered and acknowledged the long service of many youth workers, some with up to 25 years' experience. There had been a focus on developing youth clubs as hubs where young people could access advice, recognising the importance of 'third spaces' where young people could gather. Officers noted that Camden had maintained investment in youth services, particularly when many local authorities had been unable to do so, which enabled the borough to retain highly experienced staff. In youth work there had been a shift towards a greater focus on youth safety, with joint working between youth clubs and youth safety initiatives and other parts of London had shown interest in Camden's model. The Cabinet Member added that Camden had introduced youth work apprenticeships to elevate the importance of youth work and there were many young people who aspired to return to work as youth workers within their own borough.
- In relation to section 5.20, Family Case work, a Member asked how many children did not succeed in being referred to Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) either via schools or the Youth Early Help services route. Officers said that data showed that more children were being supported through referrals, with processes working both ways - youth services referring to MASH and MASH

referring back to youth services, as well as to voluntary and community sector (VCS).

- A Member stressed the importance of improving support for SEND young people to access apprenticeships, warning that a lack of opportunities could lead to long-term unemployment. The Cabinet Member confirmed that SEND young people were a key cohort within the Youth Mission and were being prioritised. SEND apprenticeships were a priority group for improving opportunities, with a focus not only on council-led initiatives but also on engaging partners to identify what additional support they could provide. Officers further suggested exploring initiatives companies in Camden could support young people with additional needs.
- A Member raised concerns about school exclusions, noting that they were disproportionately affecting Global Majority children and were primarily linked to one school. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the issue, highlighting that there was an officer Disproportionality Lead. Officers emphasised that the issue was taken seriously, noting that while the numbers were low, they remained concerning and work was taking place with all Camden schools through Camden Learning. Through the Inclusion Forum there was greater challenge and discussions between schools, and school leaders were committed to addressing the issue. The Cabinet Member added that a better cultural and lived experienced understanding from professionals often achieved better outcomes for children, however, it was noted that exclusions typically occurred due to exceptional circumstances.
- A Member requested further information on the work being done with schools to address exclusions, including the factors involved and the necessary interventions. The Cabinet Member explained that there was a Disproportionality Lead working directly with schools, and the Youth Justice Board was also engaged with the schools in question. Camden was fortunate to have Camden Learning and officers highlighted the ongoing staff training on adultification and disproportionality. A report on exclusions had been presented at the last meeting and officers offered to provide more detailed information if specific questions arose. In response to Members, officers agreed to provide further information, narrative and analysis about the school in the borough which had a disproportionately high number of exclusions and to provide detail about what specific interventions were in place with the school to reduce that number.

Action By: Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning

RESOLVED -

THAT the Committee comment on and note the report.

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BEST START FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES: DECEMBER 2024

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) introduced and summarised the report. The report covered the following areas in the portfolio: key initiatives and strategic priorities aimed at improving the lives and wellbeing of children and families across the borough, schools and Camden Learning, improving the health of children and families, adult community learning and the Virtual School, Children's Services and safeguarding, support for students with SEND and the Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS), corporate parenting and voices of families and children, and Early Years and Family Hubs.

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

- A Member highlighted the potential benefits of collaborating with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to use their data to activate auto-enrolment to increase and streamline the Free School Meals (FSM) uptake and they asked for a timeframe for when this might be possible. The Cabinet Member explained an IT project of that nature could take some time to implement. There were challenges in IT systems in schools being outdated, which made it harder to obtain a full picture of which families were eligible. Despite this, Members were reassured that other measures were being taken to encourage parents to sign up for Pupil Premium which supported FSM uptake and schools had put significant effort into securing this funding stream.
- In response to Members, officers agreed to provide further information on any specific support the Council provided, or could consider providing, to families who were living in temporary accommodation to help children attend school, particularly any details about support for families who had to move out of borough.

Action By: Executive Director, Children and Learning

- In relation to initiatives aimed at improving school attendance, a Member suggested that one effective approach could be making school a more desirable place to attend. The Cabinet Member explained that attendance in Camden was low performing compared to other London boroughs. The Children's Trust Partnership Board, a multi-agency partnership with representatives from the Council, schools, VCS, and Health established to improve outcomes for children and young people in Camden, was dedicated to addressing this challenge, alongside exclusions and concerns about Elective Home Education (EHE). For the Board, officers created data heat maps which mapped the borough to identify

areas with the worst attendance, and this showed that areas around estates had the worst outcomes. Further analysis of attendance focused on children with SEND, care-experienced children, and children who had come into contact with social workers, among other vulnerable groups. An initiative from schools was testing the effectiveness of different messaging to families in improving attendance. The Cabinet Member also noted a theme in addressing the issue was around children feeling belonging and asking what motivated children to attend school, which could be hindered by strict penalties relating to uniform or punctuality. A Member emphasised that while the feeling of belonging might sound like a soft concept, it had a huge impact on young people, such as when children felt they could participate in activities such as sports, or when the curriculum celebrated their identity.

- A Member raised concerns about parents struggling to get their Education Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) packages paid for due to administrative issues and asked whether this could be addressed.
- A Member welcomed positive progress in the work on report cards in Camden, which provided a more comprehensive assessment of schools beyond Ofsted and highlighted schools real strengths.
- A Member praised the outstanding work on early help and the development of family hubs but stressed the need for more support across other age groups.
- In relation to SEND services, a Member acknowledged the achievements but raised concerns about the 96-week wait for diagnoses, describing the significant pain experienced by children and families. The Member noted the lack of mention of this issue and limited information on speech therapy in the report. The Cabinet Member responded that the 96-week wait had been widely discussed and confirmed that they had written to the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The ICB was considering increasing investment in Camden to add an additional £900,000 per year, and the Cabinet Member expressed confidence that the ICB had taken concerns seriously. The Member requested that the next iteration of this report addressed these issues in greater detail, including updates on attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) assessments and speech and language therapist provisions.
- A Member raised concerns about school attendance, particularly at the secondary level, highlighting Camden's rate of 24% compared to 23.9% in London and 19.6% nationally. They queried whether attendance rates were better in Camden's more affluent wards. The Cabinet Member explained that areas within the borough which required greater investment often faced more challenges, with attendance rates being lower on estates. However, attendance in primary schools was showing improvement and becoming more positive. To better understand the underlying issues, a health-related questionnaire was being introduced. The Cabinet Member also highlighted the involvement of Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA), a youth-led VCS organisation, which had created a video commissioned by Camden Learning. The video, made by children for children, aimed to encourage attendance and was part of broader efforts to address school attendance issues.
- A Member highlighted the importance of celebrating the positive relationship between Camden schools and the Council, noting that schools in other local

authorities sometimes lost confidence in their council which could lead to academisation. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the challenges faced by schools across the city and credited his predecessors for the hard work over the years which helped keep Camden schools together. To sustain this progress, the Cabinet Member stressed the importance of being present figures, meeting with headteachers, and engaging with Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Efforts included increasing involvement in Camden Learning, strengthening networks, supporting cluster groups, and promoting peer reviews and federations. The governor network was also highlighted as playing a key role in maintaining these positive relationships.

- Members requested that for a more detailed data breakdown and analysis be provided, including a heatmap, in the next iteration of the attendance report to the Committee. Members noted that while the current graphs provided a broad view of London, they wanted finer details to differentiate between Camden schools to identify specific issues and foster targeted discussion.

RESOLVED -

THAT the Committee comment on and note the report.

10. INSIGHT, LEARNING AND IMPACT REPORT - QUARTER 2 2024/25

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Directors of Adults and Health, Children and Learning, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services.

Tim Aldridge (Executive Director Children and Learning) summarised areas of the report which related to the Children and Learning directorate. This included outlining the summaries of the challenges, opportunities and learning for the relevant services.

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

- In response to Members, officers agreed to provide further information about how the family therapy offer worked in conjunction with MASH.

Action By: Executive Director Children and Learning

- A Member asked whether ESOL teaching (English for Speakers of Other Languages) was being combined with vocational skills and development opportunities. Officers confirmed that this approach was part of the adult community learning pathway, explaining that ESOL often served as a first step and gateway to other opportunities.
- A Member noted that while the comments on the Looked After Children dashboard indicated stability, the data showed a steady increase since 2019/20 and they asked for an explanation of that trend. Officers responded that the

increase could be attributed to a combination of factors, including the ongoing effects of the pandemic, social care issues such as neglect and domestic abuse, and the cost-of-living crisis. Families under pressure from poverty faced increased disadvantages, which often drove poorer outcomes. Officers acknowledged the small but notable increase and explained that the Council was focusing on early intervention to address the issue. This included safeguarding measures via the Front Door service and support from the Edge of Care Service. It was also highlighted that a disproportionate number of children entering care were from Black and Asian communities and emphasised the need to work harder and intervene earlier to support these families.

RESOLVED -

THAT the Committee comment on and 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 14 January 2025. 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 8.55 pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Anoushka Clayton-Walshe

Telephone No: 020 7974 8543

E-Mail: anoushka.clayton-walshe@camden.gov.uk

MINUTES END

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LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Young Inspectors Report 2024 and Progress Update on Recommendations from the Young Inspectors Report 2023	
REPORT OF Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion and the Director of Relational Practice	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 14 January 2025
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report sets out the findings, key messages, and recommendations of the Young Inspectors inspection of the Virtual School for children looked after and previously looked after.</p> <p>The main focus of the young inspection was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To find out about the experience of children and young people of the support they receive from the Virtual School. • To identify main themes based on the feedback from focus group discussions with young people and members of the Virtual School staff. • To develop recommendations for the Virtual School based on the feedback from these focus group discussions. <p>The conclusions that emerged from the Young Inspectors gave rise to six key recommendations for the Virtual School for children looked after and previously looked after.</p> <p>The report also includes a summary of action taken to implement the Young Inspectors Report 2023 recommendations.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officers: Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion, 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG 02079743926 / Vikram.Hansrani@camden.gov.uk</p> <p>Nana Bonsu, Director of Relational Practice, 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG 02076608497 / Nana.Bonsu@camden.gov.uk</p>	

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on and note:

1. The Young Inspectors Report 2024 (Appendix 1).
2. Progress Update on Recommendations from the Young Inspectors Report 2023 (Appendix 2).

Signed:



Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

Date: 31 December 2024

1. Purpose of Report

The Young Inspectors is an annual programme involving young people with lived experience of services, who are trained and supported to inspect our work and make recommendations aimed at service improvement. The Young Inspectors undertake research into the views of children, families and professionals - about services provided by social care and partner agencies responsible for safeguarding children.

Feedback gathered by the Young Inspectors provides a foundation to the recommendations for service changes and development.

In January 2024 CSF scrutiny committee has requested an update on the progress of the recommendations from the Young Inspectors 2023 to report to a future committee which is included in appendix 2.

2. Key questions for the Committee

We would welcome the Committee's feedback to shape next steps:

- What has struck you about the findings from the Young Inspectors on the support children in care get from the Virtual School with their educational experiences?
- We've revised the format of this report to better highlight the tangible changes resulting from the recommendations of the young inspector's report from the previous year (2023). What are your impressions of this new format? What aspects did you find effective, and how do you think it could be improved further?

3. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

The Executive Director Corporate Services has been consulted on this report and has no comment.

4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Borough solicitor has been consulted on this report and has no comment.

5. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Young Inspectors Report 2024

Appendix 2 – Progress Update on Recommendations from the Young Inspectors Report 2023

REPORT ENDS

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Young Inspectors Report 2024

**The Big Ambition – Virtual School for children
looked after and previously looked after**

1. INTRODUCTION

The Young Inspectors is an annual programme involving young people with lived experience of services, who are trained and supported to inspect our work and make recommendations aimed at service improvement. The Young Inspectors undertake research into the views of children, families and professionals - about services provided by social care and partner agencies responsible for safeguarding children.

Feedback gathered by the Young Inspectors provides a foundation to the recommendations for service changes and development.

2. YOUNG INSPECTORS 2024 THE BIG AMBITION – VIRTUAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND PREVIOUSLY LOOKED AFTER, children with a social worker and Kinship

This year, a team of six young people aged 18-22 applied their own experience of Camden services in the planning and conduct of the project with the focus on the Virtual School for looked after and previously looked after children. This was requested by the Head of the Virtual School in order to get more insight from children into their service.

“The role of the Virtual School Headteacher (VSHT), and the Virtual School team, is to promote the education of children and young people in care and previously in care, and to ensure that the local authority’s statutory duties in this area are discharged effectively.

Looked-after and previously looked-after children start with the disadvantage of their pre-care experiences and, often, have special educational needs. Virtual School Heads have a key role to ensure these children have the maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential - an important part of why this role was made statutory.

- For looked-after children, as part of a local authority’s corporate parent role, the VSH needs to be the educational advocate that parents are for others.
- For previously looked-after children, the VSH will be a source of advice and information to help their parents to advocate for them as effectively as possible. VSHs are not acting as part of the corporate parent role in these circumstances but are there to promote the educational achievement of these children through the provision of advice and information to relevant parties listed in Previously looked after-children. Looked-after children
- Local authorities have a duty under the Children Act 1989 to safeguard and promote the welfare of a child looked after by them. This includes a specific duty to promote the child’s educational achievement, wherever they live or are educated. The authority must, therefore, give particular attention to the educational implications of any decision about the welfare of those children.”
- Department for Education, Statutory Guidance – Promoting Education of Looked after and previously looked after children 2018.

3. WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE SAID ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE PROJECT

Meeting the staff from the Virtual school and hearing how different they are from each other and how they work in different ways and yet they complement each other.

The most challenging task was to plan a focus group discussion with young people to talk to them about the virtual school and the Personal Education Plan meetings. It was fun but challenging to plan the questions we were going to ask them and how we were going to present it in an interesting and engaging way.

I have gained a new skill that is how to be a good presenter and get the audience's attention.

Abdi, Young Inspector

The sense of purpose I have found working in this team is something I have never experienced before.

I used to struggle with working together with peers, but I have now the understanding of being a part of a team and wanting to be a part of the team. Also, this group has given me perspective into my own personal life and how things matter in relation to learning and celebrating victories.

Mary-lynn, Young Inspector

This opportunity has enabled me to discover aspects of myself that I didn't know existed such as my great confidence in speaking in public as opposed to the panic attacks I would have when presenting in front of my teachers in schools. It was also great to come together with young people of diverse mindsets and experiences and come up with such a career changing project in such a short period of time.

It was also very easy and safe for us to converse with people who work in Camden. Our opinions were always heard and our input to the project was always valued.

Nihad, Young Inspector

Most enjoyable part for me was speaking to members of the Virtual school directly. As a former child of the virtual school, it is truly wonderful to have the opportunity to understand who the people supporting me were, and how dedicated they are in making sure that all looked after children overcome their limitations.

Princess, Young Inspector

One of the challenges I faced was the language barrier. Understanding and processing information in a second language took extra time.

This experience has been incredibly valuable for me. I have gained a deeper understanding of the Virtual School service and picked up several new skills, such as conducting interviews, taking detailed notes, and analysing information from various sources. Additionally, I have improved my ability to communicate effectively within a team. Beyond that, I have also learned about setting goals and having ambitions.

This project has provided me not only with professional knowledge but also with general life knowledge.

Sam, Young Inspector

The skills I have gained include confidence to talk in a group setting, improved planning skills and working together with other young people.

This project has rekindled my 'why' for helping young people, as one day I aspire to become a therapist for adolescents. It has also helped me to gain insight as to the amount of work each member of the Virtual school do.

I am immensely happy knowing my role will make the difference. Along with seeing that change, it will make me feel like the hard work I had put into the project was worth it.

Aisha, Young Inspector

4. AIMS OF THE PROJECT

The Big Ambition – Virtual School for children looked after and previously looked after.

The main focus of the young inspection was:

- **To find out about the experience** of children and young people of the support they receive from the Virtual School.
- **To identify main themes** based on the feedback from focus group discussions with young people and members of the Virtual School staff.
- **To develop recommendations for the Virtual School** based on the feedback from the focus group discussions.

5. APPROACH

The Young Inspectors approach to their investigation:

- Focus group discussion with young people to learn about their experience of support from the Virtual School. Nine young people took part in the discussion age 14-22 from diverse backgrounds that are representative of Camden's children in care population.
- Interviewing and discussions with the Virtual school members of staff: Head of the Virtual School, Deputy Head of the Virtual school, Education Consultant, Special Reintegration and Inclusion Officers and Education Navigator.
- Research of publications and videos relating to promoting the education outcomes of children in care.

6. EMERGING THEMES AND REFLECTIONS

6.1 Emerging themes and reflections from focus group discussion with young people.

The four emerging themes from the focus group discussion with young people were:

Theme 1 - What makes going to school a good experience?

- Having a great teacher who is easy to talk to and who explains things well.
- Teachers who understand what motivates you to do well.
- Having a teacher who helps you to achieve your goal.
- Studying subjects that I love
- Seeing friends.

Theme 2 - What makes for a good Personal Education Plan discussion?

- Talking directly with the teacher or social worker about the Personal Education Plan meeting prior to the meeting.
- Being involved in preparation for the Personal Education Plan meeting.
- Knowing or having a reminder of what has happened since the last Personal Education Plan meeting.
- Having the PEP meeting later in the day, towards the end of the school day.

Theme 3 - What could improve the experience of Personal Education Planning meetings?

- Professionals to stop using acronyms.
- Young person's favourite teacher to attend Personal Education Plan meetings.
- To help young people engage more in making plans for their education by discussing PEP prior to the meeting and providing support through the PEP process.

Theme 4 - What is most important about the person from the Virtual school who helps children and young people with education?

- Is a good listener and gives suggestions about how to improve the education of children and young people and to solve any difficulties they may be experiencing.
- Helps to empower children and young people to make decisions.
- Has faith in young people when they are short of faith in themselves.
- Has high expectations for young people in care and to encourage them towards achieving their goals
- Gives support with connecting to further opportunities in education like universities or training.
- Seeing young people through the lens of strengths and resourcefulness.

6.2 Emerging themes and reflections from discussions with the Virtual School staff.

Discussions with the Virtual School staff have highlighted the following reflections:

- Virtual school staff champion the education of children in care.
- All staff members are advocates for young people.
- Staff members are very good at building strong relationships with young people
- Happy, motivated children with learning resilience are some of the positive outcomes which the Virtual School is striving to promote.
- Virtual school staff members are experts in their fields bringing different expertise to their work with children and young people.
- Virtual school staff provide tailored support to meet the needs of each child.
- Quality assuring of Personal Education Plans is one of the strengths of the service

Challenges for the Virtual School include:

- Bringing partners together to provide highest quality of the Personal Education Plan for every child.
- Consideration of whether Education Consultants have the capacity to attend every Personal Education Plan meeting to provide advice, support and quality assurance.

7. ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Last year, in April 2024, children looked after took part in a two-day drama workshop - "All about Me". The two-day workshop provided an opportunity for young people to explore their strengths, interests and ambitions for the future. Young people made a wish list of their aspirations and made reflections on what would help them to achieve their goals.

The wish list included becoming a pilot, police officer, computer scientist, TV superstar, sports car dealer, interior designer and a perfume entrepreneur. Reflections on what and who would help them to achieve their goals were: "hard work, education, apprenticeships, support from family, motivation and love".

The Virtual School has an important role in supporting these aspirations of young people and the Young Inspectors report links to this through Theme 4 outlined above, which is around supporting children in care to achieve their career and life goals.



8. YOUNG INSPECTORS' RECOMMENDATIONS

The Young Inspectors do not rate services (unlike Ofsted inspections process which results in ratings) but overall, they found that the Virtual School offers children in care an excellent service. Considering this, their recommendations are focused on continuing to build on these foundations. The six key recommendations were:

- 8.1 To improve young people's engagement in making their education plan and attendance at Personal Education Planning (PEP) meetings - by social worker discussing PEP prior to the meeting and providing support through the PEP process.
- 8.2 All professionals including foster carers, agree to use language that enables each young person to engage in their PEP meetings - not using acronyms and ensuring that interpreter is available where necessary. This includes the use of accessible language in written reports.
- 8.3 Professionals, where possible, to attend PEP meetings in person. The key people are: the teacher that the young person would like to attend, their social worker, foster carer/carer, their Designated Teacher and when appropriate, a representative of the Virtual School.
- 8.4 Virtual School to deliver training programme for foster carers to ensure that they are confident to navigate the education system and provide support for young people. Virtual School to collaborate with Family, Friends and Fostering service to ensure the training is advertised and promoted to foster carers.

8.5 Virtual School education leads to provide more intensive preparation time and additional support with young people and education providers at these key transition points to support choices: year 6 to 7, year 8 to 9 and year 11 into year 12 - post 16.

8.6 The Virtual School to co - design resources with young people and Personal Advisors about higher education and degree apprenticeships that can be accessed by social workers and Personal Advisors to support young people with further education choices.

9. RESPONSE TO INITIAL FINDINGS AND HOW RECOMMENDATIONS WILL BE TAKEN FORWARD

9.1 The Corporate Parenting Board, which includes the Virtual School, discussed the Young Inspector's findings and key recommendations during their meeting on 22 October 2024. The Board strongly supported the recommendations and took the opportunity to acknowledge the hard work of the young people involved and extended their thanks for producing an excellent report.

9.2 The Virtual School Annual Report, which is scheduled to be presented at the next board meeting in January 2025, will address the findings of the 2024 Young Inspectors report. The report will provide detail about how these will be integrated into the Virtual School's service planning for 2025 and beyond, including an action plan to ensure that the recommendations are being taken into consideration.

9.3 The recommendations will also be reflected in the new Corporate Parenting strategy (2025-2028) which will be presented at the Cabinet meeting in April 2025.

Appendix 2: Progress Update on Recommendations from the Young Inspectors Report 2023

The Young Inspectors Report 2023 (My meetings – children and families experience of social care meetings) made eight recommendations for service improvement. A summary of actions implemented in response to the Young Inspectors recommendations can be found in the table below.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
<p>1. Embed a culture of supporting children and families to attend meetings and enable participation in shared decision making.</p>	<p>99 % of children have participated in their children looked after review meetings in the year 2023/24.</p> <p>This has remained stable compared to the previous year (99%).</p> <p>There has been a change to Children Looked After (CLA) reports on MOSAIC system to include recording of children’s attendance and contribution to the CLA meetings. MOSAIC is Camden’s case management recording system for Children’s and Adult social work services and Early Help. The system incorporates embedded forms and workflow steps which are based on statutory social work processes and forms.</p> <p>Parent advocacy referral form has been developed to make the process more accessible for social workers and for parents to receive the support. The work is on the way to include the referral form on the MOSAIC pathway.</p> <p>Mind of My Own app has been implemented in September 2024 to support children and young people to provide their views on their plans and meetings where key decisions are made. It is hoped that this tool will increase young people involvement in decision making by sharing their views.</p> <p>The app and resource allow them to send feedback directly to their social worker, at any time. They can complete forms on up-coming meetings, provide their views and feelings, who they want to be in attendance, if they wish to attend and how they will be receive feedback after the meeting on decisions made.</p>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
	<p>There is also a form for them to feedback after the meeting and include if they felt their wishes and feelings were heard or considered and what they want to change going forward. The key element is to ensure they feel involved and included in the process throughout and in decision-making forums, where their voice is recorded.</p> <p>Family Group Conferences model is well established and principles of supporting families to make plans in collaboration with their friends and family are embedded in the service. This service is offered throughout Children’s Safeguarding and Family Help and is routinely used in Early Help, Youth Services, Child in Need, Child Protection and Children Looked After work. Camden’s Policy states that all families subject to Child Protection plans or at risk of legal proceedings must be offered a Family Group Conference.</p> <p>The Quality Assurance Service audit form has been reviewed and an important update includes: the section dedicated to feedback from children and young people has now been moved to the top of the form. This change reflects our commitment to prioritizing their input as a key focus area in the assessment process.</p> <p>Learning from the audits informs forums such as the leaders and practitioners’ sessions and the Quality Assurance Board.</p>
<p>2. Children and families are better prepared so they understand the purpose of the meeting and are involved in the planning.</p>	<p>Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) guides for children and parents are included with invite letters sent to families for Child Protection (CP) Conferences. Child protection conference guide for parents, Children’s guide to child protection in Camden.</p> <p>Camden practice guidance for all social workers states that they must prepare children for Child Protection conferences, Child in Need meetings and CLA reviews by taking their wishes and feelings in advance, making a decision along with the child and family about their attendance at the meeting and what format this should be in, as well as sharing their report with the child beforehand in an age-appropriate manner.</p>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
	<p>The Children looked after service is working to replicate child protection processes regarding the administration of CLA reviews to ensure that Social Workers complete their reports in advance of the meeting and that information is appropriately shared with children beforehand. Alerts system has been implemented to remind social workers to send their reports to the Independent Reviewing Officer and to the family prior to the meeting. This continues to be an area for further development, which is reflected by a significant increase in the number of IRO alerts on Mosaic related to late or incomplete reports.</p>
	<p>Independent Reviewing Officers and Child Protection Officers record their contact with children, young people and parents within MOSAIC episodes. There has been an increase in the recording of their IRO/CPO contacts since the Young Inspectors' findings and these help to capture children's views and feelings.</p>
	<p>Advocacy for children services, including an agreed referral pathway, is already in place with Action for Children. This started in August 2024 and is still being rolled out across the service, but the aim is for this to be a consistent offer across children's services.</p>
<p>3. Child Protection Conferences and Children Looked After Reviews are less intimidating for children and parents, and more supportive.</p>	<p>There has been good practice to support young people of appropriate age (13+) to take part in the child protection reviews. We encourage young people to use the new app Mind of My Own with the support of the social worker. Also, young people are invited to present their wishes by writing a letter to the Child Protection Officer chair if they do not wish to attend the meeting.</p>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
	<p>Children who are looked after are given a choice of who they would like to attend at the review meetings, and this is strongly advocated for by Independent Reviewing Officers and Social Workers.</p> <p>Their choice has been recorded on MOSAIC since the new form was introduced earlier in 2024 - this specifically asks what the child's wishes and feelings were regarding how they wanted their review set up.</p>
<p>4. Providing timely reports to the family and professional network to enable a better understanding of the support for the family.</p>	<p>Regular supervision supports social workers to prepare and complete reports in advance of meetings.</p> <p>The new role of service co-ordinator includes reminders to social workers to complete reports two weeks in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Independent Reviewing Officers consistently work to ensure that the reports are completed within the statutory timescales.</p> <p>Over the past six months, the percentage of families receiving child protection reports from social workers at least two days in advance of the conference has ranged from 86% to 100%. Steps need to be taken to achieve this standard in children looked after reports.</p> <p>There has been an increase in the use of alerts system to ensure that the reports are completed within timescales.</p>
<p>5. Support and good communication with children and families after the meeting to ensure they understand the plan, and have an opportunity to</p>	<p>Child Protection Officers and Independent Reviewing Officers continue to meet young people and parents prior and after conferences and children looked after reviews.</p> <p>There has been an increase in Independent Reviewing Officers recording of these contacts on MOSAIC.</p>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
reflect and comment on the decision/recommendations.	Many IROs write their reports to young people in a format of a therapeutic letter which draws on use of systemic practices, writing directly to young person in the age-appropriate language. Every effort is made to reduce jargon in letter for parents. As part of relational practice, IRO meet with parents outside of the review process to allow them to express themselves further.
6. Reports and plans are simplified and easy for children, young people and parents to understand.	<p>In November 2024 compulsory practice focus sessions for all social workers and managers have taken place with emphasis on the use of meaning of language, both verbal and written, in communication with children and families. This has provided an improved framework and understanding for practitioners about how to write on children's files.</p> <p>Accessible language for young and families is an integral part of the new relational practice model in social work. Children's participation has been included as a core model in the new relational practice framework which is planned to be launched in 2025 following a series of listening events with colleagues to hear their feedback.</p>
7. Promote meaningful participation for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people by ensuring reports and plans are provided in a more creative way and are easy to understand.	<p>Currently a Social Worker and Personal Advisor meets a young person to complete the pathway plan prior to the pathway review meeting. This will be with an interpreter of their preferred language if required. The Social Workers and Personal Advisors will review this report again during the meeting with a further interpreter to confirm the young person continues to agree with the proposed plan.</p> <p>Mind of My Own app has been implemented in September 2024 to increase young people involvement in decision making by sharing their views. The app has a facility to provide translation in over 100 languages.</p>

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	OUTCOMES
	<p>Participation session completed with a group of unaccompanied young people who discussed their experience of engaging with their pathway review meetings and what they felt could improve this process. Information and welcome packs to be created to support young people understanding an overview of what they can expect while in our care, these remain underway and will be completed in January 2025.</p>
<p>8. Training for Social Workers on best practice around planning and supporting children and families to participate in meetings.</p>	<p>Commissioned core training in December 2024 to include best practice in supporting children and families to participate in meetings. Training programme to be implemented in 2025.</p> <p>Best practice briefing to be developed and shared with team managers/ social work teams supported by the Participation Service in March 2025.</p>

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE: Corporate Parenting Service Annual Report 2023-24	
REPORT OF Executive Director of Children and Learning	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 14 January 2025
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>This report sets out the annual report on corporate parenting and provides an overview of the achievement, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Camden’s children in care and care experienced young people who are placed both in borough and outside the borough. The report also sets out the priorities for 2025 and covers the period from December 2023 to November 2024.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents which are required to be listed were used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Brenda Amisi-Hutchinson, Head of Corporate Parenting Children’s Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding, Supporting People London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, NC1 4AG. brenda.amisi-hutchinson@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to comment on and note the annual report on corporate parenting.</p>	

Signed by:



Tim Aldridge, Executive Director for Children and Learning and Director for Children’s Services (DCS)

Date: 2 January 2025

1. Purpose of Report

This report sets out the annual report on corporate parenting and provides an overview of the achievement, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Camden's children in care and care experienced young people who are placed both in borough and outside the borough. The report also sets out the priorities for 2025 and covers the period from December 2023 to November 2024.

2. Key questions for the Committee

We would welcome the Committee's feedback on the below:

- What has struck you about Camden's achievement, progress and challenges in meeting the needs of Camden's children in care and care experienced young people?
- What are your thoughts on the proposed promises to Camden's care experienced children and young people, and how we measure against them?
- What are your thoughts on our priorities for 2025 and beyond?

3. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

This paper highlights the significant financial challenge facing our children's social care services, with a projected overspend c.£10 million on the children's placements budget for 2024-25.

A number of mitigation measures have been implemented through the Placement Sufficiency Strategy and the revenue and capital requirements will be considered alongside the Council's other strategic priorities through the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The Council is subject to the requirements of the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and must have regard to the corporate parenting principles in carrying out its functions in relation to looked after and relevant children. It must also have regard to the statutory guidance 'Applying corporate parenting principles to looked-after children and care leavers'.

5. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Corporate Parenting Service Annual Report 2023-24

Corporate Parenting Service Annual Report 2023-24



1. INTRODUCTION

1. This report provides an overview of Camden's Corporate Parenting Services'. It also sets out our strategy for continuing to meet the needs of our children in care and care-experienced young people as their corporate parents.
2. The statutory guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the Director of Children's Services and the Lead Member for Children's Services states that the Council is responsible for acting as effective and caring corporate parents for all Children Looked After and Care Experienced Young People. Simply put, the term 'corporate parent' refers to the collective responsibility of all elected members, staff, and partner agencies to provide the best possible support and safeguarding for this cohort and to support their transition into adulthood. This involves an absolute commitment that our children should achieve in education. They live in stable homes where they receive love and care and are ready for independence as they mature into adulthood.
3. The co-chairs and members of the Corporate Parent Board (including elected members) have continued to demonstrate a commitment to and active engagement with our children and young people. They have taken a leading role in the Virtual School Awards, an opportunity to celebrate their educational achievements. They have maintained relationships with our foster carers through consultation and celebration events and with young people through the Child in Care Council.
4. The Service continues to grapple with the proposed National Reforms for children and is heartened by some of the ideas raised in the Children's Wellbeing Bill 2024. The Bill would strengthen our corporate parenting responsibilities with our statutory partners. A whole Council approach and collaboration with Camden Safeguarding Partnership Partners led to co-designing the Corporate Parenting Strategy for 2025-2028. The strategic plan will then develop and consolidate the strategy's implementation, considering National Reforms and proposed changes in the Children's Wellbeing Bill. Camden's Placement Sufficiency Strategy and the Kinship Strategy in 2024 have also been refreshed for launch in 2025 to support the Corporate Parenting Strategy.
5. Camden's population of children in care continues to grow. As such, the Council responded in January 2024 to make being care experienced a locally protected characteristic to address the systemic inequity and hardship experienced by children in care. This work has also been supported by the Department for Education (DfE) National Advisor for Care Leavers, Mark Riddell, visiting Camden.
6. Unfortunately, children subject to care proceedings continue to experience delays in care planning due to protracted court proceedings extending beyond the 26-week recommended period due to court availability. As a response, Camden has engaged with the Designated Family Judge Trailblazer Pilot, which seeks to reduce time in care proceedings. There has also been a slight reduction over this period of care proceedings being issued and enhanced work with our casework in pre-proceedings to identify kinship carers. We have enhanced our offer of support to Camden Foster Carers. The number of families in care

proceedings has reduced from 47 (90 children) in November 2023 to 42 families (78 children) in December 2024. Additionally, an Edge of Care Service is being prototyped to address the inequality of overrepresentation of the Global Majority children within care system.

7. We continue to see the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on household incomes and services. The cost of care has also increased during this period, with a projected overspend of around £ 10 million on the children's placements budget. In December 2024, there has been a review of capital and revenue requirements as part of the placement sufficiency needs analysis.
8. Camden's Corporate Parenting Strategy is being refreshed and will be presented at the Corporate Parenting Board in January 2025 and Cabinet in April 2025 with renewed promises to children. The refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025- 2028 is underpinned by five co-designed promises to safeguard our children and young people to become the best possible adults.

- **Rights and aspirations:**

"We promise to ensure that all the people who support you are care conscious and act as your corporate parent. We will advocate for your rights and aspirations and protect you from facing disadvantage from wider services and the community."

- **Wellbeing:**

"We promise to support you in adopting a happy and healthy lifestyle and to help you navigate how you feel and life's ups and downs, ensuring your health and emotional wellbeing needs are met."

- **Interests and life goals:**

"We promise to champion you and help you find and succeed in the right education, training, and employment aligned with your life goals and interests."

- **Home:**

"We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find a stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually helps you find a place you can call home."

- **Belonging and relationships:**

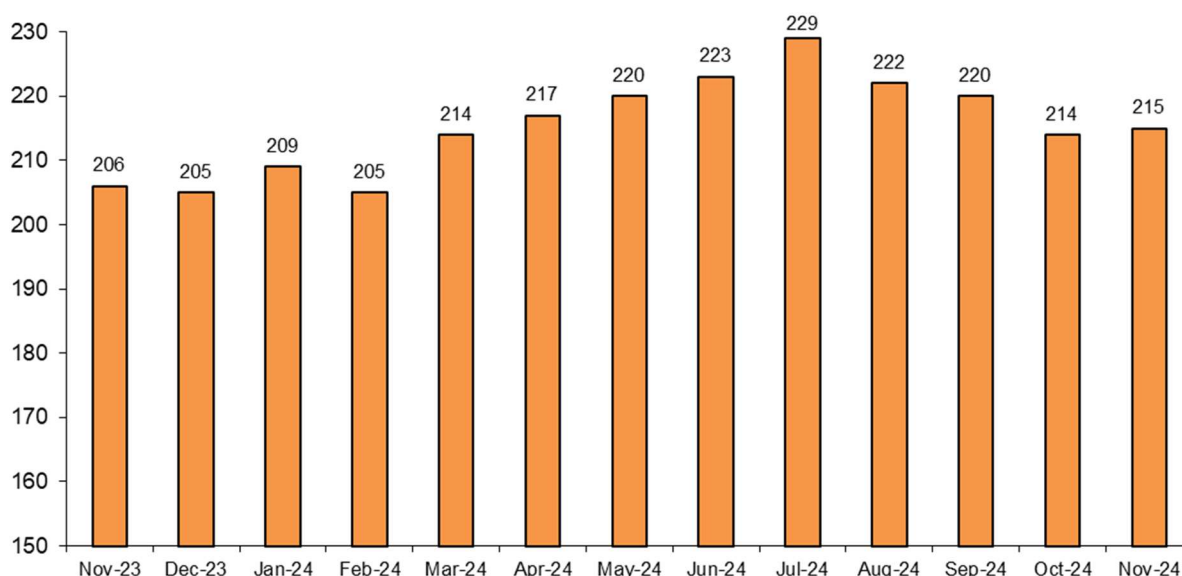
"We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long-lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you."

2. PROFILE OF CAMDEN'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POPULATION

1. Who are Camden's Children Looked After (CLA)? What our data tells us.

Over the last 12 months, Camden's number of children in its care has grown from 206 at the end of November 2023 to 215 at the end of November 2024. There was a peak in July 2024, when 229 children were in our care. This equates to 57.1 children looked after per 10,000 children under 18 living in Camden. This is an increase of 5.2 since March 2023 (52.3) but continues to be below the national rate and the rate of statistical neighbours.

Figure 1 CLA numbers (November 2023- November 2024)



2. Who is coming into care, and what is their legal status?

There has been a decrease in unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) entering our care—thirteen UASCs presented during this financial period. In December 2024 we have 37 UASCs in our care. This compares to 62 UASCs in 2021/2. All our UASCs are aged 14 to 17, and 23 have been in our care for over seven months. By country of origin: three from Afghanistan, one from Algeria, one from China, ten from Eritrea, one from Ethiopia, one from Guinea, two from Iran, two from Iraq, two from Morocco, fourteen from Sudan, one from Syria and one from Yemen. 74.4% of UASC are from African countries and 25.6% from Asian countries.

Most children come into our care through care proceedings. There are 75 children subject to care orders, meaning that care proceedings have concluded for them, and the family court has decided that the local authority should hold parental responsibility. There are 67 children subject to interim care orders, which means there needs to be more clarity about their care arrangements. There are four children on placement orders, meaning care proceedings have concluded for them with an adoption plan. Sixty children are subject to s20 of the Children Act 1989, meaning they have come into care voluntarily; 49 are aged 16 and 17. There are four children on remand to the

local authority, and one provided care as an alternative to custody, meaning their entry into care is via the criminal justice system. This is an increase in the number of children who have come into care solely due to criminal offences. One child is in custody for whom the local authority shares parental responsibility.

Table 1: Legal status of Looked After children (30.11.2024)

	Child in need teams	Children looked after teams	Children and Young People with Disability Service
Interim Care Order (section 38)	4	60	3
Full Care Order (section 31)	0	67	8
On remand	0	4	0
Placement Order (section 21)	2	4	0
Emergency Protection Order	0	0	0
Accommodated (section 20)	7	55	1

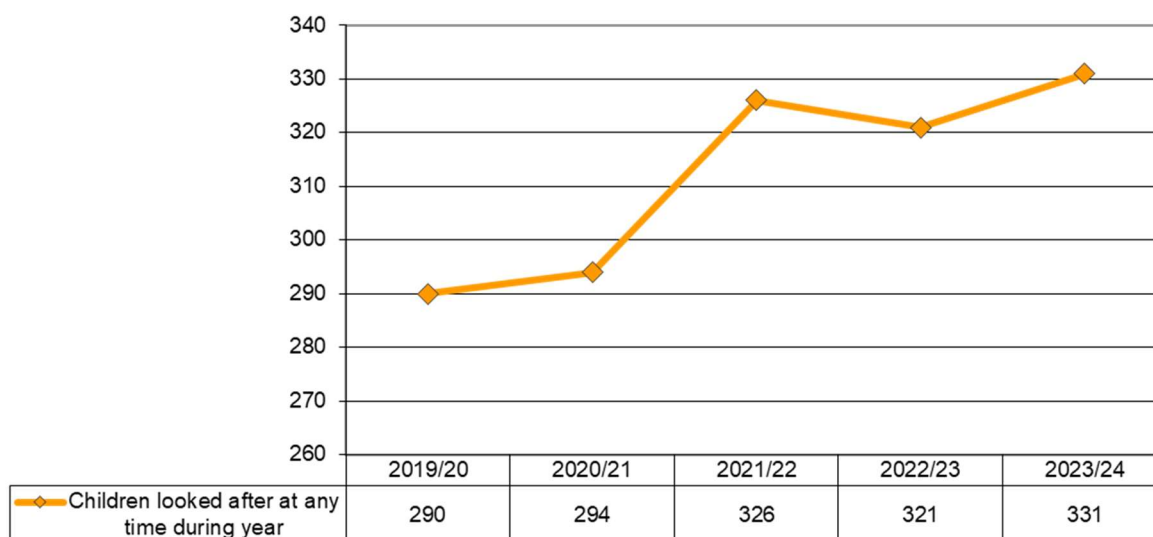
Table - CLA legal status per team

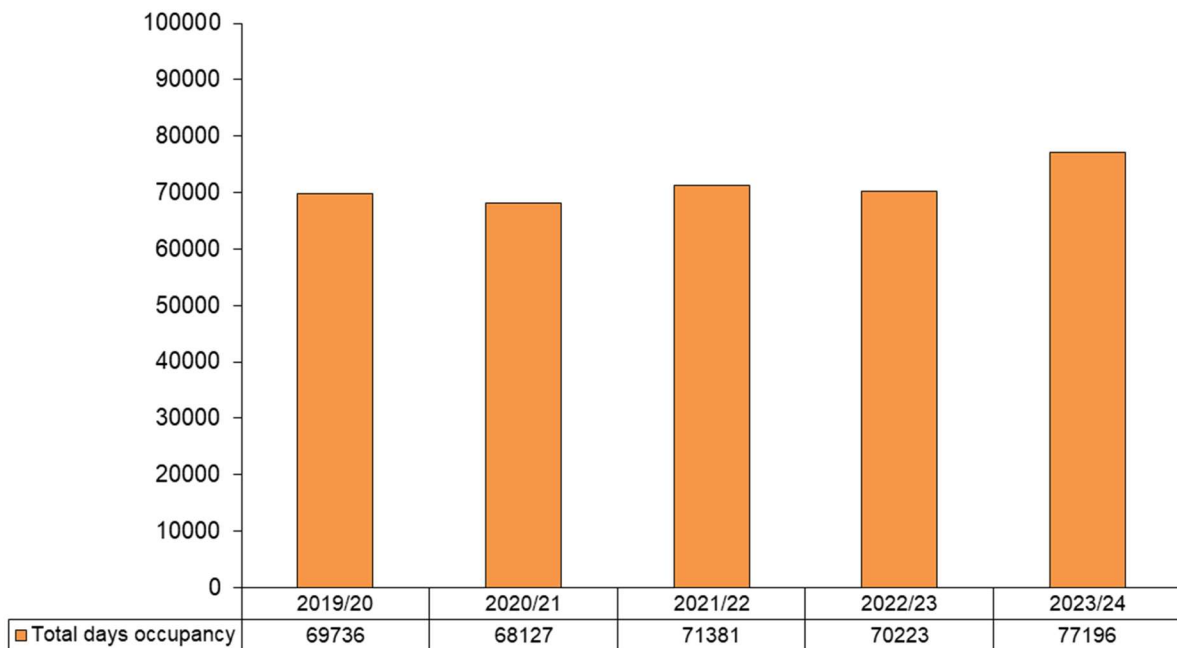
The table below shows that the length of time children spend in care has grown.

Table 2: Length of time in care

Time in care	Number of children
2+ Years	72
19- 23 months	25
13-18 months	28
7-12 months	45
0-6 months	41

Figure 2: Number of Children Looked After – 2019-2024





3. Age, Gender and Ethnicity of our children looked after:

There is an overrepresentation of Black and Global Majority children in our care. Black or Black British children continue to be the most highly represented group in our care. The overrepresentation of global majority children is visible from infancy (less than a year old), with mixed-race children being more likely to be in our care and Black or Black British children emerging as overrepresented from the age of two. We continue to work with the Regional Adoption Agency, who have a Black Adopters Program, to try and ensure that if permanency planning for these children means they cannot return to the care of their parents, we try and identify Black Adopters for them. To support their time in care, we continue to provide Replenish Boxes to placements to support conversations about race, ethnicity and heritage to enable carers to support the needs of our children. Most of our foster carers are also White British. As such, we have continued to facilitate appropriate training to develop their cultural competency in caring for children of other races. Social workers are also encouraged to have conversations on diversity within team and service meetings, and we continue to try to recruit a diverse workforce.

Figure 3 – Children Looked After Ethnicity 30.11.2024

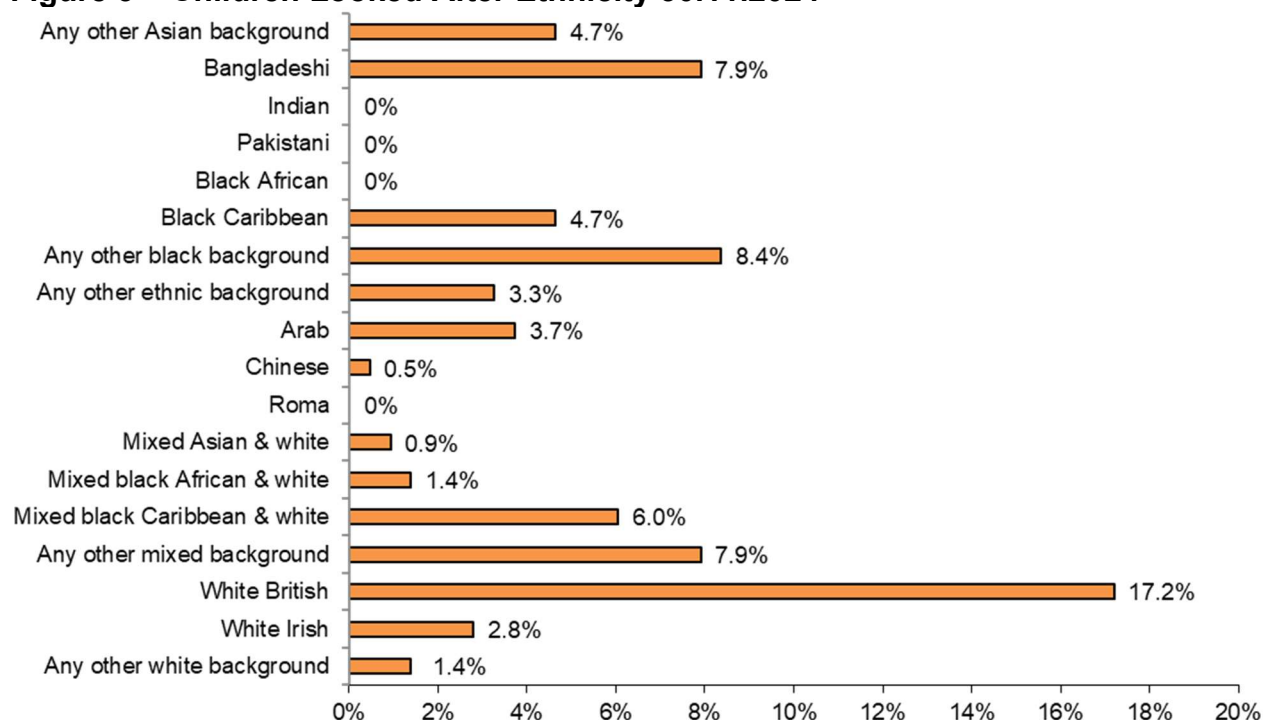


Table 3: Children in care banded ethnicity (5-year trend)

	31.03.2021	31.03.2022	31.03.2023	31.03.2024	30.11.2024
Asian	9.6%	8.9%	11.7%	13.1%	12.6%
Black	35.8%	35.6%	38.1%	43.5%	41.9%
Mixed	14.4%	13.6%	12.7%	12.7%	16.3%
Other	10.7%	12.6%	10.2%	6.5%	7.4%
White	29.4%	29.3%	27.4%	22.4%	21.9%

3. PROFILE OF CAMDEN'S CARE EXPERIENCED POPULATION

1. Who are Camden's care-experienced young people? What our data tells us.

392 Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) in Camden are eligible for a service. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extends local authority duties to care for experienced young people up to 25, regardless of their employment, education, or training status. Young people may use our services between the ages of 21-25 for variable lengths. When they cease to have a need, in discussions with them, they may have their cases closed and return when they need a service. This enables them to manage their lives effectively without creating dependency on services. Where young people have established relationships with staff, they maintain periodic telephone informal contact. We write annually to CEYP at their last known address to remind them that we are available, and they may access a service. For those aged 18-20, we mainly keep their cases open as they are yet to be settled into their permanent accommodation and are more likely to require regular help and support. We don't

close CEYP cases when they receive a custodial sentence. We continue to work with them to plan for release and support them while in custody.

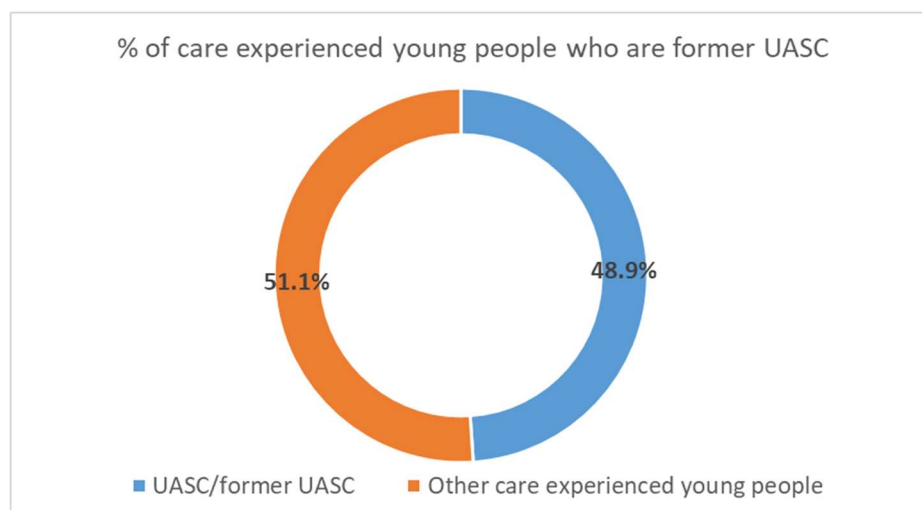
Of 392 eligible CEYP, 351 young people are accessing a service. We attempt to provide a service to all our CEYP, but sometimes, due to their lived experience working with services, they may choose to take up a service or not. As they are adults, we would only keep a case open if there are safeguarding concerns or worries about their mental capacity.

2. Care experienced by their legal status – including Former UASC

Care-experienced young people receive services based on their status. There are two qualifying statuses post the age of 18. Those in the local authority's care for 13+ weeks before their 18th birthday are relevant young people eligible for a pathway plan. Those who have been in care for less than 13 weeks are defined as qualifying or exit care because of a special guardianship order (SGO) are also qualifying young people. The distinction is that relevant or former relevant (post 18) are eligible for personal advisor support and a pathway plan that defines the support available until their 25th birthday. Qualifying young people receive a service until it is determined that their needs are met. They are not subject to the same minimum biannual review of their plan of support.

Of the 392 eligible young people, 233 are former (over 18) UASC, and of the cohort, 188 young people receive service as relevant young people. Thirty former UASC cases have been closed, and 13 of them are qualifying young people. Of the total UASC cohort (children and adults), 148 young people have accepted refugee status and have recourse to public funds. 47 Young people are awaiting an initial decision from the Home Office on their Asylum application, five young people have joined their siblings in the UK on Family Reunification Visas, 20 young people have existing appeals with the Home Office. 2 Young people have Human Rights Act assessments being undertaken meaning their appeal rights are exhausted. Therefore, they are subject to deportation from the UK should their Human Rights Act Assessment determine that it is safe for them to return to their country of origin. Two young people's age assessments are ongoing to establish whether they are children or adults.

Figure 4: % of care experienced former UASC



3. Age, Gender and Ethnicity of our care-experienced population:

Ninety-one young people aged 16 and 17 will be eligible for service as care experienced within the next two years. At the time of writing, 52 CEYP were aged 24 and 25. Of this cohort, nine young people aged 25 still receive a service. 205 CEYP were aged between 18 and 20, and 147 were aged between 21 and 23.

It is noted that there are some young people who identify with a different gender or as non-binary. Due to possible identification these numbers have been suppressed for purposes of the report. Young people are provided with support and correctly identified by their gender on Mosaic (Database system) There are 475 CEYP aged 16-25. Males are overrepresented in this cohort, making up 73.9%.

Table 5: Age and Gender assigned at birth

Age	Number	Males	Females
16	35	24	11
17	56	40	16
18	64	51	13
19	55	39	16
20	86	73	13
21	68	53	15
22	51	35	16
23	28	17	11
24	24	14	10
25	9	7	2
TOTAL	476	353	123

Figure 5: Care Experienced detailed ethnicity 30.11.2024

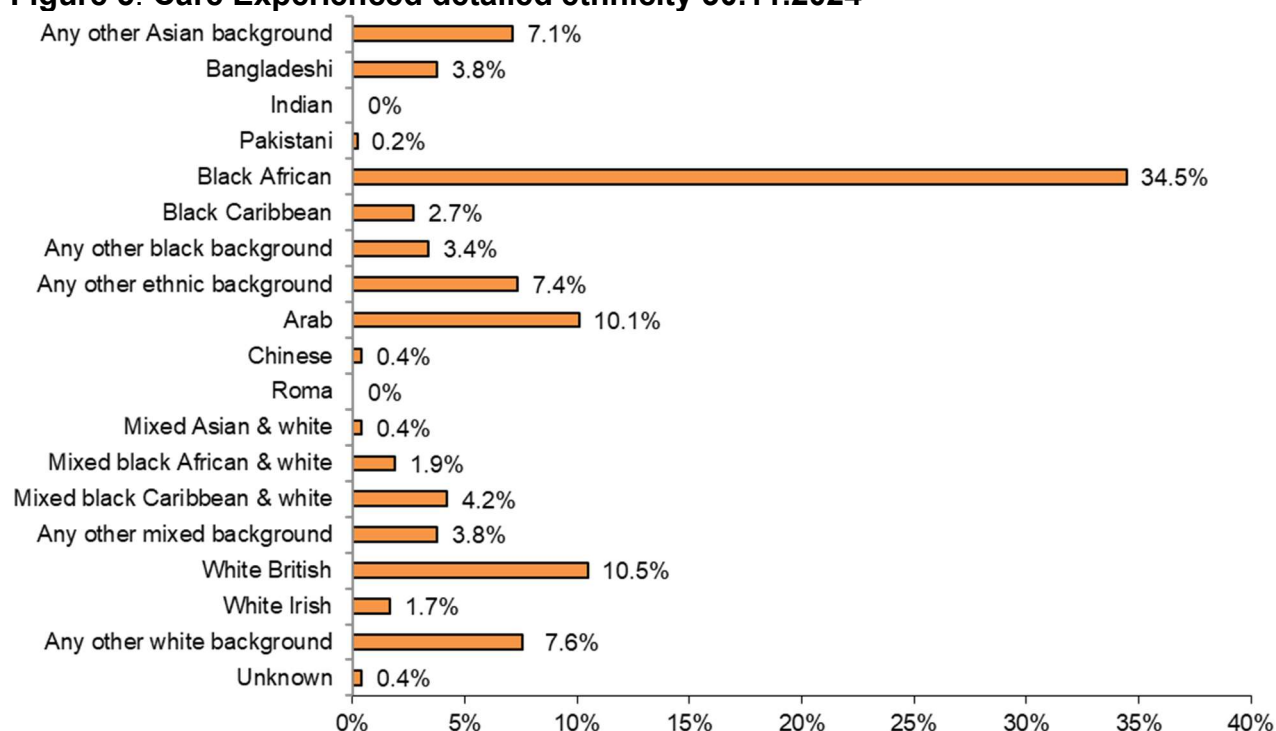


Table 6: Care Experienced banded ethnicity (30.11.2024)

	30.11.2024
Asian	11.1%
Black	40.5%
Mixed	10.3%
Other	18.3%
White	19.7%

Table 7: Care Experienced nationalities (30.11.2024)

Nationality	Number of care experienced young people 30.11.2024	% of care experienced young people 30.11.2024
Afghan	34	7.1%
Albanian	10	2.1%
Algerian	4	0.8%
Angolan	2	0.4%
Bangladeshi	2	0.4%
British	203	42.6%
Chinese	2	0.4%
Colombian	1	0.2%
Eritrean	52	10.9%
Ethiopian	12	2.5%
Guinean	1	0.2%
Iranian	18	3.8%
Iraqi	15	3.2%
Irish	3	0.6%
Italian	1	0.2%
Ivorian	1	0.2%
Kuwaiti	2	0.4%
Latvian	1	0.2%
Malian	1	0.2%
Moroccan	16	3.4%
Nigerian	1	0.2%
Other	3	0.6%
Pakistani	1	0.2%
Polish	1	0.2%
Portuguese	3	0.6%
Saudi	1	0.2%
Sierra Leonean	1	0.2%
Somali	5	1.1%
Spanish	1	0.2%
Sudanese	54	11.3%
Syrian	3	0.6%
Turkish	1	0.2%
Vietnamese	5	1.1%
Not recorded	15	3.2%

4. OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AND CARE EXPERIENCED YOUNG PEOPLE/ HOW WE MEASURE UP AGAINST OUR PROPOSED PROMISES

Ofsted

The Inspecting Local Authorities Children's Services (ILACS) Inspection of Camden local authority children's services took place from 25 to 29 April 2022, with the report published in July 2022 with an overall judgement of 'Outstanding' for Children in care and care experienced young people and the views and recommendations of the inspection inform this report.

'Children in care and those who look after them have high aspirations for the future, regardless of the complexity of children's needs. Children receive exceptional care and support and are protected decisively from harm when required (Ofsted, 2022).

When children in Camden leave care, they are well supported by their personal advisers (PAs) in a service that is aspirational for them. There are a wide range of services available for care leavers to meet their needs. The care leavers service is rooted in relational practice, which means that PAs build warm professional relationships and show pride in young people's achievements. Care leavers report that their relationship with their PA inspires them to succeed. (Ofsted, 2022)

Overall, the service continues to perform well, with practitioners who know their children and young people well and visit them regularly to provide high-quality interventions. Since Camden Council passed the motion to treat care experience as a protected characteristic, each directorate has engaged in a series of workshops led by the (Executive Director of Children and Learning). These considered how to deliver streamlined services to our care-experienced children, plan for their transitions to adulthood, and evaluate services available to them throughout their life course.

The work has revealed insights by gathering the voices of children and young people receiving services, officers across the council and considerable benchmarking. This work has been enhanced by the visit of the National Advisor of the Department for Education (DfE), Mark Riddell, who has encouraged the Council to raise its ambitions for care-experienced people. Camden's motion is unique to most Councils as it seeks to address inequality through the life course. The next phase of work to be completed is to strengthen relationships with external partners. In February, we shall review the corporate parenting board. The corporate parenting strategy will be presented at the Corporate Parenting Board in January and Cabinet in April 2025. Mark Riddell will complete a follow-up visit in the summer of 2025, and the strategic implementation plan will begin implementation in May 2025.

The next section of the report analyses how we benchmark the promises and reveals some insights into the work being done to deliver on the strategy. Camden's Children Looked After (CLA) and care experienced young people (CEYP) who will be referred to as Camden's Children for this aspect of the report have told us that they would like us to assume ambitious corporate parenting responsibilities for them under the headings:

- **Rights and aspirations:**

"We promise to ensure that all the people who support you are care conscious and act as your corporate parent. We will advocate for your rights and aspirations and protect you from facing disadvantage from wider services and the community."

- **Wellbeing:**

"We promise to support you in adopting a happy and healthy lifestyle and to help you navigate how you feel and life's ups and downs, ensuring your health and emotional wellbeing needs are met."

- **Interests and life goals:**

"We promise to champion you and help you find and succeed in the right education, training, and employment aligned with your life goals and interests."

- **Home:**

"We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find a stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually helps you find a place you can call home."

- **Belonging and relationships:**

"We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long-lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you."

The promises are interlinked and have cross-over work programmes, so they should be viewed collectively. The success of one promise relies on the success of other promises and council policy alignment to create the best success. Work continues to be underway, with immediate wins in some areas and the identification of longer-term work that shall take place over the life of the strategy supported by an implementation plan. The desire is to have quarterly cross-council working groups to enable ample review and monitoring of the plan alongside presentation at themed corporate parenting boards, which will include external partners related to the promises. An annual corporate parenting board will review the progress of the whole plan.

1. **Rights and aspirations:**

"We promise to ensure that all the people who support you care conscious and act as your corporate parent. We will advocate for your rights and aspirations and protect you from facing disadvantage from wider services and the community."

This promise focuses on our pledge to be ambitious corporate parents who make being care experienced visible and work towards reducing systemic barriers that

Camden's Children may face in various areas. Led by the Executive Director of Corporate Services, the council has committed to working with colleagues in Human Resources to include corporate parenting in the available training, raising awareness of what being a Corporate Parent is. The internal awareness of staff corporate parenting responsibilities will be developed to include celebrations during care leavers (experienced) week each year. The proposed aspects of work involve engaging with CEYP employed by the Council to gather feedback on their employment experiences. Educating staff across the council on their corporate parenting responsibilities will likely increase awareness of care experience as they discharge their corporate duties. We have included care experienced as a protected characteristic within our equality impact assessments to ensure that service delivery does not disadvantage this community.

Over the next year, we shall have more celebrations that make this aspect of work visible. We will also consider how this is advertised to residents and those who are Camden's CEYP living out of the borough. We have started and will continue to survey young people on their experience of using services designed to address structural inequalities faced when they receive services from us. Complaints and compliments received by the service will also be routinely reviewed and captured to provide insights into this area. There is a need to develop data insights that capture the care experienced across the council. We shall also encourage external partners to gather these insights as we develop services.

2. Wellbeing:

"We promise to support you in adopting a happy and healthy lifestyle and to help you navigate how you feel and life's ups and downs, ensuring your health and emotional wellbeing needs are met."

This promise captures our work to support Camden's Children to be happy and healthy children and adults. There is a desire to reduce the cliff edges of services experienced when children and young people transition. Led by the Executive Director of Adult Services and the Director of Public Health, engages People Services, Public Health, and Youth Justice Services (including National Probation, Commissioned Services and the Voluntary Community Services also to identify care experience and to plan and promote their health and well-being. The promise has revealed the need for data collection across services and the need to develop our pathway planning to support these activities. The areas of focus include co-designing the pathway plan with external partners such as health and community services. There is the aspiration to engage statutory partners such as the Integrated Children's Board, National Probation Service, Community Partners and the Metropolitan Police more effectively via the Corporate Parenting Board.

Children in care continue to receive good health screening and monitoring of their health outcomes, performing above national and statistical neighbours. Data from March 2024 reports that 99% of children had an up-to-date health assessment, against 94% for statistical neighbours and 92% for inner London in 2022/3. All children aged 0-5 had a developmental check-in time for the period. Dental health for our children in care continues to be an area of focus, with only 85% having an up-to-date dental check for the same period, against 76% for inner London and 82% for statistical neighbours in 2022/3. Insights from our work reveal that care-experienced young people continue to access services from children looked after health nurses beyond their 18th birthday.

Some work will be completed with the Integrated Care Board to explore extending this service beyond the 18th birthday. Although there has been a decline in the number of children and young people being immunised, with more parents being cautious about this, we continue to note that for those aged 12+, children in care are being vaccinated more than those without care experience. We shall continue with this trajectory, hoping to address catch-up, particularly with the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine and the Human papillomavirus (HPV). UASC young people skew the data for this cohort as it takes a little while to catch up with immunisations on their arrival in the UK.

Camden's children have told us they would like more access to the gym and the use of football or game pitches. In response, the gym offer has been extended to ensure that those who use the gym more than three times a week do so at no cost. Further work will include thinking about food and mood and how to support young people with this. In most public health spaces, care experience has been picked up as an area of focus, and suppliers of services are encouraged to collect this data. Internally, we are also doing some scoping to establish that this data can be collected for citizens.

There is an increase in children who have been remanded into custody in this financial year, with four children, a total of 6 in custody. One child has been offered accommodation on the London Accommodation Pathway (LAP) as an alternative to custody. There are 13 care experienced young people in custody. In response, we have upped our offer of services to CEYP who are in or exiting custody. Further auditing and review of practice are also introduced to consider if custody could have been avoided. Youth Justice colleagues work closely with children's social workers to prevent the criminalisation of CLA and care-experienced young people. More formal reporting has been reported to the Youth Justice Board to develop services. Further work over the next year will be undertaken to consider how we can work to reduce custody rates and criminalisation. A joint audit with the multi-agency partnership is being undertaken to consider 'Stop and Search practices' by the Metropolitan Police and will reveal further development areas.

The promise includes working with external partners, supported by the Children and Wellbeing Bill, which extends corporate responsibilities to statutory partners.

3. Interests and life goals:

“We promise to champion you and help you find and succeed in the right education, training, and employment aligned with your life goals and interests.”

This promise speaks to our desire to be ambitious corporate parents who support children through their education, training and employment, enabling them to have high aspirations. Led by the Virtual School and Inclusive Economy Colleagues, people with care experience have been identified as a priority cohort within the Council Missions with high ambitions to consider projects such as Universal Basic Income Schemes and thinking about how to support CEYP in our employment and work readiness of all our Camden's Children.

The Virtual School has recruited an Education Navigator to assist in identifying children from Year 8 who show the potential to go to university and provides support to them. We have also extended our offer to include financial support for those undertaking master's programmes. Staff have also supported one young person in custody to attend University on the day release. We continue to have ambitions for

children to attend Russell Group universities and help those who choose alternative training or apprenticeship opportunities. We have engaged with our six interns to gather insights into their employment experience and are using this to inform the next round of recruitment and support required. We are considering whether the Council can accommodate additional interns.

For children still in education, the Virtual School and Inclusive Economy colleagues will work towards developing work experience to raise their ambitions. The Virtual School also intends to review the support offered. It has been subject to a Young Inspectors review of the service and has made recommendations, including simplifying their personal education plans and making meetings more child-friendly. Over the next year, there will be improvements to service delivery following a review of the support offer. Practitioners and the Virtual School continues to work to ensure that all children and young people attend school, and we try to maintain this to their 19th birthday for those in full-time education. Post 18 support is also available to those outside of employment, education or training to ensure they can engage meaningfully. Our offer of support is strengthened by the London Compact (which offers free London bus transport) and provides financial support to engage in Education, Employment and Training activities. Work with local colleges and universities also forms part of the work of Virtual School and Inclusive Economy colleagues. A detailed annual report is also prepared by the Virtual School, which reports on educational attainment.

4. Home:

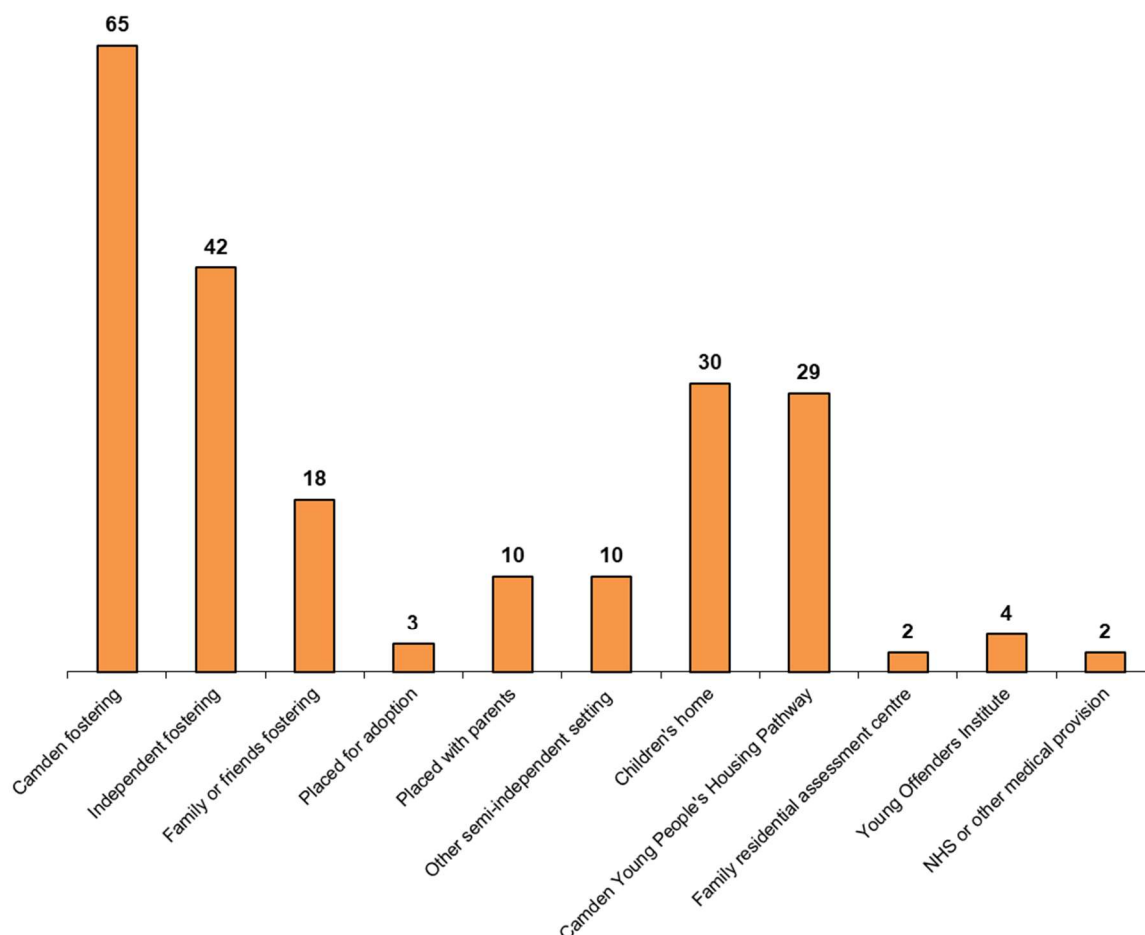
“We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually helps you find a place you can call home.”

This promise focuses on our desire for good quality stable accommodation that enables young people to enjoy their local communities and eventually offers them stable housing. The workstream has been led by the Executive Director of Supporting Communities and the Executive Director of Children and Learning. Before developing the placement sufficiency and kinship strategies, a thorough needs assessment was undertaken. The proposals from this workstream include developing a quota of permanent housing of studio and one-bedroom properties for those who have are care experienced where Camden is the corporate parent. Capital and Revenue requests of the Council have also been made to consider the purchase of semi-independence accommodation, two new children’s homes, recommissioning of the existing children’s homes, and future capital requests to consider the purchase of permanent accommodation.

We have improved our financial offer of support for foster and kinship carers and intend to develop models of practice which deliver enhanced support to foster carers outside working hours. We also plan to develop peer support for foster carers to enable them to hold on to more complex children in-house. The Kinship strategy will enhance our offer of support to those children who live with kinship members in care or on exiting care. We also seek to offer support post-age 18, where children remain with their kinship carers. A support panel has been established to use the community services and pilot an edge-of-care team effectively. The Director for Children’s Prevention, Safeguarding and Family Help has developed a placement board that reviews placement sufficiency.

Most Camden children are cared for in-house, either in our children’s home, foster or kinship care or the Young People’s Pathway. We continue to rely on external providers for some children. Still, where appropriate with their care plan, we are making suitable arrangements for them to move in-house into permanent arrangements. This movement has meant that for 15.1% of them, some children have experienced greater placement instability, meaning they have had three or more moves during the last 12-month period. The moves have been necessary for some of these children to safeguard their well-being. The 15.1% is a snapshot position at the time of writing, which will be captured again at the end of the financial year for statistical benchmarking. It is anticipated that this number will be lower. Favourably, 65.5% of our children have had the same placement for 2+ years and are in Camden.

Figure 6: Placement types for Camden Children Looked After: 30.11.2024



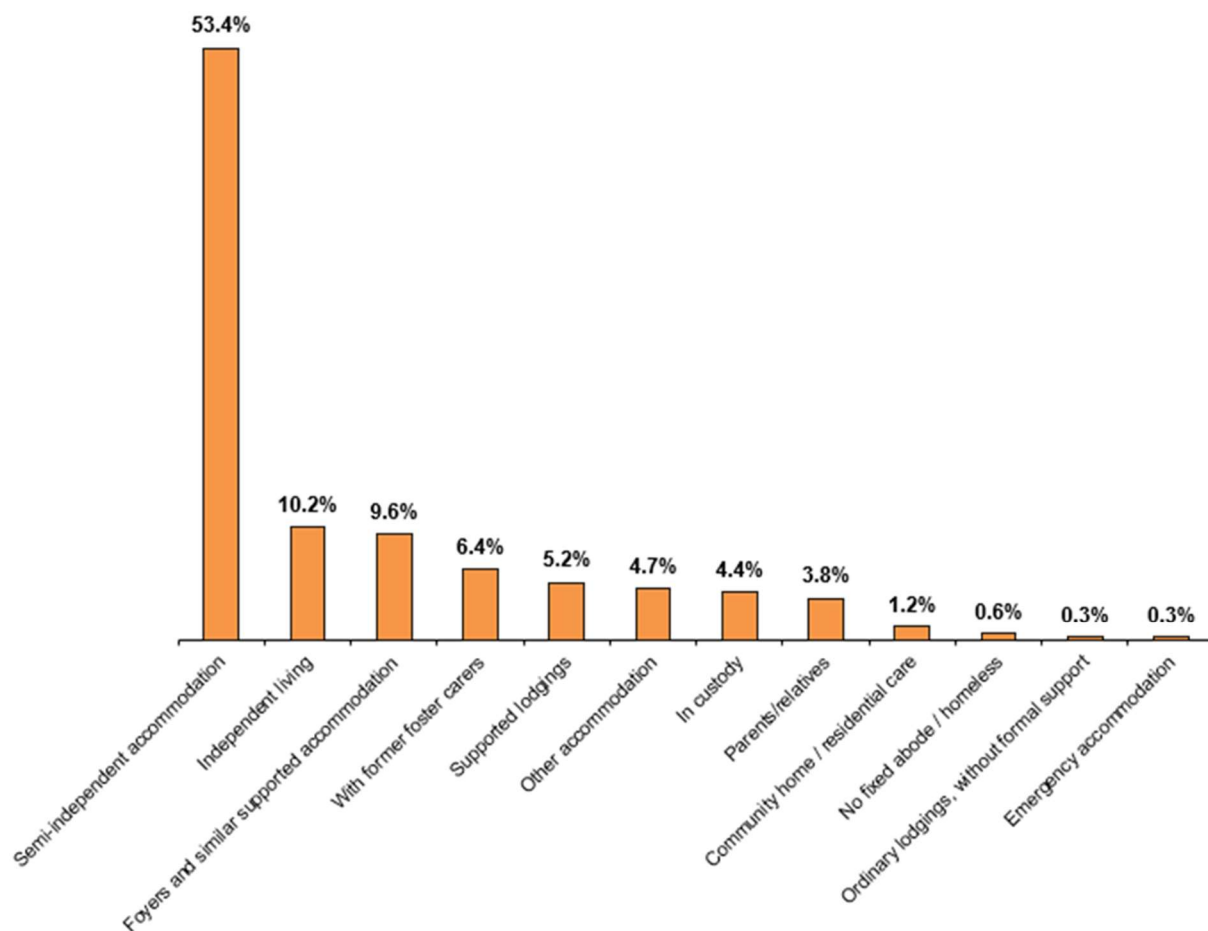
Care Experienced:

In October, 98% of CEYP aged 18-20 are in suitable accommodation. Of the whole cohort at the time of writing, 86.2% are in suitable accommodation, although 43 young people still need an entry against this measure at the time of writing. This accommodation is considered unsuitable for the 13 (3.1%) young people in custody and two young people sofa surfing. The measure also accounts for the 39 young people who are not receiving a service, meaning 13.8% are in unsuitable accommodation. Over the next few months, practitioners will work to contact all young

people aged 21+ who are not receiving service so that their factual accommodation is recorded, and their well-being is ascertained.

The workstream aspires to improve practice by recommissioning the Young People's Pathway (YPP), a pilot with the National House Project (who have developed a support programme for young people settling into permanent accommodation), refining our practice on preparing young people for permanent accommodation with pathway providers and in-house services, and development of accommodation pathways for children aged 16+. Hence, they are aware of their accommodation pathway. This will be done via the introduction of panels to review plans. The intention is to adopt a less paternalistic approach to allocating permanent accommodation and encourage better and earlier preparation of young people to take up tenancies. The purchase of additional permanent housing for young people will be a key factor in establishing success and enhanced support for their tenancies.

Figure 7: Accommodation type for care experienced young people as at 30.11.2024



5. Belonging and relationships:

“We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long-lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you.”

This promise focuses on our aspiration to increase participation and co-production with young people and create a physical hub where they can commune. Camden’s children have also told us that relationships are essential to them. The workstream led by the Director of Relational Practice, seeks to improve our participation with young people by recruiting a president and vice-president to the in-care council to work on improving services. These two Camden Children will have full-time roles and will be supported by young people completing either ad hoc or more extensive work to develop services. In the design work to support the sufficiency strategy, the Corporate Management Team (our senior officer decision making group) commissioned design work to envision young people’s accommodation for those aged 16-25. A co-produced insight work has revealed that care-experienced young people want to have a say on accommodation commissioned for them. They also wish to have high-quality accommodation and enhanced support to prepare them for tenancies and when they move into their first homes.

Furthermore, a survey has been conducted, and at the time of reporting, 9.3% of Camden Children responded. This survey is currently being analysed for practice insights, which would then assist with developing practice. This workstream's ambition is to continue gathering as many varied views as possible so we can shape our services to meet the needs of Camden’s Children.

A commitment has also been made to increase the number of Lifelong Links Meetings to 20 for care-experienced young people to help them connect with previous relatives. Lifelong links meetings (Family Rights Group) connect young people to carers, teachers or friends who they may have lost contact with through their time in care. The ambitious aim of the corporate parenting strategy is to enable all young people to access a Lifelong Link meeting on request. A co-designed piece of work is underway to complete a feasibility study of a physical hub which young people have stated they wish to have. Further capital requests will be made to the Council via the Insourcing and Resource Board in March to fund the development of this space.

5. WORKFORCE:

A year into the service redesign, which saw a reduction in management layers and the introduction of mixed caseloads for kinship and foster care services, the service remains resilient and highly ambitious about improving practice to make it more trauma informed. Staff continue to maintain lower caseloads than London Boroughs for personal advisors and social workers. The service has had in-depth diagnostic reports on practice, highlighting areas for improvement in speedier recruitment of foster carers, more trauma-informed recording and practice, and greater awareness of this in practice.

Training has been implemented to address some issues and introduce an interim service manager role to enhance practice for CEYP, including UASC and former UASC young people. The service remains cognisant of the secondary trauma

experienced by staff and will be working on developing individual and group supervision to attend to this. Staff will also formally consult on service design and development to generate more real-life applications. The intention is to implement the revised relational practice model to share values in practice. Carers (quasi-workforce) will also be supported with more therapeutic support by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

6. KEY OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR 2025 AND BEYOND:

1. Implementation of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and supporting Placement Sufficiency and Kinship Strategies.
2. Final needs analysis on the Young People's Pathway before the specification of the commissioning strategy is developed.
3. Implementation of the revised practice model of relationship-based practice and development of attachment-based support models for foster carers.
4. Staff training and development on trauma-informed practice should include individual and group supervision.
5. Service preparedness for Ofsted inspection due from April 2025.

7. CONCLUSION:

We are committed to caring for the children in our care and those leaving our care as we would our own children.

'Children in the care of Camden receive an outstanding service from workers who know them exceptionally well and use these relationships to fully respond to their needs as unique individuals (Ofsted, 2022).'

Although Camden was rated Outstanding in 2022, we are aware of the need to continually evolve and improve services, to identify and meet the needs of this diverse population of children and to offer them stability and a stable base to develop from whether they enter care at birth or in adolescence. In year data highlights that there is some work to ensure that performance indicators increase.

The Corporate Parenting Strategy will underpin the Board's work over the next year, with practice focusing on five key priorities in 2025 to ensure that we deliver an agile service in line with the promises to Camden Children. These are:

- I. We shall improve the council's awareness of its corporate parenting responsibilities and work with statutory and non-statutory partners to ensure they design and deliver services that account for their care experience. We shall celebrate them more.
- II. Create seamless transitions for Camden Children, reducing the cliff edge experienced from childhood into adulthood and other life transitions such as moving home, starting a new school, training, or job. We shall be ambitious

about our children's educational outcomes and work to ensure they are happy and healthy.

- III. We aim to co-design services with Camden's Children, enabling them to shape and design service delivery actively. This ensures that services are relevant to them and that we respond with age-appropriate communication, including digital engagement.
- IV. We aim to have better homes for Camden's Children, wherever possible and ensure that these are local. We shall do so by developing residential children's homes, recruiting and retaining foster carers, and supporting their families in caring for them under kinship arrangements.
- V. Recognise that their relationships are essential to them and therefore build life-long links, ensure that we respond to their trauma, build meaningful relationships with children receiving services and create a physical hub that they can come to.

We shall be agile and respond to National Reforms and proposed policy changes to deliver on the above priorities. The priorities align with the corporate parenting strategy and the Corporate Parenting Strategic plan.

REPORT ENDS

Agenda Item 9

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Family Hubs, Family Help and Start Well Report	
REPORT OF Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding and Director of Health and Wellbeing	
OR SUBMISSION TO Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 14 th January 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT The report provides updates to the Children, Schools and Families Committee on four interconnected programmes of work under the aegis of the recently-formed Children and Learning Directorate: Family Hubs, Family Help, Start Well, and the cross-cutting Child Health Equity programme. Each section provides background/ context to the work including information on our population's needs and governance arrangements; key updates from the last 12 months; challenges; and next steps for the coming year. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officers: Debbie Adams, Head of Early Years and Family Hubs London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, NC1 4AG Debbie.adams@camden.gov.uk Manuj Sharma, Consultant in Public Health for Children and Young People London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, NC1 4AG Manuj.sharma@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS The Committee is asked to comment on and note the report.	

Signed:



Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding



Kirsten Watters, Director of Health and Wellbeing

Date: 19th December 2024

1. Purpose of Report

This report has been requested by the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee. It provides an update on the successes, opportunities, challenges and next steps for the Children and Learning key programmes of work: Family Hubs, Family Help, RAISE Camden and Start Well.

2. Key questions for the Committee

- How could we maximise the role of Family Hubs as a community asset within each Neighbourhood of Camden?
- Are these plans sufficiently inclusive of all of Camden’s families, children and young people?

3. Background

Camden is committed to giving every child and young person the best possible start in life. This is a cornerstone of our Health and Wellbeing Strategy and a vital foundation for building a healthier, more equitable future for our community. Children and Learning’s collective purpose in working to achieve the best possible start in life is “to work together with Camden’s children, families and community to make a positive and lasting difference”. Our shared values centre around social justice, empowerment, compassion and collaboration.

In Camden, almost two in five children live in poverty after housing costs, and 39% of households have no access to private green spaces. The challenges facing Camden children, families and residents are entrenched and interconnected. Camden’s Children and Learning Directorate was formed in Autumn 2023 to bring together children’s, youth, early help and education services under one shared purpose. This report focuses on key programmes within four interconnected areas of work, and their relationship with health and addressing inequities in Camden¹:

- Family Hubs – Camden has five Department for Education (DfE) designated Family Hubs across the Borough, building on existing Children’s Centres that families know and trust. This aligns with the Council’s wider ambition for neighbourhood working, to build local networks and bring services closer to our resident community.
- Family Help – Camden is reviewing current early help and children’s social work with the intention of developing a more integrated approach to support for families across the continuum of need. This is aligned with national reform, to develop locally based multi-disciplinary family help services.
- RAISE Camden is our child health equity programme, aimed at improving projected worsening health trends for children and young people. It crosses three core themes: child poverty (material deprivation is associated with cognitive development); whole family

¹ This report does not cover updates to services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, because an update on SEND and Health was presented in July, and a report focusing on SEND will be brought to Scrutiny in February.

mental health (associated with social and emotional development); and tackling racism and inequality (which magnify the impact of both).

- Start Well spans both Camden’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the NHS North Central London Population Health and Integrated Care Strategy. It prioritises prevention and early intervention in key areas to optimise children’s physical and emotional health from ages 0-19 (25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities), tackling inequalities and building family resilience.

4. Four Programmes of Action

4.1. Family Hubs

4.1.1. Background

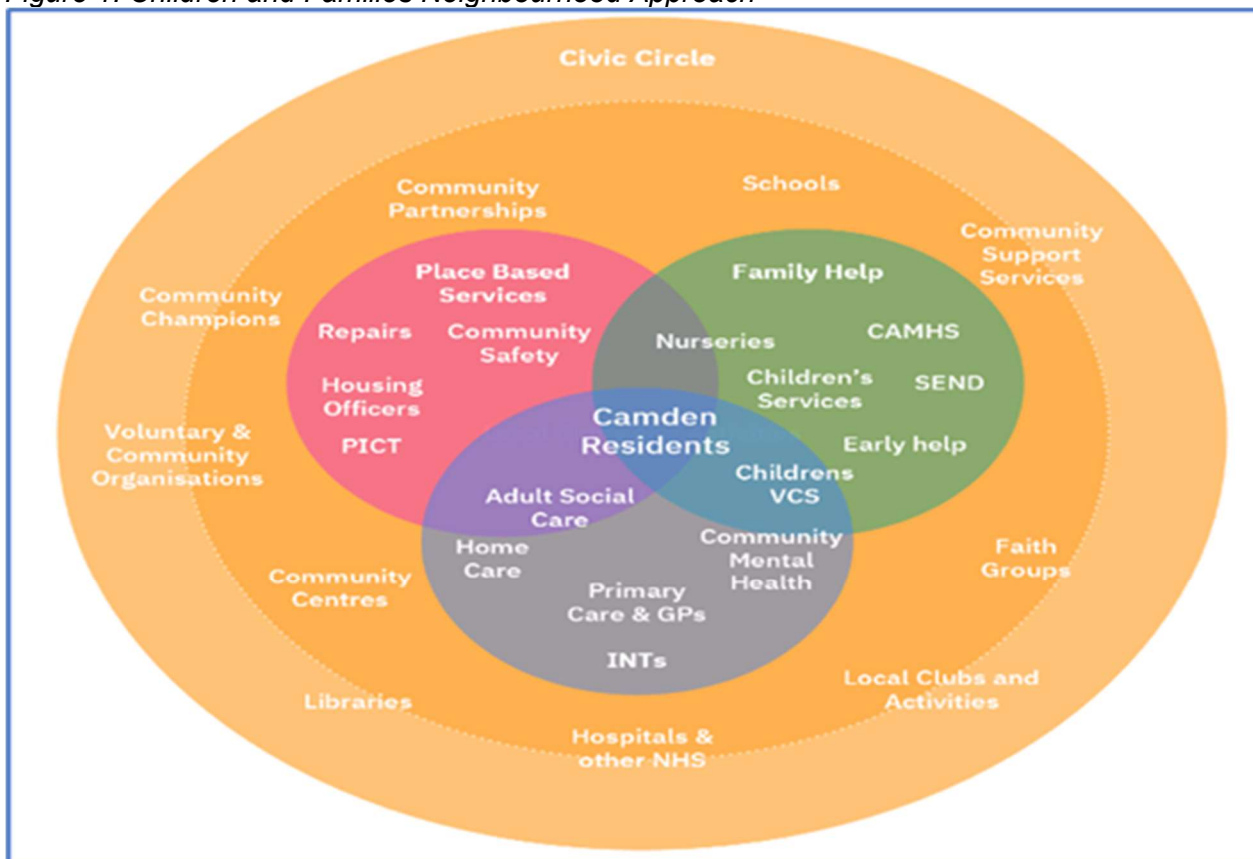
A Family Hub is a system-wide model providing high-quality, joined-up, whole-family support services from conception through a child’s early years, until they reach the age of 19, or 25 for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Camden is one of 75 local authorities selected to receive a share of the £301.75 million Family Hubs and Start for Life programme funding for 2022–2025, led by Department for Education and Department for Health and Social Care. Camden was awarded £3.4 million to deliver its detailed delivery plan. Funding is allocated to further develop Start for Life services and is limited to specific delivery strands. The Government’s October 2024 budget confirmed that funding for Family Hubs would continue for one further year, pending a comprehensive spending review in the spring of 2025.

The wider ambition of the Family Hubs programme is to join up services for families, whatever the age of their child, and importantly responds to what we have heard from families about the difficulties they experience in navigating the system to find the services that may help them. Better co-ordination and communication are central to success, as is ensuring that we successfully engage the families who could benefit most from the support that’s available. Alignment work with Start Well Priorities and RAISE Camden will be key in helping the Family Hubs to realise this potential, as will effective collaboration with North Central London Integrated Care Board and our Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners.

We Make Camden sets out four missions that are central to our approach and ambition. The Estates and Neighbourhood Mission commits Council services to being “accessible to people where they live and wants everyone to be empowered to live a good life. We want our services to be local, connected and built on relationships, enabling people to find solutions”. The children and families’ neighbourhood approach (in green below) drives our development of the Family Hubs model.

Figure 1. Children and Families Neighbourhood Approach

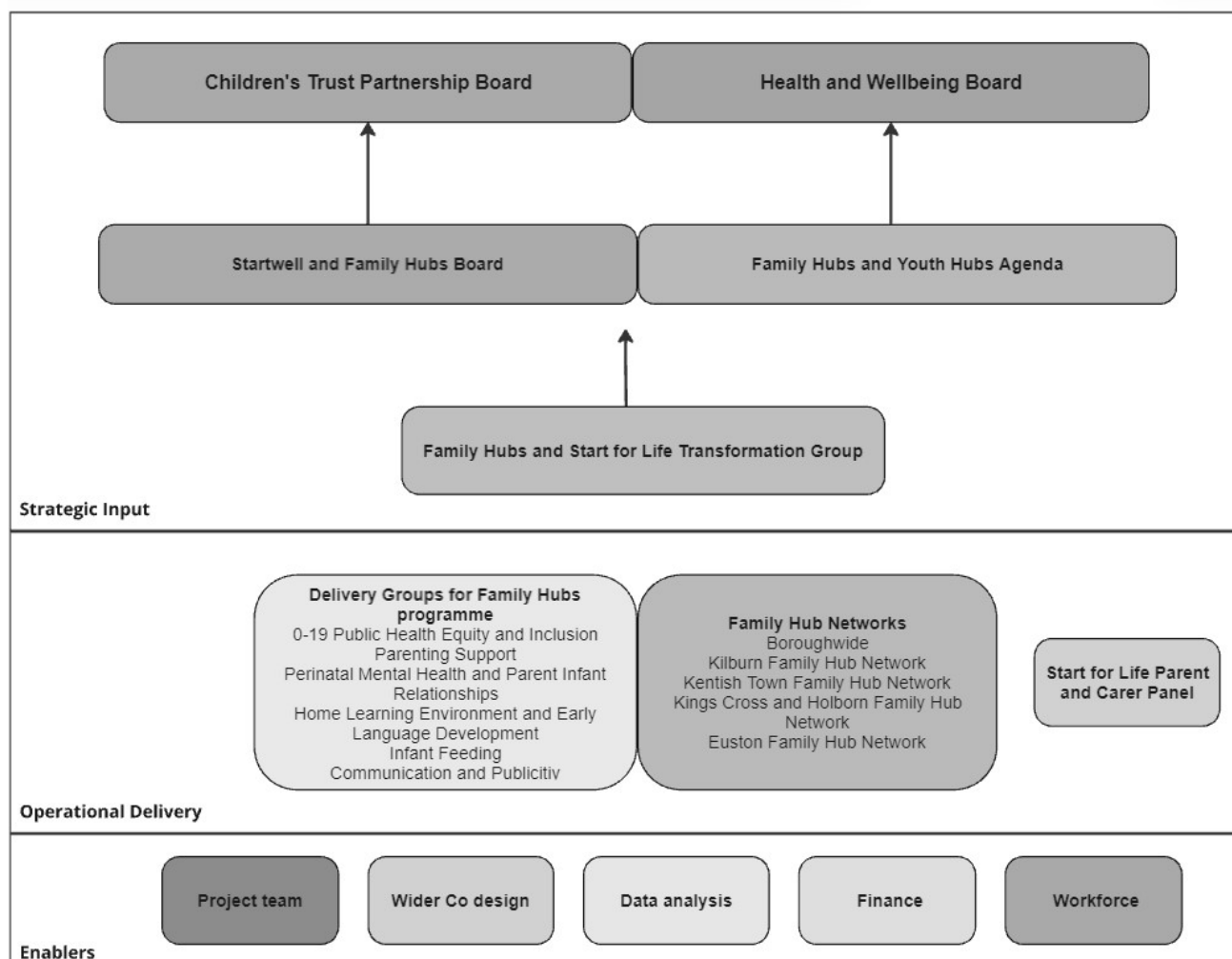


The Family Hubs programme builds on Camden’s thriving Children’s Centre service. Organised through a locality model consistent with Camden’s Estates and Neighbourhoods Mission, it grounds more services in communities close to the residents they serve. The DfE judged Camden to have met all minimum - and many of the ‘go further’ - expectations set out in the Family Hubs programme guide.

4.1.2. Governance

A developed Family Hub model is expected to have a Board that oversees or connects with strategic early help functions and engages effectively with Integrated Care Systems and other partnerships to influence and inform service decisions. The Start Well and Family Hub Board, launched in late 2023, fulfils these requirements. It is proving to be an effective mechanism for joining up services and creating ambitious expectations for the Family Hub system.

Figure 2. Camden Family Hub Programme Governance Structure



The DfE oversees Family Hub delivery through monthly meetings with a Regional Delivery Lead, statistical monitoring submissions, regular progress reports, and grant usage statements, ensuring rigorous scrutiny.

4.1.3. Successes, Opportunities and Challenges

Camden consistently meets expectations and is frequently called upon to support other Local Authority teams, with three areas of innovative practice gaining national attention: Best Start for Baby; Camden Kids Talk; and Father Inclusive Practice.

Best Start for Baby: The first 1,001 days are crucial for shaping lifelong outcomes, yet the national Healthy Child Programme alone is insufficient. Camden enhances this with three additional universal health contacts at three, six, and nine months, alongside the five mandated reviews and a service centred on supporting those with greatest capacity to benefit. These contacts focus on the parent-child relationship and attuned parenting, offering key opportunities to identify developmental delays or the need for extra support. By providing more universal contacts in the first year, the programme supports the transition to parenthood, helping more families thrive while enabling early intervention when needed. Delivered collaboratively by the Council and NHS, it benefits from strong Integrated Early Years Service partnerships.

Camden Kids Talk is a boroughwide initiative to address inequalities in communication and language development through a whole-system approach. It focuses on workforce development, parental engagement, and a shared assessment and intervention framework. The goal is to create a standardized, evidence-based method for early identification and support of speech, language, and communication needs (SLCN) and provide enhanced universal and targeted support for children. The programme has matured and now demonstrates clear outcomes. Screening in the first nine primary schools to implement it shows a reduction in children who are over a year behind their expected development level, from 51% to 29%.

Father Inclusive Practice: There is compelling evidence that shows when fathers/male carers have a positive, active role in their children's lives, there are fewer behavioural problems, improved social skills and better educational outcomes. Father inclusive practice supports and values men in their role as fathers and male carers, actively encouraging and supporting their parenting. Camden's programme aims to ensure that fathers and male carers are considered equally in all aspects of service delivery and has been welcomed for its ambition to change culture.

Providing services for families with children of all ages: Family Hub grant funding focuses on early years and 'Start for Life' services, but there is an expectation to also support families with older children through Family Hubs, linked venues, or virtually as part of the network. Hubs currently act as gateways for families to access services for children of any age and the evolving families.camden.gov.uk website provides a valuable resource for parents and professionals. Designated Family Hubs primarily serve early years during the school day, but some teams supporting older children will co-locate there, with services for older children offered after school.

4.1.4. Next steps

- Developing the Family Hub model further, to meet diverse needs for families with children of all ages, is the next significant step, requiring effective data use and further active co-production with parents and children to improve outcomes and reduce inequalities for Camden families.
- Work to further embed the Family Hub network is ongoing, with many organizations collaborating to provide families with access to information, advice, and services—both in-person and virtual—beyond the Council's designated Hub buildings. This partnership and outreach approach is core to ensuring our universal services are universal in their reach. Continued progress is essential to simplify service access and make navigating the system easier.
- To deliver a truly inclusive service, a specific focus on providing for families with children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) is needed. The forthcoming transformation programme that will bring services for older children to the Hubs includes a proposal for a new role dedicated to developing and promoting the Family Hub SEND offer.

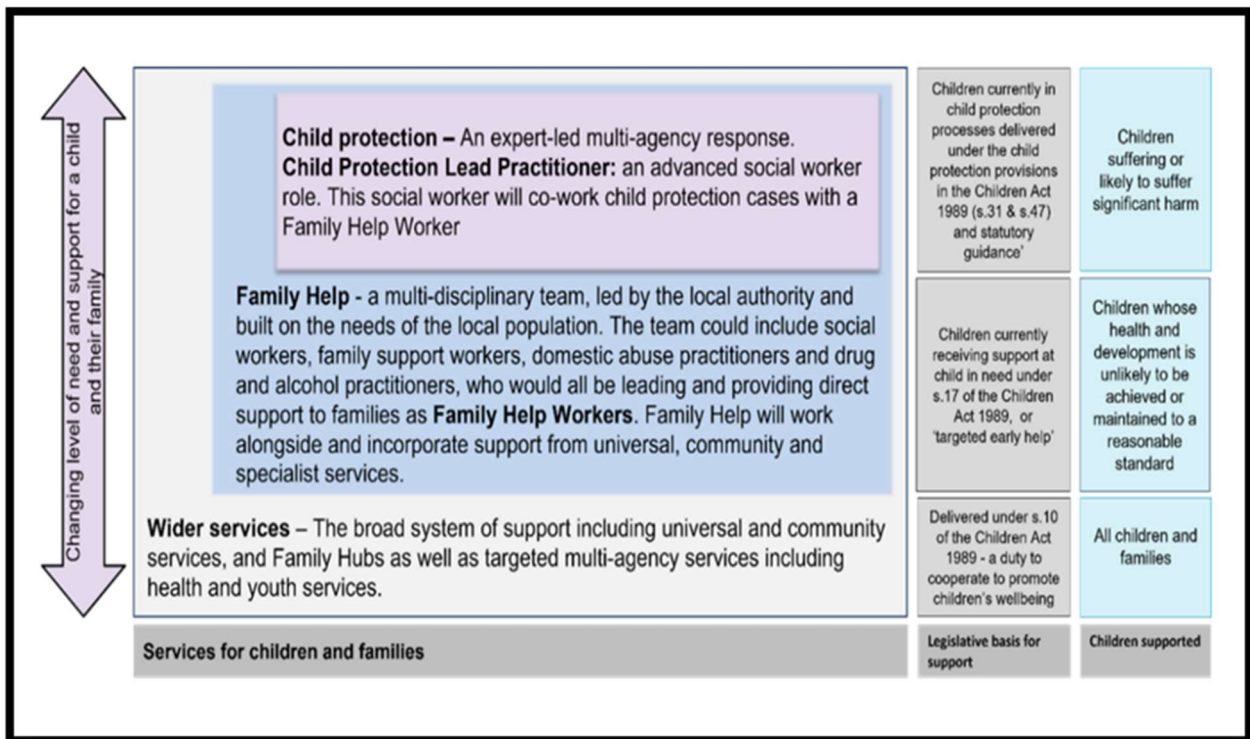
4.2. Family Help

4.2.1. Background

Stable Homes, Built on Love, the Government's response to the National Review of Social Care, outlines six pillars of reform, starting with a new Family Help model. This approach offers flexible, multi-disciplinary support delivered by local teams familiar with the community. It envisions a system with fewer thresholds, integrating targeted early help and children in need services within a broader framework of universal, community, and specialist support.

Camden's first step in responding to the national reform agenda is to streamline Early Help, currently delivered by separate Early Years, Complex Families, and Youth Services teams. The proposal consolidates support for families with children of all ages within Family Hubs, adopting an "All Age, All Local" approach under the name Family Help.

Figure 3. Family Help's place within the wider service framework (source: *Stable Homes*)



4.2.2. Successes, Opportunities and Challenges

A new **Relational Practice Framework** has been developed that sets out the key beliefs and values that will guide our work. New operational models that reflect our beliefs and values and deliver a more joined up service for families across the continuum of need are currently being developed with practitioners, drawing on their unique experience of working with families. The new simpler model of targeted early help casework will provide the right conditions on which to map the next step in Children's Services transformation and a new system that delivers services for families, across the continuum of need. These are key elements that families told us were important to them and are front and centre of Camden's Good Help Manifesto.

A new **neighbourhood-based approach to Family Help** offers significant opportunities. It represents Camden's first step in addressing the national Social Care reform agenda while fulfilling the Family Hub programme's goal of a one-stop shop for families with children of all ages. Embedding Family Help services in neighbourhoods aligns with the Council's Estates and Neighbourhoods Mission and advances the creation of multidisciplinary teams to support schools in meeting the needs of children and families, as outlined in *Building Back Stronger*, Camden's Education Strategy.

Implementing change is challenging and needs to be handled sensitively. Staff need to be engaged throughout the process so that the rationale for change is clear, and all have an opportunity to shape the future of the service. A comprehensive co-production exercise is underway in which a group of staff is working with Heads of Service to bring its considerable experience of delivering services into the design phase. Sequencing the transformation process so that the changes are iterative will enable reflection and learning to continue to influence our model as it develops.

4.2.3. Next Steps

Family Help prototypes developed during the design phase will be presented to the Supporting People Departmental Management Team in early 2025. These will undergo additional "test and learn" cycles to refine and validate the model, with implementation planned for Spring 2025.

4.3. Child Health Equity (RAISE Camden)

4.3.1. Background

The UK has one of the lowest levels of social mobility in Europe; it takes six generations for families in the lowest decile to reach the median salary. Most parents are concerned their children will be worse off than themselves. Rates of childhood poverty are increasing and persisting for longer: previously this was most common in the early years, but it is now continuing into primary school age.

Camden has among the highest inequality in life expectancy in the country. A boy born in Hampstead Town in 2020 is expected to live 13.5 years longer than a boy born the same day in Somerstown. The difference is 9.6 years for girls. By secondary school, for every ten young people, we see four attending private school and four living in poverty after housing costs. National evidence has shown that children from low-income families have worse health outcomes if they live in an affluent area compared to a more unilaterally deprived area. The effect of relative poverty is especially notable for mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore, there is an ethnic bias to these trends. For instance, in Camden, Black households are almost five times more likely to be living in overcrowded conditions than White households (24% vs 5%) and five times less likely to own their home (7% vs 36%).

RAISE Camden is Camden's child health equity programme, aimed at improving projected health trends for children and young people. It has established long term development initiatives alongside test and learn pilots, spanning three core themes: child poverty (material deprivation is associated with cognitive development); whole family mental health (associated with social and emotional development); and tackling racism and inequality (which magnify the impact of both). Its ambitions and delivery are

intrinsically linked with the other programmes of work described within this report, enhancing our focus on equity across these.

4.3.2. Governance

Each workstream is overseen by established governance boards, including the 0-19 Equity and Inclusion Family Hubs Delivery Group, the Children and Young People's Mental Health Board, and the Equitable Services Steering Group. These boards report to the Start Well and Family Hubs Board, the Children's Trust Partnership Board, and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

In early March 2025, the Institute of Health Equity will publish the results of Camden's child health equity audit, highlighting priority areas for local action. Following this, we propose establishing a RAISE Camden Board to oversee the implementation of the report's recommendations and the broader programme of work. To support this effort, we are assembling an Expert Advisory Panel comprising academics and partners from the voluntary and statutory sectors.

4.3.3. Successes, Opportunities and Challenges

RAISE Camden has established a series of test and learn pilots as well as longer term development programmes over the last 12 months. These collaborative programmes bring together teams from across the Council and our wider partners in their development and delivery.

Our flagship programme is the **Equitable Services Programme**. It drives equity within service delivery by using standardised and supported quality improvement methods to improve the consistent recording of equalities data. Disparities in access, completion, experience and outcomes of children and young people's health and wellbeing services are tracked. We approach the disparities with curiosity to understand what is driving them and, where appropriate, applying participatory appraisal techniques with families themselves. This helps us to understand what improvements can be made to services to better reflect the needs of our local communities. The process will be captured and tracked through quarterly contract monitoring meetings. Our ambition is to apply this approach at a systems level, using the Family Hubs database.

The London Borough of Camden has partnered with Nesta to launch a test-and-learn pilot offering a **one-off £500 cash transfer** to pregnant people who are eligible for benefits. Research indicates that reducing financial stress during pregnancy can lower the risk of low-birth-weight babies. Camden has seen a rise in premature and low-birth-weight births, which can have long-term health and wellbeing impacts. The cash payment will be provided in a non-coercive manner, followed by a warm welcome to the Financial Inclusion team and Family Hubs services for expecting and new parents. We will track service uptake and behavioural outcomes as key measures of success, with the pilot set to launch in April 2025.

University College London Hospital (UCLH), Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust (CNWL) and the London Borough of Camden have partnered to offer **follow up clinics for families attending Accident and Emergency (A&E) without urgent clinical needs**. These clinics are held in Regent's Park Family Hub to provide time to understand the underlying causes of emergency attendances, to address the families' needs more holistically and to encourage uptake of community services. This

clinic was launched in September 2024, and we have applied for National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funding to evaluate its impact during 2025/26.

Camden is further partnering with UCLH and CNWL on a series of programmes supporting adults and infants in the perinatal period. The Best Start for Baby programme has been accepted for **NIHR evaluation funding** to support its delivery and we are actively working with an evidence community linking multiple sites in this area. UCLH has been developing a **Birthing Buddies programme**, where local volunteers support people from global majority backgrounds through their antenatal checks and visits, during birth and postnatally. We have supported the programme by linking into community groups for recruitment and engagement. We are also supporting a reflective practice evaluation to identify and encouraging **cultural change within practice for maternity services**. Furthermore, we are developing antenatal programme supports specifically designed for Bangladeshi people during their pregnancy – delivered by UCLH and supported through a peer support network within Camden.

We have been selected as an additional site for the **Kailo study** led by UCL and UCL Partners. Kailo works with young people to co-design solutions to the determinants of adolescent mental health. This is a 1–2-year programme, building on existing work in the borough around whole family approaches to mental wellbeing. It will commence in January 2025.

4.3.4. Next steps

We recognise that a **robust research infrastructure** for child health equity is key to attracting additional innovation and funding to the borough, and this will be our priority moving forward.

Central to supporting the needs of our young residents is ensuring that **youth-led governance** influences our programme's approach. Building on our successful work with the Camden Youth Tell Them group, we will establish training and support programmes to enhance young people's participation.

In 2025/26, we will seek grant funding to develop Family Hubs neighbourhood networks, focusing on a 0-19 database that supports equalities monitoring and **the scalable delivery of our Equitable Services Programme**. We are also working to engage grassroots organisations, which we will support through the neighbourhood structure, to build trust with families we have yet to reach.

4.4. Start Well

4.4.1. Background

Camden's Start Well workstream delivers against a core long-term strategic ambition from Camden's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30: "all children and young people have the fair chance to succeed, and no one gets left behind". Our population health approach also meets the short-term priorities for action, ensuring that every child is healthy and ready for school, strengthened by community connectedness and friendships. It feeds directly into the wider ambitions for NCL Integrated Care Board in their Population Health and Integrated Care Strategy: to improve population health through a collective focus on prevention, early intervention and proactive care, working to achieve the best start in life for all our children.

4.4.2. Governance

The Start Well and Family Hubs Board is focused on ensuring a common understanding to Camden's approach to starting well, and the health of children and young people aged 0-19 (25 with additional needs). This includes ensuring common recognition of the areas of need and our priorities, and a collaborative agreement between Council, Health and VCS partners to drive transformational improvements focused on early intervention and prevention. This single Executive Board reports and escalates issues to the Children's Trust Partnership Board and Local Care Partnership Board.

The areas of focus for the board are listed below with the top four identified as priority areas for transformational activity in 2024-25. Activity has been described throughout this report linked to these areas, with further detail below:

1. Strengthening Mental Health and Wellbeing Support for children and young people, with a focus on whole family mental health, transitions and schools.
2. Supporting our children and young people with SEND and other neurodiverse needs, and their families, with a focus on delivery of our all-age autism plan, our SEND strategy, and reduction of service waiting times.²
3. Centring our transformational work around Child Health Equity through the mobilisation of a new centre for child health equity (RAISE Camden).
4. Further developing Family Hubs as the prevention and early intervention model for Children and Learning in the borough.
5. Developing the health component of the Family Hubs model for children and young people over the age of five, incorporating a focus on transitions and links to Family Help and the neighbourhood model of working.
6. Improving uptake of childhood immunisations through a population health approach, focused on improving access, engagement, training and communication.
7. Strengthening our preventative and treatment support for children with long term conditions, in particular for Asthma and Oral Health.
8. Addressing inequities in maternal and infant health, with a particular focus on perinatal health, child poverty and infant mortality.
9. Improving physical activity and nutrition to support children and young people to have a healthy weight.

The following brief updates cover some of these above areas for children and young people aged 0-19 (25 for young people with SEND). These priorities have been presented before in detail, as part of the Annual Health Report on Children, Schools and Families to Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee, hence will not be repeated in full here. Instead, we are focusing on activity within these areas related in particular to Family Hubs and school settings: Mental Health, Immunisation, Oral Health, Maternity, and Physical Nutrition and Exercise.

² A report focusing on our SEND provision will be presented in February 2025.

4.4.3. Key Updates

a) Mental Health

i) Context

In Camden, an estimated one in five children aged 11-16 and 23% of 17-19-year-olds have a mental health condition. The Camden Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire found that 38% of Year 5 and 6 children worry about their mental health. Mental health disorders in Camden are 33% higher than the national average, with social risk factors, such as living in social housing (52% of Camden's children) and poverty, contributing to poorer outcomes. Additionally, one in three of Camden's 1,370 young carers is estimated to experience mental health issues.

Self-harm is more common in young people than adults. Nationally, 7.8% of children aged 7-16 and 33% of young people aged 17-24 were reported by parents to have self-harmed. Camden's youth self-harm hospital admission rate is 171/100,000, peaking at 263/100,000 for 15-19-year-olds. While suicide rates are highest in those over 40.

ii) Updates

Family Hubs funding supports the development and delivery of services, including group-based sessions like Together Time, in partnership with Camden's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) provider, Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust. Two practitioners have been employed to deliver these interventions alongside existing staff within Camden's commissioned CAMHS under-5s services. Support for mental health in schools continue to be delivered by a combination of NHS-funded Mental Health support teams and VCS organisations, as well as through the Early Years Schools and Families team in the Health and Wellbeing department.

In 2023/24, all Camden state schools were offered partnership with **Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs)**, providing half a day per week for primary schools and at least one day per week for secondary schools. This is in addition to MHSTs already supporting 28/40 primary and 9/10 secondary schools. MHSTs assist with a whole-school approach to mental health, including staff training, curriculum development, mental health awareness events, and student participation projects. They also offer 1:1 and group therapy for children and parents, along with webinars and workshops for parents.

The School Nursing Service (SNS) protects child safety by **following up on red and amber Emergency Department (ED) attendances**. By reviewing ED summaries, nurses identify medical exacerbations, safeguarding issues, and support needed for new diagnoses. In the 2023/24 school year, SNS was notified of 492 pupil ED attendances, including 47 related to mental health, self-harm, suicide attempts, or suicidal ideation.

Secondary schools run **School Nurse drop-in sessions**. Young people have predominately attended to talk about emotional and mental health issues, such as stress and anxiety, and risk-taking behaviours. These sessions allow the nurses to establish a connection with specific students which enables any underlying issues to be disclosed. The service has made an increased number of CAMHS referrals following young people presenting at these sessions.

The Early Years, Schools and Families team also provide **advice, support and training for schools** on promoting positive mental health which includes parent and pupil workshops on topics such as managing behaviour through a trauma lens, supporting parent and pupils' mental health and building resilience.

Camden works closely with the ICB to commission a **Children Looked After Health Team** through CNWL. We also provide mental health support to children and young people through an embedded mental health lead in the Children Looked After (CLA) team. In 2023/24 Camden has expanded provision of mental health support for care experienced young people aged 18-25. There are now two dedicated mental health practitioner posts, one based at the Brandon Centre and one at the Hive, taking referrals from the Camden Young People's Pathway and working alongside the CAMHS CLA and refugee team, recently relaunched as the Growing With You team.

Other updates and developments of note in 2023/24 include:

- Tavistock's CAMHS services maintained **low waiting times**, with 82% of children seen within 4 weeks in Q4 23/24.
- A pilot of the **Integrated Front Door** model for primary care referrals has been launched, with multiagency triage from early help, social care, and mental health practitioners. Positive GP feedback has led to plans for further evaluation and potential expansion to schools in 2024/25.
- Camden has launched a two-year **social prescribing** service for young people aged 12-24, with link workers at Fitzrovia Youth in Action and the Brandon Centre. They help co-create personalised activity plans and have funding for individual activities. The Hive at Catch 22 also offers a Youth-Led Social Prescribing service.
- To improve **mental health support for care-experienced young people**, the CAMHS CLA and Refugee team has expanded with two new psychologist positions, extending service access to those up to age 24. A new Psychologist post at Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust and the Hive further supports this group of young people.

iii) Challenges

- There are high levels of emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) in Camden. The Team Around the School Model that is being developed will necessarily take a multi-agency approach, joining up the various parts of the system. We will work to ensure that there is robust mental health support available to Camden's schools.
- Our mental health approach for children and young people must consider their whole family context. We are developing the 0-19 offer and parental wellbeing support for Family Hubs.
- Despite the wide range of support on offer in Camden, young people still speak of a need for a unified approach to supporting them through the mental health landscape. They have asked for awareness, support, and practical guidance to help them access and navigate mental health services and for tailored promotion and awareness of services to ensure that all communities are well-informed. Ensuring ease and equity of access to services will form an important part of our work in the coming year, including the recommissioning of our peer education and peer support service.

iv) Next Steps

In the coming year we plan to:

- Continue to contribute to the development of the Team Around the School model, to ensure that mental health and our EBSA work are central to Camden's approach to improving school attendance.
- Improve take-up of Camden's health and wellbeing support offer to school staff, by mapping the complete provision and creating a searchable online resource that complements the Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire.
- Review the offer of mental health support to care experienced young people as part of the recommissioning of the Young People's Pathway service.
- Recommission our peer support and peer education service.
- Map and expand our provision and opportunities for more joined-up whole family mental health from antenatal through to adulthood, with a Camden CYP Mental Health Board focus on Family Hubs to embed whole family wellbeing.
- Evaluate how children and young people access and navigate mental health services in Camden. Put in place strategic measure to maximise engagement and utilisation through public health campaigns and co-production.
- Undertake a study in partnership with University College London (UCL) called the Kailo, that will examine determinants of adolescent mental health for Camden
- Deliver a perinatal mental health needs assessment.

b) Immunisations

i) Context

Improving the uptake of childhood immunisations remains a strategic priority for the Camden Health & Wellbeing Board and Camden Borough Partnership, as well as the main population health priority for NCL Integrated Care System (ICS). Camden has historically some of the lowest childhood immunisation uptake rates in the country. We are committed to taking a population health approach to tackling existing inequalities and have been making steady progress with our childhood immunisation uptake rates. Over a period of five years, we have seen a steady increase in the number of children aged one who have received all the vaccines that they are due at that age. This increase is slightly less for children aged two and our progress has not been as successful for children aged five. There are likely to be a few reasons for this including issues with data input at practice level and we are linking with our NCL ICB immunisation team and GP colleagues to focus on GP delivery and engagement with our local communities to resolve communication and access issues.

Nationally and regionally, we have been responding to two vaccine-preventable disease incidents this year (measles and pertussis). Promoting pertussis and Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccination has been a priority because of this but we are hoping to focus on improving all childhood immunisations moving forward.

ii) Updates

Membership of Camden Immunisation Group has been refreshed with key stakeholders in regular attendance and this meeting is co-chaired by NCL ICB immunisation team and public health consultants from Camden's HWB team. This meeting unites commissioners and providers so that key areas for improvement can be identified and prioritised.

MMR vaccination has been promoted through a variety of channels, including resident bulletins, social media platforms, electronic billboards and bus advertising. We have also produced leaflets which were translated for our local population, and these have been distributed via GPs, libraries and children's centres and at community events.

We have used our parent champions, health improvement staff and school nursing teams to promote MMR vaccination. We have promoted messages around the increase in measles cases and the importance of vaccination using staff from Family Hubs and have attended baby bonding sessions to promote childhood vaccinations and answer questions raised by parents. We have attended headteacher meetings to provide briefings on the increase in measles and the importance of improving MMR vaccination uptake rates and are building connections with Vaccination UK, the new provider for the delivery of school age immunisations.

We have worked with our colleagues in NCL ICB, UCLH / Vaccine bus and family hubs to deliver **outreach MMR clinics and information sessions** throughout the borough. These were promoted by GP practices near to the location of the vaccine clinics. We have co-produced a campaign to promote MMR vaccine with a Somali youth group and videos have been produced that can be shared on social media.

To raise awareness of the outbreak and **promote pertussis/whooping cough vaccination**, the national / ICB communications messaging has been shared with all our digital channels and the Family Hubs website. Information about the increase in pertussis/whooping cough cases has been shared at various forums. Communications have also been shared about the pertussis in pregnancy programme in a Camden magazine article.

We have worked with our colleagues in maternity and NCL ICB to simplify and promote key messages around the different vaccines and their timing in pregnancy (pertussis, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), flu and COVID-19). Sessions on **vaccinations in pregnancy** have been planned with our Camden Dad's group for next year and we are also working to support the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) on engagement work with pregnant women in Camden.

iii) Challenges

- We have reviewed childhood vaccine uptake data to identify where our unvaccinated children are registered in Camden and are hoping to work with our NCL ICB immunisation team and GP practices to support practices with **improving data entry**, identifying ways to improve uptake, with a focus on populations that might benefit from engagement to inform access and communication. We are also working with them to try and gain access to childhood immunisation records for health visitors and school nursing teams.
- We are aware that vaccine **uptake rates are lower in some of global majority groups** in Camden and have been working with our Somali community to understand the reasons

for this. We have held coffee mornings with MMR information sessions that were delivered by a Somali GP followed by an information session on autism. We are slowly building trust with our local community to find out how we can improve communication and access to vaccines for them.

iv) Next Steps

- Most of our childhood vaccines are delivered in GP practices and our main focus for the incoming year will be on the joint work that is planned with our NCL ICB colleagues to not only understand where our unvaccinated children are, but to try and understand why they are unvaccinated through engagement activities that will be guided by focused work with our GPs. We can then develop targeted interventions and evaluate their impact.
- We will continue to develop a stronger relationship with our Somali community and co-produce communications with them, while taking learning from our work to other global majority and underserved communities in Camden.
- We also hope to focus on engagement and communication with expecting mums and dads in Camden to try to improve uptake of vaccines in pregnancy.

c) Oral Health

i) Context

Camden data (2023) suggests hospital inpatient admissions for dental caries (tooth decay) in children are higher for those from more deprived populations, with Kings Cross ward having significantly higher hospital admissions than the Camden average. The main ethnic groups likely to have significant oral health needs in Camden are Bangladeshi and Somalian communities. Camden is worse than London and national averages for the proportion of children in Year 6 with experience of dentinal decay. Particularly, the mean number of dentinally decayed missing and filled teeth (d3mft) among 5-year-old children has almost doubled in Camden over the past decade.

Access to dentists has gradually improved but remained below pre-pandemic levels as of June 2022. Compared to Islington and England, Camden has consistently experienced lower dental access even prior to the pandemic.

We aim to deliver an efficient, effective, and innovative oral health promotion service to improve oral health and reduce inequalities for children and adults in Camden. Through a well-established Oral Health Promotion contract with The Whittington NHS Trust, in partnership with Islington, we provide oral health programmes across various settings. The Whittington works closely with pre-schools, schools, social care, mental health services, sheltered housing, residential homes, nursing homes, and day centres. Key ongoing programmes include:

ii) Updates

Supervised Toothbrushing Programme (STP): Staff in Camden Children's Centres, nurseries, and early years settings with high numbers of funded two-year-olds receive training to help them promote good oral hygiene in young children. Schools continue to deliver the programme, with positive feedback from staff and children. Camden's STP will expand

through NCL's Teeth4Life NHS-funded programme, targeting 26 additional settings in the most deprived wards. Promotions are ongoing, with six settings engaged so far. Work is ongoing to designate an oral health improvement champion within each Family Hub and further the reach of the programme through bespoke and succinct training for different staff groups (health professionals, social care staff, parent champions etc).

Fluoride Varnish: Whittington Health delivers a targeted fluoride varnish programme for children aged 3 –7 years old, within Children's Centres and Primary Schools with a high proportion of free school meal eligibility. Children receive two applications of fluoride varnish and information about local NHS dental services for their continuing care. There is a 60% uptake currently.

Brushing for Life: The Whittington provides training and Brushing for Life (B4L) packs, which include age-appropriate toothbrushes and toothpaste, to health visitors, staff at SEN schools, children's centres, nurseries, and school nurses. The packs are also distributed at community health events and dental clinics. There is potential to train community oral health champions to advise and signpost parents on oral hygiene. SEN-specific oral health training has been requested by champions, and The Whittington will work on developing this.

iii) Challenges

- Low consent rates from parents for fluoride varnish. We need to think of better and more efficient ways to communicate our offer to them.
- Difficulties cited in engaging schools' teachers/admin staff with oral health interventions. We need to improve our collaborations with school nursing teams to encourage engagement.

iv) Next Steps

- Opportunities through Family hubs to think more about whole family oral health, including subsidising toothpaste for 0–5-year-olds, offering targeted support for families at higher risk, connecting families to early years settings, and providing online support.
- Promotions will continue for the Teeth4Life programme, aiming to recruit a further 20 settings in the most deprived wards.
- With a 60% uptake of the Fluoride Varnish scheme, efforts are underway to improve consent rates by hosting parent information sessions, working with schools to fit better into their termly schedules and moving consent online.

d) Paediatric Surgery and Maternity and Neonatal Transformation Update

i) Updates

Between December 2023 and March 2024, the Start Well programme led by NCL ICB and NHSE London Region Specialised Commissioning conducted a public consultation on changes to maternity, neonatal, and children's surgical services. The proposals included:

Maternity and Neonatal Services: Consolidation of services from five hospital sites to four, with two options:

- **Option A:** Close maternity and neonatal services at Royal Free Hospital (preferred at consultation stage).
- **Option B:** Close maternity and neonatal services at Whittington Health.

Both options retain maternity and neonatal services at Barnet, North Mid, and UCLH, and significantly investing in services

Edgware Birth Centre: Proposal to close birthing suites while retaining antenatal and postnatal care at the site

Children's Surgery: consolidate some surgery for babies and very young children in centres of expertise at Great Ormond Street Hospital and UCLH

Feedback gathered during the consultation was extensive, with thousands of responses from residents, staff, and stakeholders. Two independent reports ([available here](#)) summarising this feedback have recently been published.

ii) Next Steps

- NCL ICB and partners across the system including hospitals are now considering the feedback from the consultation and taking forward additional work based on the feedback.
- Over the coming months a decision-making business case will be developed for consideration in early 2025 by NCL ICB Board and NHSE specialised commissioning. This will bring together all the different evidence to be considered when deciding the future shape of these services. It will also include updating the integrated impact assessments – ensuring that impacts of the proposals are understood on the general population, on inequalities and on community services including early years and family hubs support services, and any mitigations for disbenefits have been developed.
- Whichever decision is made there will be a detailed period of planning and transition for several years before any changes are implemented. This will include clear communication and information for staff and patients, and ample notice given to leaders and everyone affected. In the meantime, no final decisions have been made and all services continue to operate as normal.

e) Nutrition and Physical Activity

i) Context

Good nutrition and being regularly active are two key cornerstones of starting well, contributing to healthy development, learning and attainment, health and wellbeing, and ongoing habits throughout life. Camden is taking action on these healthy behaviours individually, as well as through strategic initiatives like the Healthy Weight Acceleration Plan developed this year in response to the health & wellbeing crisis linked to population levels of overweight and obesity. Data from the National Child Measurement Programme (NCMP) (2023/2024) shows that one in five (20.2%) pupils in Reception Year were overweight or obese, and this increased to more than one in three (36.3%) by the time pupils reached Year 6. NCMP data also shows that boys, pupils living in the most deprived areas, or those from Asian and Black ethnic groups are more likely to be overweight or obese.

Camden's Health-Related Behaviours Questionnaire (HRBQ) has highlighted opportunities to improve the nutrition and physical activity levels of young people in Camden, particularly among secondary school aged pupils. Data from 2021/2022 shows that in primary school around a third of pupils (37%) were eating five or more portions of fruit and vegetables each day, which dropped to one in five (20%) secondary school pupils. 11% of primary school pupils indicated that they had nothing to eat or drink before lessons on the day of the survey, which increased to 29% in secondary school pupils. The HRBQ also highlighted the need to increase physical activity in secondary school aged pupils because only 12% of pupils met the physical activity recommendations, and this figure was lower for girls.

ii) Updates

Little Steps to Healthy Lives (LSHL) supports settings to take a whole setting approach to health and wellbeing, including opportunities to provide support and signposting, as well as access to a range of programmes run at the centre or in the community. Overall, one in three (31%) of early years settings are engaged in the programme, including all maintained children's centres. Popular programmes include support for starting solids (400 unique families benefitting), addressing fussy eating among 1–2-year-olds, and family food education and practical healthy eating tips for parents/carers of children aged 2-11. Breastfeeding support is available across Family Hubs, as part of Camden's successful approach to maintaining high breastfeeding rates at 6-8 weeks (80% of babies) which is significantly higher than the national average. Work also continues on increasing uptake of the Healthy Start scheme supporting parents on low incomes to buy healthy food. This year the new Healthy Movers programme for Family Hubs and Nurseries is launching, with 24 early years settings signing up for training and toolkits to help families be more active. Weight management pathways for children and young people are currently being updated, considering issues with access, translators, and taking a whole family approach. A community healthy weight toolkit is also being developed including the range of support available in Camden to help parents and families find what could be helpful to them.

Camden's Healthy Schools programme has nearly three quarters of schools (71%) actively engaged, with all schools meeting some elements of the programme. A whole school approach to food and physical activity are key parts of the programme, including meeting curriculum requirements, developing a positive participation culture and environment of the school, and ensuring healthy choices at break and lunchtime.

School nutrition: Breakfast is now available across all Camden's Schools. Magic Breakfast is provided in 21 of Camden's most deprived schools, with more schools signing up this term, and 3,340 children having a free breakfast through the scheme every day during the summer term. A new school meals service will be provided from April 2025 with an updated specification focusing on pupil engagement, Camden's enhanced school food standards, and providing more climate conscious meals. Free school meals have been provided to all pupils in primary schools since September 2023, enabling those in low-income households above the threshold for free school meals to benefit. In secondary schools a test and learn initiative led to free fruit and vegetable offers at breaktime, and auto-enrolment for free school meals for all those eligible is being progressed. The Holiday Activity and Food Programme supported more than 2,500 children and young people over the summer, including those with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities.

iii) Challenges

- Supporting children as they move from primary to secondary school to have and maintain healthy behaviours throughout their teenage years, as they start to exercise their choice and autonomy
- Providing strong universal offers across schools that can be adapted to all abilities, while ensuring tailored programmes/initiatives for those with greater needs
- Supporting more schools to fully engage with the Healthy Schools programme

iv) Next Steps

- A range of new approaches to promoting physical activity through schools are being considered as part of a forthcoming new Children and Young People Physical Activity Strategy. This includes how to best address the drop off in physical activity levels typically seen among teenagers, and particularly among teen girls. Schools have developed their own programmes, such as Hawley's Year 5 offer to girls focusing on enjoyable participation, and Torriano's sessions for girls in Years 5, 6 and 7 (after they've left the school). There are also universal schemes running across schools, such as The Daily Mile held year-round in 14 primaries including Edith Neville, Rhyl, and Holy Trinity, and the Street Tag gamification initiative now being held for a second round.
- Extending the provision of Magic Breakfast for another year, to support more of Camden's deprived schools, and the large numbers of children currently benefitting
- Working with the new school meals provider from April 2025 to enable further improvements to lunchtime provision, in line with the new specification

4.5. Finance Comments of the Executive Director, Corporate Services

This report provides an update on the key programmes of work: Family Hubs, Family Help, RAISE Camden and Start Well. There are no significant financial implications resulting from this report.

4.6. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

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

4.7. Environmental Implications

This report to the committee should contain no significant environmental implications for Camden. Our policies and strategies which animate the work described in this report, however, are built upon and align with the Camden Climate Action Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and Clean Air Action Plan.

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee’s Work Programme and Action Tracker 2024-25	
REPORT OF: Executive Director, Children and Learning	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE: 14 January 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT: This report provides an outline of the 2024-25 work programme (Appendix 1), the 2025-26 provisional work programme (Appendix 2), and an update on actions requested at previous meetings (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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) note the Committee’s Work Programme for 2024-25 (Appendix 1) b) note the Committee’s provisional Work Programme for 2025-26 (Appendix 2) and c) note the Committee’s Action Tracker (Appendix 3) 	

Signed by:



Tim Aldridge, Executive Director, Children and Learning

Date: 2 January 2025

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This report gives the Committee an opportunity to review its 2024-2025 work programme and consult the 2025-2026 provisional work programme. A work programme of key reports for the year 2024-25 is set out in Appendix 1. A provisional work programme of potential key reports for the year 2025-26 is set out in Appendix 2.
- 1.2 The Children, Schools and Families (CSF) Scrutiny Committee's work programme has been developed to reflect:
 - 1.2.1 the corporate priorities of the Council,
 - 1.2.2 the priorities of relevant portfolio holders,
 - 1.2.3 priorities from relevant health and education partners,
 - 1.2.4 and the priority areas which have previously been identified by the Committee and other relevant panels.
- 1.3 Suggestions and proposals from each meeting can be incorporated into the programme as the year progresses. Relevant Cabinet Reports may also be considered throughout the year by the committee before they are taken to Cabinet.
- 1.4 An action tracker of Committee Member queries at meetings that require an action following the meeting is set out in Appendix 3.

2 Terms of reference

The committee has the following terms of reference:

To scrutinise the Council's policies relating to children and the provision, planning, financing, management and performance of children's services, provided by the Children and Learning Directorate and other service providers.

3 Meeting dates of 2024-25 municipal year

- Tuesday 16 July 2024
- Thursday 8 October 2024
- Thursday 11 November 2024
- Tuesday 10 December 2024
- **Tuesday 14 January 2025**
- Monday 24 February 2025

4 Scrutiny Panels

The Committee can form scrutiny panels to look at more specific areas under its remit. Scrutiny panels should be established with clear terms of reference and target date to report back to the main Committee.

5 Legal comments of the Borough Solicitor

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

6 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.

7 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

8 Appendices

Appendix 1 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-25

Appendix 2 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Provisional Work Programme 2025-26

Appendix 3 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Action Tracker 2024-25

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Appendix 1 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2024-25

16 July 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Best Start for Children and Families• Cabinet Member Update - Young People and Culture• Annual Health Report on Children, Young People and Families 2023/2024• Insight, Learning and Impact Report – End of year 2023/2024
8 October 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A summary of Camden’s provisional examination results 2024• Stock taking report on our approach to participation and co-production with children and families• SEND Scrutiny Panel Final Report• Youth Justice Report
11 November 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual School Places Planning, Schools Finance and School Organisations Update Report 2024• Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report 2023/24• Persistent Absence, Inclusion and Alternative Provision Report
10 December 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Annual Report – Jobs, Young People and Culture• Cabinet Member Annual Report - Best Start for Children and Families• 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">• Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2023/24• Young Inspector’s Report on Children’s Services• Family Hubs, Family Help and Start Well Transformation Programme
24 February 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Best Start for Children and Families• Cabinet Member Update – Jobs, Young People and Culture• Achievements and Standards Report 2024• SEND Annual Report• SEND Scrutiny Panel Response Report

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Appendix 2 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Provisional Work Programme 2025-26

July 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update – Best Start for Children and Families• Cabinet Member Update – Jobs, Young People and Culture• Annual Health Report on Children, Young People and Families 2024/2025• Insight, Learning and Impact Report – End of year 2023/2024• Persistence Absence – Update Report
October 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A summary of Camden’s provisional examination results 2025• Stock taking report on our approach to participation and co-production with children and families• Youth Justice Report
November 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual School Places Planning, Schools Finance and School Organisations Update Report 2025• Children’s Services Annual Complaints Report 2024/25• Persistent Absence, Inclusion and Alternative Provision Report
December 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSCP Annual Report 2023/24 / Business Plan 2024/25• Insight, Learning and Impact Report – Mid-Year 2025/26
January 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2024/25• Young Inspector’s Report on Children’s Services• Family Hubs, Family Help and Start Well Transformation Programme
February 2026
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cabinet Member Update - Best Start for Children and Families• Cabinet Member Update – Jobs, Young People and Culture• Achievements and Standards Report 2025• SEND Annual Report

Reports to be scheduled:

- Cabinet Member Annual Report – Jobs, Young People and Culture
- Cabinet Member Annual Report - Best Start for Children and Families

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Appendix 3 - CSF Scrutiny Committee Action Tracker 2024-25

No.	Meeting date	Item	Action	Action by	Status
1 – 24/25	11 July 2024	Item 10 - Annual Health Update on Children, Young People and Families - 2023/24	To provide a written response to the committee on whether children on the waiting list for MOSAIC diagnosis are still excluded from SALT support.	Kirsten Watters, Director of Health and Well-being	Completed
2 – 24/25	8 October 2024	Item 6 – SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel Final Report	To provide a written response to the Committee on how children were being supported who were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. not attending school due to SEND needs b. not formally diagnosed due to parents struggling through the system. 	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed
3 – 24/25	8 October 2024	Item 9 – Youth Justice Plan 2023-25 Midpoint Review	To share with the Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Further performance data, to include year on year trends and breakdowns b. Case studies 	Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Safeguarding and Family Help	Completed
4 – 24/25	8 October 2024	Item 4 – Deputations	To provide a written response to the deputation, relating to Free School Meals.	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed
5 – 24/25	11 November 2024	Item 4 – Deputations	To provide a written response to the deputation, relating to AI technologies to support SEND provision.	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	Completed

6 – 24/25	11 November 2024	Item 4 – Deputations	To provide a written response to the deputation, relating to the environmental impact of school uniforms.	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	
7 – 24/25	10 December 2024	Item 8 - Cabinet Member Annual Report - Young People and Culture	To provide further information, narrative and analysis about the school in the borough which has a disproportionately high number of exclusions and to provide detail about what specific interventions are in place with the school to reduce that number.	Stephen Hall, Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning	Completed
8 – 24/25	10 December 2024	Item 9 - Cabinet Member Annual Report - Best Start for Children and Families	To provide further information on any specific support the Council provides, or could consider providing, to families who are living in temporary accommodation to help children attend school, particularly any details about support for families who have had to move out of borough.	Tim Aldridge, Executive Director Children and Learning	
9 – 24/25	10 December 2024	Item 10 - Insight, Learning and Impact End of Year Report	To provide further information about the family therapy offer which is offered as an alternative pathway as part of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).	Tim Aldridge, Executive Director Children and Learning	