

## **Update of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families**

Children, Schools and Families Committee - 20 February 2023

### **1. Purpose of the Cabinet Member update**

- 1.1. This paper provides a short round of updates from across the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families. It presents an opportunity for the cabinet member to speak directly to the CSF Scrutiny Committee and highlight key pieces of work, both to share successes and identify challenges and opportunities in the coming months. The Committee are invited to consider the information below and ask questions of clarification at the meeting, subject to the Chair's discretion. Requests for additional information can be addressed to the relevant director/s outside of the meeting. The Committee may also use the cabinet member updates to inform their scrutiny work planning for the coming year.

### **2. Education Strategy Board – 2 December 2022**

- 2.1. On 2 December 2022, we held the second meeting of the Education Strategy Board, which is monitoring Building Back Stronger's implementation. At the meeting, we considered an initial monitoring report on progress in delivering the strategy which showed that good progress has been made at this stage. We also held focussed discussions on the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on schools, how we can support schools with collaboration and potential cluster working, post-16 education and our ambitions for every child to be a reader by seven. The Board's next meeting is due to take place in late January or early February 2023.

### **3. Children's Trust Partnership Board – 7 December 2022**

- 3.1. I chaired the Children's Trust Partnership Board (CTPB) meeting on 7 December 2022, which focussed on the cost-of-living crisis and building resilience for children and families. This relates to the aspiration under Belong, in the Resilient Families Framework, that "services work with families so that they feel stronger and have the resources that they need". The CTPB has a responsibility to deliver a consistent offer of support – both universal and targeted - that builds resilience in families and young people.
- 3.2. In the meeting we discussed the brief overview of the full set of workstreams being led across the council, this item will allow the CTPB to assess what we are seeing and how we are responding to the cost-of-living crisis as it happens, the support for high-risk groups before moving on to a wider roundtable of all partners and discussion.

### **4. Camden's Takeover Day – 25 November 2022**

- 4.1. This was the tenth anniversary of Camden's Takeover Challenge, originally launched by the Office of the Children's Commissioner as a fun, imaginative and exciting activity to encourage organisations across England to open their doors to children and young people to take over adult roles. Children gain valuable experience of a workplace and insight into how the operate, while organisations benefit from a fresh perspective on their work.

4.2. In November 2022, children from five primary schools and two secondary schools were given the opportunity to present their ideas directly to local politicians and senior officers from the Council. This included feedback on:

- Estates and neighbourhoods
- Air pollution
- Mental health – social prescribing
- The cost-of-living crisis
- Camden’s diversity mission - young leaders

#### **4. Holiday and Food Programme**

Camden’s Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Winter programme ran from 19 to 30 December and was open to children and young people aged 5 to 16 who are eligible for free school meals. Co-ordinated locally by the Young Camden Foundation, the programme offered free, fun activities and nutritional education - from learning to make healthy meals to creative activities, including photography, drama, arts and crafts, and sports such as football and basketball. In total, 901 children were supported during the winter programme across 27 different sites. Of these, 643 were primary school attendees and 258 were secondary school attendees. A total of 3,604 meals were also provided by the programme.

#### **5. Camden Music Programme and Albert Hall Concert**

Camden Council’s Music Service currently offers half-price music lessons to all primary school pupils who are eligible for free school meals. Thanks to a generous £20,000 grant from Universal Music Group, the service are extending this offer to some families who receive housing benefit or council tax support and will support up to 70 children to learn an instrument this year.

Camden’s Music Service and Camden Learning, with support from Camden Music Trust, will be hosting the Camden Schools’ Music Festival in April 2023 at the Royal Albert Hall. This is the borough’s first large-scale in-person schools’ music event since the pandemic and will bring pupils from each school in the borough together to sing in a massed choir. For the first time, the event will also be live streamed for those unable to attend in person.

#### **6. Camden Council’s adult community learning service awarded ‘Good provider’ by Ofsted.**

Camden's adult community learning service provides education and training courses for adults to gain new skills in Health and Well-Being, Digital Inclusion, Family Learning, English for Speakers of Other Languages plus a range of vocational courses supporting adults into work.

I was happy to talk to inspectors in my role as a Governor of Camden Adult Community Learning. Governors emphasised the place of ACL in getting adults on a pathway to continuous learning and the improvements in confidence, feelings of self-worth and inner belief that come from working through adult learning courses.

Inspectors judged the service as Good for developing courses that meet the needs of learners, as well as providing support and advice about next steps on their learning journeys or into employment.

The team were also recognised for helping many learners progress into further education or employment and providing a range of additional support such as childcare while parents were attending a course.

Our adult learning service makes a real difference for so many families and reaches some of the most vulnerable members of the Camden community. This is a great achievement, and my thanks goes to the staff and teachers that work hard to support hundreds of adult learners a year to gain valuable life skills and training. The work doesn't stop here, and we will continue to make improvements to ensure we provide the best possible service for residents.

In the report, inspectors also wrote that: "the majority of learners develop their self-esteem and gain a newfound lease of life as a result of the courses they study."

**REPORT ENDS**