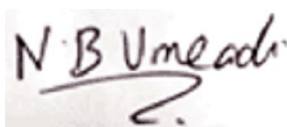


<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Using careers education to build the next generation of diverse leaders	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Councillor Nanouche Umeadi, Cabinet Adviser on Diversity Mission	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Children, Schools, and Families Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 20 February 2023
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>  This report contains the findings and recommendations of Councillor Nanouche Umeadi in her role as Cabinet Adviser on Diversity Mission.  <b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b>  No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.  <b>Contact Officer:</b> Clarissa Frias, Cabinet Officer Corporate Services, London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG 02079744132 / <a href="mailto:clarissa.frias@camden.gov.uk">clarissa.frias@camden.gov.uk</a>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>  <b>Children, Schools, and Families Scrutiny Committee is asked to:</b>  1 Note the report of Councillor Nanouche Umeadi, Cabinet Adviser for Diversity Mission; and  2 Discuss and comment on the recommendations made by the Cabinet Adviser, which will be incorporated in a report to Cabinet.	

Signed:



Date: 8 February 2023

## **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The Leader and Cabinet of Camden Council established four Cabinet Adviser roles to provide evidence-based recommendations and policy-making support to the Cabinet of the Council. The Cabinet Advisers are appointed by the Leader in conjunction with the wider Cabinet and Committee appointments made each year. The report appointing Cabinet Advisers for the 2022/23 municipal year can be found as a Single Member Decision by the Leader of the Council in May 2022.
- 1.2 Cabinet Advisers are to be appointed yearly to engage, research, and develop recommendations in a particular policy area, working with Cabinet Members, wider elected members, and the community.
- 1.3 The Cabinet Adviser roles are non-executive roles and do not sit as part of the Cabinet. They do not have decision-making powers and are limited to collaboration and recommendation-making to the Cabinet and relevant portfolio holder. Cabinet Advisers are expected to present their findings to Scrutiny in its policy and oversight function to provide opportunities for discussion of their findings and for the relevant Cabinet Member(s) to respond.
- 1.4 Following this, their report will go to Cabinet, alongside a report outlining the views of scrutiny and a response from the relevant Cabinet Member. This will allow Cabinet to consider the report, the views of Scrutiny and the Cabinet Member together; and formally decide whether to accept the recommendations.
- 1.5 Councillor Nanouche Umeadi was appointed as the Cabinet Adviser on the Diversity Mission; to work alongside Councillor Nadia Shah, who is the Cabinet Member for Voluntary Sector, Cohesion, and Equality. This report provides the findings and recommendations of Cllr Umeadi in supporting Camden's mission to ensure that the leadership of the borough is as diverse as our communities and the next generation is ready to follow. This report has a particular focus on unlocking opportunities for young people from diverse backgrounds.

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The report will examine the work that the Council and our family of schools are doing to support the next generation of diverse leaders and will make recommendations on how we can go further to develop opportunities, provide guidance, and impart leadership skills for our young people from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic backgrounds.
- 2.2 The project falls under two pillars of the Administration's Manifesto:
  - a) Giving children and young people the best start in life and supporting young people so they can thrive in adulthood.
  - b) Tackling racial inequality and racial injustice.

The project also fits within one of the four key renewal missions that Camden as a borough has come together to tackle as part of our renewal following the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 2.3 The focus of the report will be on the career services that our schools, the Council and other council-related organisations provide. It will examine the provisions that Camden and our schools have in terms of career advice and guidance. In particular, how these services affect those from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic backgrounds in terms of attainment and social mobility.
- 2.4 I will make recommendations that are designed to set out practical ways that we as a Council can improve the careers guidance in schools, so we can achieve better outcomes and increase attainment amongst Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic children. The recommendations are not an exhaustive list of options, nor have they been costed, but this report should enable the Council at least to consider some of these ideas.
- 2.5 In devising this report, I have engaged with several local youth groups, pupils, senior leadership teams and career leads in schools, Camden Connexions, and Camden Learning. I would like to thank the following groups for their input in my report: Camden Connexions, Camden Learning, Camden STEAM, Acland Burghley Secondary School, Parliament Hill School, La Sainte Union, Camden Centre for Learning, William Ellis, Haverstock School, Regent High School, and LA SWAP careers leads. I would also like to thank Hanad Mohamed (Director of Equalities and Community Strength) and Mathurini Visakan; as well as Councillor Will Prince and Camden Cabinet Members, Councillors Nadia Shah, and Marcus Boyland for supporting me during this process. Their contributions to my report have been invaluable.

### **3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND KEY FINDINGS**

- 3.1 Camden's Diversity Mission reads: *By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow.*
- 3.2 Over the past year, we have been working with our partners and the community to understand how we can promote diversity in places of power across the borough. We started with imagining what our life would look like in 2030 if business, voluntary, and public sector leaders across Camden are as racially and ethnically diverse as, and representative of, Camden's population; and if young people from under-represented communities are better supported on their leadership journeys.
- 3.3 Camden is one of the most diverse areas of the country, with a history of not only celebrating diversity, but also fighting for equality and progress. We know that opportunities in Camden are not shared equally and the benefits of living and working in Camden are not felt by all our young people. Camden is a borough where high levels of wealth exist next to high levels of

poverty. Once housing costs are considered, 43% of all children in Camden live in poverty. Over 50% of pupils in Camden schools are from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic backgrounds. This compares to the national average of 34.5%, underlining the importance for Camden to prioritise racial inequalities amongst our young people.

- 3.4 In August 2020, Camden Council launched the Building Equal Foundations report which set out 140 actions to tackle racial inequalities and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic backgrounds.
- 3.5 There were clear calls for change: particularly around the impact of systematic racial injustice and inequality in our communities in Camden, with specific reference to the impact on the lives of Black people.
- 3.6 Some of the key findings from the report concerning young people were:
- Young people raised a concern about unconscious bias in predicted grades and how this might affect the educational outcomes of Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic students.
  - Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic groups are more economically vulnerable to the current crisis than white ethnic groups, as they are more likely to work in sectors adversely affected by lockdown measures such as restaurants, retail, and the gig economy.
- 3.7 It had the following calls to action:
- To develop tutoring and virtual work experience targeted at children and young people from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic backgrounds.
  - To work in partnership with Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic grassroots organisations.
- 3.8 Schools are key stakeholders in ensuring that our children and young people get the best start in life and that the disadvantage gap is reduced. In Camden, given the high levels of wealth and high levels of poverty, it is important that schools take on a significant share of the responsibility of decreasing this gap. Part of that work is making sure that when children leave our educational institutions, they are equipped with the best careers advice, guidance, and information as possible. As such, it is paramount that we as a Council address inequality in education.
- 3.9 Keeping young people in employment, education, or training is key to tackling inequalities and narrowing the gap in attainment. Camden generally outperforms other local authorities in achieving this, in comparison both to London and to England.
- 94.4% of young people are in Employment, Education, or Training (EET) in Camden; compared to 88.4% across London and 90.5% across England

- 1.5% of young people are Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET) in Camden; compared to 1.3% across London and 2.6% across England

## **4. WHAT CAMDEN HAS DONE SO FAR**

Camden has put in a lot of work in our education system, directly linked to careers guidance and work experience for our young people. Below is a list of some of Camden's relevant key projects and organisations:

### **4.1 Building Back Stronger the Education Provision**

- 4.1.1 A strategic plan was co-produced by the Council, Camden Learning, and Camden school leaders to help ensure Camden has an education system that is fit for the challenges facing the borough up to 2030.
- 4.1.2 The Camden Education Strategy aims to ensure schools, sixth forms and early years services are in an even better position to work with their communities, the Council, Camden Learning, and others to prepare children for life, learning and work after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.1.3 An important element of the strategy is to reduce and remove barriers to education and participation – particularly for lower income and vulnerable pupils and families – as well as tackling discrimination of all forms, including racism and gender-based prejudice.
- 4.1.4 Key proposals in the draft strategy, on which there is due to be wider public consultation, include:
- Pre-birth to adulthood pathways for all children and young people, with access to additional support for families.
  - 'Team around schools' support for families and children, and training to further develop school staff capacity to work with vulnerable pupils and their families.
  - Opportunities for parents to develop their digital skills, with a free course for any parent so they can support their children's learning.
  - Supporting more successful transition of pupils between educational settings.
  - A commitment to strengthen the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) within mainstream schools; and to work closely with stakeholders, such as schools, parents, and local health trusts on a new SEND strategy.

### **4.2 Camden Connexions**

- 4.2.1 The Camden Connexions service offers expert careers guidance to help young people plan their future careers and education pathways. They support young people aged 13-19 years old who are Camden residents or attend a Camden school with a particular focus on Year 11 pupils who will be

transitioning from statutory education to either post 16 education, employment, or training.

4.2.2 The Camden Connexions service deliver careers and services in nearly all Camden state schools, including special schools and youth clubs. The service has been working closely with schools to support the improvement of the career's education programme through the Camden Careers forum and through funding from the Richard Reeves Foundation.

4.2.3 Camden Connexions also tracks all young people aged 16-18 which allows for proactive contact to offer advice and support if needed. The service continues to deliver careers guidance and support to all young people at risk of not being in education, employment, or training (NEET). This includes NEET young people with learning disabilities or autism up to the age of 25 and all NEET young students up to school-leaving age who are partnered with an adviser until they achieve education, employment, or training.

#### 4.3 **Camden STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Maths)**

4.3.1 Camden STEAM was born from a conviction that young people growing up in Camden, regardless of their background, should have access to the very best opportunities in the world-leading sectors on their doorstep and that these employers and institutions have a pipeline of diverse local talent. The work that Camden STEAM do, is unprecedented as very few Boroughs in the country run a similar programme.

4.3.2 Camden STEAM creates high-quality opportunities for young people across Camden's schools to access and learn from Camden's thriving creative, digital, and scientific sectors. 50 local employers - from small robotics start-ups and global tech firms to theatres and universities - are committed to the Camden STEAM pledge.

4.3.3 Camden's vision states: "We will work together building a future where Camden is a beacon of inclusive opportunity and innovation. Young people, regardless of background, will be inspired by STEAM opportunities and they will be ready for the world of work in Camden's STEAM industries."

4.3.4 The 2022 annual Camden STEAM Work Experience Programme saw the team partner with nine leading Camden employers to design and deliver work placements, enabling 154 Year 12 students to gain valuable experience of the workplace. Places were prioritised for students from under-represented backgrounds.

4.3.5 Camden STEAM has developed a range of strategic partnerships to develop innovation and benefit young people. STEAM Futures, a series of video interviews with Black STEAM Ambassadors, has been created for use in Camden schools. The videos introduce young people to a range of careers in companies such as Google, Facebook, Teledyne Defence & Space, and Tileyard.

#### 4.4 **The Spear Programme**

4.4.1 This is a flagship programme by Lighthouse London Community Trust, under the working name Camden Spear Trust. Spear Camden is one of 11 Spear Centres in the UK that partner with Resurgo to run the Spear Programme.

4.4.2 This programme works to inspire and support young people aged 16-24 who are not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) so they can succeed in long-term employment. It starts with a highly interactive, six-week personalised coaching programme that helps young people overcome challenging attitudes and behaviours. It also combines confidence building and career path advice, with mindset and well-being support. It also includes practical training such as writing a good CV and mock interview practice. The young people are then supported with one-to-one mentorship for a year to help them find a job and succeed in work.

4.4.3 To enrol, every trainee needs to be facing at least one barrier to employment, though most (58%) are experiencing at least three:

- Welfare-dependent household.
- Long-term unemployed.
- Received free school meals.
- Low educational attainment.
- Mental health issue / learning difficulties.
- Family in crime.
- Previously lived in care.
- Criminal record.
- Homeless.
- Caring responsibilities.

4.4.4 Over 75% of Spear trainees are still in education or employment a year after entry. Spear is most proud of the long-term success of the programme – as it reveals that the programme achieves real change and provides the trainees with a long-term solution out of poverty. It believes that the positive consequences of having a long-term job are extensive, including greater financial security, improved mental and physical wellbeing and healthier relationships with family and friends.

#### 4.5 **Camden KICKSTART**

4.5.1 Camden KICKSTART is a national scheme aimed to create high-quality, six-month paid work experience placements for young people who are struggling to get a foothold in London's hard-pressed job market. Kickstart provides young people aged 16 to 24, who are in receipt of Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment, with paid work placement opportunities.

4.5.2 Camden Council decided to provide extra funding to enhance the basic DWP offer to residents by topping up wages to the London Living Wage and

increasing contracts to 36 hours per week for those who wanted them, instead of the standard 25 hours.

- 4.5.3 Each Kickstarter also received a tailored training plan including employability workshops, a learning mentor and support to progress into a job or apprenticeship where possible.

#### 4.6 **Apprenticeship Scheme**

- 4.6.1 Camden Apprenticeships is an award-winning service that has created almost 900 apprenticeship vacancies since it was set up in 2010. It supports local employers and managers in the Council to create apprenticeship vacancies. The vacancies are for people aged 16+ who are Camden residents, former Camden secondary school students or Camden care leavers. The scheme continues to support local employers and assist young people into placements across construction and other sectors.

- 4.6.2 The apprenticeship team is also working with Camden Learning to address some of the challenges with apprenticeships in the borough, with a view to expanding the knowledge and awareness of apprenticeships amongst Camden students and teachers and increasing the number of young people choosing an apprenticeship after leaving school. This aligns closely with the findings of the Post 16 Review and the Education Strategy. (*Consultation: Review of post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below in England* ([education.gov.uk](http://education.gov.uk)))

- 4.6.3 Camden residents looking for apprenticeship vacancies will now find the process a lot easier with the launch of a new website. It makes it easier for people looking for work to register, view vacancies, upload CVs, and contact the apprenticeship team or, if it's a construction opportunity, King's Cross Construction Skills Centre (KXCSC), all in one place. Employers who advertise exclusively with the team will now have the option to register and use the self-service option to post directly to the Camden Apprenticeships team for review and publication, making the recruitment process more streamlined. The website also includes useful information on training, top tips for interviews and completing applications, as well as case studies from apprentices sharing their journey and their achievements.

#### 4.7 **Camden Youth Employment Offer**

- 4.7.1 In response to the challenges identified for young people's employment, the Council is developing a single, coherent 'offer' or 'entitlement' for young people in Camden. The development of the offer will recognise the wealth of excellent services for young people that exist in the borough; but also acknowledge that it can be difficult to know how to access employment-related services and that support can be fragmented.

- 4.7.2 This work is in development and is being considered in two phases -- for the first stage, we provided one singular place where young people 16-25 can find support if they are struggling to enter work or training.



4.7.3 A longer-term piece of work has been the co-design (with young people) of a 'young person entitlement' for Camden, which is an employment support offer that is clear, comprehensive, consistent, and visible. It reimagines what the system of support could look like.

#### 4.8 **Camden Youth Pathways Finders Project (YPFP)**

4.8.1 Camden has developed a Youth Pathways Finder Project (YPFP); a pilot project in collaboration between Camden and the GLA. The project provides an individualised programme of learning and employment, targeting young adult Camden residents aged 19-25, who are in danger of becoming victims or perpetrators of violent crime, or who are vulnerable to being at risk of exploitation.

4.8.2 The bespoke pathway aims to reduce violent offending, improve the well-being of participants, and unlock new opportunities to develop aspirations of young people. This forms the cornerstone of diverting participants lives away from poverty and towards greater fulfilment.

4.8.3 The YPFP provides one-to-one mentoring, activities, and workshops focused on a mixture of soft and hard skills in conjunction with paid work experience. Learning journeys are highly personalised, and no assumptions are made concerning educational level, employment, or further learning destinations.

4.8.4 Throughout participation, YPFP has provided ongoing pastoral care and support with in-person and remote working placements, including provision of IT kits and the offer of broadband assistance. This became more pronounced and necessary over the past year, given challenges posed by the digital divide during the pandemic.

#### 4.9 **Camden Summer University (CSU)**

4.9.1 The CSU offers a wide range of free activities for 5 weeks during the summer to any eligible young person aged 13-19 who live or study in the borough. A range of courses are available, such as documentary filmmaking, cooking, first-aid, fashion design, journalism, football, yoga, contemporary music, web designing, and coding.

4.9.2 During Camden Summer University, young people will have the opportunity to gain valuable accreditations for the new skills they will learn on many of its courses, leading to a nationally recognised certificate can strengthen CV's and UCAS applications.

4.9.3 Last summer, CSU offered 78 courses in 16 different venues in Camden, including specialist courses at Great Ormond Street Hospital.

#### 4.10 **The Avalon Project**

4.10.1 The Avalon Project has over 40 years of experience and expertise in educating and creating positive change for children with special education needs and disabilities (SEND). The sessions are 100% practical, delivered by professional tutors in our fully equipped workshops. Lessons are carefully planned to ensure the learning is fun and engaging for students that struggle to maintain focus and attention.

4.10.2 It is an 'alternative education' provision for pupils that require other options to a traditional school timetable. This project is a traded service delivering bespoke and meaningful education to some of Camden's most vulnerable young people. The project has now completely moved away from awarding low-level AQAs. It is now a Pearson Edexcel BTEC-approved vocational training centre specialising in engineering, construction, catering and off-road motorbiking.

### 5. **CONVERSATIONS WITH CAREER LEADS, TEACHERS, AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM CAMDEN SCHOOLS**

5.1 I had the privilege of talking to students, teachers, and careers leads at the following schools: Acland Burghley Secondary School, Parliament Hill School, La Sainte Union School, Camden Centre for Learning, William Ellis School, Haverstock School, Regent High School, and LA SWAP Sixth Form.

5.2 The conversations were conducted during the months of December 2022 and January 2023.

5.3 Here are some of the conversations I had with students:

- "I want to either be a paediatrician or a lawyer, but my mum said I will never get there because I am Black, and this country discriminates against people like me."
- "I know the direction that I want head to, but I don't know how to get there and how to get the experience that I need".
- "I applied to do dance because that's the only thing that I am good at".
- "I still don't know how to write a personal statement, so I simply do not apply to colleges that ask for one".
- "I am not very good at talking to people, especially strangers. So having to find my own work experience is very scary".
- "My dad works in construction, so is my brother, so I will also probably do construction next year".

- “I have never really looked into careers, and I am not really good at anything else”.
- “I am not well-behaved enough to do a work experience placement”.
- “I wanted my work experience placement to be in health and social care as I want to work with older people. But I can only find childcare placements so I will be doing that”.
- “I am tired of school. I want to leave, but I don’t know what else to do”.
- “Nobody in my house cares about what I do with my life”.
- “I am thinking of studying sports next year as my brother is doing sports right now and he can help me get into his college”.
- “I want to be a paramedic and would love to talk to someone who does the job. Or get some work experience in a hospital, but I don’t know anyone or how to do it”.
- “I just don’t know why I am putting myself through school. What is the point?”
- “I hear people talk about the importance of networking. I want to network with professionals, but I don’t know anyone or how to find these people.”
- “My parents speak broken English. So, the only time I hear English being spoken well is at school. This really affects my confidence.”

5.4 To summarise these quotes, I spoke to a mixture of boys and girls from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic background across Key Stage 4 (KS4), in various Camden secondary schools. Some were in small focus groups, some in larger group discussions, and some in one-on-one conversations. I made sure everything was informal, so the young people were relaxed and willing to have an honest discussion with me. Often their teachers were not within earshot, so they were able to talk freely. I also attended career guidance interviews.

5.5 The young people displayed a range of aspirations. Some knew exactly what they wanted to do whilst others had no idea. Some were influenced by the careers and work paths of their family members, whilst others were going to be the first in their family to reach certain goals or pursue certain careers. I asked questions about the constraints and challenges that they were facing, and how their school and other partners could help. Many had never accessed the various programmes outside of schools that Camden have for young people.

5.6 Many of the young people had high aspirations for themselves. Many wanted to be lawyers, doctors, or work in film and media. I even met a young person who wanted to be a marine biologist. These were young people that were

going to be the first in their family to go to university or the first to follow a certain career path, and some spoke the pressures that being 'the first' in their family entailed. I used this opportunity to share my experience of being an immigrant myself, being the first in my family to graduate from university and pursue a career in politics.

- 5.7 Those interviewed conveyed a clear sense of wanting to see more examples of people that looked like them undertaking successful careers and, moreover, they expressed a desire to have access to these people in order to ask them questions about how pursued their chosen career.
- 5.8 Overall, the girls seemed more ambitious compared to the boys, particularly in relation to apprehension around being the first in their family to consider certain careers. Many of the boys expressed an interest in was construction, engineering, and sports as career paths. The reasons for these were not always linked to their interests or strengths; often it was linked to just being a straightforward path that they knew people before them had previously taken. Most had never considered even looking outside of these paths.
- 5.9 I spoke to some young people who did not know what they were going to do after KS4, even though they were already in Year 11. Although they had applied for sixth form for the following year, they were unsure of the reasoning for their decision to continue in education and unsure of their future career path.
- 5.10 Work experience placements came up frequently in my conversations with young people. There were many positive stories but also many stories of students undertaking placements in sectors in which they had no interest. One young person spent months working with her careers adviser to find a placement in a law firm but ended up working at a nursery. At one school, I had the opportunity to sit in on conversations as students sought placements. I was struck by the emphasis on the students finding their own placements based on who they knew and where they lived. One pupil spoke about her plans to contact all the cafes and shopping centres in Wood Green Shopping centre to inquire about placements, even though she had no interest in working in a retail setting. Many students ended up doing placements in retail or childcare settings, simply because it was easier to get placements there.
- 5.11 On the other hand, here are some quotes from the conversations I had with teachers:
- "Work experience is so badly run".
  - "Black boys tend to avoid anything to do with mentoring, so we need to find another way to reach them".
  - "I spend more time doing administration than actually speaking to young people".

- “Most of the young people only get 30 minutes with me in Year 11 when applying for colleges and then I don’t see them again because I simply don’t have the time”.
- “If money was not an issue, every school should have one person as a careers lead, one person as an administrator, one person who focuses on work experience placements, and a dedicated person that just focuses on careers guidance and education”.
- “Boys avoid anything to do with the word ‘mentoring’.”
- “As a career’s lead, my time with students is very limited.”
- “We have an extensive careers programme, but it needs more than one person to run it. Unfortunately, it is just me running it now”.
- “On last year’s work experience, our middle-class students did well and got some really great experience. But our working-class, Black, and Asian students really struggled to get decent placements.”
- “We need to work on breaking down the barriers for students to feel that they can achieve their career aims regardless of BAME.”
- “The Year 11 pupils I’ve met are more interested in apprenticeships after Level 3 Sixth Form, particularly the option of degree level apprenticeships.”
- “In my school, I only first meet pupils, one-to-one, when they are in Year 10 and Year 11; by which time it may be too late for predicted grades to be raised, particularly if the student has become disillusioned with school. Earlier, targeted one-to-one meetings with BAME students identified as not realising their academic potential, are conducted in Years 7-9; with members of staff who the young person values such as school mentor or teaching assistant. This could help to raise their attainment levels especially if this is done in collaboration.”
- “I believe resources are now very good at promoting careers positively to all students. Unfortunately, students do not see all corporations as being inclusive as the top positions are still disproportionately seen as being White and Male.”
- “The career landscape is forever-changing, and students are finding it hard to navigate so many options.”
- “More careers advice is needed in schools, especially with all the shortages in various industries and the constant misconceptions about certain industries. Schools mostly see careers guidance as an afterthought.”

- “Careers advice should be tailored to include parents to debunk the older thinking of career routes.”
- “Careers advisers need to learn about the different cultures and the barriers they face.”
- “I would like regular training to keep up with the ever-changing careers landscape and how it feeds into education”.
- “We don’t have enough time to do the important stuff as we are buried in administration work. We need a full-time administrator”.
- “I wish there was a one-stop shop for everything work experience related, and a large database to cut off the admin on my side. So that for example, if I have a young person who is interested in being an architect, I will know exactly which schemes they could apply for and the placements that are available”.
- “Work experience alone needs one person running it. There is so much admin involved. I don’t feel like our students are getting the best out of it. Especially our disadvantaged children”.

5.12 The teachers, careers lead, and careers advisers had a lot to say about careers education and welcomed me as a Councillor to discuss a topic that can often be considered low priority. In meeting careers leads and advisers, I was struck by how overwhelmed they are with the quantity of work that is expected from them. Many spoke about spending more time doing administration than they did giving advice.

5.13 I also emailed questions to all the careers leads working with Connexions. I enquired how careers advice and guidance for children from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic backgrounds could be improved, including accounting for the changes they have seen recently in of the career aspirations of young people.

5.14 It was good to note that the careers advisers in Camden are racially diverse which is important for our diverse Borough. However, not all had the right racial literacy or fully understood the challenges and barriers that comes from being a minority. One particular careers teacher couldn’t acknowledge these barriers because no student had ever brought them up with her. Her belief was simple – all students could become anything they wanted to be, irrespective of background. Yet the careers leads and advisers that were from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic groups acknowledged these challenges and students had raised these issues with them directly.

5.15 In all my conversations, work experience repeated cropped up as an area of complaint – too few placements, sourcing of which took too much time, with too little external help from Camden Council or Camden Learning. The quality of the placements was also an issue, leading to difficult conversations with students when the placements they wanted were simply not available.

One careers lead discussed the issue faced by a significant number of her students from Black Minority Ethnic background who wanted to study law in university and who sought a placement in a law firm to pursue this. These placements have now become an impossible task to obtain, even with personal connections.

5.16 I had the pleasure of attending the LA SWAP Careers leads network meeting, where similar themes came up. This network worked well as they were sharing ideas, stories, and best practices.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

6.1 Work placements perform a key, underappreciated, role in the development of young people:

- In smoothing the transition from school to work.
- In teaching skills and attitudes that can't be taught in the classroom.
- In developing aspiration and fuelling the motivation for educational attainment.
- In tackling entrenched inequalities which, if left unchecked, perpetuate a cycle of disadvantage.

6.2 Access to work placements, in turn, is key to building the next generation of diverse leaders.

6.3 There is clear demand from students from disadvantaged backgrounds for higher quality work placements. In practice, students currently undertake the work placement offered to them through their school or are expected to arrange their own work placement externally. In the former case, the quality of these placements is low. In the latter case, the quality of the placement hinges on the 'know-who' of the student rather than the 'know-how'. What we are ending up with is a large proportion of students with very limited options – doing their placements either in retail or in primary schools, as these are the only opportunities that are accessible to them. By any account, the current offer fails to break the cycle of disadvantage at this critical opportunity in a young person's development and fails to build a platform the next generation of diverse leaders in Camden.

6.4 Students at Camden schools are not in a position to improve the quality of the work placements available to them.

6.5 The current system, for understandable reasons, often views the role of careers guidance as a lower priority to the broader teaching function at a given school. This is demonstrated by the understaffing of careers guidance, either through too few staff specifically allocated to the role or through the role being covered by another teacher on top of their teaching and other pastoral commitments.

6.6 Time constraint was a recurrent theme amongst all the careers leads that I engaged with. There was a consensus that there was simply not enough

time allocated to them to perform all the various responsibilities that fall under the remit of a careers lead. I did not come across a single school careers lead who found balancing the work manageable. This has a direct impact on the quality of the service that is being given to students.

- 6.7 Careers leads at Camden schools are not in a position to materially improve the quality of the work placements available to students.
- 6.8 Camden Council has undertaken good work in training teaching staff around racial literacy. It is essential that school careers leads (and staff more broadly) not only have a greater understanding of the issues of race that affect their school community, but also that they are equipped with the knowledge and vocabulary to address it with confidence. This would allow them to acknowledge and engage in a constructive manner with the additional challenges faced uniquely by Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic students. Continued training in racial literacy would allow more teachers to have a greater understanding of their students' cultural background and how this impacts their education and the choices they make for their future. Even before beginning my research, it was often difficult to get schools to engage on this topic. I believe that this was due to a combination of reasons, one of which being some teachers' discomfort in having frank discussions about racial issues. (I suspect also time was an additional major constraint.)
- 6.9 I repeatedly encountered bright and talented young people from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic groups whose aspirations to attend certain higher education institutions and to enter certain professions were held back by the belief that their race could be a barrier. A key element of the previous point is enabling teachers to acknowledge these barriers and, at the same time, to assist students in not being discouraged by them.
- 6.10 Until 2012, the Department of Education (DfE) made it statutory for all students in Years 10 or 11 to participate in work experience. After 2012, the statutory guidance was removed which has led to a significant disparity between schools across the country as some schools simply removed work experience. Fortunately, in Camden, all our mainstream schools are still offering work experience, but the quality of placements have fallen.
- 6.11 The Year 10 and 11 students I spoke to who had positive work experience placements relayed how their respective work experiences helped them to develop their communication skills as well as their problem-solving skills. The placements took them out of their comfort zone and habitual environment, encouraging them to push themselves whilst developing skills that are important in the world of work.
- 6.12 There are existing organisations that seek to bridge the quality work placement divide that exists due to racial inequality. Organisations such as *10,000 Black Interns* partner with companies to provide paid placements for Black university students. Whilst this offer engages with students at a later point in their development, it demonstrates that there is an appetite from



employers to participate in programmes that seek to tackle racial inequalities directly through access to work placement opportunities.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET**

I make the following recommendations connected to work experience:

- 7.1 Camden Council needs to play a greater role in bridging the quality work placement divide, in order to ensure the next generation of diverse leaders.
- 7.2 The quality of work placements available to Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic students is key. Neither these students nor their careers leads are in a position to improve the quality of the placements. Camden Council -- as a larger organisation, with greater workforce flexibility, stronger relations with other commercial businesses, corporates and voluntary sector partners, and greater heft in negotiations with these partners -- is better equipped to lead the concerted effort towards improving the quality of placements available to Camden schools. Take the example of the many disadvantaged students that I spoke with who were interested in pursuing a career in law: does a careers lead operating at a single school have either the time or the access to realistically arrange one of these competitive placements for their students?
- 7.3 I recommend that Camden Council sets up a dedicated Work Placement Officer to nurture relations with employers, to arrange with them work placements for Camden students, and to ensure that all Camden business promotes opportunities for Camden students.
- 7.4 Camden needs to institutionally embed promotion of opportunities for the next generation, along with equal access to these opportunities. The whole reason I am writing this report is because the more affluent have done exactly this for themselves – albeit without enshrining equal access. Camden needs to grapple with this and take the action to ensure another generation of diverse leaders do not miss out on these opportunities as other have done before. History has demonstrated that students and schools cannot do this alone and there is nobody else who can do it on their behalf.
- 7.5 Camden, as a council, is one of the largest employers in Camden and should lead the way in setting an example by offering work experience to pupils in different departments. It needs to be a part of our policy and we need to demonstrate our commitment.
- 7.6 Promotion of opportunities for Camden students should be embedded in Camden's engagement with external, commercial parties. Contracts negotiated with external contractors ought to include guarantees of work placements to be made available to Camden students. The practical cost to employers of offering work placements to students in Years 10 & 11 is negligible (leaving aside administration and work around safeguarding, see

below). This contrasts with the immense benefit that Camden students stand to get from taking part in such work placements.

- 7.7 Camden has one of the most dynamic economies of any local authority in the UK and is home to the UK's leading innovation district, as well as world leading universities and cultural institutions. Let's make it easier for employers in Camden to engage with Camden schools and do more to promote the corporate social governance benefits of offering placements to disadvantaged (predominantly Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic) students. Camden has recently been known as the start-up capital of London. Can we, as a Council, say we are serving our young people if we are letting the opportunities that arise from this growth and innovation pass them by? Can we, as a Council, say we are serving our young people if we are standing up for them to ensure they have access to these opportunities?
- 7.8 Camden Council and Camden Learning should set up a website with a one-stop database of employers that are willing to take in students for placements. It should be an easily accessible virtual space that promotes work experience, where employers can sign themselves up. This would remove the amount of time careers leads and teachers take in seeking placements for students, as a website with comprehensive database already exists. This would also allow independent local SMEs to participate also in any work placement scheme. This would then free up time for teachers to do the educating and pastoral side of the careers service.
- 7.9 Building the next generation of diverse leaders needs to be enshrined in the remit of any work placement officer. They should have the objective to encourage potential Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic role models to participate in careers events at Camden schools. This is another example of high benefit for students at minimal cost to businesses and employers, that would also act to improve the quality of the careers guidance offer in schools and careers fairs (see below).
- 7.10 Statistics around racial and economic background should be maintained and monitored to ensure that the quality work placement gap is being bridged, which in turn ensures the next generation of diverse leaders. There needs to be active supervision of the programme to ensure that students from more affluent backgrounds are not deriving disproportionate benefit from a programme that needs to have racial and economic justice at its core.
- 7.11 A lot of companies simply do not want to handle the administration side of taking on students under 16 years of age, due to the additional safeguarding that is required. This is work that could be made significantly easier for companies by a dedicated Work Placement Officer, who could assist them in meeting the safeguarding requirements, in turn making it easier for them to take on Year 10 and Year 11 students on placements.
- 7.12 The Council already has existing connections with companies that offer apprenticeships. I would recommend improving these connections more and asking them to take in young people in Key Stage 4. A degree of racial

literacy here is important also as it enhances social inclusion and understanding between student and the companies that take on students for work experience.

- 7.13 We should develop the STEAM initiative model further so other careers are included. At the current time, STEAM only offers placements for Year 11, College, and Sixth Form students. It is critical that we maintain and build on the momentum. I recommend that they also offer the two-weeks placements to Year 10 students, but currently the safeguarding and staffing issues mentioned above are a significant stumbling block. As a borough, we need to draw on the resources of our world leading universities and cultural institutions to ensure their offer includes Camden students. The gap in representation in STEAM industries is stark and represents a social problem. It is important that all young people not only have the information, opportunities, and support to pursue such careers; but also, the exposure to such industries from a young age. A dedicated Work Placement Officer could work to the end.
- 7.14 The role of career fairs needs to be reviewed to ensure they do not just become a box-ticking exercise for schools. An improvement in careers fairs will come from the better relations with employers that would come from a dedicated Work Placement Officer.
- 7.15 We should have more collaboration and sharing of ideas and expertise on a regular basis between key stakeholders such as schools' headteachers, Camden Learning, Connexions, and youth groups. They could come together to share ideas, good practices, and create a new Camden strategy for careers. This could lead to a more collaborative career service that isn't based on how good individual school's career services are. For example, if one particular school is very good at getting young people into Oxbridge, then a Camden pupil from another school can access that support through a referral scheme. For the benefit of readers, whilst I acknowledge that the school is a selective, sixth form academy, Brampton Manor Academy in Newham has achieved stellar results, having been founded in 2012 with the express intention of raising achievement within a heavily disadvantaged areas, thereby improving outcomes for Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic students.
- 7.16 All students would benefit from seeing a more diverse range of professionals speaking about a wide range of careers and sectors. I would recommend having guest speakers from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic groups going into schools to give talks about their profession. This would serve the purpose of not only demystifying certain industries that are perceived to be less accessible for Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic groups. This could help students feel empowered and motivated to strive for a successful career regardless of their race. I feel this could be achieved through a Work Placement Officer.
- 7.17 There should be active encouragement for parents and carers so they could participate and collaborate more. With a lot of the young people I spoke to,

their parents were often not involved with their career choices and options for higher education. Even if they are involved, sometimes the parents are not coming from an informed place. I recommend schools can run events at key transition points so that parents will have the right information to fully support the decision-making of their children.

- 7.18 It is recognised that Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic groups have a higher incidence of poor mental health compared to the wider population. We need a scheme that addresses this, which can help these young people in navigating mental health, building their resilience, and helping them deal with the added challenges of being from a disadvantaged background. The programme can give the young people the tools to stay positive, how to manage their emotions effectively, and stay motivated when things get hard. Surely there will be setbacks and challenges – some to do with race or class – but with the right mindset, tools, and mental resilience, they can push pass that.
- 7.19 With a changing labour market and a rise in entrepreneurship especially after the pandemic, young people should also be taught about how to create a business and work for themselves. Engagement with SMEs through a Camden coordinated work placement sourcing programme can help in achieving this.
- 7.20 There are a lot of schemes traditionally to help Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic young people in terms of careers. But it is hard to really measure the success of it all and how much engagement there has been. Some of the young people that I spoke to expressed a discomfort at being singled out as an ethnic minority, and to be seen as someone who needs extra help or support. As such it's important to look at the language that we are using and the names we are calling the schemes. Young people do not want to see their race as a disadvantage that needs remedying but something to be proud of and encouraged. It's important to change the language, for example using words that are more inspirational and celebratory. This can also be linked in with stories of career success from professionals from Black, Asian, and Other Ethnic background again something that can be promoted by a dedicated Work Placement Officer.
- 7.21 Given government legislation falls short in ensuring work placements for all school students, Camden Council should step up and expressly enshrine work placements for all its students in Years 10 and 11.

## **8. FINAL WORDS**

- 8.1 I asked one question about careers to all the teachers that I spoke to:  
*If money were not a constraint, what would you like to happen?*

Most said the same thing in different ways: to hire more people – an administrator, a dedicated qualified careers lead, and a work experience coordinator. For them, this would ideally create the best environment and have the best impact to really support the students.

- 8.2 Schools need to be given the funding to do what is right for their cohort of students. What is right for an all-girls school, may not be right for a mixed school. Schools need the autonomy and the financial backing to do what they need to do in order to support their students in the best possible way. Sadly, this is not currently happening.
- 8.3 I envision a careers service and education in Camden where all the young people can be as aspirational as they want to be without any limitations; because they have the right support, they are equipped with the right knowledge, and their mind is in the right place. They can simply be whatever they want to be. This will not be possible unless we invest in the careers service and make sure it is financially secure.
- 8.4 Meaningful impact can only come from Camden businesses, institutions, schools, and young people all working closely together. This will help young people from all backgrounds to secure successful futures through access to the most relevant skills, education experiences, careers advice, and work experiences. It will be ideal for them to have all the relevant skills and experiences needed in order to flourish in a constantly changing world of work.
- 8.5 Camden has established a partnership in reviewing its curriculum racial literacy training with the *Black curriculum* -- a social enterprise founded in 2019 by Lavinya Stennett to address the lack of Black British history in the national curriculum. To quote the Black Curriculum: 'the aspect of identity is central in raising underachievement, particularly in Black learners who have historically had to reside within an education system in the UK that systematically disadvantages them.' So, in a world where Black or Asian inventors and heroes are erased and forgotten; combined with a narrative of Blacks and Asians being criminals, terrorists, and in low paid jobs; and certain professions are seen as only suitable for certain genders or seen as only for the middle-class children to aspire to; it is important that schools actively counteract this narrative.

## **9. FINANCE COMMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORPORATE SERVICES**

The report contains several recommendations and observations. As stated in paragraph 2.4 of the report, the recommendations have not yet been costed. The recommendations detailed in this report should be fully costed before any decisions are taken.

## **10. LEGAL COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR**

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add  
This report

## 11. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

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