

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

Children, Schools and Families Committee - 11 July 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 – 27 February and 21 April 2023

- 2.1. On 27 February 2023, we held the third meeting of the Education Strategy Board, which is monitoring Building Back Stronger's implementation. At the meeting, focussed discussions were held on: the Integrated Early Years service and 1,001 days, including the development of Family Hubs; the Adult Community Learning service and its work with schools to support parents' learning; and the development of our post-16 ambitions, including support schemes for Camden students applying to Oxbridge.
- 2.2. The Board's fourth meeting was held on 21 April 2023, which considered the latest monitoring report showing that good progress has been made at this stage. The Board agreed to add a new goal to its implementation plan, to ensure that 'young people are empowered to play their part in tackling the climate crisis' and also held a focussed discussion on improving digital learning.
- 2.3. The Board's fifth meeting is due to be held on 6 July 2023.

3. Children's Trust Partnership Board – 8 March and 3 May 2023

- 3.1. I chaired the meeting on 8 March 2023, focusing on the 'Contribute' aspiration. During the meeting we heard about the publication and launch of the State of the Borough report. We had short, Pecha Kucha-style updates from colleagues at the Central and Northwest London NHS Foundation Trust, the Department for Work and Pensions, Coram and Housing about achievements and areas of focus, and looking ahead to the coming year. We heard about the work of the Parent Champions and explored what the partnership board could do to support this work. Samir and Zara, Camden's

youth MPs took us through their priorities for the year ahead and how the Board could get involved.

- 3.2. I also chaired the meeting on 3 May 2023 focusing on the 'Prosper' aspiration. This meeting had two main items. The first explored the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on women, with a report from Camden Women's Forum which was presented by Angela Mason, the Forum's co-chair. The report brought together the testimony of 100 women and 17 partner organisations, which shaped the recommendations within the report and led to it finding that women are bearing the brunt of the cost-of-living crisis. The second item was around the role of family hubs as part of Camden's early intervention and prevention offer.

4. School Breakfasts

- 4.1. The Council has been supporting all schools in Camden to develop their free breakfast offer since December. This has included grants for schools continuing with their current arrangements, as well as paying for the national charity Magic Breakfast to work with Camden's more deprived schools.
- 4.2. Schools have stepped up their breakfast offers and provided additional and linked cost-of-living support to families (£158k in cost-of-living grants and hardship vouchers so far). From our contact with schools, we know that any young person arriving hungry at school can be supported with free food, particularly those eligible for free school meals. This is through breakfast provision, other onsite food, and/or financial support/vouchers. While the overall reach of breakfast provision in non-Magic Breakfast schools remains at similar levels to December, all schools have moved quickly to ensure that a free breakfast and support is available for those who need it.
- 4.3. There are 22 schools working directly with Magic Breakfast, with 18 primary and special schools providing breakfast to more than half of pupils on their school roll – and in some schools everyone receives breakfast. This is achieved through a combination of extended breakfast clubs, playground grab and go, and having breakfast in the first lesson of the day. Magic Breakfast is also in four secondary schools where reach is considerably less, but hunger-related needs are being met as part of a whole-school approach to food.
- 4.4. Magic Breakfast is not for all schools, but its wide reach enables a stigma-free approach to addressing hunger at the start of the school day. Headteachers working with Magic Breakfast have noted a range of benefits for their pupils.

5. Universal Free School Meals in Primaries

- 5.1. The Mayor of London will be funding universal free schools meals for all pupils at Key Stage 2 in London, for one academic year from September 2023. Pupils at Key Stage 1 are already entitled to universal free school meals. The funding provided by the GLA will fully match the cost of providing

school meals for pupils in Years 2-6 under the Council's contract with its school meals provider for the current financial year. Cabinet has also agreed to extend the universal primary school meals offer beyond the first year funded by the Mayor.

- 5.2. The Council's school meals provider has advised that the vast majority of Camden school kitchens can produce the anticipated increase in meal numbers with their current equipment, and further discussions are taking place on an individual basis with those schools that may need to procure additional equipment.

6. Digital advertising campaign for secondary school students

- 6.1. We are running an enhanced marketing campaign to promote Camden secondary schools in the run up to the next admissions round for Year 7 places. This will include digital advertising to support our usual printed promotion, with:

- Social media adverts, targeted at relevant parents of children at the right age, both in-borough and neighbouring borough boundaries, via Camden's Facebook / Instagram account from late June/July onwards.
- Google paid-for adverts, linked to our Moving On to Secondary School event on 21 September 2023 and a published news item on Camden's website, from late July/August up until mid-September.

7. Family Hubs and Children's Centres

- 7.1. In 2022 Camden was announced as one of the 75 local authorities who would be awarded a share of £301.75 million Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme funding. Family Hubs provide a universal 'front door' for families to access joined-up support services from conception, throughout a child's early years and up to the age of 19, or 25 for young people with special educational needs or disabilities. They offer a 'one-stop shop' of family support services which cover social care, education, mental health and physical health needs, with a comprehensive Start for Life offer for parents and babies at their core.

- 7.2. Camden has committed to transforming five of its Children's Centres into Children's Centres and Family Hubs, by Summer 2023. The centres are located in areas of deprivation to support families with the greatest need:

- **1a Children's Centre, 1a Rosebery Avenue, EC1**
- **Agar Children's Centre, Wrotham Road, NW1**
- **Harmood Children's Centre Nursery, NW1**
- **Kilburn Grange Children's Centre, NW6**
- **Regent's Park Children's Centre, NW1**

7.3. The following key milestones have been achieved as part of the wider delivery of the programme:

- Camden's Start for Life and Family Hubs offer online was published in March 2023 as the first step in providing a virtual offer within the Family Hubs programme. A link to the site can be found here [Family Hubs - Camden Council](#).
- In March 2023 a Parent and Carer Panel was established, which consists of 13 parents from diverse backgrounds. The panel meets six times per year, with an objective to help shape services accessed by families with children aged 0-2 years.
- Through consultation with colleagues from across the council and external partners, a Camden Family Hubs brand has been created. The new brand has been formulated to be widely recognised and positively associated by Camden families, local practitioners, and other services as a 'one-stop shop' of family support services for expecting parents, and families with children up to the age of 19 (or 25 for young people with SEND).
- The first Family Hub Network Workshop took place on 17th May, bringing together stakeholders from across the council as well as partners from VCS organisations. Attendees included representatives from Camden Council, NHS trusts, and voluntary and community sector partners. The workshop was successful in sharing ideas of what the programme could mean for Camden and how best to work together to engage families with the range of services available. A second workshop is planned for Autumn 2023.
- On Monday 5th June, local families spent the day at London Zoo for the launch of Camden's Children's Centres and Family Hubs. Around 230 children, parents, and carers in Camden visited the Zoo to hear more about the many services in the borough that offer vital help and support. Representatives from organisations that provide support to families in the areas of mental health, health and wellbeing, welfare rights and more, operated stalls that provided information to those in attendance. Children's Centres and Family Hubs across the borough are currently hosting a series of individual events over the course of June and July 2023, to launch the programme and are due to complete by 6th July.

8. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

8.1. Recently published data (as of May 2023) confirms that Camden Council is one of the highest-performing authorities nationally in finalising Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) within 20 weeks, with 99% being completed within this timescale, compared to 50.7% nationally.

- 8.2. Published data in June 2023 confirms that 3.6% of pupils accessing Camden schools have an EHCP vs 4.5% in London, whilst 14% of pupils in Camden schools are on SEN support vs. 12.1% in London. These two statistics are good indicators that assist in conveying the message of an inclusive school community, where needs are being appropriately met without the need for an EHCP and instead, through timely, local intervention.
- 8.3. Whilst the key metrics demonstrate that Camden is performing well, the Council recognises that there are opportunities to develop additional SEND provision to ensure that pupils access local provision.
- 8.4. In a similar way to mainstream schools and pupils, Camden is reviewing its SEND sufficiency in parallel to continuing to support mainstream providers to best meet needs. As part of this process, the Council is assessing whether there is sufficient provision across the borough and how the High Needs Block can be utilised to best meet current and future needs. Many schools have already been engaged in work with Peter Gray, who has been commissioned to start this analysis and make recommendations. As with the SEND Strategy, sufficiency planning will be co-produced with parents/carers and schools to develop the best way forward.
- 8.5. Through careful management of resource, Camden is one of very few local authorities where the High Needs Block is not in deficit. With this prudent oversight and increased central Government funding for the High Needs Block, there are now additional opportunities to optimise this resource to deliver positive and sustainable outcomes.
- 8.6. The council's commitment to develop a new Education Commissioning and Inclusion division will enable increased leadership and greater opportunities in optimising the education footprint across the borough to develop further SEND provision.

9. School Future Options Group

- 9.1. The Council has undertaken a significant piece of work with our school community and other stakeholders within the Camden education system. The work was originally commissioned to respond to the White Paper and the proposed journey to academisation of all schools by 2030. As we know, due to Government changes, the White Paper and the Schools Bill were withdrawn. This led to the School Future Options Steering Group refocusing the work on one of the four foundations for success of Building Back Stronger – a 'Collaborative and Federating System'.
- 9.2. As a product of this work, the Council will be receiving a report which addresses the potential situation of full academisation and prepares us well for any future national policy change. More importantly, we will also have

commissioned work that addresses the key principles of a collaborative and federating system, with an agreed 'Position Statement on Structural Partnerships'.

- 9.3. Already many schools are engaged, or considering engagement, in possible structural partnerships. As part of the wider report, the council has also commissioned a 'Toolkit', which has been designed in consultation with some headteachers and is the first stage of an iterative process in developing the support for schools to move towards structural partnerships and, in so doing, gaining the benefits of greater opportunities for staff recruitment and retention, continuing professional development and leadership development, as well as the more efficient use of limited resources. We are looking forward to launching the report and toolkit in September.