

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS: ALL</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE:</b> Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families: November 2023	
<b>REPORT OF:</b> Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO:</b> Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE:</b> 9 November 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT:</b> The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families here provides the Committee with their annual report for discussion, including updates on Camden Learning, free school meals, support for students with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) and our other children and family health support initiatives.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to information:</b> No documents that are required to be listed were used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Nathan Koskella, Cabinet Officer The Cabinet Office, Camden Council 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG <a href="mailto:Nathan.Koskella@camden.gov.uk">Nathan.Koskella@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS:</b> The Committee is asked to note and comment on the report.	

Signed:



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

Date: 27 October 2023

## **1. Introduction**

This report covers the approximate year since my last report to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee in December 2022.

Below you will find status updates, policy visions, highlights and other examples of the hard work delivered by Camden this year. I believe this report demonstrates the Council's commitment to creative work and consistent service improvement for our children and families in Camden.

I have been very pleased in my first full calendar year as Cabinet Member to lead our important work to make our fantastic Camden-maintained schools the first choice for every child in the Borough, no matter what their background; support our schools to make the best use of technology to aid our children's futures; increase the diversity of our school governors so they reflect our communities; and continue embedding the goals of healthy living into our offer for schools, young people and their families.

I look forward to continuing to drive forward the Council's missions for our children, families and schools.

## **2. Schools and Camden Learning**

### **2.1. Camden School Attainment**

#### *2.1.1. Overview and Camden's help for disadvantaged learners*

Camden Schools continue to be successful, working hard to overcome the legacy of the pandemic. 97% of all Camden Schools, and 100% of Camden Primary Schools are graded Good or Better by Ofsted. Over the last academic year there were 14 inspections of Camden schools, all of which found Good or Outstanding provision. Pupils in Camden schools undertook statutory national examinations in 2023, for the second time since these were suspended due to the pandemic in 2020.

Outcomes are provisional, with final validated outcomes released later in the year. There is currently limited analysis on the performance of groups within headline data sets. This will be available for scrutiny in February 2024 when National validated data sets are released.

Caution is advised when considered trends over time due to the legacy of the pandemic. However, Camden Schools continued to perform well and sustained or improved on outcomes in 2019 overall. However, concerns remain over the impact of lost learning on disadvantaged learners.

Although we know that disadvantaged pupils in Camden typically achieve better than those nationally, there continues to be a strong correlation between disadvantage and educational achievement. The recent pandemic has emphasised this, with learning gaps that were once reducing now widened.

In response, we have provided schools with comprehensive data materials that highlight where disadvantage is most impacting on achievement and this has informed support and challenge from our school advisers with headteachers and school governors. Alongside this, there has been focussed work to develop oracy in the early years and early reading with our **Every Child Reading by 7** initiative.

Our school-led learning projects in the last year have shared practice between Camden schools of what makes effective teaching that is responsive to the needs of disadvantaged pupils through increased vocabulary development and responsive teacher feedback and we continue to focus on how to ensure all learners experience success, regardless of background.

### 2.1.2. *Primary School Attainment*

2023 was the second year of statutory assessments in our primary schools since the summer of 2019.

- Early Years (end of Reception year)

Provisionally in 2023, in Camden maintained schools 69% of pupils achieved a 'good level of development'. This is an increase of 4ppts on recent years and well above the 2022 national averages. 2023 national data is not available until later in the Autumn term. The disadvantaged gap in 2023, the gap was -14%, similar to recent years and narrower than the national dis. gap for 2022 (-20%)

- Key stage 1 (end of Year 2)

This is the final year that schools will be required to complete and report Key Stage 1 tests.

In 2023, KS1 results increased in some subjects and remained at or above national and regional averages for 2022. No 2023 official comparison data will be available until later in the Autumn term

72% of pupils reached expectations in Reading at the end of KS1, the same as in 2023 and above 2022 national and London results. The disadvantaged gap was -15%, wider than in recent years (-9% in 2022), but narrower than the national gap for 2022 (-21%)

65% of pupils reached expectations in Writing at the end of KS1, which is a 6ppt decrease on 2019, and below 2019 national and London results. The disadvantaged gap was -17%, wider than in recent years (-13% in 2022), but narrower than the national 'gap' for 2022 (-22%)

73% of pupils reached expectations in Maths at the end of KS1, which is a 2ppt increase on 2022, and above 2022 national and London results. The disadvantaged gap was -19%, wider than in recent years (-13% in 2022), but narrower than the national 'gap' for 2022 (-21%)

- Key stage 2 (end of Year 6)

In 2023, KS2 results largely followed the national trend in all subjects and remained well above national averages and above most London averages

70% of pupils reached expectations in the combined measure - a 1ppt decrease on 2022, but well above 2023 provisional national results (59% again). This remains above the London results for 2023. The disadvantaged gap was -16%, much narrower than the national gap for 2023 (-22%)

81% of pupils reached expectations in Reading, which is a 4ppts decrease on 2022 but well above the 2023 national result, which similarly saw a fall in 2023. This is also above London results for 2022. The disadvantaged gap was -13%, narrower than the national 'gap' for 2023 (-18%)

78% of pupils reached expectations in Writing, 7ppts above the provisional 2023 national figure, and the same as 2022 results in Camden. The disadvantaged gap was -14%, much narrower than the national 'gap' for 2023 (-19%)

80% of pupils reached expectations in Maths, which is a 3ppts decrease on 2022 but well above 2022 national results (which increased by 1ppt). This is in line with 2022 London averages. The disadvantaged gap was -11%, much narrower than the national gap for 2023 (-20%)

### 2.1.3. *Secondary School Attainment*

Due to the cancellation of all secondary examinations in the summers of 2020 and 2021, results were based on Teacher Assessment Grades, rather than on the usual examination process, and in 2022 account was taken of the impact of the pandemic in grade boundaries. Caution is therefore needed when making comparisons of performance over time. The Ofqual [announcement](#) of a return to pre-pandemic grading at GCSE and A Level in 2023 meant that national results were lower than last summer.

The figures below are provisional for the 2022/23 academic year and subject to validation. Final data sets will be released in January 2024.

- Key Stage 4

Results in Camden were in line or higher with 2019 Camden results and higher than national comparators for 2019. National results for 2023 are not yet available.

51% of pupils achieved a strong pass (5+) in both their English and maths GCSEs. This is a 5ppt increase from 2019 and above the national and London average for 2019 too. Maths has shown big improvements in recent years, with 56% of pupils achieving a strong pass in 2023, an increase of 6ppts since 2019.

## GCSEs:

Indicator	Pupil group	Camden 2023	Camden 2019	National 2019
<b>Attainment 8</b> (Score)	All	47.9	48.6	46.8
	Disadvantaged	41	43	37
	Non-disadvantage	54	55	50
<b>GCSE Maths and English Standard Pass</b> (Grade 9-4) %	All	68%	68%	65%
	Disadvantaged	56%	59%	45%
	Non-disadvantaged	80%	79%	72%
<b>GCSE Maths and English Strong Pass</b> (Grade 9-5) %	All	51%	46%	43%
	Disadvantaged	38%	36%	25%
	Non-disadvantaged	62%	59%	50%

- Post-16 – Key stage 4 destinations

2022-23 data is not yet available. In 2021-22, 94% of the 2019/20 Key Stage 4 cohort went on to sustained education destinations in 2020/21 which is 5% higher than nationally.

68% of this cohort went on to a school sixth form, which is much higher than the national averages (due to the nature of provision in Camden, with all secondary schools having a sixth form).

3% of the cohort did not sustain their destinations, which is less than national averages.

3.5% of 16-17 year olds in Camden were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or their activity was not known (November 2022). This is lower than the Central London average (8.3%).

- Key Stage 5 – Average Point Score (A-Levels)

A Levels – the average point score (APS) per entry was 32.9, the same as the result in 2019. This is equivalent to a grade C+.

Applied General (L3 vocational) – the average point score was 28.0, slightly higher than 27.6 in 2019. This is equivalent to a Merit +.

6.6% Camden entries awarded the highest result A\*, a little lower than National (8.6%).

70.2% Camden entries were awarded A\*-C, a little lower than the National (75.4%).

## **2.2. Camden Learning**

All Camden schools including academies, diocesan schools and voluntary-aided schools are active members of Camden Learning and have signed up to the Camden Learning school improvement service level agreement for the coming two years. By creating a strong partnership between schools, the council, and others with an interest in education, Camden Learning continues to help enrich learning, raise standards, and drive improvement, ensuring that all Camden schools benefit from being part of a locally aligned schools' system.

Camden Learning has developed a professional development framework and continues to provide development opportunities for teachers, headteachers, governors and other practitioners; identifies outstanding practice; and puts schools in touch with others to share learning and accelerate improvement. School advisors called Camden Professional Partners (CPPs) continue to visit all maintained schools in Camden termly and report on both the quality of education and welfare of pupils.

Thirteen Camden Schools received an Ofsted inspection in the last academic year. All were found to be at least good, with four outstanding. The number of Camden schools graded good or better continues to be well above national averages at 97%. Systems to challenge and support schools where there might be concerns over declining standards of provision are robust and outlined the schools requiring additional support strategy which has been agreed by Camden schools. The benefits of a coherent local offer are evident in the school to school and partnership work that is enacted where concerns arise.

There have been 14 new appointments of Headteachers or Heads of School to Camden Schools since April 2023, the majority of whom were staff already working within the Camden school system. An induction programme has been set out for new appointments, alongside a new leadership coaching offer for all Camden Headteachers designed to support effectiveness, wellbeing, and retain leadership talent within Camden.

Camden Learning continues to seek innovation and develop forward thinking pedagogy. Following a successful application, a new North London research school hub is being established in Camden (Torriano school in partnership with Parliament Hill and Eleanor Palmer) funded by the Education Endowment Foundation. A weekly bulletin is sent to all Camden schools containing key updates and information. Separate half termly consultation meetings with Primary and Secondary Headteachers and Chairs of Governors alongside annual conferences afford regular opportunities for information and practice sharing. These continued to be well attended by school leaders.

## **2.3. Overall Education Strategy**

Services across the Supporting People directorate are engaged in activity related to the aims set out in Building Back Stronger, our Education Strategy, with around 70% sitting with Camden Learning. Impact is reported to a half-termly Education Strategy Board, Chaired by Dame Christine Gilbert. Following the first year of implementation the implementation plan will be reviewed in the coming school term to inform the

second year of delivery. A conference with school leaders on 6 October 2023 set out a continued focus on the aims of BBS, engaging school leaders in the process of next steps implementation.

There continues to be a commitment to ensuring all Camden pupils receive a rich and broad curriculum. In April, over 2000 children from every Camden school performed in the Camden Schools Music Festival at the Royal Albert Hall, with excellent feedback from schools, parents and audience members. A livestream option was introduced this year, which reached 7000 devices in 71 countries. 35 primary schools are participating in the whole-class first-access instrumental lessons scheme, with at least one year-group having a weekly class instrumental lesson for one year. We are in the process of planning an Arts Biennale for 2024 that will further celebrate the artistic achievements of Camden young people.

## **2.4. Place Planning in Our Schools and Transitions Work**

### School Organisation

Our Education Strategy set out a vision for a “collaborating and federating system” and “a good local place available for every Camden child. A Schools Future Options Group was convened in 2022-23 to consider the challenges and provide advice to Camden Council and Camden Learning. A partnership position statement was agreed, setting out roles for Camden Learning and Camden Local Authority in relation to schools partnership. Different types of partnership are appropriate and deliver benefits in different situations. In the last year, four school partnerships have been successfully formed sharing executive leadership:

- The H3 Federation of Haverstock, Heath and Harmood schools.
- The Torriano and Brecknock federation.
- Holy Trinity and Hampstead Parochial partnered with Emmanuel Primary School.
- St. George The Martyr school also joined the Church of England Partnership of two Camden and two Westminster schools and St Patricks joined the Catholic Partnership.

To facilitate school partnerships, a series of sessions for school leaders and governors outlining the role of system leaders and the practicalities of forming school partnerships took place in the Spring and Summer 2023. A report has been drafted summarising the work and conclusions of the Schools Future Options Group and the Executive Group, which met monthly between September 2022 and April 2023.

An interactive school map showing contextual data and geographical locations to support schools seeking to form partnerships has been provided to all schools and a questionnaire analysis of the current context and appetite for partnership in Camden has also been drafted. School leaders have submitted expressions of interest in future executive leadership roles to form a register of future system leaders and a toolkit of supporting resources for use by schools when considering and forming a partnership has been produced, such as template Memoranda of Understanding or resource sharing agreements.

## School Transitions

**The Council continues to take a proactive approach to school place planning in response to changing local demographics.** Since 2018 the Council, in partnership with its family of schools, has removed 10 forms of entry from our reception intake, responding to a 24% reduction in birth rates within the borough. These difficult decisions included four school closures, the most recent being the closure of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School which was confirmed during summer term, with the building returned to the Diocese of Westminster.

Admissions into primary schools have, over the last two years, begun to stabilise and our most recent forecast data indicates that previous rates of decline will not continue in the medium term with potential for increases towards the end of the decade. Camden forecasts of pupil numbers are based on the best available information; recent revisions have improved the accuracy of primary forecasts in Camden to within 2% of the actual numbers on roll. We make use of data provided by the Office of National Statistics and the Greater London Authority (GLA).

The Council has also undertaken a review of all potential housing development data. Our forecasts therefore incorporate the additional pupil demand anticipated from agreed and potential developments in the local area. The Councils composite report on all the data relating to pupil places was received by the Children and Families Scrutiny Committee on 2 November.

Our rate of reception vacancy in September this year will be 7%, falling from above 12% and moving towards wider planning guidance of 5%. It is however vitally important that we continue to monitor, challenge, and review the data against intake levels. While ensuring that Camden has the right number of school places is our statutory duty, equally taking decisions that reduce the number of unused school places is an essential part of retaining a viable pattern of school provision. This is of particular importance to our schools as they manage their financial horizon, with additional costs associated with increased inflation and where every vacant place is a direct cost to schools.

Whilst the proportion of pupils attending private school provision has moved from the COVID peak of 38% towards the pre-COVID levels of 32%, we continue to explore ways to improve the uptake within our state-maintained schools. We have commissioned further research looking at the parental choice, with a particular focus on parents who engage with the state sector but make different choices at school transition points. We continue to support the promotion and marketing of the Camden School Offer. This year this we have continued to support the work of Meet the Parents, provided further funding to deliver traditional and social media marketing and held a successful transition 'Moving on' Event held at the Crick Institute.



## 2.5. Supporting Technology in Education / Digital Learning Hubs

### Digital Learning

Camden Learning has developed an ambitious three-year Digital Learning Plan, in partnership with a respected external expert in educational technology and digital learning, and with detailed input from school leaders. The plan will deliver to Goal 8 in Camden's Education Strategy to 2030, Building Back Stronger, "harnessing technology to improve learning, schools, and our local system", and takes account of the needs, opportunities, resources, expertise, and challenges in Camden schools, as well as key recent developments in Artificial Intelligence.

The plan will launch in Autumn 2023 and a Digital Steering Group will oversee its implementation and report on impact.

**The plan is based on overarching principles that reflect Camden's values of inclusion and a strong sense of place.** It understands and reflects local demographics, histories, and values. It recognises the importance of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths), and that creative, digital, and scientific employers are at the heart of Camden's economy. It is underpinned by the principle that digital learning is more than just technology. While technology plays a crucial role in digital learning, it is only one element in a broader approach to education that emphasises collaboration, creativity and critical thinking. The plan is built on four pillars: the digital foundations, the digital classroom, the digital learner and the digital leader.

**There is also a key focus on further developing the strong links between Camden Learning, Camden STEAM and globally leading technology companies based in the borough for the benefit of Camden schools and young people.** A flagship project with Google, to support young people for study and careers in Artificial Intelligence, is being developed.

Additionally, two Camden-based ENTHUSE Partnerships of 6-10 schools, funded by DeepMind (the leading artificial intelligence company who are based in Kings Cross), have been set up. Each Partnership has selected an area of focus for the two-year programme. One Partnership will focus on KS2-KS3 computing transition, especially girls' progression, and the second will focus on computing and digital teaching for non-specialist teachers, and professional development for science technicians.

### Opportunity Centres

Following a recruitment and scoping process, two school-based opportunity centres also started in April 2023 at Acland Burghley and La Sainte Union schools. This is a test and learn process and the learning and impact from these will be evaluated in Summer 2024.

In close collaboration with these two Camden secondary schools, we have developed the proposal for opportunity centres operating at evenings, weekends,

and holidays. Both La Sante Union and Acland Burghley are **offering out-of-hours interventions, 1:1 tuition and targeted support.**

These school-based opportunity centres are also delivering programmes in music, physical activity, creative arts, and food and nutrition making use of the schools' cookery and technology workshop facilities. In the first instance these offer access for secondary age students to learning, targeted at those who most need it, but with wide access alongside access to technology designed for students individualised and personalised use. We will be reviewing impact in Summer 2024. If these Centres are successful, we will look to extend the provision through, for example, greater access to mentors, enrichment activities, signposting other services, holiday programmes for Year 6 and closer links to services such as Camden Adult Community Learning and Youth and Community.

We continue to scope the possibility of working with industry partners including the possibility of an opportunity centre linked with an AI technology campus.

## **2.6. Camden STEAM update**

The Camden STEAM programme creates high-quality opportunities for young people across Camden's schools, from Early Years to Sixth Form, to access and learn from Camden's thriving creative, digital, and scientific sectors – from career talks and curriculum co-design to mock interviews and work experience placements.

In March 2023, the launch of the STEAM Strategy took place at Google, with almost 200 attendees and keynote speakers including Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, Cllr Georgia Gould, Dinah Caine CBE, Cait O'Riordan (Google Vice President) and speakers from Camden schools and businesses – an opportunity gather further support from industry for Camden's schools and young people.

Almost 60 local employers are committed to the STEAM Pledge, reaching approximately 6000 pupils annually in Camden schools through opportunities brokered through the STEAM team.

The flagship Year 12 STEAM Work Experience Week continued to develop, with 253 students taking part (an increase from 154 in 2022). Since the STEAM Work Experience Week launched in 2020, this was the first fully in-person programme, and both employers and schools were closely supported in developing high-quality placements. The STEAM team partnered with 18 employers (an increase from 9 in 2022), including Google, the British Library, Cadent Gas, Arup, Camden Council, Lendlease, and Models 1. The evaluation demonstrated excellent feedback from the young people and employers who took part. Recruitment included a focus on students from underrepresented backgrounds.

Summary of student feedback:

- 94% of the young people who participated said that they have learnt new skills that they would not have learnt otherwise.
- 74% of the young people participating said that this was their first-ever work experience.

- Over 75% of the young people are interested in continuing their journey at university, with almost 50% considering a degree apprenticeship.
- 75% of the young people would be interested in working for the employer they did their work experience with, as opposed to only 32% prior to their work experience.

Summary of student demographics:

- 60% of participants from Black, Asian and Other Ethnic groups; 17% White; 23% did not disclose
- 44% male; 34% female; 2% non-binary; 20% did not disclose
- 49% eligible for Pupil Premium

STEAM Ambassadors – the network of 300 trained employee volunteers – delivered a wide range of sessions in primary and secondary schools, from careers talks to mock interviews to curriculum support.

27 primary and secondary schools, and 40 teachers, are active members of the STEAM Hub, which focuses on building teachers' expertise in STEAM, and supporting teachers to develop impactful STEAM employer partnerships in the curriculum. STEAM Hub meetings are held once every six weeks, with a focus on a particular STEAM sector, including meetings at:

- Arup, focused on careers in sustainability and engineering
- Samsung, focused on careers in creative and digital
- Google, focused on careers in tech and innovation

Camden STEAM developed a range of strategic partnerships to develop innovation and benefit young people in Camden, including:

- A monthly programme of Year 5 visits to the Google HQ
- The Future Leaders programme - a leadership and careers programme for Year 12 students from underrepresented backgrounds, run in partnership with the University of Oxford – launches in September, with places funded for 100 students.
- Leading a GLA-funded rewilding STEAM project at The UCL Academy, and partnering with Camden's Sustainability Team, Camden Think and Do, and Camden Clean Air Initiative to support projects such as the Green Dragons' Den competition for primary schools

## **2.7. Our Post-16s Work: an education system that benefits all students**

A key part of the development of the Post-16 strategy set out in our education strategy is the need to improve the quality, breadth and take-up of post-16 education in Camden to meet the needs of every young person. We want them to leave education or training with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will help them succeed in work or further education and training. During the 2020/21 academic year, Camden Learning commissioned a post-16 review, that found our provision was variable, had significant gaps and course duplications, with some sixth forms too

small to be viable and with inconsistencies, especially for the non-A level cohort. The resulting initiatives set out within BBS are starting to bear fruit, with Camden Secondary schools working in close collaboration.

The Flying High initiative has got off to a good, practical start in the summer term with Camden School for Girls (CSG) opening up its Masterclasses to the students of other schools in the borough. In June, CSG put on training for teachers on mock interviewing students applying for Oxbridge colleges; 27 staff from six of the borough's other secondary schools participated in this. CSG also opened its doors to the parents of potential candidates from schools across the borough for an Oxbridge information session to be led by the Director of Cambridge admissions. The next step for the initiative is for the group to work collaboratively on enhancing further the experience and success of the students, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, applying to elite universities. Planning for this has commenced.

The schools intending to commence a T Level each from September 2024 continue to plan for this. Staff training, capital requirements and industry partners are all being explored. Camden Learning has recruited for a broker role to support schools with industry placements. The next step is for schools to continue to identify staff training, capital requirements, proposed approaches to student recruitment and considering good practice elsewhere.

Information on schools' current KS3/4/5 curricula is being gathered via school contacts to inform a 14 to 19 Pathways Prospectus. This work has raised the question of how this information could be made available to students and parents and how it might link with the Life Futures Plan work to support students' decision making through a website which might provide a one-stop shop for students (for example, curriculum provision, applications to schools, information on educational next steps, careers, apprenticeships, training and the Life Futures Plans all in one virtual place).

This work, and that on the Life Futures Plan, has also raised common interest in a common application form/process for sixth form places in the borough. The current system is seen as causing some problems for students who apply to two or more Camden schools/Westminster Kingsway College as they have to complete separate and different application forms for each institution. The Post-16 Strategy Implementation Group discussed this issue and noted the potential challenge in any common process dealing with out of borough students. Camden Secondary schools have agreed to work on a common set of information then this application could be used to streamline the application process for students.

Over the last three months, students from Haverstock School, Hampstead School, Talacre Community Sports Centre and a small number from Westminster Kingsway College took part in the development of the proposal (below) for the Life Futures Plan pilots to be carried out in the coming academic year. Hampstead and Haverstock have agreed to a test and learn pilot for a Life Futures Plan this year.

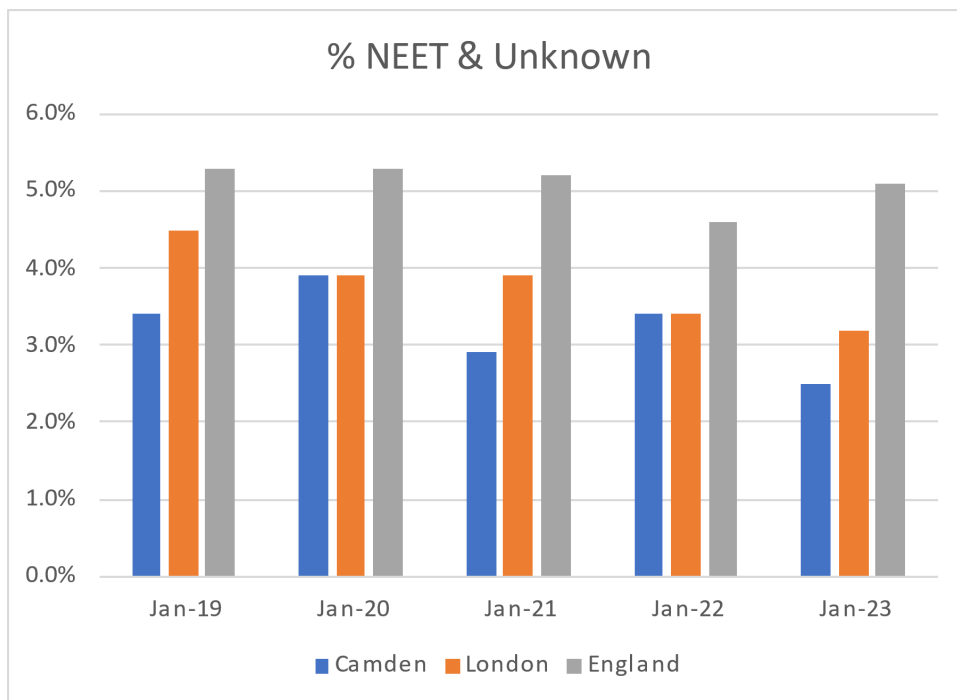
## 2.8. Our 'Careers and Connexions' Service

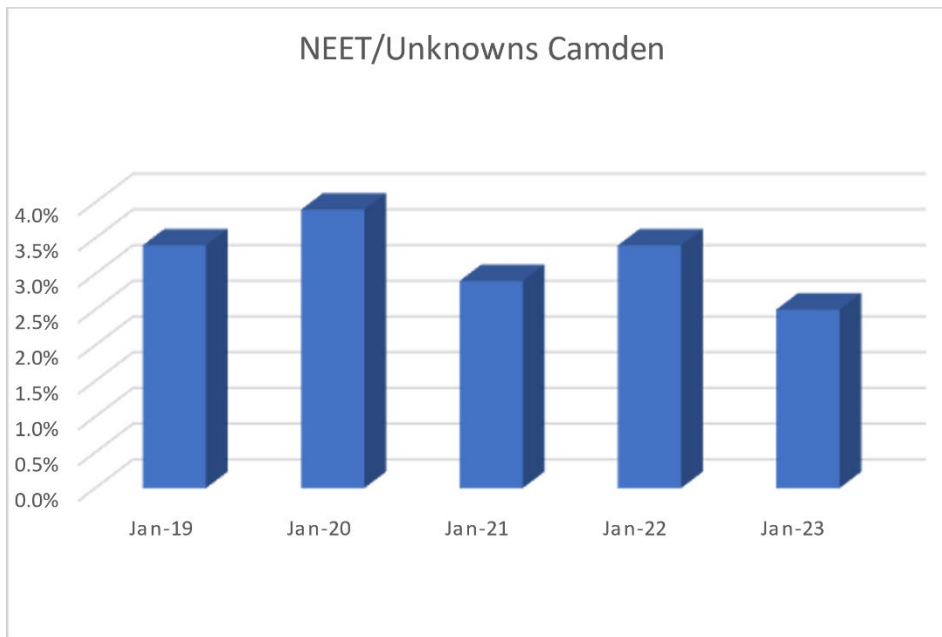
Our Careers and Connexions Service delivers Careers Guidance across Camden's secondary schools as well as targeted support to those at risk of becoming *NEET*. **The Council is grateful for the recent report of Cabinet Adviser Cllr Nanouche Umeadi on using careers education to build the next generation of diverse leaders—its insights have been valuable in our ongoing work.**

Careers guidance professionals are placed with the youth justice and leaving care services as well as two specialist workers, who work with young people with Special Educational Needs up to the age of 25.

There are also advisers placed across the borough in the Youth Hubs so supporting the youth early help teams. We also have careers advisers with a focus on young people being educated at home, young people in hospital schools and alternative education.

The Careers and Connexions service is responsible for reporting young people's participation to the Department of Education through a national database called NCCIS (National Client Caseload Information System). The system is uploaded with census data on all young people who are in Education or training from year 9 onwards. If a young person does not enrol in education or training, we will track the young person by phone, social media, door knocking, professional networks and council databases. If a young person is NEET they will be allocated to a Careers and Connexions adviser who will continue to support them until they are participating. **Our service performance is strong** and is measured by a combination of NEET and 'Unknown' data (unknown refers to young people whose current engagement is unknown often because they have moved and are therefore difficult to trace).





Overall youth service performance data:

- Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, 3,456 young people of all age ranges attended youth projects across the borough including funded voluntary sector youth organisations.
- 2,715 (15.7% of the 13-19 population in Camden) had one or more contacts with any youth projects or centres in the borough of Camden. Young people attendance in youth services across Camden starting to recover following Covid.
- In terms of continued engagement, 1,948 (11.3% young people of the 13-19 Camden population) were considered participants in 2021/22.
- Of those classed as participants, 1,544 achieved a recorded outcome. Of those classed as participants, 1,138 achieved an awarded outcome.

## 2.9. Ensuring School Governors Better Reflect Our Communities

We believe that the diversity of our school population is a great source of strength and we aim to affirm children’s sense of identity and tolerance and respect for each other. The Education Strategy speaks of children developing as “socially and morally responsible changemakers.”

The Governor Diversity Working Group has been carrying out work toward Camden’s ambition for those holding positions of power in the borough to be as diverse as our community by 2030 – with the next generation ready to follow. A number of initiatives have recently launched to deliver on this ambition.

During the summer term, the third annual diversity monitoring survey was carried out. The return rate was approximately 46%. Data on governors in Camden is increasingly robust, and consistently shows the following: Governors from Black, Asian and mixed ethnicity backgrounds are underrepresented in the survey in comparison to the Camden population as a whole and the school population.

Governors from a White British background make up around 60% of our governors, compared to 35.4% of residents as measured in the census.

This appears to be falling slightly but not significantly. Camden is not the only area in which this is an issue. The National Governors Association's Everyone On Board campaign reflects this, with over 90% of respondents to their annual survey from a White British background. There are more female than male governors at around 60-40. The number of governors reporting a disability is broadly in line with the Camden population. Governors are older than the population, with only 20% under 45, and only 6% below 35. There are fewer governors describing their religion as Muslim than amongst people in the Camden population as a whole and the school population.

**Ahead of the autumn term, a new suite of resources was created for school governing bodies, to support diverse recruitment.** This includes guidance on recruitment, additional resources to support advertisement and selection and revised terms of reference. The guidance in relation to elections of parent and staff governors.

**Outreach was an area that began to accelerate in 2023. There were a number of promotional events held during the year, aimed at promoting the role to governors.** These include visits to the Camden Parents' Forum, the Camden Black Workers' Group, and Swiss Cottage Parents Group. In June 2023, the British Somali Community Centre, together with Camden Learning, hosted an online event with over 20 attendees aimed at members of the Somali community. The meeting included a discussion led by four past and present governors from the Somali community. They clearly articulated the satisfaction that the role had given them, while addressing what may be perceived as potential barriers.

**Plans for 2023-24 include further events with community groups, stands promoting the role at events in the borough and an expanded online advertising campaign.** As part of a longer term approach, we will advertise for and recruit a cohort of younger governors to be deployed to schools in 2024, with a programme of tailored support to them.

2022-23 saw the launch of the Global Majority Governors Network, jointly with Islington Council. This group, aimed at Black, Asian and Other Ethnicity governors but open to all, met three times, twice in Camden and once in Islington, with over twenty governors at each event. At each meeting, along with ample opportunity for networking, two key themes are discussed, chosen by the Chairs of the meeting. Themes discussed during the year included the performance of groups, the role of the Arts, the role of schools in supporting pupils with SEND and recruitment onto boards.

The group has played an effective role in galvanising this group of governors, now equipped with their own Governor Hub, and we look forward to seeing it continue to develop in 23-24.

The theme of diversity was also in evidence at this year's two-part Governor Conference. In November, the keynote speaker was Shalina Patel, of the Black

Curriculum. Shalina's well-received presentation on Decolonising the Curriculum was covered in the December edition of the Camden Learning Governor Newsletter. At the second part of the conference in May, Orlene Badu delivered a workshop on becoming an anti-racist school.

**Looking ahead to 23-24**, planned events include a longer session with Orlene Badu on developing an anti-racist school in November and a session in February from Shekeila Scarlett on her journey from being at risk of permanent exclusion to Chair of Governors at 26, and how she leads an inclusive team. We will also be making a version of Camden Council's anti-racist and inclusive practice courses available to governors via Governor Hub in the autumn. We have also arranged a session in October on neurodiversity on teams and boards led by Daniel Brook of Neurodiversity Specialists, reflecting Camden's commitment to the widest understanding of diversity.

### **Our Upcoming Young Governors' Programme**

Age is another important part of our efforts to ensure our schools governors best reflect the vibrant Camden community.

School governors are on average older than the borough population. Camden Council has agreed to support a Young Governors' Programme to be delivered in conjunction with Camden Learning.

The programme will seek to place a cohort of young people (ages 18-25) on participating governing bodies on a year's placement as "Associate Members," with a dedicated programme of support during the year.

Recruitment to the programme for individuals and schools will begin in the Spring Term, with the programme scheduled to launch in Autumn 2024.

### **2.10. School Attendance Update**

School attendance continues to be a priority area for Camden. Since the pandemic attendance at school has declined compared to pre-pandemic levels. This decline has been seen nationally, in London and locally.

Research has shown that a factor in the increased rates of absence has been a significant shift in parental attitudes towards regular school attendance because of the pandemic. Other factors research has found include an increased willingness for parents to take term time holidays, a rise in mental health problems and the cost-of-living crisis.

Provisional attendance data for 2022/23 shows that the rate of overall attendance in primary schools was 93.2% (compared to 93.7% in London and 94% in England) and 90% in secondary (compared to 91.7% in London and 90.7% nationally). Approximately 21% of primary school pupils and 31% of secondary school pupils are classed as persistently absent, which is having an overall attendance rate of below 90%.



Camden Learning is commissioned to deliver the Council's statutory duties in relation to school attendance. This primarily relates to the legal intervention measures. In 2022/23 a total of 646 fixed penalty notices were issued to parents in respect of absence from school. In addition to this Camden Learning provides advice and guidance to schools to support them in improving attendance rates.

For 2023/24 we organised a back-to-school media campaign using the tagline 'Every School Day Counts'. This involved posters in schools, leaflets for parents, bus stop posters and social media posts.

The most recent DfE attendance guidance 'Working together to improve attendance' has placed new expectations for local authorities. In response to this Camden Learning has appointed three new officers who will work with schools to support them in respect of inclusion in school. An intervention framework is also being developed to support schools in understanding their responsibilities, navigating the council's early help interventions and how to escalate cases.

## **2.11. Education Safeguarding Update**

Camden Learning has recently completed the biennial section 11 safeguarding audit of schools on behalf of the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership. There was a 100% return rate from state funded schools in Camden and the findings will be reported later this term.

In addition, Camden Learning has undertaken a number of safeguarding reviews in schools to provide feedback to school leaders on their safeguarding practice. This work will continue. Camden Learning has also provided advice and guidance to around the implementation of the new Keeping Children Safe in Education requirements around filtering and monitoring of school IT systems.

## **2.12. Camden Summer University**

Camden Summer University (CSU) is our offer of a wide range of free activities to any young person 13-19 for 5 summer weeks.

In summer 2023, we offered young people a chance to enrol onto a summer programme consisting of 83 courses across 18 venues across Camden. The courses ranged from graphic t-shirt design with award winning design studio We Are Oat; Art and Self-Portraiture at the Courtauld Gallery; a Film Project with London Film School; and Creative Design at Central School of Speech and Drama, as well as our staple popular courses in First Aid, Caribbean Cookery, Manga Art and Basketball. We also included three specialist courses for young people engaged with our Disability Project.

Like past years, enrolment was offered to Camden's most vulnerable young people two weeks before it was extended to all young Camden residents and students. This includes looked after young people, young people known to the youth justice Service, residents of the Young Person's Pathway and young people identified by their social workers.

**647 young people enrolled on courses of which 80 were registered as disabled and 240 were on free school meals.**

Other highlights of CSU included two new courses at the Courtauld Gallery, our second year of Animal Conservation programme at London Zoo – a programme unavailable for free for any other group at this time - and the Inspiring Black Figures poetry and spoken word masterclass at The British Museum which will produce our now annual calendar. Our media and public speaking courses were further highlighted in the annual CSU Film Show at the British Museum.

### **3. Improving the Health of Children and Families (including School Meals, Physical Fitness and Activities)**

#### **3.1. Free Breakfast Programme**

Camden has launched a major drive to reduce the number of children starting the school day hungry. This was a direct response to the deepening cost of living crisis last winter and was progressed by Camden's family of schools with significant Council funding. In December, around half of schools asked parents to pay for breakfast, but by June all schools provided free places for pupils eligible for free school meals as a minimum.

All primary and secondary schools were offered grant funding to extend the reach of their existing breakfast offer, while more deprived schools eligible for the national Magic Breakfast scheme could sign up for free. £158k of cost-of-living support was also distributed through schools while the breakfast offer was established.

22 schools chose to join Magic Breakfast, receiving a constant supply of breakfast and tailored advice on increasing the reach of breakfast without stigmatising those benefiting. One in four primary school pupils (2,600+) in Camden benefited every day from Magic Breakfast support at the end of the summer term. A combination of grab and go food on arrival, extended breakfast club provision and food in the first class of the day enabled four schools to provide breakfast for all pupils every day, while six more schools supported more than half of children on their school roll. Heads in participating schools are very supportive of the scheme.

#### **3.2. Universal Free School Meals in Primary Schools**

The Council has supported the roll out of universal free school meals in Key Stage Two. This programme, funded by the Mayor, means that every child in year 3,4,5 and 6 now has access to a hot meal at lunch time. Whilst this funding, at a value of over £1.5m has only been confirmed for one year, the Council has committed to extend this into year two should it not be offered by the Mayor.

The council has worked with its catering suppliers and with schools to ensure that this offer was fully operational within schools in September. Early indications from our schools show that this has been well received within the community with take up by children being high.

The Council has been considering the implication of the scheme as it relates to the continued receipt of pupil premium by schools. Working with our communications and benefits team the Council has been engaging with parents and families who might be impacted. Initial reports indicate that overall free school meal claimant levels have not fallen and, in some instances, increased. The Council will continue to monitor levels of take up and ensure that ongoing strategies are embedded into delivery.

### **3.3. Addressing Hunger in Secondary schools**

Camden has invested significantly in seeking to reduce child hunger and family food insecurity. Over the past 18 months we have distributed over £2.5m in food vouchers for children and families over the school holiday periods. Since 2020 the Council has spent over £2.3m in grants to our voluntary and community sector partners to provide access to food and to increase the provision of advice to people on low incomes in the Borough.

Our Free School Meals (FSMs) Test and Learn is a new joint project between Camden Learning, the Health and Wellbeing Team and the Strategy and Design Team, which aims to address hunger in secondary schools. This project aims to understand the issues schools and families experience with FSMs, and to develop and test solutions in three Camden secondary schools. Three project objectives have been identified:

- Maximise applications to FSMs by ensuring that all families that are eligible are encouraged to and have the necessary support to apply.
- Maximise the uptake of FSMs at Camden secondary schools.
- Understand the needs of and provide support to those families that are not eligible for the national FSM scheme, but still experience food insecurity.

Since the project started in April 2023, research has been undertaken with a range of stakeholders. The project team have conducted interviews and workshops with a diverse group of parents, young people, community partners, and other local authorities. An external research organisation, Word on the Curb, has completed observations and workshops with young people in two partnering Camden secondary schools – **Regent High and Haverstock** - to understand issues with FSM uptake. The team have also visited an additional 3 secondary schools (**Parliament Hill, Hampstead and William Ellis**) to gather a broader picture.

Initial findings from focus groups, lunchtime observations and 1:1 conversations suggest that, whilst relevant, stigma associated with being on free school meals did not appear to be a significant barrier to uptake of FSM. Research participants did however focus on improving food taste and quality, and the physical environments in school where lunch is eaten. While some of the issues affecting uptake of FSM seem common across schools, other issues were much more school-specific such as the small size of canteen resulting in long queues, or different lunchtime schedules affecting eating habits. The team will be working closely with staff and young people from the schools in order to design solutions and interventions to test out that meet the school-level need, while extracting learning from the test and learn that would have broader scale benefit.

Additionally, the project team has been working alongside the Benefits team and the Digital Data Services team to feed into a new FSM application processing system, to streamline and improve internal processes.

The project team will synthesise the research findings and develop solutions to identified issues—relating to both increasing uptake at school level, and maximising applications to FSM, with the intention to test out multiple interventions before the end of the winter school term. Throughout the implementation of the interventions, an iterative ‘test and learn’ approach will be taken to make necessary adjustments and identify effective interventions. Once interventions have been tested and evaluated, learning will feed into costed proposals that will inform decisions about roll out to other schools across the borough.

### 3.4. Childhood Vaccinations

Improving the uptake of childhood immunisations in Camden is an important strategic priority for the Camden Health and Wellbeing Board and Camden Borough Partnership, as well as the main population health priority for the North Central London (NCL) Integrated Care System (ICS). Vaccination data highlights the inequalities in uptake in areas of high deprivation and for some ethnicities, and we know that inequalities in vaccine uptake contribute to short- and longer-term health inequalities.

Addressing low uptake of childhood immunisations falls within the ‘Healthy and Ready for School’ short-term priority of Camden’s Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30. **A child who is healthy and thriving at age 5 will already have embedded healthy behaviours and be ready to access education, laying the foundations for life-long health and wellbeing into working age and older. Being fully vaccinated on school entry is an important element of this readiness**, preventing loss of education and protecting individual children from serious illness, as well as contributing to the herd immunity that benefits and protects our local communities. The strategy calls for a population health approach to engage the full range of health determinants and a united response from partners and communities.

The Immunisations programme in Camden is supported by ICB (Integrated Care Board) Immunisation Improvement Managers, who work cross-borough with practices, parents and community groups. Key priorities identified were:

- Addressing inequalities in immunisation uptake
- Improving data quality and provision
- Increased and transparent education for communities to address concerns in sensitive and appropriate ways
- Enhancing opportunities to access vaccines

The ICB and Council are working together to support communities to catch up on missed vaccinations. MMR vaccination is being offered to children aged 1-11 who are partially vaccinated, and Adults aged 19-25. However, all children and adults are

being encouraged to check their vaccination status for MMR and speak to their GP if uncertain.

Further response from the Council has included:

- Focused catch up: the Council is supporting our NHS partners to deliver an MMR and polio catch up campaign to primary school children who may have missed one or both MMR doses.
- Outreach: our vaccine bus has been delivering MMR vaccines and advice to residents all over the borough this summer.
- Supporting our school aged immunisations team in holding vaccination sessions at two of Camden's asylum seeker contingency hotels (Maida Vale Apart Hotel and Comfort Inn Kings Cross) to provide vaccines and advice to residents there.
- Supporting NCL ICB colleagues to submit an expression of interest for funding to deliver vaccinations through Family Hubs and Early years settings.
- A comprehensive communications plan with council, health and CVS partners to encourage uptake of the MMR vaccine to residents in our target groups. This has included letters being distributed to all parents of primary school children, press and social media.

Addressing the priorities in partnership with system colleagues through a population approach **has already shown a steady improvement in uptake of routine childhood vaccinations**. Going forward, we will keep building on the foundations, learning from this and previous vaccination campaigns and put in place a long-term sustainable model of vaccine education and delivery. We will also continue to advocate at national level for more hyper localised commissioning arrangements and better intelligence to aid immunisation delivery.

### **3.5. Improving Families' Oral Health**

A new oral health contract started in May 2023, running for the next 5 years, commissioned from NHS Whittington Health with an aim to deliver an efficient, effective, and innovative oral health promotion service to improve oral health and reduce oral health inequalities in the population of Camden.

One of the main elements of this service is the Fluoride Varnish programme which is an evidence based clinical intervention aimed at improving the oral health outcomes of primary school children in Camden. Since 2017, the programme has been aimed at all Camden primary schools for the select age range of 3-7 years, with an aim to provide annual /biannual Fluoride Varnish applications per academic year. The programme is currently running in 38 Camden schools and is available for children from Nursery to Year 2. Schools with higher free school meals percentage are prioritised for biannual applications approximately six months apart. During 2022/23, 3945 Fluoride Varnish applications were delivered to the eligible children. During the first quarter of the new contract since May 2023, 772 Fluoride Varnish applications have already been delivered.

Going forward, the focus is on improving access to appropriate NHS dental services, including community dental services that are taking on new NHS patients for routine

and urgent care. This will be achieved by developing clear pathways and/or protocols between the Oral Health Promotion Team and Community Dentistry and ensuring that these are accessible to frontline health (and other) professionals to enable them to refer or signpost families to the relevant services.

### **3.6. Families for Life and Family Kitchen**

The “Families for Life” 4-week healthy lifestyle programme support families with children aged 2-11 years old to make positive changes to their diet, including increasing fruit and vegetable intake and reducing foods high in fat and sugar, and increase physical activity through active games.

Programmes run via schools, early years settings and virtually. In 22/23 over 200 unique families engaged in the programme with evaluations showing positive impact on health behaviours. The Family Kitchen at Home 4-week virtual cooking programme, which was developed over Covid, allows families to cook free healthy meals and continues to be the most frequently requested programme. A newer addition is cooking webinars to allow families to prepare healthy food at home in their own time. In 2023, 70 families requested and were sent webinars, accompanied by supermarket vouchers for ingredients.

The Early Years, Schools and Families team (previously Health and Wellbeing Team) have been trained in TastEd sensory food education which is an evidence-based practice for increasing children’s receptiveness to trying new foods and encourage more fruit and vegetable consumption. TastEd was piloted in 4 schools last year reaching 192 pupils, and this year schools have been offered both pupil and family TastEd workshops to support healthy habits and help to address fussy eating, which is the most raised concern by parents.

Also available to families are Starting Solids sessions to help families to start well and raise healthy eaters which has already reached 304 families in 2023. Finally, Camden has local programmes to support early years setting and schools to take a whole setting approach to health and wellbeing which are aligned to Healthy Early Years London and Healthy Schools London. There are currently 78% of Camden schools engaged with Healthy Schools.

### **3.7. The Holiday Activities and Food Programme**

The Holiday Activity and Food Programme (HAF) is a DfE funded programme that supports children and young people aged 5-16 who are eligible for benefits-related Free School Meals (FSM) during Easter, Summer, and Winter school holidays. It provides free access to physical and enriching activities, nutritional education, and a healthy hot meal during the day. The Council works in partnership with the Young Camden Foundation to deliver the programme.

There are over 7,600 children eligible for FSM in Camden, and the central government funding only enables us to offer a small proportion of FSM eligible children and young people access to the programme. In recognition of this challenge, and the marked increased demand because of the cost-of-living crisis, in July 2023 the Council identified an additional £73,333 from a Family Crisis Fund to

expand access to the HAF programme this summer and a further up to £26,667 to expand access to Winter 2023 and Spring 2024 programmes. This funding was sufficient to enable an extra 173 places on the programme, including 57 extra places for children with SEND needs requiring 1:1 support or specialist provision. We were able to double the number of children with 1:1 support accessing HAF programmes because of this funding. An impact report from summer 2023 will be published in October 2023. Planning is underway for our Winter programme.

### 3.8. Promoting Physical Activity

The Early Years, Schools and Families Team (EYSFT) offer support to schools, early years settings and families to increase physical activity. A broad range of activity was delivered in 2023 including:

- 10<sup>th</sup> Annual award-winning 'Race to Health' schools physical activity challenge
- The Daily Mile: Support to schools implementing The Daily Mile to increase physical activity levels of all pupils
- Little Steps to Healthy Lives Award and Healthy Schools: Support to early years settings and schools to complete the Health and Wellbeing Review and meet all the criteria including on physical activity
- Physical Education Leads Network Meetings: Coordination and delivery of 4 Primary PE Leads Network meetings including delivery of the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) Youth Schools Training Programme for PE leads
- In depth analysis of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) results for physical activity by ethnicity and gender
- Delivery of bespoke pilot projects with schools aimed at increasing physical activity levels in young people. E.g., completion of the year 5 girls physical activity project at Hawley Primary School which is currently being evaluated.
- Promotion and coordination of projects related to annual campaigns e.g., walk to school week.
- Policy Guidance: Provision of template physical education and physical activity policies for Camden Early Years and School settings, updated every 2 years.

## 4. Adult Community Learning and Virtual School

### 4.1. Adult Community Learning Update

Camden Adult Community Learning (ACL) completed its scheduled Matrix re-inspection between 22 May and 24 May 2023. The Service was deemed as continuing to meet the standard of the kitemark. **The report noted: 'The breadth and scale of the Camden ACL impact is cause for celebration.** Across each programme area it is clear that provision is making a difference to individuals' lives economically and socially, with learners bringing to life in their own words the return on investment from this adult learning provider. Impact upon reduced loneliness, increased mobility, health and well-being, progression to employment and promotion, sense of community and volunteering and instilling a culture of family and lifelong learning were all expressed by learners as gained outcomes.'

- 2,438 adults (312 more than the immediate past year) were taught by the Service: 93.7% were retained on their courses of study and 98.5% passed their course.
- Attendance at class was an average of 89.0%.
- Most learners were women of economically active age and non-white British, though a broad range of learners were engaged throughout the year in a range of curriculum and geographical settings. The cohort of learners also contained 708 learners of 65-plus, which included 9 learners of 95-plus. 22% all learners self-declared as having a disability/learning disability in 2022/2023.
- Courses are predominantly at the lower entry levels, but some vocational programming was at level 2 and level 3. Provision continues to be predominantly delivered in the most deprived areas of the borough and face to face. The Service continues to maintain high standards of teaching, learning and assessment as well as retention and achievement.
- More than 2,000 students successfully completed learning across Camden in courses in: Family Learning; Digital Inclusion; Health and Wellbeing; English as a second language (ESOL); Vocational training (Supervisory Training in Construction, Security for Retail, Childcare and Barista training); or a Youth Employment Programme (Targeted at those in danger of violent crime or being the victim of violent crime)
- Furthermore, the ESOL Advice Service continued to support refugees more generally, and in hotels specifically, as well as Camden's settled communities. For the first time in its history, the programme serviced 1,200 clients (200 more than the immediate past year)

#### **4.2. Virtual School Update**

The Children and Families Act 2014 included a provision that requires Local Authorities to appoint at least one person who is tasked with promoting the educational achievement of all the children looked after by the local authority they work for, including children placed out of authority. This person is by statute the Virtual School Head (VSH) and this position is supported in Camden by the Virtual School team (9.5 FTE). The staff include specialists in Early Years, Primary and Secondary Phase, 16+ and inclusion mentors. Camden also provides an Educational Psychologist (half a day a week) to support the Virtual School.

The ever-expanding role of the Virtual School covers promoting the educational achievements of Children Looked After, Previously Looked After, and Children in Need.

**Attendance:** Local data shows that attendance has improved significantly since COVID and post COVID levels. In 2021/2022, 23.3% of children looked after were classed as persistent absentees (defined by DfE as 10% absence). According to records obtained from Welfare Call, as of 31/07/2023, 10/66 (15.2%) Children Looked After (CLA) in the reporting cohort (in care for a year or more as of 31 July 2022) meet the threshold for Persistent Absence (PA). This is an improvement but still requires further improvement and monthly scrutiny.



Attainment: In 2023, the average Attainment 8 score for Camden Children Looked After was 17.46 (provisional) compared to average Attainment 8 score of 16.25 for Camden Looked After Children in 2022. Camden Looked After Children have also increased their participation in EBACC to 28.6%. The cohort size and average Attainment 8 are in line with the results from 2018 and 2019; the COVID-19 affected results of 2020 and 2021 which are much higher.

There were two UAS (Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking) in the reporting cohort who achieved an average score of 24.0, which was the second highest in 7 years. The emphasis for ESOL students to sit their first language GCSE (where possible) proved to be highly effective, with two students achieving a Grade 9.

Enrichment: The Virtual School has offered a variety of enrichment activities for children and young people as well as promoting local to Camden free and low cost activities. This past year the Virtual School has extended enrichment offers to include all children with a social worker.

This year enrichment activities included: Theatre trips, a petting zoo and slime making and tickets to ZSL London Zoo.

Post-16 Education, Employment and Training: 68% of care leavers were in education, employment or training, (*an improvement of 3.8% in comparison to last years OC3 return, which was lower in 2020 2021, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns*). Camden continue to achieve OC3 EET (Education Employment or Training,) outcomes higher than the national average of 58% and compares favourably against the Inner London average of 58% and statistical neighbour average of 54.5%.

Care Leavers in Higher Education: In 2023, 6.21% of Camden Care Leavers were in higher education, an increase of 2.1% from 2022 when only 4% of Camden Care Leavers were in Higher Education. This is in line with the national average of 6%, but below the Inner London and Statistical Neighbour averages of 9%.

The Education Navigator and Inner Circle Education Trust: The role of Education Navigator is a **new and exciting role to support Camden Care Leavers who are able to attend University**. The programme is funded by a charity, Inner Circle Education Trust, and will be based in Camden Virtual School. The Education Navigator and her manager will work to provide an in-depth intervention for a cohort of 15 young people, supporting and guiding them to build confidence and awareness of the opportunities available to them through work experience and a variety of enrichment opportunities.

## 5. Children's Services and Safeguarding Update

### 5.1. Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership

Three statutory safeguarding partners hold equal responsibility for safeguarding children in the borough, and lead the work of the Camden Safeguarding

Children Partnership (CSCP): Camden Council, the North Central London Integrated Care Board (formally Clinical Commissioning Group), and Central North Basic Command Unit (BCU) of the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).

The **objectives** of the CSCP are to:

- Ensure agencies work effectively together to safeguard Camden children and to deliver the core statutory functions of the CSCP, that are quality checked through single and multi-agency audits with effective performance management.
- Address the challenges and risks posed by the changing face of safeguarding.
- Ensure preventative and early help services are provided in a joined-up manner.
- Continue to develop a culture of good professional judgement as reflected in our Learning and Improvement framework.
- Ensure effective training programmes across agencies to keep children and young people safe in Camden.
- Drive and challenge effective information/ intelligence sharing and systems across all agencies to ensure good communication to keep children and young people safe.

**A forthcoming report will be brought to this Committee (Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee) at its December meeting, setting out the work of the CSCP and its priorities. But highlights will include its current key areas of work and development:**

- Strong mature multi-agency partnership response to heightened areas of safeguarding risk.
- Monitoring the effectiveness of the single front door and collaboration with multi-agency partners to keep children safe.
- Embedding the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and how as a Partnership, violence against women and girls can be reduced.
- Work of our young advisors in strengthening our scrutiny mechanisms and directly hearing about the lived experiences of local children and young people.
- Ensuring that there is a pro-active and supportive response to keeping vulnerable adolescents safeguarded, enabling a smooth transition into adulthood.
- Embedding learning across the partnership in how we work with vulnerable parents and infants.
- Addressing racial equality in our safeguarding practice and our support to our workforce.

## **5.2. Children Missing Service**

In November 2022, Camden introduced a **new in-house missing service** offering return home interviews (RHI) to children reported missing from home or care.

This was in response to very low RHI completion rates provided by our commissioned service. We employed 2 missing outreach workers to make contact with children who were missing and complete the RHI. This provides the opportunity for young people to speak to someone independent from their professional network to discuss the push and pull factor which impacted on their missing episode.

The new service includes a **data-informed approach to respond to frequently missing young people, offering regular one to one support**. This has resulted in **improved RHI completion rate** and allowed us to better hear young people's perspectives.

### **5.3. Refreshed Training Offer on the National Referral Mechanism for Modern Day Slavery Victims**

Camden has also been part of a pilot Home Office initiative to devolve decision making to local areas, with our panel making decisions on whether a child or young person **meets the threshold and criteria to be understood as a victim of Modern Day Slavery**.

Of benefit this last year has been the training offer for professionals through *ECPAT (Every Child Protected Against Trafficking) UK*, specialising in Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, and ensuring professionals are kept up to date on key legislation changes regarding the National Referral Mechanism and the Modern Slavery Act, as well responding to children experiencing exploitation.

In addition, a new tailored training was developed and delivered by *Barnardo's*, commissioned by the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership, for all partners. The training focused on a refreshed approach to responding to exploitation, including contextual safeguarding and working with vulnerable young people.

### **5.4. Early Help Family Support**

The number of families requesting and receiving early help family support from Camden services is now at its highest level since before the Covid pandemic. Contacts forwarded from front door to early help have increased by 23% over the last 5 years (3627 in 2022/23) and the highest number of early help assessments in 5 years (709 children from 367 families). 54% of all children's front door contacts were passed to early help last year.

Wards with the highest increases in early help assessments include Kilburn, Holborn and Covent Garden, St Pancras and Somers Town, Kings Cross, Bloomsbury and Belsize. To note that this correlates with locations of Home Office hotels for Afghan refugees and people seeking asylum which accounts for some of the increase, particularly in wards which historically have had lower levels of referrals (Bloomsbury for example). Top presenting needs for early help families continue to include housing, financial problems, mental health and parenting issues.

Under the family hubs strategic development, early help has increased proactive outreach to take family information, advice and guidance closer to the community. This is in response to increased socioeconomic pressures for families resulting in

increased front door contacts and aims to get help to families quicker. First Stop Early Help (who provide information services at the children's front door) have trialled information surgeries for parents in schools, targeting wards with high needs based on early help data and cost of living data. The test phase reached 29 parents over 26 sessions in 2 schools with positive feedback from parents and school staff. The test phase is currently being evaluated with a view to increasing reach to more schools and community venues from 2024 (subject to additional resources).

Early Help Quality Assurance Service has worked with Camden Learning to launch a school-based family support leads network. This initiative is in support of the 'team around the school' objective in the education strategy Building Back Stronger. The network provides support, resources, peer learning and practice development opportunities for school staff who give practical and/or emotional support to families in their school community. Nine schools attended the first network meeting, which is open to all schools in Camden.

## **5.5. Support for Refugees and Displaced Children and Families**

Camden continues to welcome and support high numbers of refugee and displaced children and their families. Whilst the Home Office hotels housing Afghan refugees are now closed, Camden continue to provide accommodation for Afghan refugees awaiting housing

options, including 103 children. The number of Ukrainian refugees in Camden has decreased, currently with 180 live hosting arrangements. Early help has to date supported 122 Ukrainian families and their hosts to access services and settle into the borough. This includes 12 Ukrainian children who were unaccompanied, of which 7 have now turned 18. Welfare checks and support continue for all Ukrainian refugee and their hosts.

There are four remaining Home Office-procured hotels for people seeking asylum in Camden, currently home to 84 children from 48 families. Camden has significantly increased its outreach to these residents in the last six months including visits and drop-in sessions for families of all ages. A dedicated refugee and displaced families team is established in early help, providing a single point of contact for queries and support requests for this population. Regular safeguarding meetings with the Home Office and its subcontractor remain in place. Camden's priority remains the welfare of all refugee children and their families for as long as they call Camden home.

## **6. Mental Health of Children and Families Update**

### **6.1. Integrated Front Door programme**

One of our key developments in mental health this past year was the launch of our **Integrated Front Door**. Partners across mental health, primary care, children's services, commissioning and information technology, have been working together to develop an integrated referral system for mental health and early help support for Camden's children, young people and families.

The new system means that when a child is referred for either mental health or early help support, a discussion can be held between clinicians and family support staff to ensure the right services are offered to the family, rather than via multiple referrals or assessments. The shared referral process is intended to:

- Improve access for families to the most appropriate service at the right level of need
- Improve partnership working and shared decision-making
- Improve experience and outcomes for children and families
- Widen engagement and access to our community and VCSE support services

The new pathway launched with 5 GP practices in July 2023 and will be rolled out across the borough from October 2023. It is planned that all practices will have fully transferred over to the new process by the end of 2023. It is intended that this new referral process will be available across more community partners from 2024.

## **6.2. Mental Health Support in Our Schools**

In 2020-21, a Health-Related Behaviour Questionnaire (HRBQ) was completed with over 2500 primary and secondary age children. Key findings from the HRBQ 2021, in comparison to 2017 scores, found a 19% increase in primary pupils worrying about the mental health of a family member. Year 6 girls' self-esteem decreased by 19% and 46% of pupils said they keep worries to themselves. Key findings from secondary pupils showed 42% scored in the low/med low range on the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, 64% pupils had low/med-low resilience scores and there was an 11% increase in pupils worrying about the way they look.

Findings from the HRBQ, along with input from school Mental Health Leads, and nationwide mental health data, helped to inform and enhance the mental health and wellbeing offer of support to schools and EYFS settings. New mental health workshops and training for parents/carers, staff, and governors included 'Trauma-Informed Practice' and 'Improving Body Image and Self-esteem'. To date, 237 staff and governors and 210 parents/carers attended mental health workshops in 2023. There has been an increase in the prevalence of anxiety and rates of EBSA following the pandemic, so MH Leads received specialist training on this topic to address this issue.

**New to the mental health offer were pupil workshops, 175 pupils attended mental health workshops.** The most requested session was about 'Managing Friendship and Change', as pupils are still adjusting to social interactions at school following the long-term effects of lockdown. In 2022-23, a further 133 pupils from 10 schools trained as Wellbeing Champions. The Wellbeing Champions drive mental health initiatives in their school and support their peers who might be experiencing poor wellbeing.

## **7. Support for Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS)**

### **7.1. Camden SEND Investment**

- We have appointed an interim Head of SEND to provide additional leadership capacity. Jessica Juon, previously Head of Service for SEND in Newham, will have a specific focus on Ofsted-inspection readiness, quality assurance and the implementation of the SEND strategy.
- A permanent Head of SEND has been appointed and is due to start in early 2024. Jessica will remain in post until the permanent Head of SEND commences their role.
- Camden's new Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion has used the autumn term to meet with VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) groups across the borough. This has resulted in strengthening links between VCS groups and organisations such as SENDIASS to provide targeted support to communities in relation to SEND.
- Camden Adult Community Learning will be hosting a Camden Wellbeing and Information event in later November 2023 for parents and carers of children with SEND at Swiss Cottage Library in November 2023. This event will bring together opportunities and organisations that can support parents and carers of children with SEND with their wellbeing. This event will also signpost parents to where they can access good, impartial advice regarding SEND support.

### **7.2. Continuing to Commit to and Invest in Our Advice and Support Services**

We have continued to invest in SENDIASS (Special Education Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services), so they are able to increase their ability to support more parents in Camden and grow their offer. This includes the addition of three more advisors starting in September 2023.

SENDIASS are an impartial Service which is confidential, free and operates at arms-length from Camden Council. The law requires all local authorities to provide children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their parents/carers with information, advice and support.

SENDIASS have established SEND surgeries based at Camden MOSAIC for parents and carers of children and young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This will provide an opportunity for parents and carers to:

- Receive information and advice about education, health and social care SEND systems and procedures, from initial concerns to appeal processes.

- Speak to someone from the SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS).

SEND drop-in sessions have also been established, which are taking place at both Harmond Children's Centre, Family Hub & Nursery, and at Regents Park Children's Centre, Family Hub & Nursery.

### 7.3. Our SEND Change Partnership Programme (CPP)

The SEND Change Partnership Programme (CPP) launched in September 2023, a 24-month programme testing potential future SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) reforms following the SEND & AP Green Paper published in 2022. Camden, alongside Islington, Barnet, Enfield and North Central ICB will be piloting this work, representing London.

As of January 2023, Camden had maintained 1,446 Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), which was an increase of just six pupils compared to 2022. **This compares very favourably to the national trend**, where many local authorities are reporting huge increases in EHCPs. This is in part due to the focused work on early intervention through an Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG), which has been in place since 2018 for mainstream schools.

As of January 2023, Camden issued 96.9% of new plans within 20 weeks of referral, including exceptions, and 99.2% excluding exceptions. Again, this compares very favourably to the latest Department for Education (DfE) published data (for the 2021 calendar year), with national figures of 57.9% and 59.9% and London figures of 59.3% and 63.9% (including exceptions and excluding exceptions respectively).

### 7.4. Our SEND-specific Preparedness for Future Inspections

Preparations for Local Area SEND inspection readiness are continuing. Whilst the focus is not Ofsted, this process allows us to ensure that we are clear on our strengths and those areas for further development which will be aligned to the SEND Strategy implementation plan.

We are in the process of refining our Self Evaluation Form (SEF) content following extensive input from colleagues across the partnership via workshops, position statements and focused sessions. We are also **ensuring that the voice of our families is well embedded** via a dedicated survey and working with the parent carer forum to understand their lived experience and ensuring our SEF narrative is true to this. Within the SEF we are also compiling a series of 'spotlight on practice' narratives to share key good practice, innovation and areas of impact.

We are also continuing to develop and collate our annex repository of information to be submitted to inspectors—consisting of 7 specific data lists, plus 16 other data requirements in addition to information requests. More than 80 documents have already been identified and colleagues are reviewing and refining these to make sure they are relevant and up to date.

We are also taking the recent (week commencing 30 October) Ofsted Focus Visit within Children's Services as **an opportunity to reflect on our approach to inspections—what works well, lessons we can learn** and how these can be incorporated into our SEND inspection planning and preparation.

## **7.5. The Rebuilding Bridges project**

Our Rebuilding Bridges project, funded through the Department for Education Short Breaks Innovation Fund, aims to test novel approaches to integrated delivery of short breaks and improve health, education and well-being outcomes. Camden was one of seven local authorities to successfully bid in Year 1 of the programme (£212,565) and this year was successful in securing funding in Year 2 of the programme (£561,952). The overarching aim of the project is to enable children and young peoples' needs to be met more effectively in mainstream education and in universal out-of-school services, and to reduce the risk of placement breakdown or moves to costly out-of-borough provision for those already in specialist settings.

The programme supported 40 children/young people aged 4-18 by June 2023. The programme had a high level of engagement, with 85% of referred families engaging with services. An external evaluation of the year 1 project highlighted positive outcomes for service users:

- Over 80% achieved very positive outcomes in relation to personalised goals, including around behaviours of concern. Around half of service users reported improved wellbeing scores.
- Nearly 60% of parents reported being better equipped to meet their child's needs
- 25% of children/young people showed significantly improved school attendance (an increase of over 10% in attendance).

Learning from the year 1 project informed changes to the delivery model in the Year 2 bid, including widening the age range to 6-25 years, as well as the addition of input from the Camden EP service, support for older cohort from IYSS (Integrated Youth Support Service), and the establishment of an Independent Living Hub as an extension of the existing preparation for adulthood element of commissioned Short Breaks provision.

In year 2, the project is on course to work with 120 children/young people aged 6-25 years with SEMH needs, autism and learning difficulties who are:

- Displaying behaviours of concern
- Socially anxious/isolated and/or vulnerable (including at risk of criminal /sexual exploitation)
- Not engaging with/refusing school and at risk of exclusion/placement breakdown / transfer to alternative provision
- Unable to access universal services due to behavioural/emotional needs and/or lack of parental confidence
- Insufficiently prepared for adulthood/independent living
- At increased risk of expensive, specialist support in future.



A bid for £699,552 of DfE Year 3 funding for continuation and consolidation of the project has recently been submitted. Alongside this, a plan has been developed to scope options for sustainability of the project beyond the duration of the DfE funding programme.

## **7.6. Autism/ADHD transformation**

The North Central London Integrated Care Board (NCLICB) undertook a review of community health services in 2022. It made recommendations in four priority areas for children and young people. The four priority areas are:

- autism/ADHD
- therapies
- community nursing
- community paediatrics

The aim of the recommendations has been to move towards similar and improved levels of care for residents in each of the five North Central London boroughs (Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington).

The review found that overall, **Camden's offer to children and families delivers better access than similar services in other North Central London (NCL) boroughs**. However, the review recognised the challenges that all boroughs, including Camden, are experiencing:

- long waits for autism and ADHD assessments, made worse by steadily rising demand
- increasing demand for therapy services placing pressure on teams' ability to support CYP (Children and Young People)
- recruitment and retention challenges in our therapy, medical and nursing workforces.

For autism and ADHD, Camden leads an NCL Strategic Overview Group seeking to implement a more needs-led, neurodiversity diagnostic pathway that makes sure there is support for families as soon as needs are identified and without waiting for a diagnosis. This group is developing overall guiding principles that each borough will then translate into local changes.

In Camden this work is aligned to our emerging 'All Age Autism' strategy plan. **Between October '23 and Spring '24, a wide range of stakeholders including parent/carers will identify key actions** to improve autistic children and their families experience of health, education and care support.

## **7.7. Children and Young People with Disabilities Service**

The Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS) is a social work and social care service that provides support to disabled children and young people with severe and profound level of need and disability with a focus on preparing for adulthood. The focus had remained on meeting needs locally and ensuring a timely response to increase demand, and that resources are fairly distributed to those in

need. CYPDS currently supports an average number of 430 disabled children and young people across age ranges 0-25.

#### “Named worker model” implementation

In order to achieve that in 2023, CYPDS has been part of the redesign in Children’s Services with the aim to develop a service that supports early assessment, effective planning and sustained statutory intervention by CYPDS through the introduction of 4 Short Breaks Practitioners as named workers for the disabled children in need who receive an enhanced short break offer and are under the age of 18. Having a named worker contributes to children achieving better outcomes through long-term trusting relationships that help children and their families to live with the dignity and independence we all strive for. The implementation of the new model will start from November 2023. This is also in line with SEND strategy in Camden.

#### Direct Payment hourly rate increase for families of disabled children receiving a Personal Budget for care and support

At the beginning of 2023, CYPDS requested for the Direct Payment hourly rate to be increased in line with London Living Wage rate. The previous Direct Payment rate was not sufficient to cover for the cost of employing a carer for a disabled child and not in line with LLW increase. This was approved and as of mid-2023, the Direct Payments hourly rate was increased from £13.98ph to £15.12ph. This applies to those families receiving a Personal Budget as a Direct Payment for their disabled children care and support.

#### National Review of disabled children care and support living in out of borough residential schools registered as children’s homes

The key findings and recommendations from the Quality and Safety reviews completed for children in care with disabilities and complex health needs, who currently live in residential school settings, which are also registered as children’s homes during August – November 2022, were shared with the Corporate Parenting Board and the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) in 2023 and with the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.

The emerging themes focused on: ensuring the effective use of LAC (Looked After Children) reviews and processes with a focus on multi professional network effective sharing of information and being more curious about the provision, strengthening the role of LADO in Camden and their relationship with LADOs in other Local Authorities, implementing multi agency visiting for each child in care with a disability and complex needs that lives in out of borough residential school provision registered as children’s home, ensure contractual arrangements are clear for all agencies across health, social care and education, embedding regular community access in care planning for disabled young people, and ensure scrutiny of how residential special schools that are also registered as a children’s home are preparing young people for adulthood and for living in supported living as they move into adulthood.

#### Preparing for Adulthood

Finally, the CYPDS service supports an average number of 150-160 disabled young people into adulthood each year. In 2023 we continued with the Preparing for

Adulthood Drop ins that are held each month and are multi agency drop ins for parents of disabled children, who would like to ask for advice and support on the preparing for adulthood journey for their child.

At the end of 2022, we also held a successful Preparing for Adulthood event for parents and education providers across Camden at Greenwood Day centre, we had over 160 families attending, and we heard from supported living providers in Camden, parents whose children moved out in own accommodation with support as they entered adult life and how this was for them. We heard from one young person who successfully entered the world of employment and what this meant for him and from education providers.

The next event is planned to take place in April of 2024.

## **8. Corporate Parenting and Voices of Families and Children**

### **8.1. Children Looked After**

Camden had 197 Children Looked After (CLA) at the end of March 2023 which translates to a rate of 54 (per 10,000 children population). **This is significantly lower than the statistical neighbour rate of 63.8 as of 2021/2022.** St Pancras and Somers Town, Kentish Town North and Haverstock wards have the highest entrants into care at 86.3, 86.8 and 78.3 per 10,000 respectively. Our children are 75% from Global Majority backgrounds with approximately a third coming into care as Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC).

Of the CLA cohort, 24% (47) are UASC (March 2023) **which is a reduction of almost 10% from 2022.** As of October 2023, there are 217 CLA. When UASC are discounted, Camden has **a low number of children who come into care** under s20 (by consent of the local authority, child and parent). 11.7% of our children have been in our care for more than three years meaning we continually are working to find permanency options for children by reunifying them with their parents, family and friends, through or special guardianship arrangements. Where this is not possible, adoption is also used to provide permanency options. Of the children who ceased to be looked after during 2022/23 and were aged 16 or older, 87.8% (72 out of 82 young people) ceased to be looked after upon turning 18 during 2022/23, almost unchanged from 2020/21 (88.8%) and 2021/22 (90.5%).

Regarding the health and wellbeing of our children in care, compared to other inner London authorities, **Camden had the third highest proportion of children looked after with both an up-to-date dental check and health assessment,** and were most closely comparable to Haringey, Kensington & Chelsea, Tower Hamlets and Westminster, whilst being higher than Hammersmith & Fulham, Lewisham, Newham, Southwark and Wandsworth. **Camden's proportion of children looked after with both an up-to-date dental check and health assessment was higher than the national, inner London and statistical neighbour averages.**

## **8.2. Our Thorough Review of Offer for Care-Experienced Young People**

Part of We Make Camden is our refreshed partnership vision for the future of Camden – it sets out what we want to collectively achieve and lead together across the borough and partners to tackle the injustice in Camden’s communities.

We have a range of strategic commitments to supporting our children in care, and those who have experience of the care system, to thrive. We Make Camden outlines 6 ambitions, all of which are relevant to care leavers. As we review our Corporate Parenting Strategy which comes to an end in 2024, we hope to continue to develop and reaffirm our corporate parenting duties to our care experienced young people. Officers are currently considering whether it is viable for the Council to make them a protected characteristic and consider what impact this would have across the system. It is important that we are able to achieve lifelong commitments to them as any good parent would and recognise that sometimes this may mean offering support, which is above and beyond our statutory duties.

We know that care experienced young people nationally can experience poor outcomes. It is important to both look at the available outcomes evidence, whilst noting that outcomes for care leavers are not uniform. 26% of the homeless population have spent time in care; 24% of the prison population in England have care experience, and 41% of 19-21 year old care Experienced young people are not in education, employment or training (NEET) compared to 12% of all other young people in the same age group (Ministry for Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2020; Williams et al., 2012; Department for Education, 2021b). This demonstrates the importance of working with partners in the criminal justice system, housing, education and employment colleagues if we want to make a change for care-experienced young people in Camden.

Research from the Nuffield Foundation and UCL has also outlined the lifelong health and wellbeing impacts of those who experience care. Their research found that adults who spent time in care as children between 1971 and 2001 were 70% more likely to die prematurely than those who did not. The extra risk of premature death rose for care leavers from 40% to 1971 to 360% in 2011. Additionally, adults who were in residential care as a child are between 3 or 4 times more likely to report their health as ‘not good’ compared with ‘good’. These health inequalities demonstrate the importance of working with health partners on improving outcomes for care-experienced young people in Camden.

Care experienced young people also have to face stigma and sometimes discrimination. For example, around the ability to parent. This stereotype means that professionals can be quick to assume that care experienced young people will not be effective parents and make them go through unnecessary assessments.

The new offer will also include more detailed information on the Pathways accommodation from accommodation providers with an introductory booklet for young people giving them a flavour of what it is like to live in the Pathways and how they progress towards their own accommodation. The review will also look at the offer for care leavers from Health, Education Services (led by the Virtual School) and other council services to reflect how Camden has widened the corporate parenting responsibility to include a wide range of services and agencies with a duty to support

care leavers in their journey to independence. The review will be conducted with input from care leavers who will also co-produce the website and update of the “Pocket PA App”.

One other recent achievement of the council is the creation of a supported internship role for a care experienced young person. This role sits within the Council’s Comms team and ensures that a young person’s voice will be at the centre of our communication to care-experienced young people.

Finally, we know that is important not to be complacent with these achievements—there is always more we can do in Camden to ensure our care-experienced young people can thrive.

### **8.3. Voices of Families and Children Programme**

Camden’s Corporate Parenting Strategy 2021-2024 demonstrates our commitment to listening and taking account of the views of all Camden’s looked after children, living in and out of the borough to make sure that their views influence how services are planned and developed. **There continues to be good progress in engaging with Camden’s looked after children and care leavers.**

Training and support are provided to help young people to develop their skills and confidence to be fully engaged in the delivery of the engagement and participation activities:

- The **Camden Children in Care Council (CiCC)** provides a formal structure for looked after children to voice their views and experiences of the care system, make suggestions to improve services and become instrumental in influencing changes and improvements to the services they receive from Camden. The CiCC meets once a month and is active in representing and giving voice to the views of looked after children and care leavers. Some of the areas discussed with children and young people over the past year included: life story work – a joint workshops with foster carers, review of the Caring life - life story app, welcome pack for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children, and planning the review of Camden’s care leavers offer.
- The **Young People’s Pathway Advisory Board** was established in December 2021 following the Young Inspectors’ recommendation regarding Pathway service development. The programme of work has been developed together with young people and it includes work on the development of a Pathway Handbook for young people and an update to the Pocket PA App (Camden care leavers offer App) to include more detailed information on the Camden Pathway.
- The **annual Young Inspectors** programme continues to undertake inspections of statutory services with their recommendations having a direct impact on service design and delivery. In the summer of 2022, the team of Young Inspectors researched Camden’s kinship care service in response to the recommendations made to Government in the Independent Review of Social Care by Josh McAlister.

In the summer of 2023, the team of Young Inspectors focused on researching the participation of children, young people and families in meetings, including Children Looked After review meetings and Child Protection conferences. The team launched a consultation with parents, children, young people, and professionals to help understand their experiences when attending social care meetings. The results of the consultation will provide information on how we can improve user participation at meetings to ensure that children and families voices are heard and that they are fully involved in shared decision-making about their lives.

All Young Inspectors reports are available here:

<https://www.backchatonline.org.uk/pages/young-inspectors/young-inspectors-reports>

- **“My education” – a child-produced training video for social workers**  
Children in care and care leavers took part in the production of a training video for social workers, where they give feedback and messages on their experience of education, the support they receive from the Virtual school for children looked after and from the CSSW and the things they want to achieve in life. The video and messages were presented to all staff at a Camden Safeguarding and Social work training day in November 2022.
- **Young People’s Interview Panel:** this panel provides an opportunity for care experienced Young People to be involved in the recruitment process and in interviewing candidates for senior posts at the Council. In 2023 young people interviewed candidates for the post of: Executive Director for Children and Learning, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion and for the post of Head of Corporate Parenting.
- **Replenish** – children and foster carers collaborated to develop the design of a logo for the Replenish hair and skin products gift box. The Replenish gift box aims to provide black and mixed heritage children in care with products that meet their needs.
- **The Back Chat online participation website:** this was developed and designed in partnership with looked after young people, <http://www.backchatonline.org.uk> and continues to inform looked after children and young people on how to participate in upcoming consultations.

## 9. Early Years

### 9.1. Overall Approach

Significant changes to free early education entitlements were announced by the government in the budget in March 2023. Funded childcare will be extended, through a phased approach, to the children of working parents from when their baby is 9 months old. Conscious of the crisis already facing early education providers in Camden, and nationally, the Early Years service has commissioned some research to explore the impact of the additional entitlements for Camden parents and

providers. The research will focus on whether there will be sufficient places to meet demand, what funding rates will enable providers to cover costs and, what Camden can continue to do to ensure **all** children have the best start in life, not just the children of working parents.

Our strong relationship with providers has encouraged many to participate in the research and we look forward to working with the sector to ensure a stable and thriving childcare offer for parents.

Our focus on prevention and early intervention is continuing with our new Best Start for Baby service rolling out across the borough this year. The new service introduces additional contacts with health visitors for all families in a child's first year providing more support for parents at this critical time and enabling extra help to be offered if needed. Our strong partnership with CNWL (Central and North West London), our health visiting provider, has led to a shared innovative approach focused on achieving the best outcomes for families.

## **9.2. Family Hubs Programme**

### **9.2.1. Overview**

In 2022, Camden was announced as one of the 75 local authorities who would be awarded a share of £301.75 million Family Hubs & 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. The government has allocated the funding for the programme under the following headings:

- Parenting support
- Early language and the home learning environment
- Parent–infant relationships and perinatal mental health
- Infant feeding support
- Establishing a Parent and Carer Panel
- Publishing a Start for Life Offer

Building on the strength of the borough's early years services, **our 5 Children's Centres successfully transitioned to Children's Centres and Family Hubs in the summer of 2023**. A boroughwide launch event took place at London Zoo with local celebrations in each locality. A press release officially launching Camden's Family Hubs programme was published in July 2023.

The Hubs will build on the locality approach developed in Early Years with collocated teams at its core. The Hubs will look to extend this approach beyond the early years

to provide a more joined up, accessible service for families which will include a much stronger digital offer.

*Key milestones:*

- 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.
- Also in March 2023, a Parent and Carer Panel was established to help shape services accessed by families with children aged 0-2 years. The panel consists of 13 parents from diverse backgrounds and meets six times per year.
- Through consultation with colleagues from across the council and external partners, a Camden Family Hubs brand was formulated. The new brand was created 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 17 May 2023, bringing together stakeholders from across the council as well as partners from VCS organisations. Attendees included representatives from Camden Council, NHS trusts, voluntary & 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 the Autumn.
- A formal review meeting reporting on progress for Camden's Family Hubs model took place on 30th June 23. Representatives from DfE and DfHSC (Department of Health and Social Care) provided positive feedback about Camden's progress within the programme. There was particular interest in Camden's existing Integrated Early Years structure, and the multidisciplinary nature of teams within centres. Additionally, Camden has been asked to share its approach to the use of data at a national webinar organised by the Department for Education.

Camden has been selected as one of the local authorities to take part in the National Family Hubs Transformation evaluation. This will focus on the Home Learning Environment and Early Language workstream within the programme. As part of the evaluation, a workshop took place with a researcher from Sheffield Hallam University on 18th July 2023. Camden was selected to take part in this work to share good practice developed through the Camden Kids Talk project which is introducing universal screening and support for language development from 12 months. Camden's health visiting service, speech and language services, local nurseries and schools are all participating in this important new initiative.



### 9.2.2. *Co-creating our Work with Families*

Camden's Family Hubs provide services, advice and support for families with children of all ages. **We recognise that it is vital that the Hubs feel welcoming and reflect the lived experience of Camden families.** The approach has therefore been developed and co-designed directly with families, using a number of different engagement methods:

- **Start for Life co-design** – 12 meetings were attended by 95 different parents. Parents told us that the topics that are important to them include: Ante-natal services; Work with Fathers; Services that are inclusive; mental health support. We are enhancing our Bump to Baby ante-natal programme, working with midwifery services and health visiting to provide a more seamless service to expectant families. employed a Fathers inclusion lead. A peri-natal mental health pathway is being developed by a new Lead officer funded through the Family Hub grant.
- **Parent and Carer Panel** – The panel was convened in March 2023 and its membership is drawn from parents and carers in the community who are either expecting a baby or have a child under 2. There are 12 parents signed up to attend the panel meetings including some fathers. The panel meets every 6 weeks or so, and discusses topics relevant to caring for young children in Camden such as support in pregnancy, infant feeding and support concerning mental health. Reflections and suggestions from the panel are brought to the delivery groups planning Family Hub services and to the Family Hub transformation group. We have also been able to pass comments onto midwifery services to expand on feedback gathered through their parent feedback processes.
- **Strategic Boards** – Early Years parents attend a number of strategic boards across Camden including: the Children Trust Partnership Board, 1001 Steering Group, and the Autism Board.
- **Parents Feedback and Surveys** – Feedback is also obtained across all key Early Years services through a questionnaire that we ask parents to complete to obtain feedback. Services then consider the feedback and make appropriate changes. We are in the process of coordinating this work to provide an overview of the feedback received for the whole service. In addition, a key mechanism for gathering the views of parents in respect of Family Hubs has been through a survey, with over 160 parents having completed this over June/ July 2023.
- **Parent focus groups and community conversations** – The service has finally directly engaged with parents in the planning of the 'Start for Life' offer involving a number of different focus groups, using these conversations to inform all aspects of our offer.

### **9.3. The Childrens Trust Partnership Board**

Our Children's Trust Partnership Board has strategic governance of our Resilient Families Programme in Camden. The Board uses the Resilient Families Programme strategic objectives as the focus of their meetings as set out below:

- Children and young people are encouraged to be safe and positively engaged in the community
- Children and young people succeed at school and thrive
- Outcomes for children and young people who require additional support are improved
- Fewer children and young people living in poverty
- Children and young people are safeguarded and are protected from harm
- Good physical and mental health are promoted and health inequalities reduced.

The first Childrens Trust Partnership Board (CTPB) took place on Wednesday 3 May 2023, chaired by Cllr Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

Members met to discuss the theme of 'Prosper'. During the meeting attendees heard from Angela Mason, co-chair of Camden Women's Forum setting out the Women's Forum enquiry into the cost of living and how this linked to the work of the Board. Discussion also explored family hubs the Board could support the programme's successful roll out.

Subsequent CTPB meetings took place on 18 July 2023, and 12 September 2023, with work including:

- Colleagues from across the health discipline presented items related to ambitions in the Resilient Families Framework, with a particular focus on immunisations, maternity and maintaining healthy lifestyles.
- Members of the board were joined by Immunisation Leads for North Central London and Camden, colleagues leading Start Well Maternity, Neonatal and Paediatric Surgery Transformation Work in the borough, as well as the Senior Health and Wellbeing Adviser in the Health and Wellbeing Team for Camden Learning.
- Discussion led to information sharing about how transformation work in maternity and neonatal services could be used to address inequalities. Opportunities for joint up work between initiatives in and around the council were also raised as well as suggestions about how families could be engaged in immunisations messaging in creative ways.
- A focus on ensuring children have positive experiences of learning through safe and supportive environments. The new Executive Director for Children and Learning at Camden joined the discussion. The meeting opened with a tour of the

setting, showcasing the range of support on offer for Camden families, through an integrated working structure across council and NHS staff teams.

## 10. Special Update on Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) Following the Government’s Announcements

All of us at the Council recognise the importance of this issue and the anxiety it has caused since the government’s eleventh-hour announcement ahead of the new school year.

In Camden we are offering support to our schools, particularly those completing any additional checks. We have also been reaching out to offer additional support to those schools in the borough that we do not run directly.

The broader picture on RAAC nationally continues to develop and as we begin to understand more, we will be looking at more we can do. **The most important thing is that all our students and staff remain safe whilst at school or using any public buildings.**

The Council has made proactive offers of support to help schools as they investigate—surveys have been performed at several schools enabling them to affirm no RAAC is present.

Together with awareness training approaches, we will collectively consider the evolving situation and feed back into any further response. Camden approaches the safety of our students and staff with the utmost seriousness and care.

## 11. Formal Major Decisions Taken (in the last year) and Available Forthcoming Decisions (forthcoming in *italics*)

CABINET-LEVEL DECISIONS (In Cllr Boyland’s name)	MEETING DATE	DECISION IMPLEMENTED	DESCRIPTION
<a href="#">Camden Youth Justice Plan 2023-25</a>	20/12/2023	<i>For Determination</i>	A plan outlining service priorities for the Youth Justice Service.
<a href="#">Award of the Camden Learning Commission (SP/2023/12)ref: 4027</a>	12/07/2023	21/07/2023	To consider the further re-commissioning of Camden Learning for a period of 3-years.
<a href="#">Determination of the Statutory Notice concerning St Dominic’s Catholic Primary School</a>	29/03/2023	07/04/2023	To consider the statutory consultation on the future of St Dominic’s Catholic

<a href="#">(SP/2023/05)ref: 3948</a>			Primary School and to decide whether to implement the proposal as set out in the statutory notice.
<a href="#">Secure Children's Home for London and Pan-London Commissioning Vehicle (SP/2022/23)ref: 3784</a>	16/11/2022	25/11/2022	Camden Council's agreement to participate in a Pan London Vehicle to enable shared provision of Secure Accommodation Children's Home.
<a href="#">Camden Local Area Special Education Needs and Disabilities Strategy 2022-2027 (SP/2022/18)ref: 3786</a>	16/11/2022	25/11/2022	To consider Camden's SEND Strategy.
<a href="#">Youth Mission: Approach to Delivery and Proposed Youth Employment Entitlement Offer (SP/2022/24)ref: 3785</a>  <b>(Joint with Cabinet Member for New Homes, Jobs and Community Investment)</b>	16/11/2022	25/11/2022	To consider the proposed approach to delivering the Youth Mission and Youth Employment Entitlement; and to authorise officers to develop an employer facing campaign to support delivery of the entitlement.

<b>SINGLE-MEMBER DECISIONS (by Cllr Boyland)</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>EFFECTIVE FROM</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governors</a>	04/12/2023	<i>For Determination</i>	<i>Appointment of local authority school governors.</i>
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governors</a>	06/11/2023	<i>For Determination</i>	<i>Appointment of local authority school governors.</i>

<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governors</a>	02/10/2023	11/10/2023 (Call-in)	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Commissioning Strategy for the Provision of Camden's Residential Children's Home for Children Looked After ref: 4071</a>	06/09/2023	14/09/2023	Strategy for Camden's Residential Home For Children Looked After.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 4043</a>	14/07/2023	22/07/2023	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Section 75 Partnership Agreement for Health Visitingref: 4026</a>	07/07/2023	15/07/2023	Extension of Section 75 Partnership Agreement with our NHS Trust.
<a href="#">Children's Safeguarding and Social Work Department Reorganisationref: 4013</a>	12/06/2023	20/06/2023	Restructure of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 3983</a>	12/05/2023	12/05/2023	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 3965</a>	11/04/2023	21/04/2023	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Contract Award Report for the Camden Pause Programmeref: 3933</a>	20/03/2023	28/03/2023	To consider the award of a contract to the London Borough of Islington for the delivery of a Camden Pause programme.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School</a>	01/03/2023	09/03/2023	Appointment of local authority school governors.

<a href="#">Governorsref: 3913</a>			
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 3879</a>	01/02/2023	01/02/2023	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 3848</a>	11/01/2023	19/01/2023	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 3806</a>	07/12/2022	15/12/2022	Appointment of local authority school governors.
<a href="#">Appointments of Local Authority School Governorsref: 3790</a>	14/11/2022	14/11/2022	Appointment of local authority school governors.

## **12. Finance Comments of the Executive Director, Corporate Services**

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the content of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

## **13. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the content of this report and has no comments to add.

## **14. 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.