



Corporate Parenting Service Annual Report 2023-24



1. INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

- **Rights and aspirations:**

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

- **Wellbeing:**

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

- **Interests and life goals:**

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

- **Home:**

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

- **Belonging and relationships:**

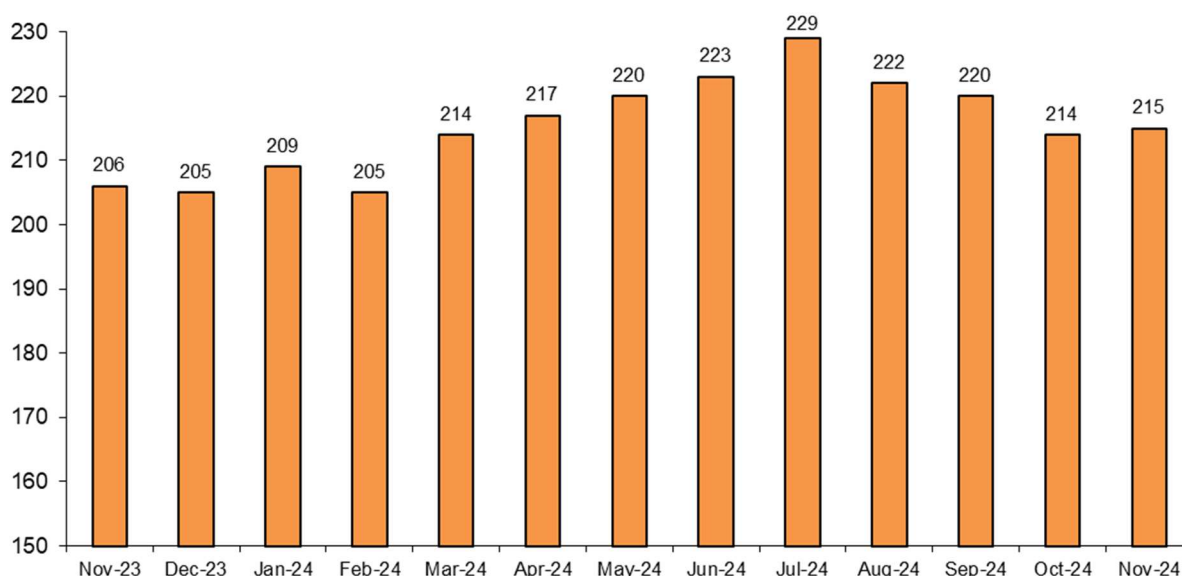
"We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long-lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you."

2. PROFILE OF CAMDEN'S LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN POPULATION

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

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

Figure 1 CLA numbers (November 2023- November 2024)



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

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

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

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

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

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

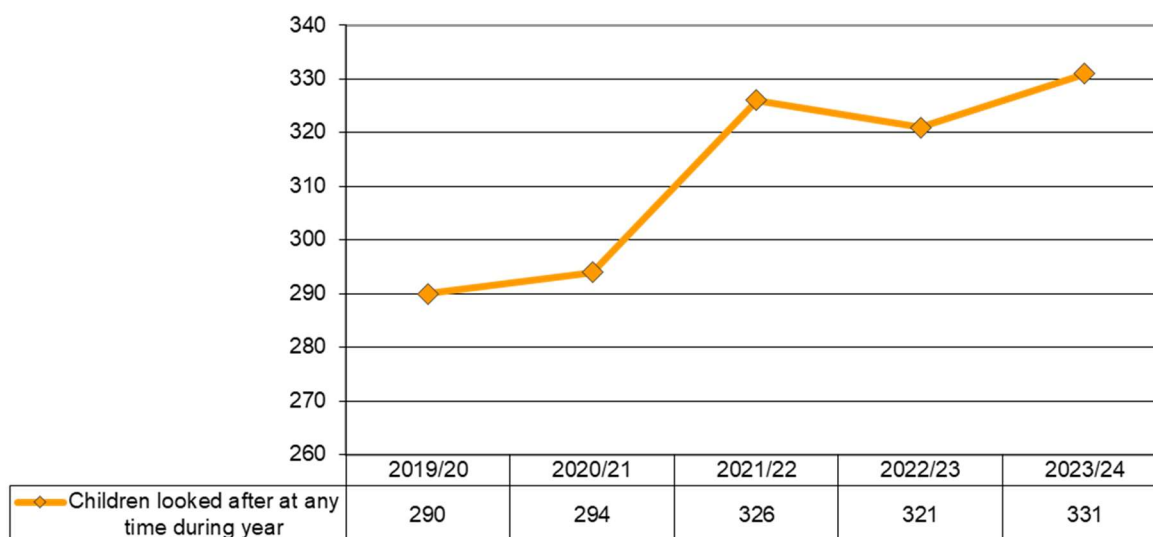
Table - CLA legal status per team

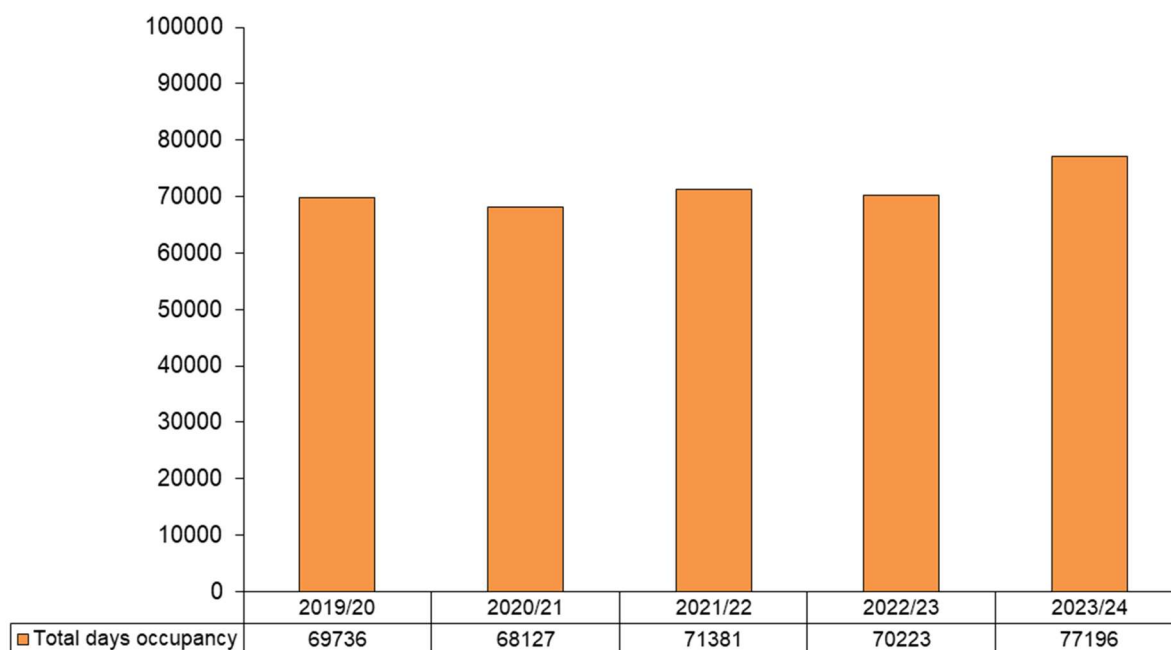
The table below shows that the length of time children spend in care has grown.

Table 2: Length of time in care

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

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





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

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

Figure 3 – Children Looked After Ethnicity 30.11.2024

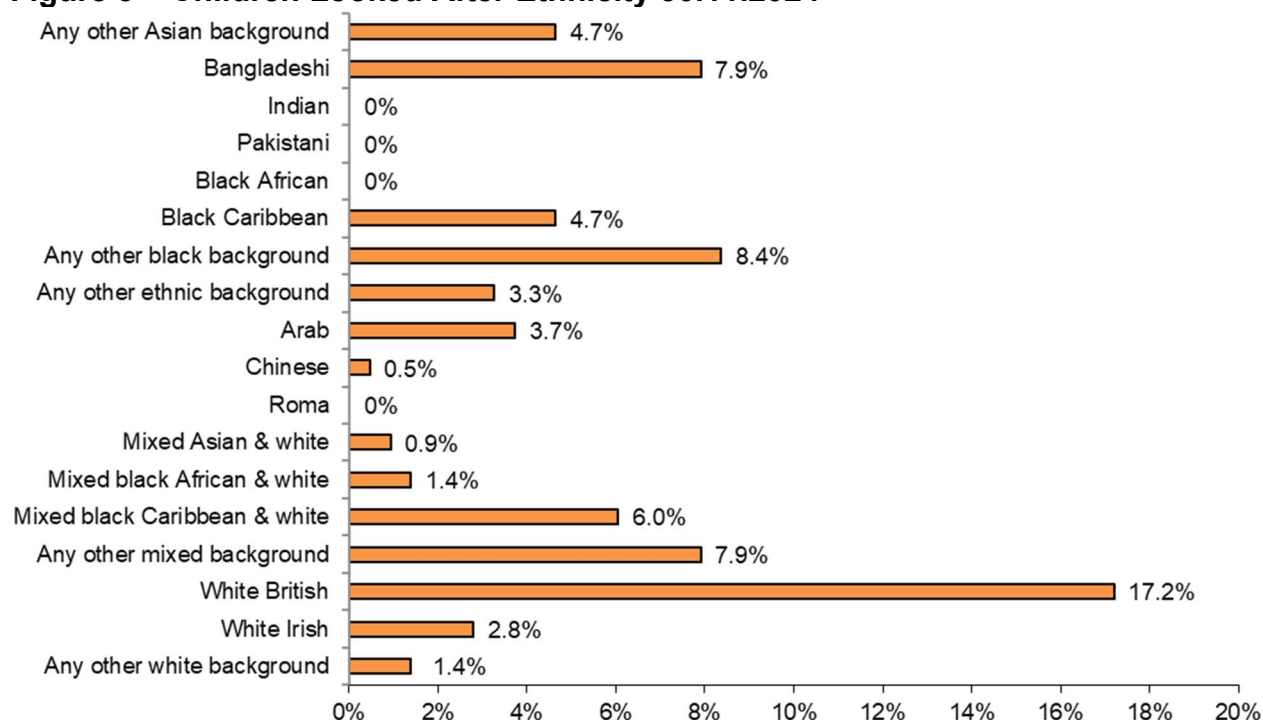


Table 3: Children in care banded ethnicity (5-year trend)

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

3. PROFILE OF CAMDEN'S CARE EXPERIENCED POPULATION

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

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

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

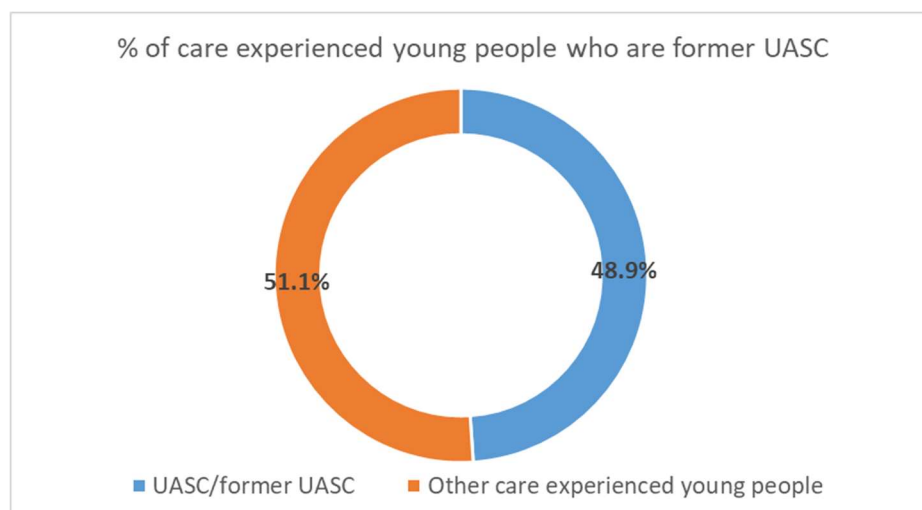
Of 392 eligible CEYP, 351 young people are accessing a service. We attempt to provide a service to all our CEYP, but sometimes, due to their lived experience working with services, they may choose to take up a service or not. As they are adults, we would only keep a case open if there are safeguarding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

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

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

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

Figure 4: % of care experienced former UASC



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

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

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

Table 5: Age and Gender assigned at birth

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

Figure 5: Care Experienced detailed ethnicity 30.11.2024

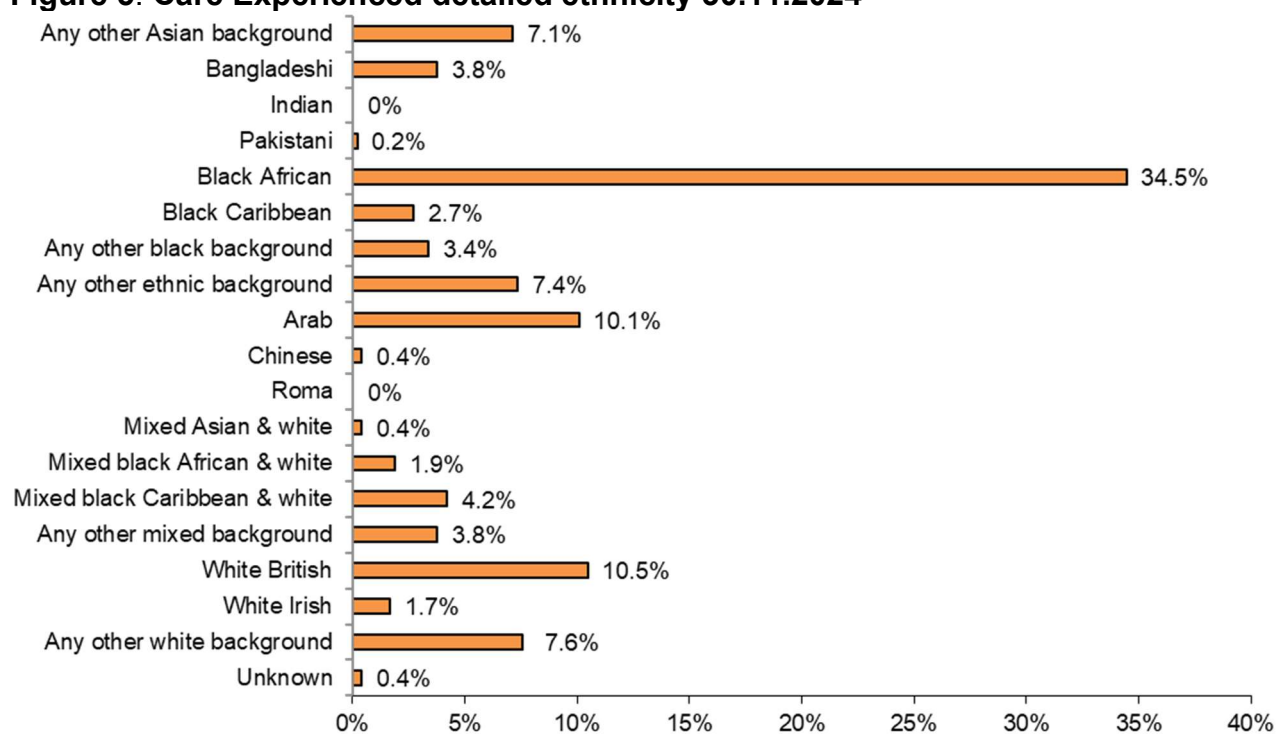


Table 6: Care Experienced banded ethnicity (30.11.2024)

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

Table 7: Care Experienced nationalities (30.11.2024)

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

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

Ofsted

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

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

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

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

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

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

- **Rights and aspirations:**

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

- **Wellbeing:**

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

- **Interests and life goals:**

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

- **Home:**

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

- **Belonging and relationships:**

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

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

1. Rights and aspirations:

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

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

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

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

2. Wellbeing:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3. Interests and life goals:

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

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

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

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

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

4. Home:

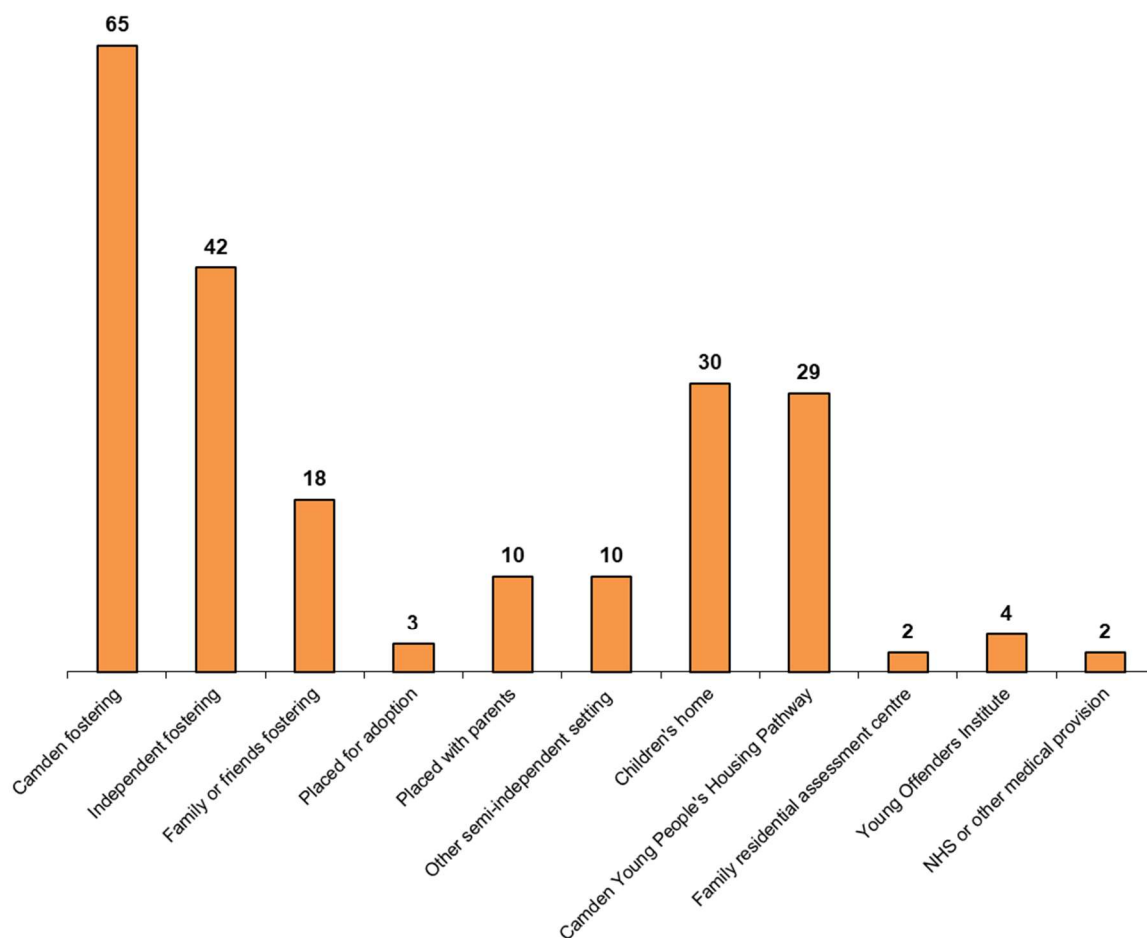
“We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually helps you find a place you can call home.”

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

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

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

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



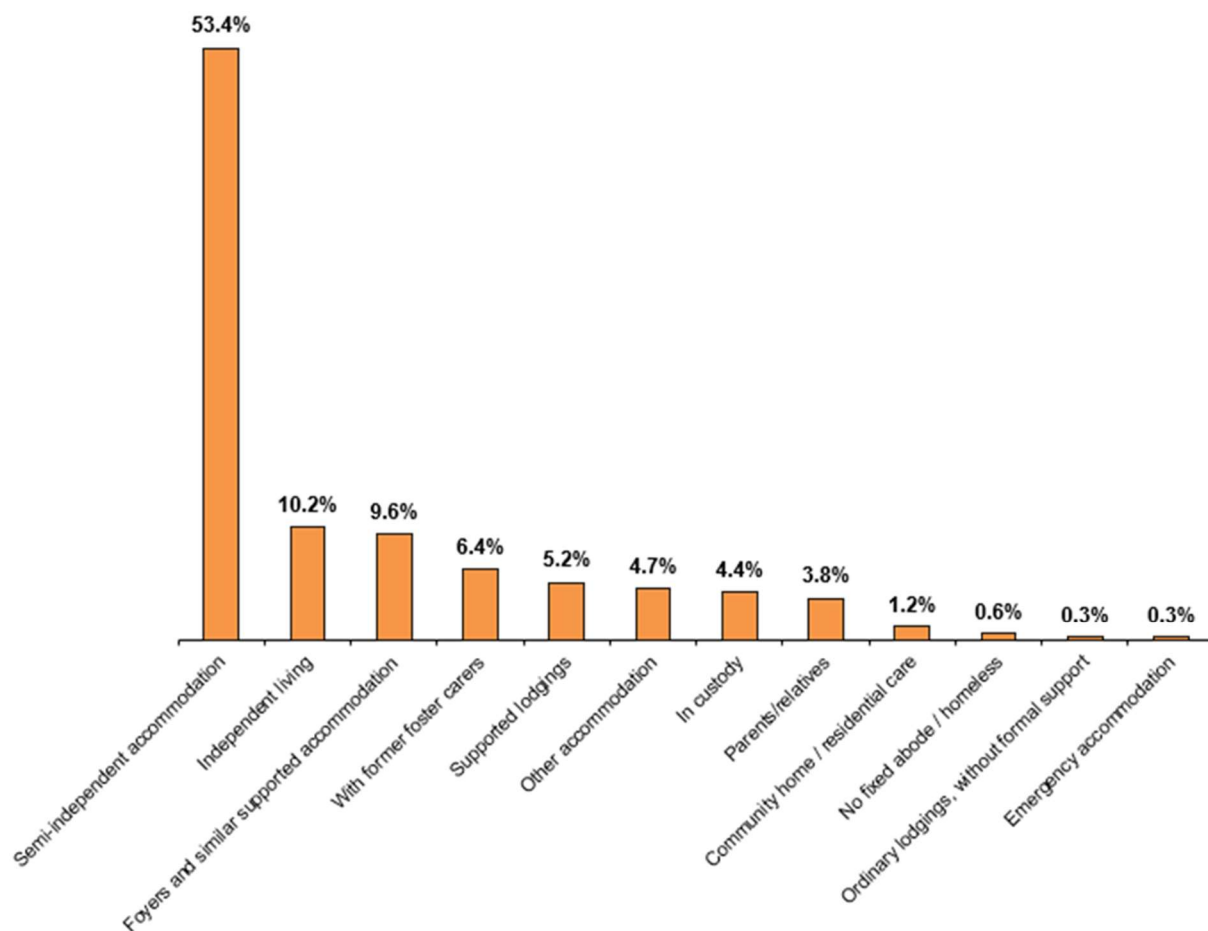
Care Experienced:

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

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

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

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



5. Belonging and relationships:

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

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

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

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

5. WORKFORCE:

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

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

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

6. KEY OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR 2025 AND BEYOND:

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

7. CONCLUSION:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

REPORT ENDS