

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All Wards
REPORT TITLE Insight, Learning and Impact Report – Quarter 4/End of Year 2023-24	
REPORT OF Executive Directors of Adults and Health, Children and Learning, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee Resources & Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee Housing Scrutiny Committee Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 9 July 2024 15 July 2024 15 July 2024 16 July 2024 16 July 2024
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report focusses on the year 2023-24 using a broad range of measures from each directorate and division across the organisation. In this report, Camden Directors have been asked to provide a narrative covering key areas of challenge, opportunity, and learning. This report is divided into two main sections: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of key themes: a summary which highlights key responses from directorates and highlights particular cross-cutting themes • A more detailed account of individual service responses across each of our three Directorates. Appendix A contains the data dashboard with key measures and data for 2023-24 from services across the Council. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: James Coumbe – Insight, Learning and Impact Lead London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG	

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Scrutiny Committees are asked to note the report, including the most recent data and trends and the emerging challenges identified, that relate to the services that fall within their respective remits.

SIGNED

Jon Rowney
Executive Director Corporate Services

19 June 2024

1. INSIGHT, LEARNING AND IMPACT REPORT

- 1.1. Over the last year Camden has been moving away from measurement for control and towards measurement for learning, while recognising the ongoing need for both vertical accountability to central government, and horizontal accountability to people and place, for core service delivery. This is a direction of travel in keeping with the ambitions set out in The Way We Work: towards creating space for innovation and learning, working beyond organisational barriers, understanding our impact and delivering We Make Camden while learning from the experience.
- 1.2. We have already set out how we want to use data and evidence in different ways through our insight and accountability framework, and this continues to evolve as we develop key products and processes and explore what it means to actively learn and evaluate as we deliver services and We Make Camden missions.
- 1.3. Towards this goal, for this Insight, Learning and Impact report for 2023/24, Directors have thought about the key performance issues they would like to focus on, and have provided a short narrative looking back over the last year and looking ahead to 2024/25 on the following points:
 - what were the biggest challenges to your service delivery in 2023/24 and looking ahead to 2024/25, what challenges are going to require the organisation's attention and focus?
 - What are the biggest opportunities i.e. where could you most benefit from support to deliver improvement?
 - What have your services learned in the last year and what do you need to learn in the coming year? e.g. from data or evaluation, regional or national research etc.

- 1.4. We have continued to produce the quarterly corporate data dashboard which provides the latest performance data for Q4 and the annual figure for 2023/24, for the key measures from all the services across the council, and which accompanies this report.

2. Overview of key themes

2.1. Corporate Services response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Finance and Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Revenue Account (HRA) financial instability • Inflationary pressures • Uncertain long-term funding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost control measures for HRA and General Fund • Strengthening financial resilience through new Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) • Collaboration with finance colleagues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-London collaboration for financial challenges • Development of a robust section 25 note for budget setting
People and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention • Impact of cost-of-living crisis on employees • Pay inflation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camden Talent Pool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma Support • Mentoring Programme • Pulse Survey results
Strategy, Design, and Insight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention • Maintaining focus on priority strategic work • Mitigating impact of pre-election period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing Insight, Learning and Impact capacity • Developing strategic delivery management model • Contributing to key pieces of service transformation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building external partnerships • Learning from inclusive recruitment process re-design • Reinforcing mission governance
Law and Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of experienced lawyers • Increase in complaints esp. housing • London Mayoral/General election 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Services review • Improve accessibility to council meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand for enforcement requiring legal support • Annual Complaints report 2022/23
Digital Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving digital and data skills within workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing technology to deepen citizen engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing collaboration • Constructive challenge and mutual trust
Equality and Community Strength	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asylum seekers facing rough sleeping • Loss of Household Support Fund • Governance structures for equalities • Cost of running Community Investment Programme (CIP) community centres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borough of sanctuary • Community Impact Fund • Refresh Camden's Discretionary Rate Relief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in homelessness among asylum seekers • Rise in financial hardship and debt • Focus on Disabilities and accessibility
Participation, Partnerships, and Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of demand • Preparing Elections communications • We Make Camden partner networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General election- focus on the borough • Enhanced media monitoring service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative working with UCL & Central St Martins • Refresh of evidence base that informs channel strategy

2.2 Children and Learning response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Children's Family Help and Safeguarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficiency of placements for children with complex needs • Budget to be in line with trend • Workforce retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National reform around family help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total number of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC) in the Children Looked After (CLA) cohort remains high
Family Support & Complex Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing need for proactive outreach • Increases in Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and autism in early help family work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift of the early help system towards neighbourhoods and locality family hubs bases • Family help national reform agenda • Developmental work around care entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data insight work on young carers to help inform strategy development. • A codesign project with children who have survived domestic violence. • Developmental work on Centre for Relational Practice
Early Years and Family Hubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up Family Hubs in line with Department for Education (DfE) expectations • Supporting the introduction of the new childcare entitlements and ensuring sufficient provision. • Funding for Family Hubs unconfirmed beyond 2024/25 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Family Hub programme allows more families to benefit from neighbourhood-based services. • Social care reform provides to simplify and further integrate support for families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong appetite among partners to work together more closely. • Commissioning new services as part of the family hub programme takes time.
Integrated Youth Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in referrals into our Youth Early Help • Increase in the number of young people with SEND referred into our Youth service provision • increase in the number of incidents of violence against children • Housing vulnerable families being exploited/at risk of violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To develop a more inclusive voluntary offer support to children who are arrested for serious offences • Better information sharing, training, development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing numbers of children engaging with our turnaround initiative • Zero children received a custodial sentence 2 years running
Education, Commissioning and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supressed demand for school places has placed strain on schools. • Reductions in school funding. • Increase in pupils with additional needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorganisation of the Virtual School • Full scale reorganisation of SEND & Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration between admissions and other teams that collate school cohort data

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of practice in the SEND Team 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New structure in Adult Community Learning (ACL) • The SEND area self-evaluation identified areas of strength and focus.

2.2. Adults and Health response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Adult Social Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing levels of demand/complexity of needs • Recruitment and retention • Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) and Office for Local Government (OFLOG) concerns around social isolation. • Upcoming Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of more sophisticated approaches to modelling future demand • Provider Oversight Board was reviewed and relaunched • Transformation programmes for Care and Support at Home and implantation of an Accommodation Plan. • Adult Early Help pilot launch May 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation Plan identified the need to redesign our mental health supported accommodation pathway. • A number of significant service offers, were insourced by the council. • Overall equalities plan for the department requires a significant review, update and relaunch.
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse – Camden has been identified as an “enhanced support” area by Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) meaning greater scrutiny • Cost pressures by the service provider of the Integrated Sexual Health service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional grant funding for smoking cessation activities and schemes • Additional funding Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery Grant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance insights from heart health-focused works • Increase in numbers in substance misuse treatment.

2.3 Supporting Communities response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness and Rough Sleeping • Temporary Accommodation • Rising rents/arrears • HRA financial challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reprioritizing transformation program towards social housing improvement • Review and rationalization of systems across Housing and Repairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on data and performance for service delivery • Efforts to reduce rent arrears showing results • Recruitment of Building Safety Managers under Building Safety Act
Property management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volume of disrepair cases still being received • Pressure on HRA means that resources cannot be expanded to meet demand • Market remains tough for key skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council has responded strongly to the Building Safety Act and has placed itself in a good Regulatory position • The new stock condition data will shape a new asset strategy for Camden to assess and produce options for the challenges faced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have brought greater focus to the analysis of productivity in the repairs service through the application of new reporting tools • Our work to review Ombudsman case outcomes has led to operational changes and service improvement workshops
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial constraints on housebuilding. • Inflation and interest rate impacts. • Regulatory changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversifying delivery models. • Camden Living • Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction market updates via Arcadis and Beacon • Ongoing sales market advice and commentary via Savills
Planning and Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing delivery remains challenging due to market conditions for residential. • Government changes to new planning performance regime starting October 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support from the corporate service design team in changing the way we work within Development Management • Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) funded digital projects to be testing this year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing delivery will remain challenging due to lack of housing proposals coming forward on private sites. • Hoping to learn more about the government's proposals for changes to the planning regime
Environment and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff retention around highways/building control • Service demand vs budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Environmental Implications module as a mandatory learning module. • 'Place-based' development investment • Greening Camden's Transport Fleet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligning Climate Action Plan with Missions and broader frameworks • Enhanced customer view via GovMetric data. • How to adapt to changing climate

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Good Work Camden	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties when residents are presenting with long-term, chronic mental health conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the Good Work Camden (GWC) portal potential for a digital portal for business • Maximising the opportunity of the new Euston Skills Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest rate of young people out of employment in a decade • Increase in school non-attendance might feed through into increased NEET figures in time (not in education, employment or training)
HS2 and Euston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uncertainty around HS2 at Euston and associated uncertainty around budget and resources • Influencing the station designs to ensure place is at the heart of decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuring and resourcing a Development Corporation • Opportunities to deliver more housing at Euston working alongside DLUHC and CIP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of a Euston Economic Impact Assessment highlighting the significant economic potential
Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention • Service demand vs budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed Community Safety Enforcement service • ASB Taskforce/Review • Revised Environmental Health service model 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data led/prevention-based approach towards Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). • Review of emergency planning / business continuity procedures
Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASB impacting our teams and the enjoyment of the wider public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library Improvement Fund secured 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Sport for Young People Report

3. CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1. Finance and Audit

3.1.1 Challenges

The biggest immediate risk facing the financial position of the Council is the financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA overspent by £13.1m in 2022/23. This was a result of significant inflationary pressures on energy and repair costs along with emergency action to tackle damp and mould. In January 2023 the Council agreed MTFs (Medium Term Financial Strategy) savings for the HRA but the ongoing inflationary pressures mean that the HRA will need to identify further savings or cost control measures over the medium term to protect its financial stability.

In addition to the current inflationary pressures the HRA has faced a number of challenges in recent years that have significantly impacted its financial resilience including the impact of the pandemic that saw no specific government support for the HRA, government legislation that resulted in reduced rents for four years and more recently capped rent increases below the rate of inflation, reducing potential rental income to the HRA by c£75m, plus the need to fund the Chalcots major works.

While the Council has received some funding from the government to address capital costs for the Chalcots and a financial settlement from the contractor, this does not fully cover all the costs associated with the Chalcots evacuation and subsequent capital expenditure required on the Chalcots estate.

In the General Fund the Council agreed a new MTFs in January 2023 which will help to strengthen financial resilience over the medium term. The Council has set balanced budgets for 2024/25, however, the financial and operating context for the Council remains challenging. Our financial position is stable but characterised by high degrees of uncertainty about the long-term rates of inflation, future demand for services and a long-term funding settlement for Local Government.

3.1.2 Looking Forward

In both the HRA and General Fund there is a continued challenge to forecast the medium-term financial position to ensure the Council can take early action to address financial pressures. Increasing demographic and service demands across the Council as well as uncertainty regarding the wider economic situation are going to continue to drive cost pressures for the Council. In addition, the cost-of-living crisis will continue to impact residents and businesses in the borough and influence the level of support the Council will need to provide.

It is important that services continue to work to deliver services within budget and continue to identify emerging cost pressures as early as possible.

3.1.3 *Opportunities*

The Council needs to take action to bring overspends under control across the HRA and General Fund to support the Council's financial stability. Directors need to continue to work with finance colleagues to understand and forecast medium term pressures facing their services including pressures caused by changes in demographics, national and local legislative and policy changes and inflationary pressures. In doing this and continuing to develop a deep understanding of the long-term financial pressures facing the Council, will allow the department to make sound decisions to invest in early intervention in the right services to control and avoid costs on future service delivery.

London boroughs are seeing significant cost pressures in a number of services especially across social care and homelessness. Developing a deep understanding of what is driving these costs in Camden will support the Council to make informed investment decisions in early intervention and prevention. Through the established approach to long term financial planning, ongoing financial resilience and stability will allow the Council to continue to invest in support and early intervention across the borough, however overspending on existing services may limit the level of investment that the Council is able to make in future years.

3.1.4 *Learning*

Officers have been working with peers cross London to identify common financial challenges across London boroughs. This will help to support lobbying efforts to government for a fair financial settlement for the Council and show the true level of funding required to deliver Council services. This work has included the sharing of forecasts and assumptions about future funding and cost pressures as a sense check to ensure the Council's financial planning assumptions are reasonable and broadly in line with our peers. This helps to further support sound medium term financial forecasting. Learning from across the local government sector and from key national indicators have helped officers develop a robust section 25 note (Section 25 sets out the requirements that apply to borrowing costs) and for the budget setting report summarising the work the Council is carrying out to ensure it remains financial resilient. There is an opportunity to continue and expand this work in 2024/25 to test the Council's medium term financial forecast assumptions and to learn from best practice across the sector.

3.2. **People and Inclusion**

3.2.1. *Challenges*

The Council continued to cement itself as sector leading in terms of its role as a leading employer, including being accredited as the first local authority by Blood Good Employers and getting GOLD on the Mayors Good Work standard. The Council also reacted swiftly to the recruitment and retention issues following COVID and Cost of Living crisis, re-adjusting pay scales to enable it to better compete with the market. This included investing £1million in the bottom scales, and thereby increasing the minimum earnings guarantee. The lowest paid person at Camden is now on £15.57, well above the London Living Wage which is £13.15. Recruitment and retention will continue to be the biggest challenge as the Council moves into the first half of this year, albeit that there are signs of improvement as vacancies nationally fall or level off. Pay inflation is still running at a relatively high rate (6%), which will continue to place pressure on pay levels.

3.2.2. *Opportunities*

Next year the Council has an opportunity to continue to grow the Camden Talent Pool (which focuses on getting local residents into level 1-3 temporary positions). Since launching the talent pool platform in October 2022 the Council has supported 40 residents into temporary employment for level 1-3 roles. Roles offered to residents include customer services officer, homelessness prevention advisor, children's centre admin assistant and Ukraine response team officer. 29 of these residents are still in employment. The Council now has over 150 residents registered to the talent pool, through job hub referrals and directly. Over the next year the Council wants to grow this pool and is planning an event on the Community Bus in May 2024 for residents to learn more, to receive CV support and interview training.

3.2.3. *Learning*

In the Inclusion work this year, officers have learned how to respond to external challenges, including the war in Israel and Palestine. In responding to this they set up dedicated wellbeing resources to support staff including extending the trauma support. Alongside this responsive work the Council has re-launched the Mentoring programme, launched a new LGBTQ+ Action Plan, revised the Domestic Violence policy to include interest free loans for staff members fleeing abusive relationships and launched a new Women's Network.

This year's pulse survey showed that colleagues are feeling the difference:

- 81% of staff feel they belong (up 26%).
- 89% feel we are making progress to becoming an anti-racist organisation.
- 86% feel leaders at Camden are committed to building an inclusive culture.

3.3. **Law and Governance**

3.3.1. *Challenges*

The Legal service continues to struggle to recruit experienced lawyers and consequently the service is reliant on agency staff. In addition, there has continued throughout 2023/24 to be a significant rise in dis-repair cases which is putting further pressure on Legal Services. The service is in the early stages of externalising all Housing repairs cases to external lawyers, freeing up capacity of internal staff to focus on corporate priorities. This will continue to be developed in 2024/25. A review of the service has commenced, with engagement with staff on moving to a permanent staffing model and looking at the balance of resourcing. The review will set out options for addressing ongoing challenges.

There has continued to be a significant increase in the number of complaints received by the Council, particularly relating to housing. The number of stage 1 complaints has increased by 39% from 2022/23. The ongoing increase is driven by an upturn in complaints for Property Management and Housing Management.

The Housing Ombudsman has started to increase the severity of their findings on complaints cases escalated to them for review, including the number of orders included in the determinations. In October 2023 the Ombudsman communicated their decision to commence an investigation into the Council's handling of leaks, damp and mould, complaints and repairs.

The Elections team are preparing for the 2024 London Mayoral election. Work is also underway to prepare for the next General Election which includes the plan to use 5 Pancras Square as the Count Venue and developing a comprehensive project planner to ensure the smooth running of this high-profile election. This is the focus for the Council but will need to remain a high priority as we work towards the General Election. All of this preparation is taking place whilst the team are implementing the changes from the Election Act 2022.

3.3.2. *Opportunities*

Support is being provided to deliver the Legal Services review. A Head of Legal (Deputy Borough Solicitor) position has been appointed to and will be joining in July 2024.

The Central Complaints team is working closely with service areas to ensure ongoing improvements and will be part of the group that leads the response to the Housing Ombudsman. Support would be beneficial to ensure successful implementation of any recommendations.

There is an opportunity to improve accessibility of Council meetings to those who need support or adjustments in order to engage with the democratic process. This will be developed and explored in 2024/25.

3.3.3. *Learning*

Legal Services has seen fluctuating demand. There has been an increase in demand for enforcement in certain areas which has required significant input from the Legal teams.

The Central Complaints team continues to see a significant increase in the number of complaints submitted at all levels. The focus from the Housing Ombudsman is in-line with their focus on other London Local Authorities. The team continues to collaborate with the Housing services to improve responsiveness to Ombudsman cases.

The Central Complaints took a comprehensive Annual Complaints report 2022/23 through Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny and Cabinet and as always will be looking to continue to improve the report next year following feedback.

3.4. **Equalities and Community Strength**

3.4.1. *Challenges*

Asylum seekers living in contingency hotels face destitution and rough sleeping due to the fast-track asylum process giving insufficient time for individuals to find their next steps. Homes For Ukraine families living in hosting arrangement face new uncertainty as their 3-year Visa arrangement are within 12 months of expiry.

The loss of the Household Support Fund will impact school holiday hunger for 16,500 families, 9,000 households who are in receipt of free school meals, Council Tax Support or Housing Benefit. Also, the loss of the Council's income maximisation advice service (IMAS), which helps people with sustainable, longer term financial support.

As the equalities workload expands beyond the pace of team growth, there's a risk of inefficiency and inadequate response to community needs in addition to our statutory obligation under the Equality Act 2010.

Cost (e.g. utilities and service costs) of running new Community Investment Programme (CIP) Community Centres are high and beyond the financial capacity of the organisations for whom the centres were built (Highgate Newtown Community Partners and Abbey Community Centre). Community Partnerships are seeking to find ways to make these initiatives viable but are likely to require use of reserves.

3.4.2. *Opportunities*

Camden will shortly be completing the process of becoming a borough of sanctuary. The award will provide further opportunities for services to benchmark what they do now and build stronger interfaces with refugee communities in the months and years ahead.

Community Partnerships are re-designing the 'Community Impact Fund' to align with We Make Camden (WMC). This fund potentially could become a vehicle to enable Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners to deliver against WMC. It could also enable pooling of funding across the system creating a clear, consistent approach to grant project funding for the sector – e.g. three rounds per annum.

Camden has one of the most restrictive Discretionary Rate Relief (DRR) programmes for charities of any London borough. £1 of DRR for a charity costs the council an estimated £0.33. Refreshing this policy is probably the single most significant thing the Council could do to achieve its aim of supporting a resilient, sustainable VCS.

3.4.3. *Learning*

Recent data has shown an increase in the number of homelessness presentations and an increase in rough sleeping for those receiving positive asylum decisions, under the government's accelerated procedure.

Nationally, financial hardship has increased from winter 2022 to winter 2023. People are less able to make ends meet and falling into greater debt as a result. This is illustrated by data from Citizens Advice Bureau. Locally, there has been an increase in money advice referrals from households citing having someone with a disability as the main reason for hardship.

Locally, data is showing that disabilities and accessibility needs further work - Members Enquiries have risen in this area, and accessibility remains a massive issue for many in Camden. Nationally, central government are still being held to account to several failings in this regard and Camden needs to ensure it is not failing disabled residents.

3.5. **Digital & Data Services (DDS)**

3.5.1. *Challenges*

The Council needs to address the critical task of improving digital and data skills within its workforce. An organized plan is in motion to improve these competencies, emphasizing the necessity of integrating targeted educational programs and significant investment in skills development. The Council is also committed to nurturing an environment that recognizes the importance of these technologies.

These steps are fundamental to the ability to adapt swiftly, operate efficiently, and fulfil the Camden community's expectations effectively.

3.5.2. *Opportunities*

With the successful implementation of a number of key initiatives, the council now stands at the brink of new opportunities for service delivery enhancement. Building on the momentum from the revamped website and the Omni-Channel Contact Centre, future efforts can focus on further leveraging technology to deepen citizen engagement and utilizing the data collected from the new contact model and website analytics to identify patterns and pain points, thereby tailoring services to better meet citizen needs. These initiatives will significantly enhance operational efficiency and citizen satisfaction, ensuring the council remains at the forefront of innovative public service delivery.

3.5.3. *Learning*

DDS has made significant strides in enhancing collaboration both internally across Data, Product, IT, and Customer Services and externally with council directorates. By learning to cultivate an environment where teams are encouraged to constructively challenge each other and build mutual trust, DDS has seen a marked improvement in its operational efficiency and project outcomes. This new collaborative spirit has led to a series of successful deliveries, demonstrating the power of teamwork and open communication. As teams become more cohesive, they are better equipped to tackle complex projects and deliver solutions that meet the evolving needs of their stakeholders. This progression in team dynamics marks a pivotal development in the division's ongoing efforts to refine service delivery and enhance overall performance.

3.6. **Strategy, Design and Insight**

3.6.1 *Challenges*

Recruitment and retention: Recruitment, in a high turnover service, will continue to be a priority but we need to reflect on how best to do it in sustainable way whilst maintaining leadership focus on project delivery and service development. We have learned from the recent successful recruitment campaign what is effective, and will continue to focus on retention and progression so that people have clarity around the development opportunities and career pathways they have in Camden.

Delivery risk: With a high level of demand on the skills and support of the function, the service needs to prioritise the strategic areas where it can most meaningfully contribute to outcomes. Carving out meaningful space to engage in work, such as supporting delivery of the WMC missions, requires a level of capacity that is regularly impacted by responding to new pressures.

Mitigating impact of the pre-election period: The service needs to be alert to the exact timings of the pre-election periods in the coming year to be able to re-align ongoing programmes of work involving the engage residents around policy areas to mitigate a need to pause or postpone delivery.

3.6.2 *Opportunities*

Growing Insight, Learning & Impact (ILI) service: The recruitment campaigns to build up the team is ongoing with appointment of Senior Research Officer confirmed during Q4 and 1 more position (Research Officer) to fill. This will give the ILI team the capacity to continue developing their proposition and capitalise on positive response to the second state of the borough report, continuing to broaden and deepen the evidence base the council and partners can use.

Strategy Delivery Management model: The design and establishment of a consistent model for the delivery of strategic, design-led change initiatives will allow for greater coordination of effort and multidisciplinary working across the Council's directorates, as well as supporting the operations and people development offers of the Council's Strategy Family.

Contributing to key pieces of service transformation: The teams continue to work in partnership with other strategy and service teams in areas of important transformation work aligned to We Make Camden and the priority areas from the MTFS.

Further refining our approach to Missions delivery and governance: Upcoming deep dive sessions on each Mission will bring greater attention to stretching ambition, increased accountability, and more visible stepping stones to 2030 to facilitate unblocking of barriers to delivery, greater visibility across the borough, and increased co-delivery with partners.

3.6.3 *Learning*

Building external partnerships: Recent publications, conferences and interactions have shown more appetite and interest regionally, nationally and internationally, for mission-oriented delivery and for policy design and design research. Our teams expect to be learning more from others and are actively sharing their experience as sector leaders (e.g. presenting at the recent Service Design in Gov conference, co-founding the Local Gov Service Design Network).

Learnings from an inclusive recruitment process re-design: The services has recently run a re-designed process for recruitment that puts inclusivity at the centre, was successful in filling all vacancies, and well-received by candidates, both successful and unsuccessful. This approach has been shared with the rest of Corporate

Services to support other teams in their recruitment campaigns and will be shared more broadly to help close the Council's longer-standing vacancies.

Reinforcement of Missions governance: Engagement around the Missions Community of Practice and the quarterly Member Sessions has been extremely encouraging and beneficial to the long-term embedding of the missions-oriented approach, with many organisations approach the Council to understand and learn from our good practice in this emergent space.

3.7. **Participation, Partnerships and Communications**

3.7.1 *Challenges*

The service continues to meet a high level of demand across the council. The workload intensity across the organisation remains very high, while requests for business-as-usual communications support is back at pre-pandemic levels. The service manages its resources/capacity through forward planning and agreeing priorities at senior level; however, it frequently get requests for urgent communications support on new priorities. The service flexes its resources to meet council priorities which last year included housing/tenant participation, ongoing cost of living crisis, equality and community strength, We Make Camden participation among other areas.

The service is on election footing – this means both preparing communications handling and support to cover Mayoral and GLA, by-elections and the General Election and also recognising it is working in a hyper-politicised environment. Many of the issues that were challenging in 2023/2024 – i.e. the Council's approach to rough sleeping, council house maintenance including damp and mould, certain equalities work and care for vulnerable citizens, are likely to be big challenges again.

Delivering at scale and pace has been challenging. The service played a key role in the development and delivery of the Intensive Tenant Participation and Engagement programme, which included 28 Estate Action Days and door knocking with 22% of Council tenants. As ambitions for We Make Camden partner networks grow, so has the scale of the partner infrastructure – with the We Make Camden Summit, Mission Ambassadors and mission networks developing. Citizen applications for the We Make Camden Kit continue to grow. The demand outweighs the level of Council funding – so the service is working with Camden Giving to increase funding contributions from other organisations. This year's Cost of Living Community Fund increased to £450,000 and a new approach was developed to convening and working across networks to support collaborative partner responses.

3.7.2 *Opportunities*

Looking ahead to 2024/2025, continuing to support a full programme of communications will remain the priority. Aligning communications activity with issues flowing on from a general election and potential change of government and ongoing financial pressures on residents and for local councils will be at the front of planning and collaboration with other areas of the organisation.

The service is working to provide an enhanced media monitoring function for the organisation including stepping up the weekend service. This will allow it to better identify emerging reputational issues and offer timely, strategic advice to help the organisation to respond to these. There will be a need for services to provide timely service briefings and policy advice, and organisational leaders contactable for this to be as effective as possible. Directors and heads of service gearing up their services to respond quickly and outreach from the media team within the organisation will assist with this.

The service will look to continue to support colleagues to test and learn new participatory approaches, to continue on its journey of embedding participation across the organisation. This will include working with housing colleagues to embed learning from the Tenant Participation and Engagement programme within the housing transformation programme; promote events and the use of Good Life Camden; and work alongside the 5 citizen scientists and other citizens to develop an ambitious participation model for citizen decision making and governance of Camden's Community Wealth Fund.

3.7.3 *Learning*

The service delivers evidence-based communications which draws on its own channel research, which is enhanced by access to data/insight specific to policies and programmes requesting support. Making the most of access to data and information is critical to informing messages, understanding audiences and evaluation. For example, when the service works with Tackling Poverty colleagues on the cost-of-living crisis campaign, they provide specific information on barriers preventing residents accessing specific benefits and who those residents are, and they also provide benefit take up rates. This helps to identify what is working well, and what isn't so effective, so that the service can iterate and pivot the approach as needed.

In the past year, the service has continued to collaborate with colleagues to learn more about the issues it is communicating, and to iterate the communications approaches to ensure it is being as effective as possible. In the year ahead, the service will be refreshing the evidence base that informs the channel strategy and will continue to identify opportunities to maintain and develop skills within the teams.

Once again, the service has seen the strength in working collaboratively with partners to increase citizen action/voice. It will look to continue to work with partners, such as UCL and Central St Martins, to increase the number of citizen scientists in the borough and to develop accreditation which recognises their contributions/skills. The neighbourhoods approach is continuing to develop and presents a huge opportunity for the Council to benefit from resident relationships, input and insight and for a collective neighbourhood approach to supporting those citizens in greatest need.

4. CHILDREN AND LEARNING

4.1. Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

Children's Social Care

4.1.1. *Challenges*

Sufficiency of placements for children with complex needs including and care experienced young people is a challenge because demand has increased. The increase in the volume of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children between 18-25 has led to pressure on the commissioned Pathway beds and therefore an increase in spot purchasing at a higher unit cost. This higher level of demand has created pressures on the placement budget as there is also a commensurate shortage of in-house fostering placements for larger complex sibling groups. Covid was a turning point for several fostering households who retired, but the service was unable to replace at sufficient pace. A more strategic approach to planning and commissioning of placements is underway including a system analysis and overall assessment which sets out the Camden story. Data analysis looking at children in care and placement budget and an opportunity assessment setting out next steps.

It is notable that there is an increase in the volume of referrals and a commensurate increase in the numbers of children in care. Previous and current MTFs savings were made from the placement budget based on declining numbers. Work is underway to right size the placement budget in line with the change in trend and inflationary costs in a competitive environment.

Workforce retention. This remains a national and regional challenge in social care, and while the agency rates in social care in Camden are relatively good compared to London, the Council is engaged in several regional and local initiatives to widen the pipeline. The challenge of retaining social workers in child protection requires an investment in their professional development and that of those who supervise and support them.

4.1.2. *Opportunities*

National reform around Family Help poses an opportunity for delivery model that balances help and safeguarding, building on Camden's successes while meeting new national requirements. A Pathfinder bid has been submitted to the Department for Education (DFE) as the first step towards our intentions.

4.1.3. **Family Support & Complex Families**

4.1.4. *Challenges*

Rise in front door contacts points to increasing need for proactive outreach (front door is by nature a reactive service). Growing importance of positioning – and widely communicating – family hubs as an information source for families of school-age children to try and reduce the number of front door contacts that are being resolved with Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) in early help (significant %).

Increase in family problems that relate to other council services, notably housing and SEND. Early help often seen as a 'mediator' or problem solver where relationships have deteriorated with other Camden services. This isn't necessarily a problem for early help, but the ideal would be that relationships between families and other services don't deteriorate in the first place.

Increases in SEND and particularly autism in early help family work – challenges regarding a) competence and confidence of the 'generalist' workforce to provide appropriate, informed help to families with children with disabilities and b) the availability of 'specialist' family support options for families where needed and where that is the family's preference.

Communication – staff experiencing uncertainty about the various change agendas and what it means for them – need to improve/increase communication and opportunities to participate in change work so it is felt as collaborative.

4.1.5. *Opportunities*

Continuing shift of the early help system towards neighbourhoods – family hubs and family help provide opportunities to create more coherence in the system from a resident's perspective.

Family help national reform agenda enables a rethink of current practices for children above universal need but below child protection to ensure we are operating at maximum effectiveness for families.

The developmental work around care entry will support a greater lens on prevention of family breakdown for a small cohort of children who enter care.

The move to a 'relational council' is welcome but this needs accelerating to prevent the relationship breakdown between services and residents that then needs mediating.

4.1.6. *Learning*

Excellent piece of data insight work on young carers completed to help inform strategy development.

A codesign project with children who have survived DV to design therapeutic services and support available for children in their position is in development.

Developmental work on Centre for Relational Practice.

Scoping work on edge of care options to identify any additional ways to prevent family breakdown and children's care entry.

Integrated Early Years and Family Hubs

4.1.7. *Challenges*

In 2023-24 setting up Family Hubs in line with DfE expectations and responding to the monitoring requests in respect of service delivery and grant usage.

Supporting the introduction of the new childcare entitlements and ensuring sufficient provision.

Funding for family hubs unconfirmed beyond 2024/25. If funding ceases we will then need to consider what services can be mainstreamed.

On-going roll-out of additional childcare entitlements.

Defining the scope of the 0-19(25) service.

4.1.8. *Opportunities*

The Family Hub programme allows more families to benefit from neighbourhood-based services.

Better communication of services available for families through a new communications campaign and new website.

The opportunity that social care reform provides to simplify and further integrate support for families.

To showcase the added value of integrated working, e.g. in the delivery of the new enhanced healthy child programme.

4.1.9. *Learning*

There is a strong appetite among partners to work together more closely.

Commissioning new services as part of the family hub programme takes time.

Integrated Youth Services

4.1.10. *Challenges*

There has been an increase in referrals into the Youth Early Help service with concerns for young people experiencing bullying and fighting both in and outside of school. This is having a detrimental impact on their attendance, safety and mental health. This will require close working with schools to agree a joint response.

There has been an increase in the number of young people with SEND referred into our Youth service provision. Whilst this is considered a positive and the service has actively been working towards better inclusion, this does have an impact on staffing ratio to young people and the types of activities that can be facilitated. More training is required for youth workers and review of current universal offer to cost assess impact for future delivery.

Housing vulnerable families being exploited/at risk of violence. There have been several families across both our statutory and voluntary services moved into temporary accommodation due to risks in the community. This requires families moving into hotels, moving frequently and destabilising families, leading to children being NEET (not in education, employment and training). It has profound impact on family dynamics, feelings of stability, our ability to offer support/monitoring and networks to wrap around them. Due to the ineffectiveness of this intervention some families have chosen to move back home even though the risk remains. There needs to be a clear trauma informed plan with housing colleagues in how the service supports these families and work in partnership.

There has been an increase in the number of incidents of violence against children. These incidents are not believed to be linked to our established gangs. However, there are concerns about ongoing issues between different peer groups. Police investigations into these incidents are continuing and children/young people are still to be identified. This needs to be monitored closely and further analysis needed.

Ongoing concerns around a criminal group based around the Hardington block on Belmont Street NW1. Support and disruption work aims to reduce the risk of this group becoming a gang. This group of children and young people are involved in

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) at various locations and class A drug supply around the Camden Town area. Work is ongoing to safeguard the children and disrupt exploitation and criminality.

4.1.11. *Opportunities*

Work through the Prevent and Identify strand of the Youth Safety Steering group to develop a more inclusive voluntary offer of support to children who are arrested for serious offences. This could build on the turnaround initiative for those children who and support them before potential charges and offer confidence to courts on potential for bail support packages. This could reduce potential future remands.

As per recommendations from extended learning review into the death of child C in July 2023 we need to develop better relationships with universal youth settings. Work to be undertaken to support better information sharing, training, development, information sharing, understanding of needs and signposting.

Developing parenting champions specifically for adolescent parents within the borough that can support families who are otherwise reluctant to be vulnerable/engage with support from the Local Authority specifically.

Better joined up working between council services, including between children's and youth services, to develop the response for children and young people at risk of youth violence, based on the understanding that youth violence, gangs and child criminal exploitation can overlap, but need to be explored individually too.

4.1.12. *Learning*

The service has increasing numbers of children engaging with the turnaround initiative and increasing numbers of children coming through on Youth Justice Service (YJS) Interventions which has meant higher workflow. New case managers have been recruited to support the increase in workload and ensure all families and children continue to get an excellent service. A new challenge would be how to maintain this preventative workstream when funding for Turnaround ends in March 2025.

Youth Justice Data: First time entrants continue to be low with only 10 in Q4, a year total of 25. For the second year running there have been zero children receiving a custodial sentence.

4.2. **Education, Commissioning and inclusion**

4.2.1. *Challenges*

School places - suppressed demand for school places has placed strain on schools. Compounded with real terms reductions in school funding, schools can feel

vulnerable to the challenges brought by an increasing complexity of admission and proportional increase in pupils with additional needs, retaining high quality staff and managing budgets in a time of high inflation.

Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - Consistency of practice in the SEND Team and across the partnership to ensure statutory compliance. .

4.2.2. *Opportunities*

Virtual School - Reorganisation of the Virtual School to ensure that the service is able to adapt to the changing needs

SEND & Inclusion – full scale reorganisation to strengthen the system in a range of ways (including stronger partnership working, career progression opportunities, improved financial and data oversight, more proactive engagement with families)

4.2.3. *Learning*

Admissions – to achieve greater integration between teams that collate data on school cohorts (including public health, SEN, mainstream admissions, housing and benefits

Adult Community Learning - New structure to improve IAG based on a consultation. Improved accredited learning in ESOL. Removal of hybrid learning at low levels in Digital inclusion courses.

SEND - The SEND area Self-Evaluation identified areas of strength and focus. Performance oversight needs to be strengthened.

5. **ADULTS AND HEALTH**

5.1. **Adult Social Care**

5.1.1 *Challenges*

The number of people waiting for assessments and reviews has increased significantly since the pandemic and in 2023/2024 one of the service's key priorities was to quantify existing demand and numbers of people on waiting lists. A robust management action plan has seen an overall reduction in the numbers of people waiting for reviews. Demand at the front door however remains high and a priority for 2024/25 is to continue with management actions as well as implement a new neighbourhood and front door model. The service has invested additional staffing capacity in the new model so that residents are supported in a timely way.

The increasing complexity of some residents' needs means that it is often difficult to identify providers able to meet the needs of residents locally, either in Camden or within the North Central London (NCL) footprint.

The North Central London Integrated Care Board (NCL ICB) carried out a comprehensive review of its staffing structures followed by an extended consultation with staff during 2023/24. ICB commissioners have been working within Camden teams for many years on integrated contracts, particularly related to mental health and learning disabilities in Adult Social Care (ASC). As of 1 April 2024, all ICB health commissioning is now aligned with ASC instead of integrated, with health contract responsibility now held directly by the ICB. These changes have presented a range of challenges to Camden, where staff capacity has been temporarily reduced, additional recruitment activity has taken place and remains underway, and changes to commissioning portfolios are being agreed with updated work plans for 2024/25. New ways of working and expectations around accountability will need to be developed over the coming months with existing and new ICB staff alongside Camden commissioning staff.

5.1.2 *Opportunities*

The five NCL boroughs are working together to develop more sophisticated approaches to modelling future demand for adult social care services, using the new national Client Level Data set that all local authorities now capture. By coming together to agree a defined methodology NCL will be better placed as an ICB to model and prepare for future demand for social care services.

The Provider Oversight Board was reviewed and relaunched in 2023, with a new terms of reference and enhanced approach to capturing risks, issues and trends. A number of VCS contracts were handed back during this financial year due to unforeseen financial issues, and a major provider that works across a number of London boroughs to deliver community equipment has been challenged by poor performance and financial concerns. A number of other providers in Camden have been engaged through improvement planning and enhanced monitoring, showing improvements through this work. Commissioners and operational colleagues have worked closely together and with provider partners to manage risk and assure safety and quality across the borough, and an updated set of documents and processes that capture this work in one place are being developed for publication in 2024/25.

The department has been focused on Care Quality Commission (CQC) preparation over the last year, and has carried out a number of robust exercises to review the evidence available for each of the CQC's four themes and nine quality statements. Weekly departmental meetings are keeping the work moving forward at a steady pace, with the self-assessment in draft form and a comprehensive comms plan in

development. Once contacted, ASC will be prepared to supply evidence collated that demonstrates how Adult Social Care in Camden supports adults with care and support needs and carries out its duties as defined by the Care Act 2014. Evidence will be sent to the CQC within the 3-week window allowed, followed by an on-site visit to Camden that will take place within a 6-month period following document submission. Whilst preparation for CQC inspection has been a challenge in terms of the time and resource required, this has given us the opportunity to review what we are doing well, celebrate what we are proud of and identify what progress we have made on our improvement priorities.

In 2023/24, the transformation programme gathered momentum across a number of projects, which have been reporting regularly to the Supporting People Connecting Communities Steering Group and Board. The service is now moving to the implementation phase for the Accommodation Plan, having completed year one of five towards Transforming Care and Support at Home and is about to launch a number of key strategies and frameworks, including the Carers Strategy, Workforce Strategy and Co-production Framework and Toolkit in early 2024. In addition to equalities being a cornerstone of the Workforce Strategy, Co-production Framework, relaunch of What Matters and the departmental Learning and Development Plan, a focus on the impact of ASC equalities work for residents, ASC staff and our providers will further enhance our ability to demonstrate the outcomes of our commitment to equalities.

National data from Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) and Office for Local Government (OFLOG) has indicated that Camden performs less well in comparison to other local authorities when it comes to supporting residents who experience social isolation, who feel less safe and experience loneliness. To help address these concerns, work on Adult Early Help has progressed considerably during 2023. Officers have completed an initial discovery exercise which has enabled them to understand the issue and current landscape in depth. For the service, Adult Early Help is for adults who are facing or are at risk of facing overwhelm, due to competing stresses in their lives. Part of this is about multiple disadvantage. Part of this is about people falling through the gaps of support. They may not be eligible for statutory support or are not receiving the right kind of help.

The service now has a clear vision of what effective Early Help could mean for adults in Camden, it has developed a set of assumptions to be tested and has planned a small-scale test-and-learn pilot which will launch in May 2024. This will employ 5 staff over an 18-month period to test out Adult Early Help interventions with residents who are currently falling through gaps in Camden's complex network of support services.

In 2023, officers carried out a review of Mental Health Social Work arrangements with Camden and Islington Mental Health trust. The key objective was to work in partnership with the Trust to design and agree a new model of integration in neighbourhoods, which would ensure the continuation of multi-disciplinary working but also provide the council with closer oversight and accountability in delivering our statutory duties under the Care Act 2014. With an in-principle agreement now in place, the service will be engaging and consulting with staff and stakeholders to deliver the new model and staffing arrangements by early 2025.

5.1.3 *Learning*

Through engagement and consultation with staff in 2023, staff have said that some of the overly complex systems and processes can get in the way of progressing work in a timely way and that improvements and changes could help reduce waiting times. A number of workstreams to address this are underway in 2024 and this includes potential improvement in the way financial processes are managed. During 2024/25 officers are planning to conduct a review of financial services, looking at processes, roles, structure and capacity to improve the way financial services are managed in ASC, with a focus on how processes are impacting on the experience of those who draw on care and support.

Work on the Accommodation Plan identified the need to redesign the mental health supported accommodation pathway prior to scheduled re-procurement in 2024/25. Additional work with Housing colleagues on the Single Adult pathway highlighted the need to look at this pathway alongside the Mental Health accommodation commissioning plans. A more holistic approach to both pathways will ensure that work is better aligned, commissioning intentions are consistent and that pathways are able to adjust to the specific and dynamic needs of individuals.

Although embedded in a range of strategies and regular work carried out by Adult Social Care the overall equalities plan for the department requires a significant review, update and relaunch. A refreshed plan will also create more opportunities to embed equalities into the initial analyses of projects, regular discussions in supervisions and team meetings, and a refocus on structural biases that may negatively impact on either residents or staff.

The service oversees management of the local market of providers to ensure a fair cost of care. The continued aim is to deliver best value and efficiencies while maintaining transparency in negotiating costs with providers. Camden continues to develop its work with local authorities in North Central London (NCL) to ensure that there is a joined-up approach where possible. This is particularly relevant given the interdependency on care beds between the boroughs. This consistent and robust approach to market management has kept Camden within its budget envelope for 2023/24, and the intention is to do the same in 2024/25.

A number of significant service offers, including Camden's Mental Health Day Services and one of four Camden extra care services in borough, Mora Burnet House, were insourced by the council. The insourcing has presented both opportunities and challenges, with learning presented to the Supporting People Connecting Communities Board in March 2024. The aim of sharing this learning is to inform corporate approaches to insourcing as well as future approaches to commissioning in ASC, both for transformation opportunities and when there are rare provider failures that need to be responded to. During 2024/25, Camden will be undertaking a deep dive review of Charlie Ratchford Court and a wider review of ASC In-house Provider Services to utilise the learning in future planning of these key service areas in Camden. There are also plans in place to align provider monitoring and quality assurance for all in-house provision with commissioned providers to ensure parity across the market.

5.2. **Health & Wellbeing (Q3 2023/24)**

5.2.1. *Challenges*

The biggest on-going challenge which will also need focus in 2024/25 is the recent reporting of cost pressures by the Long-Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) service provider in the Integrated Sexual Health service (CNWL). The provider has written to the Chief Executives of all four commissioning authorities (Camden, Islington, Barnet & Haringey) outlining a significant shortfall in finances. Officers from all four boroughs are working closely with CNWL to better understand the factors driving cost pressures with the aim of developing mutually agreed solutions.

A new drug & alcohol service began in April 2023. Camden has been identified as an "enhanced support" area by the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID), meaning our performance against increasing the number of people accessing treatment is under greater scrutiny. This means the number of people who leave the service either in a planned or an unplanned way are important measures to review.

Increased non-attendance rates for Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) courses and Make Every Contact Count (MECC) courses remain a challenge, with participants booking & not showing up for courses. However, it is worth noting that average & overall group size is increasing as well. With the new contract, a possible challenge will be pivoting towards delivering solely to Camden and ensuring courses are adequately filled.

5.2.2. *Opportunities*

There is a considerable additional grant funding starting in 2024/25 to support a range of increased smoking cessation activity including introducing the “swap to stop” scheme (providing vapes as an alternative to nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to encourage people to stop smoking), provision in substance misuse settings, engagement with key target groups, and increasing capacity in the Breathe service.

The additional funding Supplementary Substance Misuse Treatment & Recovery Grant (SSMTRG) has a clear objective to increase numbers in treatment, this also includes interventions to retain people in treatment (reduce unplanned exits). The interventions are currently funded & will continue to be funded next year, and have a focus on interventions to identify, encourage & support more people to engage & sustain their engagement with drug & alcohol treatment.

5.2.3. *Learning*

NHS Health checks: Insights from recent heart health focused works such as the Camden mobile bus evaluation, NCL-wide Long-Term Condition service model will help shape delivery improvement plans. An equity audit is underway to ascertain current areas of inequalities which will inform the review of the NHS Health Checks service specifications.

Latest quarterly Substance Misuse data suggests an increase in numbers in treatment from the previous quarter with a decrease in unplanned exits for drug users but a small increase in unplanned exits for alcohol users. The Office of Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) issue monthly “Local Outcomes Framework” data which allows both commissioners & services to review data more frequently & evaluate the effectiveness of new initiatives, pathways & interventions.

In partnership with Islington, Barnet & Haringey Camden have developed a resident survey to help commissioners understand how and why people access the LARC service which will support the development of the new service in 2025.

Camden commissioners have also funded a number of pilot projects related to identified areas of service development (including establishing a Clinical Advisory Group) which will be evaluated in 2024. The findings of which will inform the service model when it is recommissioned during 2024/25.

6. SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

6.1. Housing

6.1.1. *Challenges*

Homelessness and Rough Sleeping:

The Council continues to face challenging policy changes from central government which are increasing homelessness. The Home Office are still fast-tracking decisions (known as the 'Streamlined Application Process' or SAP) for asylum seekers. Those granted Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK are then required to make their own housing arrangements and can also approach local authorities to apply as homeless – many are leaving Home Office accommodation to sleep rough - data suggests that since January there are 25-30 refugees rough sleeping in Camden each month.

Rough sleeping rates in Camden are high. Between January – March, 428 people were seen rough sleeping. This is the highest number counted in a quarter this year and represents a 51% increase compared to the same period last year (when 255 people were seen over the three months). This year also saw a 44% increase in statutory homelessness presentations with an increase from 2,458 applications in 2022/23 to 3,548 in 2023/24. Of these, there was a steep increase in applications from refugees leaving asylum seeker accommodation from 74 (2%) in 2022/23 to 360 (9%) in 2023/24.

Temporary Accommodation:

Camden has a duty to secure temporary and emergency accommodation for certain homeless households in priority need under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996. At the end of March 2024, the Council was providing temporary accommodation to 808 households of which 468 were families. Numbers in temporary accommodation has increased by 42% since the end of year 2022/23.

Temporary accommodation continues to be a financial challenge for the Council, with current overspend for the year forecasted at around £5 million and we are working towards finding new, more financially stable options to meet this statutory duty.

Rent Arrears

Rising rent arrears remains a key challenge for the Council. A combination of factors has meant that tenants are increasingly struggling with their finances; rising heating charges and cost of living means that we are seeing tenants are less able to pay rent.

Voids

We are actively working to improve our key-to-key void times and have an improvement plan in place. As part of our work to improve void times, we are:

- Proposing improvements to the service structure which aims to streamline the lettings process

- Collaborating with other organisations to share best practice
- Improving IT and systems to improve reporting for voids
- Working with Neighbourhood teams to reduce the time between offer and tenancy start
- Deliver a pilot of 'pre-void' visits which will help to assess void works and potentially allow us to start the re-letting process at a stage before the property becomes void.
- Working with contractors to improve clearance times
- Reviewing voids with quick turnarounds to learn what works well
- Looking at contractor capacity and the scope to bring in additional supply chain support
- Reviewing works prioritisation with the lettings team to make sure overall key to key time is reduced

We have recently just recruited to some key posts in the Repairs and Lettings services.

Pressures on the HRA:

The HRA continues to be under significant financial strain, particularly due to risks around power and income heating income volatility, bad debt, loss of rental income through void properties and volatility in leaseholder income. Despite this, specific workstreams are being led to increase rental income, review leaseholder services, and increase the efficiency of the void turnaround.

6.1.2. *Opportunities*

The Council is reprioritising the efforts of the transformation programme towards the improvement of social housing. Regulatory changes and resource constraints mean that focus needs to be put on Camden's duties as a landlord. The transformation outcomes are still being defined. As part of this transformation, Camden are undertaking a significant piece of work to review and rationalise its' systems across Housing and Repairs, working closely with Digital and Data Service colleagues to prioritise which systems will enable greatest improvement to services.

For temporary accommodation, the Council are developing options for use as family and/or singles hostels at Chester and Camden Road; approval has been provided to utilise empty properties on regeneration sites as short life temporary accommodation; the conversion of up to fifty void general need properties to be used as temporary accommodation; and working with potential partners to secure access to large hotel sites to reduce cost and consolidate emergency hotel placements.

6.1.3. *Learning*

There is a focus on data and performance and ensuring Housing has a strong performance culture and improved use of data to drive service delivery and decision making.

Rough sleeping increased:

The number of rough sleepers observed on a single night reduced slightly in Q4 to 112 which is still nearly double the figure at the start of the year (58); there is a regular seasonality reduction in the single night count in January and February. Since January, the outreach team have moved 42 Home Office leavers into permanent accommodation. Each month new people rough sleep in Camden. Typically, the percentage of new people has been around 30% of people seen each month - in March 2024, our outreach team met 47 new people who are rough sleeping with only 10% having any connection to Camden. Additionally, in the same month over 50% were non-UK Nationals, many with limited rights to work and benefits in the country.

6.2. **Property Management**

6.2.1. *Challenges*

The Council is still receiving a high volume of disrepair cases which is common across the social housing sector. The total number of live cases has reduced however due to a process of closing out settled cases on the system. Addressing this caseload has required the Council to divert resources from responsive repairs and with compensation and fees also payable to solicitors, disrepair is placing a significant impact on the HRA with an overall impact of £4.9m for the financial year.

The Council has dedicated damp and mould resources and has made significant progress during 2023/24 on managing the casework generated and proactively following up cases. Expenditure in 2023/24 totalled £3.9m as the Council managed cases and carried out works to address the root causes. The Council's approach to proactively managing damp and mould is outlined in its self-assessment against the Ombudsman's Spotlight report on damp and mould which was reported to the Housing Scrutiny Committee in January 2024.

Good progress has been made on recruitment – particularly for key roles such as Building Safety Managers – however the market remains extremely competitive, and the Council continues to keep its approach to the recruitment of technical personnel under review.

6.2.2. *Opportunities*

The Council has responded strongly to the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the Building Safety Act 2022 and has placed itself in a good position to meet the wide range of Regulatory requirements (noting that this has required £4.5m being allocated from its revenue budgets within the HRA). There will be challenges in meeting the various deadlines however the Council has built a strong team and is working systematically to develop the Building Safety Cases required for 188 of the Council's tall buildings,

the first tranche of 39 being due April 2024. The development of the safety cases will further improve the Council's approach to managing tall buildings and keeping residents safe; this through works undertaken, regular inspections and information made available.

The Council has also been assessing its position against the new consumer standards, introduced through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, and this includes measures such as the decent homes standard and other compliance indicators such as gas safety. The measures are called Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), and a report is being taken to the Housing and Fire Safety Panel in July 2024 which will report the Council's outturn against the new measures that have been introduced. The introduction of the TSMs has helped the Council take a fresh look at compliance and how it is measured against these new definitions. It will also enable benchmarking across landlords and help residents better understand how landlords are performing against standard definitions of compliance. It should be noted that the definitions used for the TSMs for repairs and gas safety differ from those currently used for this report, we will look at how best to incorporate the TSMs into this report for 2024/25.

The Council has also worked closely with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) on its response to the Regulatory Notice issued in July 2023. This concerned the number of high-risk fire safety actions that needed to be delivered and the progress made on the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Solid progress was made during 2023/24 and by May 2024 all high-risk actions had been addressed, the installation of Carbon Monoxide detectors had been completed and more than 93% of tenanted homes had smoke detection installed with the remainder due to be delivered or undergoing a 'no access' process. As part of this process the Council agreed a Voluntary Undertaking with the RSH which put in place a range of actions to help make sure similar backlogs do not occur in the future.

During the year, the new housing stock condition survey was completed and this will shape a new asset strategy for the Council's homes and lead to the development of options to bridge the gap between resources available and investment required. As part of this the Council will review its five-year capital programme and make sure it is targeting the most acute priorities, helping to take pressure off the repairs service, and best use is made of available resources.

6.2.3. *Learning*

The pressure on the repairs service due to the above factors, and wider requirements such as fire safety works, has led to a gradual decrease in completion of repairs in target time and this is an area of the focus for the service as it moves into 2024/25. To help balance these pressures, in Q3 and Q4 of 2023/24 we

brought greater focus to the analysis of productivity across the repairs service, this through the application of new reporting tools and monitoring by managers across the repairs service. Additional controls were introduced to limit the level of replacement work being carried out reactively, to make sure investment decisions are being considered alongside other priorities. The overall approach being to make sure that the service remains within its budget can accommodate the pressure placed on it by new regulatory requirements, disrepair and addressing damp and mould.

Work to review Housing Ombudsman case outcomes has led to operational changes and service improvement workshops across the repairs service, housing services, the repairs contact centre and case management teams. This includes for example, the checks made when works have been completed to empty homes and they are handed back to the moving homes team for letting. This work has been supplemented by its self-assessment against the Ombudsman's spotlight reports on damp and mould and Knowledge and Information Management (KIM). The Council also introduced a residents panel to help evaluate complaints and discuss the changes that need to be made to service delivery. This work will support the wider housing and repairs transformation project and will improve how we deliver services to residents.

6.3. **Development**

6.3.1. *Challenges*

Having emerged from the unparalleled challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a period of unprecedented inflationary cost pressures, the last year has been one of ongoing instability, exacerbated by a lack of clarity from central government on issues such as building safety.

In the face of the many factors working against us, this year CIP has continued to progress schemes where many others have stalled. Having specifically tailored the procurement and contracting approach to individual projects and sites, the service has been able to successfully attract competitive bids from contractors and development partners alike.

Continued pressure on the HRA means that any additional borrowing to facilitate direct delivery of new homes beyond what is already in the approved pipeline will be challenging. However, the current delivery programme remains significant with approximately 500 new homes currently in construction and approval in place to deliver 1,000 more.

6.3.2. *Opportunities*

To increase the overall scale of the CIP programme the Council has diversified delivery models. A development partner has been selected to work with the Council in bringing forward a significant number of homes at Bacton II and a similar process is at an advanced stage for the Camley Street project.

Opportunities to deliver more homes in partnership exist across the borough, including at Central Somers Town, Tybalds and Euston, where the Council could position itself as the delivery arm for offsite affordable contributions.

The Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme has been a success with a further 50 properties acquired through TAPP 3 which will be used for temporary accommodation and housing Ukrainian and Afghan refugee families.

6.3.3. *Learning*

The service continually receives construction market updates via Arcadis and Beacon which provides useful context with which to assess the Council's performance over the last 12 months. Part of this includes extensive benchmarking against comparator house building organisations and informs a framework of triggers which support our decision-making processes.

Savills provide the Council with ongoing sales market advice and commentary. The CIP private sales activity has been resilient throughout the last year. Sales have exceeded forecast target from 33 to 37 homes and generated a total income of £22,758, 949, exceeding the target sales receipt for the year by £1.8m

6.4. **Environment and Sustainability**

6.4.1. Challenges

Service demand vs budget: particularly for transport services within Camden Accessible Transport Solutions and the growth in client demand from Adult Social Care / Special Educational Needs that is driving up costs in this area.

Staff retention across a number of key services (Sustainability / Highways / Building Control) given the growing competition from a rise in the number of higher paid roles in both public and private sectors.

6.4.2. *Opportunities*

Greater organisational engagement in the climate programme would secure stronger delivery impact, including how services develop resilience to a changing climate – use the Environmental Implications Learning and Development module as a

mandatory learning module / Further staff Environment Days and action taking place in autumn.

'Place-based' development investment recognising and delivering against Camden's Transport Strategy, Clean Air and Climate Action priorities linked in with area-based development, local economy and wider public realm objectives – development of the Future Neighbourhood approach to Net Zero Neighbourhoods.

'Greening Camden's Transport Fleet': Rationalisation of in-house vehicle use and investment Zero/Low tailpipe emissions vehicles and infrastructure (depot development).

Developing thinking around Euston Development to factor in area-based development to include Euston Road and place-making.

6.4.3. *Learning*

A need to shape Camden's next Climate Action Plan so that it aligns with the Missions and Challenges framework as well as the Climate Citizen Assembly's recommendations that inform the current Climate Action Plan through to 2025. Also, ensure that the new Plan blends in climate adaptation work across the Council – how the Council is working with communities to adapt to a changing climate – hotter, wetter conditions.

Enhanced customer view of services and adapting to feedback – Camden Accessible Transport Solutions (SEN children) / Environment Services (waste, recycling, street cleaning services engagement work) / enhanced use of GovMetric data for service development (Environment Services)

Organisational / service development with regards to the impacts of a changing climate and how services, alongside communities, can change to adapt/design service delivery to improve future resilience to climate risks.

6.5. **Good Work Camden (GWC)**

6.5.1. *Challenges*

We have noticed an increase in the number of residents presenting with long-term, chronic mental health conditions, coupled with a lack of specialist provision who can be confidently signposted to.

Developing processes to better secure, monitor and enforce employment and skills obligations through planning and procurement.

6.5.2. *Opportunities*

Delivering **the GWC portal** – once delivered, this will provide a front door for all three services that come under the GWC umbrella – neighbourhood job hubs, apprenticeships and the construction skills centre. GWC is being supported by the digital customer experience team to develop the portal, but progress has been slow, mostly due to capacity issues.

Developing employer engagement capacity and capability, working more effectively across Good Work Camden and programmes like the Low-Income Family Tracker (LIFT), and through senior leaders and the emerging partnerships team to make every contact count in terms of securing opportunities for residents and to influence systematic change to recruitment processes.

Developing Good Work Camden's professional development offer – with support from other teams like the family support team who are further along in their journey and organisational development and learning.

Maximising the opportunity of the new Euston Skills Centre - developing a strong, cohesive training offer that responds to need and demand, including for new green skills, and maximises the centre's occupancy including out of hours and weekend provision linked to schools, the community and employers.

6.5.3. *Learning*

Over the last year: An evolving picture around labour market – latest labour market data nationally shows that unemployment is low, but economic inactivity is high – well above pre-pandemic levels with 700,000 more people economically inactive than 4 years ago. Higher worklessness is partly due to more older and more younger people being out of work. For young people, one in seven are now outside full-time education or employment, the highest rate in nearly a decade. More young people out of work with long-term health conditions, and weaker growth in education participation among young men, appear to be driving this trend.

There is a concern that the nation-wide increase in school non-attendance might feed through into increased NEET figures in time, (currently low in Camden). School non-attenders have been identified as a priority group for the Youth Mission.

The service has received the final draft of the evaluation of the first three years of Good Work Camden. The evaluation report contains really rich intelligence, feedback, insight and analysis and represents a lot of qualitative and quantitative work. The findings and recommendations are going to be invaluable in iterating the service going forward.

Over the next year: GWC is planning research with UCL to develop a more granular understanding of the Health and Life Sciences ecosystem in the Knowledge Quarter area and links or interdependencies with other sectors such as tech and AI.

We are planning research, possibly with other boroughs in the Health and Life Sciences Coalition to understand the space needs of the Health and Life Sciences sector, including what affordable/accessible space looks like for Life Sciences.

GWC will be running the Council's Business Survey in 2024/25.

GWC is evaluating 16 to 18 provision delivered at the Euston Skills Centre, working more closely with construction contractors on developing the offer. An offer for 14- to 16-year-olds also needs to be developed in conjunction with Camden schools and contractors looking at how best to engage with this age group and looking at a range of training providers that maybe best fit to run this provision.

6.6. **Planning and Area Regeneration**

6.6.1. *Challenges*

Development Management income targets from pre-application and applications remains challenging due to a slow-down in development activity across London over the last 18 months. The service is hopeful of closing the gap this year due to an increase in fees, a more active development market and applications expected in 2023/24 coming in 2024/25.

Housing delivery will remain challenging due to market conditions for residential, the new Local Plan has a lower, more realistic housing target but this will not come into force until 2025/26. Land-owners and developers are prioritising commercial land uses over residential, especially in the South of the borough.

The government recently consulted on a new planning performance regime which is due to start from 1 October 2024. This will require the determination of 50% of majors and 60% of minors within statutory timelines. To achieve these targets the service will need to determine planning applications as submitted as there will not be time to negotiate changes. The service is receiving support from the corporate service design team in changing the way it works to achieve these new targets.

6.6.2. *Opportunities*

The service is already receiving support from the corporate service design team in changing the way it works within Development Management to achieve the new targets.

The service is making good progress on DLUHC funded digital projects which will be tested this year. Continued support from procurement and IT is welcome.

6.6.3. *Learning*

That housing delivery from private sites will remain challenging due to lack of housing proposals coming forward on private sites with other uses such as student housing, offices and hotels favoured. The Council however is resisting other uses on sites allocated for housing and considering using its planning powers to help bring forward new homes on the 02 and Regis Road sites.

6.7. **Euston and HS2**

6.7.1. *Challenges*

Government decision making around HS2 and Euston is still highly uncertain and at times unpredictable. The Council uses all available levers through the Euston Partnership and political lobbying to influence decision making.

The government announced Housing Delivery Group is focused on delivering 10,000 homes at Euston, an unrealistic number. The Council is working with Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to shape this group and its approach, so it takes a balanced and holistic look, and works closely with Camden communities.

Influencing the shape of any new Development Corporation or delivery vehicle at Euston, ensuring it is locally led.

Influencing the station designs to ensure place is at the heart of decision making and trade-offs.

6.7.2. *Opportunities*

Support to resource the development of the Council approach to a Development Corporation and how to shape, structure and utilise and financial powers the Council has to deliver benefits to the communities alongside development at Euston. The Council has commissioned studies into Development Corporations and Funding Mechanisms.

Opportunities to deliver more housing at Euston working alongside DLUHC and CIP – if coordinated and supported by community conversations – support with these conversations is helpful.

6.7.3. *Learning*

Consultants produced a Euston Economic Impact Assessment for Euston which highlighted the significant economic potential and national importance of development at Euston, building on the Knowledge Quarter potential here.

The Council has learnt that delivering Meanwhile Uses around Euston is challenging due to the Government's drive to restart construction and complexities to get sites ready for use. It is developing a Meanwhile Use Strategy to help with the council's internal response to meanwhile opportunities to lead by example and a 'how to' guide to demystify the process.

6.8. **Public Safety**

6.8.1. *Challenges*

Recruitment & Retention: Recruitment and retention remains a key challenge particularly within Environmental Health related services (Food Safety, Noise Pollution etc). National/regional sectoral challenges (reduced number of qualified Environmental Health Officers etc) continue to influence increased labour market competition across both the public and private sectors.

Demand: Service demand vs budget; high demand levels continue to impact a range of front-line services, particularly in areas such as Community Safety, Environmental Health and Public Protection. A number of projects have been commissioned in order to further establish a data/neighbourhood focused approach towards the delivery of Public Safety services.

6.8.2. *Opportunities*

Opportunity to fully embed the newly established Community Safety Enforcement service, neighbourhood model to be embedded throughout 2024-25 to further enhance the Council's approach towards tackling priority issues such as environmental crime and anti-social behaviour.

Opportunity to fully embed the learning, policy and service development activity delivered via the ASB Taskforce/Review. Revised multi-disciplinary anti-social behaviour model to be fully established, underpinned by additional Council investment into the Community Safety service.

Opportunity to establish a revised Environmental Health service model supported by additional Council investment into the relevant Food Safety and Noise Pollution services.

6.8.3. *Learning*

The Needs Assessment which informed the Anti-Social Behaviour Review has made a number of recommendations including the development of a data led/prevention-based approach towards anti-social behaviour.

Data from the intensive tenant participation and engagement programme has played an important role in the development of the ASB Review and will continue to shape the neighbourhood-based approach towards the delivery of anti-social behaviour reduction initiatives.

The Council has commissioned a review of a range of emergency planning / business continuity related procedures, protocols and operating practises. Whilst at a relatively early stage the review has identified a number of key areas as part of the phased approach towards the completion of the review.

6.9. **Recreation**

6.9.1. *Challenges*

Services are continuing to see a degradation in the behaviour of parts of the Camden community with incidents occurring across our community spaces. In the last 6 months these have included serious incidents in libraries, in particular involving school children intimidating staff and library users as well as destroying library books. Contract staff also been attacked in parks and verbal abuse of member of the teams. The service are undertaking updated Risk Assessments of each space to allocate resources accordingly.

6.9.2. *Opportunities*

The Council has been successful in securing £499k of Library Improvement Fund for a proposal for improvements at Kilburn Library. This will refresh the existing library space, replacing furniture and open up the space as well as investment in the unused lower ground floor to bring this space into use for the local community as an extension to the library.

6.9.3. *Learning*

The Policy Advisor for Access to sport for young people has made six recommendations following an investigation in how to support access to sport through talking to local clubs and school children. The report provides important reflection point of good work and opportunities to improve on the already class leading levels of activity for Camden's children.

7. **Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

7.1 The Director of Finance has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

8. **Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

8.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add to this report.

9. **Environmental Implications**

9.1 There are no proposals with environmental implications made in this report.

10. **Appendices**

10.1 Appendix A: Corporate Performance Data Dashboard Q4/End of Year 2023/24

REPORT ENDS