

Update of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee - July 2024

1. Purpose of the Cabinet Member update

- 1.1. This paper provides a short round of updates from across the portfolio of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children, Schools and Families. It presents an opportunity for the cabinet member to speak directly to the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee and highlight key pieces of work, both to share successes and identify challenges and opportunities in the coming months.
- 1.2. The Committee are invited to consider the information below and ask questions of clarification at the meeting, subject to the Chair's discretion. Requests for additional information can be addressed to the relevant director/s outside of the meeting. The Committee may also use the cabinet member updates to inform their scrutiny work planning for the coming year.

2. Update on the SEND (special educational needs and disabilities) Inclusion Board and the SEND Strategy

- 2.1. On 23 May the Inclusion Board approved the Year 1 progress report and Year 2 implementation plan for Camden's Local Area SEND Strategy 2022-27.
- 2.2. The Year 1 report recognised the progress that we have made in achieving the strategy's priorities, but also recognised where progress has not been as significant as we would have hoped and there is still work to be done. Some of the key achievements from the first year of delivery include:
 - additional funding to our Holiday Activities and Food programme to create more spaces for children with SEND.
 - an increased focus on improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
 - increased SEND information, advice and support service capacity.
 - inclusive Family Hubs model.
 - autism training across the partnership.
 - setting up the Disability Job Hub.
 - annual coproduction event on preparing for adulthood.
 - named worker model in social care.
- 2.3. The Year 2 implementation plan sets out an ambitious programme of work for the remainder of 2024 with a number of priorities focused on how we can further meet the needs of children, young people and their families including how we can better gather their feedback and strengthen how we hear and respond to it.
- 2.4. The Inclusion Board also discussed preparations for Ofsted inspection of our Local Area SEND Partnership. We expect an Ofsted inspection within the next year and are working to ensure that we are ready to showcase our local approach.

3. Children's Trust Partnership Board in May on Mental Health

- 3.1. Camden's third Children's Trust Partnership Board meeting took place on Tuesday 7 May 2024. The meeting marked the first with a refreshed agenda structure, based on stakeholder and parent feedback, reflecting on how discussions can make the best use of member time.
- 3.2. This meeting saw a rich discussion based on the resilient families' theme 'Thrive' where members heard from a mixture of voluntary and community sector (VCS) partners and council officers about Camden's offer for children, young people and families in the area of mental health.
- 3.3. Camden's Head of Children's Commissioning and Partnerships alongside Public Health Consultant for Children and Young People presented data that showed the trend of mental health needs in the borough. We also heard from colleagues at Fitzrovia Youth in Action who had prepared a video they had collated with young people that had accessed child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS).
- 3.4. Members also heard from young people via Camden Youth: Tell Them in a video which challenged attendees to think about how to improve access to mental health and wellbeing support in Camden.
- 3.5. A headteacher from Brookfield Nursery and Primary School brought the experience of families to life through case study examples that showed the intergenerational impact of mental health concerns for three Camden families.
- 3.6. I invited members to engage in an open discussion, exploring the strengths/assets in Camden on this topic, with a focus on how to address the mental health and wellbeing needs of families holistically.
- 3.7. The meeting rounded off with a poignant item on measles and immunisations, presented by Public Health Consultant for Children and Young people, highlighting the rising cases in London.

4. Update on the reopening of Joseph House

- 4.1. I am pleased to be able to update that the refurbishment of Camden's children's home, Joseph House has now been completed.
- 4.2. The new service provider, KPMS, will manage the day-to-day operations in providing specialist support to children and young people with complex needs.
- 4.3. Pending full Ofsted registration, Joseph House will begin accepting referrals in the coming months.

5. Mark Riddell, Department for Education visit

- 5.1. On 23 April, we welcomed Mark Riddell, the National Implementation Advisor for Care Leavers at the Department for Education (DfE). Mark stayed in Camden for a day and a half and met colleagues from across the council including the leader of the council and our executive directors to frontline practitioners and care leavers. He was presented with our offer for care experienced young people in Camden and gave us recommendations on how we can keep raising our ambition as their Corporate Parent.
- 5.2. Mark was impressed to see how much buy-in there was amongst our elected members and senior leaders across the council to enhance our offer for care experienced young people, following the recent motion to make care experience a protected characteristic.
- 5.3. He gave us some very helpful challenge and recommendations on how we can go further, which included empowering our partners to be co-owners of our local offer for care leavers, pushing our local thriving business community to make pledges for our care experienced young people, increasing care experienced people's participation in designing and scrutinising policies that affect them.
- 5.4. The visit was well attended by all directorates including housing, adult social care, inclusive economy, health, commissioning and equalities. It left me and other attendees inspired to do more and see us as 'corporate uncle and aunts' of all the children who grew up in our care in Camden.

6. School Meals Future Options

- 6.1. A paper outlining the next steps of the School Meals Future Options work programme was agreed by Cabinet on 5 June, marking a significant point in the programme's development.
- 6.2. The paper presented recommendations for a procurement strategy that will deliver an interim school meals provision for at least the next two years whilst we conduct the necessary due diligence to develop the in-sourcing proposition.
- 6.3. We believe that an in-sourced school meals service could deliver significant benefits to Camden's school population including further improved nutrition (already enhanced through our approach to school food) and increased opportunities for school and pupil participation in the development of the school food service, as well as delivering wider social value including supporting secondary school uptake of the national free school meal offer from its current level of 63% and creating good local employment opportunities.
- 6.4. Following agreement of the cabinet paper, the programme will now move into 'Phase 2' that will look at the short, medium and longer term opportunities that an in-sourced school meals service could bring while ensuring value for money and efficient delivery for schools.