

Update of the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People & Culture Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee – June 2025

1. Purpose of the Cabinet Member update

- 1.1 This Cabinet Member update introduces a new format, centring on Camden's Youth Mission. Led by the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture, the report provides the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee with an opportunity to reflect on key achievements, ongoing challenges, and emerging opportunities related to children and young people in the borough.
- 1.2 Building on the Annual Report presented in December, this report highlights how the Youth Mission is contributing to a shift in long-standing patterns of inequality and disengagement, particularly among those facing the most significant barriers.
- 1.3 Future updates will explore additional themes within the Cabinet Member's wider portfolio. The Committee is invited to review the information presented and, at the Chair's discretion, raise any questions for clarification during the meeting. Further details or follow-up information can be requested from the relevant director(s) outside of the session. These updates are also intended to support the Committee in shaping its scrutiny work programme for the year ahead, ensuring that collective focus is directed where it can make the greatest difference.

2. Background to Camden's Youth Mission

- 2.1 Camden's Youth Mission was established in direct response to the deep and lasting impact of the pandemic on young people's education, wellbeing, and future economic opportunities. Launched in 2021, it reflects both an urgent and long-term commitment to ensuring no young person is left behind particularly as they continue to face the compounded challenges of the cost-of-living crisis and years of reduced national investment in education and youth services. Recognising the scale of need, Camden set a clear interim goal of achieving measurable progress by 2025, with the wider ambition of fully realising the Mission by 2030.
- 2.2 At the heart of this approach is a Universal Offer open to all young people alongside focused support for five priority groups: care-experienced children and young people, children and young people in the youth justice system, children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), disabled children and young people, and school non-attenders.

- 2.3 This mission is delivered through a borough-wide network of high-quality opportunities and support. Initiatives like the Camden Young Talent Guarantee ensure every 16- to 24-year-old can access meaningful work experience, personalised careers guidance, and one-to-one mentoring. Programmes such as Camden STEAM in partnership with over 65 employers provide hands-on placements and exposure to future-facing industries, with over 12,000 student encounters already facilitated in the 2024/25 academic year. The Connexions service adds further depth, offering tailored support to more than 1,600 young people, contributing to Camden's 98.7% September Guarantee rate. With dedicated training centres like the Euston Skills Centre and collaborations such as the Google London AI Campus, Camden is actively building pathways to future success.
- 2.4 Through the Youth Mission, Camden is helping young people build the confidence, resilience, and skills they need to shape their futures and thrive on their own terms. The scale and scope of this activity demonstrate a borough-wide effort not only to mitigate past harm but to reshape systems to enable longer-term opportunity, inclusion, and prosperity.

3. Member Session - improving attendance, attainment, and economic outcomes through Camden's youth mission

- 3.1 The fifth Youth Mission Member Session continued the deep dive into Camden's priority cohorts, turning its focus to one of the borough's most urgent challenges: improving school attendance. Bringing together education leaders, council officers, and community partners, the session highlighted the scale and complexity of persistent absence, with over 4,000 children currently affected. The evidence is clear poor attendance is closely linked to lower academic attainment, reduced future earnings, and a heightened risk of exclusion. But more than a school issue, attendance was framed as a borough-wide priority with far-reaching implications for social mobility, economic justice, and community safety.
- 3.2 Participants explored the root causes of absence, including mental health challenges, housing instability, and family stress, and worked collaboratively to develop practical and inclusive solutions. These included strengthening school cultures of belonging, increasing family engagement, expanding peer mentoring, and enhancing multi-agency wraparound support. There was strong consensus on embedding this work within Camden's wider Youth Mission, recognising attendance as a gateway to equity and opportunity not just a performance measure.
- 3.3 This work signals a critical shift in how education inclusion is being addressed in Camden, through a joined-up, preventative approach that views attendance

as both a barometer of wider wellbeing and a foundation for lifelong outcomes. Refer to Appendix 1 – Parental Messaging Pilot

4. Autonomy – scoping basic income pilot for care experienced young people

- 4.1 In January 2024, Camden formally recognised care-experienced individuals as a protected characteristic. This decision reflects a commitment to advancing equity, inclusion, and social justice, particularly for young people who face persistent structural disadvantage. It aligns with Camden's Youth Mission, which seeks to remove systemic barriers and ensure that all young people especially those with lived experience of care are supported to achieve positive life outcomes.
- 4.2 In support of this commitment, the Council initiated a scoping process in early 2025 to explore the feasibility and design of a Basic Income pilot for care-experienced young people in Camden. A basic income pilot would aims to provide a foundation of financial stability, thereby enabling young people to engage in education, training, or employment in line with their goals and aspirations. Camden does not have funding or the ability to deliver a basic income pilot scheme and would be reliant on external funding for a pilot.
- 4.3 At this stage, the work is focused on scoping what a pilot might look like in practice, and within this, exploring ethical and practical considerations for a pilot. For example, if there was a small amount of external funding available, which cohort of care-experienced young people would Camden look to benefit from the pilot, and how would we ensure equity for all care-experienced young people in making this decision.
- 4.4 The scoping work is structured in six stages and is informed by national learning, including the Welsh Basic Income pilot for care leavers. It places the lived experience of young people at the centre of design. Step one of the process focusing on internal consultation has been completed. This phase involved briefings and feedback sessions with council staff to gather initial insights and identify key enablers and challenges.
- 4.5 Subsequent phases will involve engagement with care-experienced young people, frontline practitioners, and subject matter experts to co-produce a pilot model that is both impactful and operationally viable. The scoping work will produce a final report in the Autumn, and Camden would look for any available external funding.

5. State of the Borough - State of the Mission

- 5.1 For the first time, [the 2025 annual State of the Borough report](#) includes a State of the Missions update, with a focus on all four missions. The Youth Mission update outlines the progress made, insights gained, and the areas where

further work is needed. Grounded in evidence, lived experience, and insight, the Youth Mission shares the approach to better understand the challenges young people face and to guide actions that support their long-term wellbeing, aspirations, and success. The report was launched at the We Make Camden Summit in May to a range of stakeholders.

- 5.2 This inclusion reflects growing recognition of the Youth Mission as a central mechanism for delivering on Camden's wider social and economic objectives. It also provides a shared evidence base to inform continued improvement and cross-sector collaboration.

6. Youth Mission Ambassadors

- 6.1 The British Museum, Khadys Dream and the Roundhouse were appointed as the three Youth Mission Ambassadors at the We Make Camden Summit in May 2025,, which took place at the British Library. This marks a significant step forward in Camden's ambition to deepen collaboration with influential stakeholders to achieve tangible outcomes for children and young people across the borough.

- 6.2 Mission Ambassadors are key partners who will work alongside the Council to champion the We Make Camden Missions and deliver targeted, mission-focused initiatives. They bring sector-specific expertise and insight, and will contribute to a shared goal of making Camden a place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive, regardless of their background or starting point.

- 6.3 As part of the pilot, Mission Ambassadors will:

- Deliver initiatives and measurable outcomes aligned to the objectives of the Camden Missions, with strategic support and guidance from the Council
- Participate in the Council's Test and Learn programme to inform future delivery approaches and embed learning across the system
- Promote and advocate for the Mission within their own networks and spheres of influence, supporting wider engagement and community reach
- Share the impact of their work through jointly agreed communications, including via digital platforms, print media, and public-facing events

Their involvement represents a new phase in place-based collaboration embedding the Mission in new spaces and communities, building capacity for impact, and ensuring that the borough's aspirations are underpinned by a wide and inclusive alliance.

Appendix 1 - Case Study: Improving Attendance for Pupils at Risk of Persistent Absence