

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: ALL
REPORT TITLE Ofsted Inspection of Children's Services in Camden	
REPORT OF Executive Director, Children and Learning	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 23 rd June 2025
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>An Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) short inspection of Camden was carried out in March 2025, with the final report published in April 2025 confirming that Camden Children's Services are judged to be Outstanding.</p> <p>After a short inspection local authorities are expected to write an action plan which responds to the findings of the inspection. This report summarises the findings of the inspection report and sets out initial reflections about Camden's improvement plan in response to findings.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer:</p> <p>Lucy Sawyer Principal Policy and Project Officer London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG lucy.sawyer@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>The Committee are asked comment on and note the contents of the report.</p>	

Signed:



Tim Aldridge, Executive Director, Children and Learning

Date: 11th June 2025

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. This report is intended to provide the Committee an overview of the Ofsted inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) which took place in Camden in March 2025. It sets out the background to and purpose of the inspection process, the findings from the inspection in Camden and the recommendations for improvement made by inspectors. This report also sets out the initial actions which have been taken in response to those findings and recommendations, as well as longer term plans for continuous improvement within Camden children's services.

2. Background

2.1. The ILACS framework focuses on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements across four areas of judgement which include:

- help and protection for children, and enabling families to stay together and get the help they need.
- the experiences and progress of children in care wherever they live, including those children who return home. This includes the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after, in stable, loving homes, including adoption.
- the experiences and progress of care leavers.
- the impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families, which includes the effectiveness of leaders and managers, as well as the quality of professional practice delivered by a workforce that is equipped and effective.

2.2. Ofsted inspect local authorities based on available intelligence and their most recent inspection judgement, with local authorities judged to be good or outstanding at their most recent inspection usually receiving a short inspection, which take place once every three years.

2.3. Camden's last short inspection took place in 2022 where the overall effectiveness of services was judged to be 'outstanding'. At this inspection 'the experiences and progress of children who need help and protection' were judged to be 'good' and two specific areas for improvement were recommended by inspectors. These were relating to the execution of the local authority designated officer (LADO) duties and support from social workers in the emergency duty team (EDT) to children who become subject to the powers of police protection.

2.4. In between inspections, the local authority will usually receive one focused visit or a Joint Targeted Area Inspection. Camden received a focused visit in October 2023 where inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in need and children subject to a child protection plan. During this visit inspectors made two recommendations for improvement relating to evaluation and challenge of social work practice through effective quality assurance processes and management oversight of practice and timely decision making to progress children's plans.

2.5. Since Camden's last short inspection in 2022 there have been some changes to the framework used for inspection by Ofsted; primarily the introduction of a

standalone judgement for ‘the experiences and progress of care leavers’ where previously this had been included in one broader judgement area covering both children in care and care leavers. Changes to the inspection framework have also included a greater focus on vulnerable groups of children including young carers and teenagers at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

3. Inspection Findings and Judgement

3.1. The inspection report published in April 2025, confirmed the overall effectiveness of children’s services in Camden as ‘outstanding’, with inspectors determining the overall effectiveness grading of a local authority by taking account of the grading of the other judgements that have been agreed. A summary of the Ofsted judgements and grades is outlined in the table below.

Judgement	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of children in care	Outstanding
The experiences and progress of care leavers	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding

3.2. Inspectors found that children and young people in Camden continue to receive excellent support, with leaders having further strengthened and enhanced services since the last inspection in 2022. The report noted that leaders have continued to develop line of sight to frontline practice and provide very effective support to the workforce. It highlighted Camden’s innovation and ambition: with multidimensional projects and workstreams to harness ever better support for children and young people.

3.3. Inspectors identified that the previously ‘good’ services and support to children in need of help and protection are now even stronger; highlighting highly effective early help services, timely decision making, tailored responses and skilled social workers.

3.4. The report found that children in care in Camden continue to benefit from excellent corporate parenting, with outstanding services to care experienced young people meaning children and care experienced young people are making exceptional progress. Inspectors were clear that social workers understand children’s needs and enable them to access specialist support, describing sensitively produced plans and thoughtful records.

3.5. Through direct engagement with children and families, inspectors heard that children feel leaders listen to them, and that they can shape and change services. The report was clear that we embrace the perspectives and opportunities that children’s voices provide. Review of practice also showed that

work is informed by the voices of children, parents and wider family and that children's voices and opinions are valued and given weight in the work undertaken and the plans made for them.

3.6. Inspectors found that the few areas for improvement identified at the last inspection are now areas of strength, with the local authority designated officer (LADO), emergency duty team (EDT) and quality assurance arrangements all highly effective through increased capacity and dedicated improvement.

4. Next Steps

4.1. The inspection report outlined just one specific recommendation for improvement to practice and leaders have begun to address this.

- *'The timeliness of decision-making and the impact of escalation and oversight for the small number of children whose plans are not progressing within identified timescales.'*

4.2. We are developing a more detailed action plan for submission to Ofsted in early July that will also address areas for development which although not identified specifically in the inspection report, are areas leaders have reflected could be targeted to continue refining our services as part of a drive for continuous improvement. This includes: an ongoing focus on case recording and the quality of this, a focus on permanence planning and timeliness and continuing to embed our approach to quality assurance across all services.

4.3. Each service area across Children's Safeguarding and Family Help, and Relational Practice divisions have been developing service plans for the 25/26 year which will be the operational drivers for delivering the improvements identified, and which align with the broader Children and Learning directorate priorities.

4.4. We are continuing to deliver on the National Reform agenda, stemming from the Department for Education led 'Stable Homes, Built on Love' implementation strategy and consultation, which sets out a vision to rebalance children's social care nationally; away from costly crisis intervention to more meaningful and effective early support. We have completed the 'discovery' phase of our programme and are moving toward our 'design, test and learn' stage, which is the next step in reshaping our approach: aligning the national reforms with Camden's community-focused, relational practice, with a focus on family help, family networks and plans and multiagency child protection teams. An update will be shared with the Committee in September 2025.

5. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services

This report has no financial implications.

6. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

This report has no legal implications.

7. Environmental Implications

This report has no environmental implications.

8. Appendices

Appendix A - Inspection of Camden Local Authority Children's Services

REPORT ENDS