

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All Wards
REPORT TITLE Insight, Learning and Impact Report – Quarter 4/End of Year 2024-25	
REPORT OF Executive Directors of Adults and Health, Children and Learning, Supporting Communities and Corporate Services	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee Resource and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee Culture and Environment Scrutiny Committee Housing Scrutiny Committee	DATE 23 June 2025 8 July 2025 14 July 2025 14 July 2025 15 July 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report focusses on the year 2024-25 using a broad range of measures from each Council directorate and division across the organisation. In this report, directors have been asked to provide a narrative covering key areas of challenge, opportunity, and learning. This report is divided into three main sections: • A summary table which highlights key responses from services for the year 2024/25 across each of our four Directorates. • A more detailed narrative of the individual service responses • Appendix A contains the data dashboard. 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 james.coumbe@camden.gov.uk / 020 7974 5965	
RECOMMENDATION 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 Date: 11 June 2025	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Insight, Learning and Impact (ILI) Q4 report covers the period between April 2024 – March 2025.
- 1.2 The ILI report is submitted to all scrutiny committees twice a year (mid-year at Q2 and end of year at Q4). For transparency, all the scrutiny committees receive the full report, though Scrutiny Chairs and Members are reminded to focus on the service and data relevant to their remit.
- 1.3 The ILI report includes both the data dashboard and service narratives. The data dashboard (Appendix A) gives Scrutiny Committees the opportunity to view service performance data collected across the year and compared to previous years. The service narratives (in the body of this report) provide an overview of the key issues identified by officers for each service.
- 1.4 To produce the service narrative, all Camden Council Directors were asked to provide a narrative covering key areas of challenge, opportunity, and learning, looking back over 2024/25 and looking ahead into 2025/26 on the following points:
 - **What were the biggest challenges to your service delivery** i.e. 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 and what do you need to learn in the future** e.g. from data or evaluation, regional or national research.
- 1.5 The main report begins with a tabled overview of service issues for the year 2024/25 across each of the four Council directorates in responses to the three key questions above. That is followed by a more detailed narrative of those individual service responses.
- 1.6 The Corporate Data Dashboard is at Appendix A which provides the latest performance data for Q4 and full year 2024/25 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	• Overspend of £22.8m General Fund and £3.2m Housing Revenue Account • Inflationary pressures • Ongoing Chalcots costs • Pressures across children's social care and homelessness services due to demographic and complex case demand • Uncertain long-term funding/pressures	• Resource and Oversight Panels established to discuss key financial pressures • Quarterly forecast review with Executive Directors to address financial challenge. • Government indication of agreement for multi-year settlement from 2026.	• Cross-London collaboration for financial challenges and forecasting of future funding • Developing a deep understanding of the cost drivers to drive efficiencies
People and Inclusion	• Green shoots of economic recovery • Pay growth is still relatively high (5.7% in public sector) - pressure on appointment salaries in next year	• Process began for new Chief Executive • Camden model of leadership • Focus on employing local people	• 2024 staff survey was completed
Digital Services	• Legacy systems and technical debt causing delivery delays • Resource pressure from multiple concurrent transformation programmes • Resistance and unfamiliarity with new delivery approaches (e.g. Test & Learn)	• Progress toward Mobile Device Management (MDM) and predictive analytics capability • First local gov contact centre pursuing Contact Centre Management Accreditation (CCMA) accreditation • Improved customer experience through user-focused tools and design	• Early service engagement is critical to success • Internal capability building reduces supplier dependency • Cross-team collaboration enables more sustainable transformation
Law and Governance	• Stage 1 complaints continued to increase throughout 2024/25 • Electoral Services delivered General Election in 24 days including organising new count venue at 5 Pancras Square • Complexity of Regulatory measures	• Ongoing recruitment exercise in Legal Services • Council's Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) pilot - Legal, Business Support and Democratic Services all applied	• Recruitment highlighted Camden is a good place to work • Sharing benchmarking data with other London boroughs around recruitment to compare
Strategy, Design, and Insight	• Recruitment and retention • Risk on delivery of strategic work • Maintaining pace	• Engaging Government • Supporting service transformation	• Investing in a clear framework for engaging with public affairs • Multi-disciplinary collaboration

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Equality and Community Strength	- Govt seeking greater levels of collaboration/responsibility from Local Authorities on refugees - Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) sustainability – financial fragility, cost pressures, volunteering shortfall - Tensions in community have been high, influenced by global conflicts/ - Continued high volumes of applications to the Cost of Living fund - Supreme Court gender ruling	- Final phases of the Camden Pledge - We Make Camden Project Fund 2024-31 - Advice Services Redesign - Cohesion Fund Continuation	- Understanding how housing conditions influence integration - State of the Sector Report (VCS) - Cost of Living Community Response 2025
Participation, Partnerships, and Communications	- Significant political change at a local level with new Leader and Cabinet - High levels of activity and demand - Internal communications - inspections	- Support the incoming Chief Executive - Support the implementation Community Wealth Fund - Cost of Living Community Fund increased to £450,00 - Partnership with Demos and New Local received €1m Euro funding from Google	- Member Enquiries remains high, but the on-time response rate has significantly improved - Insights and data about channel preferences and campaign recognition rates can inform approach

2.2 Children and Learning response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Children's Family Help and Safeguarding	- Increased volume of work coming in at Front door - Increase in numbers of children coming into care aged 14+ - Rate of Section 47's are high - Disproportional Black and Brown children in care	- Edge of Care team established - Alternative pathway in MASH service, family therapy offer	Improvement in the timeliness of completion of Child and family assessments and visits to children and families
Children and Young People Disabilities Service (CYPDS)	- School non-attendance for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) has an impact - Providers market is not regulated - Lack of overnight respite options for disabled children	- Recommissioning short breaks provision - Frontline Hub to be set up	- Preparing for Adulthood model developed - CYPDS spoke at Local Government Association (LGA) webinar on model

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Early Years and Family Hubs	• Development of Family Hub network including VCS partners • Department for Education (DfE) funding for Family Hubs extended for one further year pending spending review • Sustaining the First 1001 days (conception to age 2) programme • Social care reforms and further development of community-based service delivery	• Neighbourhood-based services benefit more families, multiple access points for families. • Discussions with colleagues about multi-disciplinary teams hosted in Family Hubs. • A pilot of Team Around the School arrangements helping to address absenteeism and responding to the feedback from Headteachers	• There is a strong appetite among partners to work together in neighbourhood model.
Family support & Complex Families (Early Help)	• Increased volume of work coming in at the front door • Continue to see an increase in Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND as a presenting referral need into Early Help – currently limited parenting support available for school age children	• Supporting Families Grant will continue into 25/26 • Pilot of Team Around the School aimed at addressing persistent absence • Rebuilding bridges has continued into 25/26 • Development and recruitment into the perpetrator intervention team in progress.	• Improvement in the timeliness of Early Help assessments and Team Around the Family (TAF) reviews • Continued embedding of the Quality Assurance (QA) framework and auditing schedule in Early Help • Increase family feedback opportunities to inform ongoing service delivery and the development of the multiagency Family Help teams
Integrated Youth Services	• Increase in the number of First Time Entrants • Increase of children remanded for grave offences who had very little prior knowledge with services • Mental health biggest referral reasons into the Early help system	• A full review of Integrated Youth Support Services • Working with neighbouring boroughs around cross borough tensions	• Undertaking targeted audit activity at children who present as high risk but sit outside of statutory service • Identified more work needs to be done on how we identify and respond to children who are the victims of crime
Education, Commissioning and Inclusion	• Significant reduction in demand for school places in Camden/London • Applications for Reception and Year 7 places for entry in Sept 2025	• Annual School Capacity (SCAP) return has provided the opportunity to integrate the work of the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) • New Schools Bill proposed to give Local Authorities new role with capacity/admissions for academies	• Adult Community Learning - Improved accredited learning in ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) • The SEND area Self-Evaluation identified areas of strength and focus

2.3 Adults and Health response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Adult Social Care	• Not just volume but the complexity of work on service • Financial viability of providers	• Integrated Neighbourhood Teams • Carers Strategy and Action Plan • Co-production Framework	• Care Quality Commission assessment of Camden's Adult Social Care • Quality Assurance • Adult Early Help
Adults Public Health	• Sudden increase in drug related non-fatal overdoses in March	• Developing joint local drug alert system with the Police	• Amend drug alert messaging in accordance with adulterated supply

2.4 Supporting Communities response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Housing	• Homelessness and Rough Sleeping • Temporary Accommodation • Rising rents/arrears • HRA financial challenge	• Housing Transformation Programme • Housing First Project • RentSense has been granted a new 18-month contract following successful pilot.	• Focus on data and performance for service delivery • Efforts to reduce rent arrears showing results • Embed our co-produced 'Service Standards'
Property management	• Volume of disrepair cases and costs associated • HRA pressure means resources cannot be expanded to meet repair demands • Building Safety Regulator Gateway delays on work to tall buildings • Investment need, and stock profile, placing intense pressure on repairs • Incoming new Decent Homes Standard and implementation of elements of Awaab's Law from October this year	• Housing Investment Strategy approved by Cabinet • ROCC and Madetech systems went live for repairs in Q3 • Building safety team continues to undertake extensive work to comply with the Building Safety Act	• Our action plan to address Ombudsman recommendations has been approved with good feedback received • Application of lessons learned has improved performance against the Regulatory Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) for lifts • Our new lessons learned lead, residents panel and complaints panel, continue to guide our work on learning from complaints, including a review of our compensation policy.

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
Development	Continued pressure on the HRA	- Diversifying delivery models. - Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) used for temporary accommodation for refugees	- Construction market updates via Arcadis and Beacon - Ongoing sales market advice and commentary via Jones Lang LaSalle
Planning and Area Regeneration	- Development Management income targets from pre-application and applications due to London slow-down - Housing delivery remains challenging due to market conditions for residential.	- Potential for significant planning reform with the new government - Support from the Policy Design team in changing 'The Way We Work' - Government funded digital projects to be testing this year - Knowledge Quarter continues to grow as a cluster	With housing delivery challenging nationally, the Council is using powers to help bring forward new homes
HS2 and Euston	Uncertainty around HS2 at Euston around budget and resources	- Working alongside Government and Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP) to deliver more housing - Council approach to become a locally-led Development Corporation	- Production of a Euston Economic Impact Assessment - Developing a Meanwhile Use Strategy
Good Work Camden (GWC)	Residents with long-term, chronic mental health conditions	- Delivering the GWC portal - Working with LIFT (Leading Inclusive Futures Through Technology) - Maximising the opportunity of the new Euston Skills Centre - Partnership with Central London Forward, focusing on care experienced young people	- Highest rate of young people out of education or employment in a decade - Research with University College London and Health and Life Science Coalition
Environment and Sustainability	- Increase in graffiti and fly-posting - Appropriate resourcing and organisational focus on the climate risk agenda - Increase transport demand for SEN children and budget pressure - Recruitment and retention – Parking Services, Building Control & Transport Strategy.	- Next iteration of Camden's Climate Action Plan (2026-30) - Lane Rental Scheme adoption aims to improve road congestion and air quality - Co-ordination of area-based service delivery	- Emissions Trading Scheme to Energy from Waste facilities North London Waste Authority (NLWA) facility from 2028 - Air Quality improvements - Healthy Streets scorecard analysis shows Camden performing well

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
	Staff well-being – an increase in staff with concerns over mental and physical health		
Public Safety	- Recruitment and retention – Public Protection & Environmental Health - Sustained high demand for environmental health services - High demand for community safety and cohesion related activity - The Police notified intent to remove officers from supporting the Coroner	- Explore opportunities to utilise AI and upgraded IT systems. - Develop Licensing Charter - Refresh the delivery of the Inner North Coroner service.	- Anit-Social Behaviour (ASB) review continues to inform the delivery of the revised cross-council approach. - Major multi-agency emergency planning exercise, involving the Police, Fire Brigade and Health partners
Recreation	- Library closures for periods whilst building improvements take place. - Resolving the GLL Leisure Centres service charges and turnover rent agreement.	- Transformation of libraries into civic spaces following range of investments. - Trauma informed practice being designed for frontline teams.	- Green Space survey launched in February 2025. - Reading Strategy

3. CORPORATE SERVICES

3.1 Finance and Audit

3.1.1 *Challenges*

The Council has set balanced budgets for 2025/26, this includes contingencies against known high risk areas such as temporary accommodation and Children's Social Care, the financial and operating context for the Council remains challenging. At the end of 2024/25 the Council has an overspend position of £22.8m in the General Fund and £3.2m in the Housing Revenue Account. The Council has had a strong track record of delivering services within budget in past years, however the significant challenges that are being felt across London including high inflation, service pressures from demographic changes, especially in temporary accommodation and Children's services, have meant that the Council has overspent its budgets in 2024/25. The overspend forecast will require the Council to use reserves to fund expenditure in year, which will mean fewer resources for the Council to deliver the aims of We Make Camden and also reduce the Council's ability to provide additional support to residents and businesses across the borough, by limiting any new investment in services. The General Fund forecast includes the use of £12m of short-term corporate provisions funded by an increase in interest received from higher cash balances and interest rates from which the Council is currently benefiting. An expected reduction in cash balances and interest rates over the medium term means that the actual structural overspend facing the Council in the General Fund is approximately 40m.

This structural pressure will need to be addressed during the Council's next Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) along with all other known pressures and the impact of any new funding reforms.

The worsening financial position means that the Council will need to consider a range of actions to control expenditure including tighter control on recruitment and use of agency staff. Resource oversight panels have already been established to develop a response to service areas with particularly high budget pressures such as homelessness services and Children's Social Care. It is important that these resource panels continue to report back on their agreed mitigation work to the Camden Management Team (CMT) on a regular basis. In addition, the Council will establish additional checks in the quarterly monitoring process to address overspends and any new financial pressures through delivering agreed action plans. The Council will need to match its resources to the needs of existing services and so it is vital that there is a clear picture of the level of expenditure expected in these services over the next year before the Council agrees its next Medium Term Finance Strategy.

One of the biggest immediate risks facing the financial position of the Council is the financial stability of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is reporting an overspend by £3.2m in 2024/25. The overspend is being driven by high interest rates on debt and significant inflationary pressures on repair costs along with emergency action to tackle damp and mould. In January 2023 the Council agreed MTFS 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. The relatively low reserves held by the HRA mean that overspends

are a challenge to its financial sustainability. The current MTFS is looking to address this by delivering cost savings and increasing the level of reserves held by the HRA.

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. It has been estimated that the HRA has lost £168m of rental income since 2016 and rental income is £32m lower in 2024/25 compared with what it would have received if the policy had been kept consistent at a Consumer Price Index (CPI) of + 1%. In addition, the Council has had to find capital funding for fire and building safety works most notably for the Chalcots estate.

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.

The Council's 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. The position is further challenged by those in year forecast for overspends in the General Fund and the HRA which need to be brought under control if the Council is to remain financially stable. It is key for the Council to bring the current forecast overspend down and to ensure it has a clear view of genuine unavoidable budget pressures in order to shape the Council's future budget setting and Medium-Term Financial Strategies.

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. The cost-of-living crisis will mean continue to impact residents and businesses in the borough and influence the level of support the Council will need to provide. Outside of social care and homelessness the Council is also seeing cost pressures across services driven by inflation on salary costs and in some contracts.

It is important that services continue to work to deliver services within budget and continue to identify emerging cost pressures as early as possible. Continuing financial pressures and budgetary overspends will significantly reduce the Council's ability to invest in new services to support the borough and to help support the delivery of the We Make Camden Missions.

The local government financial settlement was confirmed in February 2025 setting out central government funding and Council Tax setting rules for local authorities. The Settlement along with the Council's MTFS has allowed the Council to draft a balanced budget for 2025/26 which was agreed by full council on 3 March 2025.

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 over the medium term. 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. Doing this and continuing to develop a deep understanding of the long-term financial pressures facing the Council will allow us to make sound decisions to invest in early intervention in the right services to control and avoid costs on future service delivery.

To support the understanding of the financial pressures facing the Council officers have established a number of Resource and Oversight Panels to review and discuss key financial pressures. The Resource and Oversight Panels are made up of Council officers, including the Chief Executive and the Executive Director Corporate Services. This high level of scrutiny across service budgets will need to continue over the medium term to ensure the Council remains focused on working within budget and protecting its financial stability and resilience.

London boroughs are seeing significant cost pressures across services especially 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. Our 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.

The new Labour government have indicated that they will agree a multi-year settlement from 2026 which should allow the Council to better plan the medium-term use of its resources.

3.1.4 *Learning*

Officers have been working with peers cross London has help 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 work will continue over 2025 to support the development of the Council's medium-term forecast and the next Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Learning from across the local government sector and from key national indicators have helped officers develop a robust section 25 note for the budget setting report summarising the work the Council is carrying out to ensure it remains financial resilient. A section 25 notice refers to Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 which requires local authorities to take into account a report from their Chief Financial Officer on the robustness of budget estimates and the adequacy of financial reserves when setting their annual General Fund budget. Our Section 25 Notice is included in the budget setting report that is considered by Cabinet and then full Council every

February/March. There is an opportunity to continue and expand this work to test the Council's medium term financial forecast assumptions and to learn from best practice across the sector.

Officers will also work to learn from the service overspends to ensure that the Council fully understands the cost drivers in services and is able where possible to address them to reduce costs and to ensure the Council has robust medium-term forecasts. Developing a deep understanding of the cost drivers that services are facing represents an opportunity to drive efficiencies across the Council.

3.2 People and Inclusion

A restructure and re-launch of the HR service took place in March 2025. To make sure that the Council are putting people at the centre of everything they do, building trust and focusing on relationships, the service have rebranded to 'People and Inclusion' and through this work have increased the diversity of the leadership team.

3.2.1 *Challenges*

Green shoots of economic recovery continue with national modest increases in employment rates and unemployment remaining flat. At Camden this is reflected in lower turnover rates, which continue to improve.

Pay growth is still relatively high (5.7% in public sector), which may start to introduce some pressure on appointment salaries as we move forward into next financial year.

3.2.2 *Opportunities*

This year saw the Council begin the process to recruit a new Chief Executive for Camden following the current Chief Executive, Jenny Rowlands, decision to step down at the end of the summer. The recruitment process gave the Council the opportunity to showcase the borough and our sector leading work. This was a participative process including staff, members and partners.

The service has rolled out the Camden model of leadership cross the top 150 senior leaders in the organisation. This puts relational and inclusive practice at its heart. A cohort of 16 internal facilities have also been trained up, who will continue to support this work, including coaching, into next year.

The Council continue to focus on employing local people. Over the last 12 months there has been 61 Camden residents successfully placed in temporary roles through the Camden Talent Pool. Over 30 people from the talent pool were also brought in to support work on last year's general election.

3.2.3 *Learning*

The Council has cemented themselves as sector leading in terms of our employment offer. With have a minimum earnings guarantee of £16.91, this is 22% more than the current London Living Wage.

The 2024 Camden Council staff survey was completed by over 44% of the Council (a 50% increase in responses from the previous survey). Respondents scored highly in

questions on themes of pride, commitment, inclusion and trust and belonging. 94% staff feel proud to work for Camden, 93% believe Camden puts residents at the heart of what we do and would recommend us as a great place to work. 89% believe Camden is making progress to being anti racist with strong support for inclusive leadership.

3.3 Customer, Technology, and Data Services (CTDS)

3.3.1 *Challenges*

Demand for CTDS capabilities continues to grow, both in terms of supporting live services and enabling strategic transformation. This pressure is magnified by ongoing issues with legacy technology and the operational complexity of large-scale programmes.

The volume of concurrent transformation initiatives, including the Housing Digital Change Programme and Mosaic upgrades, is placing sustained pressure on internal teams. Balancing business-as-usual with the demands of change delivery is an ongoing challenge.

While the Master Data Management (MDM) Test & Learn approach confirmed confidence in our chosen solution and supplier, it also exposed a lack of familiarity with the Test & Learn method across procurement, resulting in delays and resistance.

Additionally, the onboarding of new Data Analyst roles brought early challenges in role definition, team integration, and alignment with existing capabilities. While the model is now beginning to bed in, it's a reminder of the need to provide the right support and structure when embedding new skillsets.

3.3.2 *Opportunities*

CTDS is making strong progress in both foundational infrastructure and forward looking capability. Finalising the MDM procurement marks a major step toward a single source of truth and enhanced data governance. Live outputs from the Data Research Platform are now enabling internal ownership of insights and reducing dependence on external suppliers. In parallel, the development of a structured predictive analytics intake process is establishing a solid base for scaling data-informed decision-making across services.

Customer-facing innovation also continues at pace. Launches such as Queuebuster, the Ceremonies Case Management tool, Qlik dashboards, and improved booking journeys in Registrars have all delivered measurable improvements to resident experience. Collaborative service design efforts, notably between Contact Camden and Adult Social Care have enhanced training pathways and operational handoffs.

The service are now 75% through the process to become a Contact Centre Management Association (CCMA) accredited contact centre. If successful, they would be the first local government contact centre to achieve the standard — a major milestone and a powerful external endorsement of their people and processes.

The technology foundations are growing stronger, with the completion the Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) and successfully re-certified for Public Services Network (PSN) both critical achievements in bolstering organisational resilience. Infrastructure modernisation continues across libraries and community sites, and enhancements to the Customer relationship management (CRM) and case management journeys reflect a deepening commitment to user first, integrated digital services.

3.3.3 *Learning*

Several recent initiatives have underlined the importance of cultural and operational readiness in digital transformation. Projects like MDM and Impulse highlighted the need for early and active service engagement, not just to shape requirements but to build lasting ownership like we achieved with the Roc technology implementation. Building internal capability, whether through in-sourcing platform expertise (e.g. Denodo), developing robust runbooks and documentation, or investing in training has been valuable. These actions have improved delivery speed and reduced dependency on suppliers.

The cumulative impact of small but targeted improvements has also been striking. Enhancements to content, system usability, and journey design, as seen in Registrars and Queuebuster have led to tangible gains in efficiency, revenue, and resident satisfaction.

Ongoing cross-functional work (e.g. Contact Camden + NEC Software Solutions, the Housing & Property realignment, and Adult Social Care joint training programmes) continues to show that shared ownership and collaborative delivery are key to successful, sustainable transformation.

3.4 Law and Governance

3.4.1 *Challenges*

Legal Services has recently concluded a recruitment exercise on the open market. Approximately 80 applications were received for a range of posts. The goal remains to further reduce the number of agency workers and good progress continues to be made with further steps planned in the coming months.

The service is working hard to keep pace with changing case laws and legislation across many different areas of local government law - the upcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill, Mental Health Bill, Social Care Care reforms, the Children and Well-being Bill, the Employment Rights Bill, the Renters Bill and a myriad of building safety, fire safety and regulatory measures. Legal services will work closely with relevant departments to offer support and guidance as required.

The number of stage 1 complaints has continued to increase throughout 2024/25 with an overall increase of 38% in comparison to 2023/24. Complaints relating to Property Management account for 54% of complaints. Despite the increase in volume, performance in responding within 10 working days continues to improve each quarter with 82% being responded to within the timeframe in Quarter 4. In Q4 there were an additional 524 cases dealt with as not a Complaints and are classified as Business as

usual, these include service requests, duplicate complaints or falling outside of the Complaints process. During 2024/25 the Central Complaints team has worked closely with the Property Management division to respond to the Housing Ombudsman Section 49 Investigation. A significant amount of work has been done to improve the approach to complaints across all stages and further work is ongoing to continue this development including, the roll out of Effective Complaints Handling training for all staff, a review of the unreasonable behaviour policy, best practice guides for learning from complaints and encouraging all services to embed this in their day to day work.

Although work was underway in preparation for the General Election expected to be held by January 2025, the announcement that it would be held on the 4th July 2024 put considerable pressure on the Electoral Services team who had to deliver the election in 24 days. Organising the new count venue at 5 Pancras Square, with high-profile candidates was challenging but due to the preparations already in place, and overall corporate effort across the Council as well as by the team themselves a successful election was delivered which was then subsequently followed by three local by-elections.

Due to the elections, the Annual Canvass was completed in February 2025, postponed from December 2024. A review was undertaken on the way that Annual Canvass had been previously managed, and more use of local data matching was undertaken to identify where there were changes to the Register of Electors and where residents needed to be invited to register to vote. The changes meant that resources could target where necessary and a change in the way that door-to-door canvassers were employed meant there were significant cost savings to the project. Electorate in the borough is continuing to grow and expected to continue for the local elections in 2026.

The statutory review of all European citizens on the register of electors has been concluded following the change of franchise introduced by the Election Act 2022. EU citizens from Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, Poland and Denmark remain able to vote, but other EU citizens who were living in the UK before the end of the EU Withdrawal Agreement Implementation Period (up until 1 January 2021) had to be reviewed. Historical electoral register records were checked to confirm if an EU voter was legally resident in the UK before 31 December 2020, before a correspondence review was conducted to check if they could remain on the register of electors. For those that advised that they were not a resident, or failed to respond to the review, were removed from the register of electors. Thankfully this was a relatively low number of 1900.

Throughout 2024/5 significant additional resource and effort continued to be deployed by Democratic Services to address the ongoing challenges of managing Council and committee meetings in the light of repeated protests and disruption associated with the conflict in the Middle East. The Team has also seen a significant increase in the number of officer decisions requiring their input (which is a positive indication of compliance and transparency) and as a result of a renewed focus on governance in this area has had to double the resource allocated to this area of work.

3.4.2 *Opportunities*

The ongoing recruitment exercise to reduce Legal Services agency staffing numbers will mean a more stable and resilient Legal Service to support the council and the work of the Borough Solicitor.

Legal Services, the Business Support Service and Democratic Services have applied to be part of for the first tranche of the Council's Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) pilot. The aim is to put to best use, the current full range of AI offers and to harness AI efficiencies which could include drafting of documents, compiling of disclosure lists for court proceedings, minute and note taking and researching from a secure and comprehensive online resource.

3.4.3 *Learning*

The extensive recruitment process taking place in Legal Services has highlighted that Camden Council, along with our current office location at 5PS, make Camden a highly desirable place to work. The service is learning more about the current recruitment market and how favourably the extensive council benefits are being viewed by applicants. Sharing benchmarking data with other London boroughs around recruitment is also providing an invaluable opportunity to undertake a sense check of how the Council compares to our neighbours and peers across London. This information will allow us to assess our next steps in reshaping our Legal Service.

3.5 **Strategy, Design and Insight (SDI)**

3.5.1 *Challenges*

Delivery risk: There remains a high and growing level of demand on the skills and support of the team across the organisation. The service are working closely with stakeholders and senior leadership to prioritise the specialised resource across discoveries as well as test and learn initiatives, and to focus on work that is contributing to organisational priorities as defined in We Make Camden, the Camden Missions and in tackling complex and urgent issues for services. Mechanisms have been put in place to help prioritise and plan work and strong partnerships with service areas will continue to be a condition of success for the work. In addition to this, with the appointment of a new Chief Executive and a new Directory for Strategy, Design & Insight, the team anticipate a slight shift in strategic intent and as a result are continuing to regularly review and prioritise their work to ensure alignment to We Make Camden and long-term organisational ambitions as they transition through a period of change.

Recruitment and retention: SDI are maintaining a focus on retention of staff across roles recognising the delivery of key organisational activities over the last year including supporting strategic priorities such as transformation in housing, new prevention agenda and delivering on missions. They also are continuing to reflect on equitable recruitment and staff development practices as part of our wider retention strategy. In the year ahead, this continues to be a risk as there are staff taking parental leave as well as other staff changes, which will mean operational changes to prepare for. By re-emphasising the value of the Strategy, Design & Insight's work, and refreshing their offer to the rest of the Council, it will reduce the likelihood of staff churn during the transition between Directors and continue to support team members to deliver purposeful and necessary work.

Prioritisation and maintaining pace: In the context of a new national government priorities and policy agenda, there is increased value for the team to engage with policy announcements and working across services and with members to respond in line with our organisational priorities. SDI anticipate a year of change and new pressures in services coming from inspections and external factors to affect how they plan their work but are putting in place mechanisms to allow the team to have a strategic view of them as they arise.

3.5.2 *Opportunities*

Engaging government: SDI have been able to support different directorates and with Cabinet to ensure that Camden Council and political leaders are positioned to engage with the new government over potential opportunities and collaborate around issues where we share concern and where we are positioned to advocate for reform. As the new government further settles into the parliamentary cycle, the team will be able to anticipate and bring evidence of the work they are doing in Camden to support this case.

Supporting service transformation: The service continue to engage with services around the Council in supporting transformation and change – during the last two quarters this has included:

- Supporting innovative initiatives from the Money Advice Camden, Debt and Financial resilience team to try new ways to proactively reach out to people who might benefit from further income maximisation and access to services.
- Developing a triage model for Housing queries as part of the Housing Transformation programme – this includes collaborating with CTDS and housing services on a redefinition of different housing services and how they respond to queries from residents.
- Launch and development of the Adults 'Early help Test and learn team' – SDI worked in partnership with ASC to deliver a test a learn focusing on people who are falling through the cracks in the system and how they might develop a systemic and place-based approach to ensure any crisis escalation is mitigated and people can build resilience through holistic support. The team are currently finalising initial evaluation based on professional feedback and would want to learn more from the people currently engaging with the service.

3.5.3 *Learning*

The importance of investing in a clear framework for engaging with public affairs in a way that allows the service to engage promptly with discussions across government and where the right actors are present. There is a broad agreement on a framework for this and will continue to develop the operations that will support effective practice.

Investing in team infrastructure can have a positive impact on the team's wellbeing. Investing in assets, team time and frameworks for reflective practice has been beneficial for the team and has helped built confidence. These are assets we are also now sharing with the rest of the strategy family and has helped strengthen their proposition in the organisation.

Multi-disciplinary teams collaboratively working together on a problem space really enriches the work: over the last year there has been more proactive engagement with

data analysis colleagues as well as CTDS and policy and service officers from early stages of projects and that has helped the service uncover insights and create more interesting propositions than working alone.

3.6 Equalities and Community Strength

3.6.1 Challenges

Refugee Response: The Government commissioned system for processing asylum seekers, arriving in the UK is overwhelmed. The use of commercial hotels and the practise of subcontracting out management and support, by the Home Office have delivered poor outcomes for service users and for the public purse. There are currently 2 hotels in Camden used to house asylum seekers.

Similarly, the system of transitional accommodation for eligible Afghan's arriving in the UK under Afghan Resettlement Plan (ARP) is under intense pressure. This more recent crisis is largely due to the removal of Ministry of Defence service accommodation from the pipeline, which are currently used to house Afghan refugees, before they are matched to a resettlement property or Private Rented Sector options.

The Government is now seeking to lever greater levels of collaboration and responsibility from Local Authorities to deliver initial accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers. Camden has always been committed to developing a fair, viable system of housing and support for refugees and asylum seekers and will continue to work with strategic migration partners to explore new delivery models and deliver a London regional plan.

A significant risk however, inherent in the current proposals, is that insufficient resources are being allocated by the Government for resettlement from short stay housing, whereby the homelessness burden then passes to the Local Authority hosting the facility.

The war in Ukraine continues with no immediate cessation in sight and there is uncertainty as to how this will impact the 200 Ukrainian refugees still living in Camden under the current visa extension period. Many Ukrainian families are becoming naturalised to life in the UK and are integrating within our Camden communities. The Refugee response will continue to work with the Ukrainian cohort in Camden to promote stability and enable families to make positive decisions about their own future, wherever possible, through these changes.

Community Partnerships: A number of challenging issues are impacting on Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) sustainability, including:

- **Financial Fragility:** 57% of Camden-based VCS expect a deficit in 2024; 11% have no reserves. Rising inflation, contract values and funding competition are forcing VCS groups to subsidise delivery or restructure services.
- **Cost Pressures:** Increased National Insurance and the London Living Wage disproportionately impact medium-to-large charities. Members of the Camden Consortium of Community Centres report reducing staff hours, freezing vacancies, or restructuring.

- **Workforce & Volunteering Pressures: Recruitment & Retention:** 77% of charities report recruitment issues. There's no borough-wide professional development model for the sector – though work is underway to develop one.
- **Volunteer Shortfall:** 77% reported challenges recruiting volunteers. 56% stated they needed more volunteers, limiting their delivery capacity (Volunteer Centre Camden, 2024).

Camden Advice Network (CAN) faces continued pressure—rising resident needs linked to debt, housing insecurity, and food poverty. Welfare reforms and universal credit rollout are contributing to debt and emotional distress. Residents increasingly seek support only at crisis points (e.g., eviction risk, energy disconnection, food insecurity), often too late for early intervention.

Rising community tensions—partly linked to global and national events – have led to isolated incidents of intimidation and vandalism. The Cohesion Fund and Interfaith Network play a crucial role in building bridges, but sustained investment beyond the one-year (2024/25) test and learn programme is required.

Community Spaces - VCS organisations operating CIP development scheme premises are facing significant cost pressures associated with utility and operating costs.

Equalities: There is currently much going on in the space from the recent Supreme Court gender ruling and its ramifications to local authorities still being worked on, and the rise in focus on intersectionality is set to continue.

Money Advice Camden: The team continues to receive almost 1,000 Cost of Living applications a month but efficiencies to the team ways of working means most are turned around within four working days.

3.6.2 Opportunities

Refugee Response: The final phases of the Camden Pledge, (Afghan resettlement scheme) are now well advanced. By April 2025 Camden will have resettled 109 refugee households comprised of 343 individuals into long term homes in Camden. This number will increase to around 120 households and 400 individuals by September 2025.

The scheme is funded externally by the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) it has increased affordable housing resources for refugee families, by taking houses intended for private sale, back into the Camden housing stock and through buying back former Council homes, sold under Right to Buy, delivering new refugee housing capacity without creating pressure elsewhere in our housing system.

Community Partnerships: We Make Camden Project Fund 2024-2031: There is an opportunity to continue developing and strengthening the alignment of this programme to the Council's Missions and neighbourhood work – using the fund as a vehicle to galvanise VCS initiatives that are mission-aligned and to continue embedding open and trusting grant giving approaches aligned to the Institute for Voluntary Action Research's open grant-making principles.

Advice Services Redesign (2027–2034): Camden's VCS Advice fund ends in March 2027. There is a significant cross Council opportunity to review and develop the funding approach for independent advice services, aligning to needs of different directorates/service (e.g. Housing, ASC, Refugee Response, VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls), etc.) The independent advice sector brings £2 million per annum of annual external funding into the borough. A cross-council approach to this fund could strengthen the overall programme and our collaboration for supporting residents with advice (housing, debt, welfare benefit, immigration, etc.).

Cohesion Fund Continuation and Development: The £40,000, 2024/25 'test and learn' Cohesion Fund has been very successful and enabled practical community-based initiatives that have responded to community cohesion issues. A decision is needed on the continuation of this programme linked to the Inclusion Calendar – a paper is being drafted to recommend extending this through to 2031 to align with the VCS investment programme.

Volunteering: Volunteers play an essential role in Camden's VCS, supporting their work with Camden's communities. Camden is home to 2,400 organisations, working with large numbers of volunteers. This includes 723 charities led by 4,266 trustees. The 38 Community Partner Funded organisations engage more than 2500 volunteers in their work and have approx. 280 Trustees. Camden's Staff Volunteering Scheme enables staff to undertake up to one paid day to volunteer in Camden.

3.6.3 *Learning*

Refugees: By September 2025 120 Afghan and Ukrainian refugee households will have settled into longer term housing in the borough. The funding requirements and the need to work at pace have led to different ways of acquiring properties. For example, where housing block developments have been repurposed for refugee resettlement, the team has identified concentrations of Afghan refugee households in one neighbourhood as opposed to "buy backs" whereby refugee households tend to be peppered across Council managed estates. Understanding how housing conditions influence integration, cohesion and growth is an important learning for future resettlement programmes, should they arise.

Community Partnerships: State of the Sector Report: Commissioned by Camden Infrastructure Partners, the report was launched during Trustee Week in November 2024 and aims to help local stakeholders understand the strengths, challenges, and support needs of Camden's VCS. It makes several key recommendations for supporting VCS organisations which should inform the Council's policy and programme of work with the VCS.

Cost of Living Community Response 2025 has been shaped by Community feedback on the impact of the cost of living - Evaluation of 2023-24 approach and evidence from the Social Isolation, Loneliness and Community Connectedness in Camden: Health Needs Assessment (2022) - Key findings from the Needs Assessment: Social connectedness helps mitigate the impact of rising living costs on vulnerable residents. Isolation is more common in areas lacking accessible amenities and among those on low incomes. Notable age-related spikes in loneliness risk: 30–34 and 50–59 age groups.

3.7 Participation, Partnerships and Communications (PPC)

3.7.1 *Challenges*

The directorate supported the organisational impacts of a year of political change – from supporting the hosting of the Camden Count at the General election and subsequent by-elections, providing support to the London Mayoral elections and to the change of the Council's Leader and helping the new Leader and his new Cabinet communicate their priorities for delivering for Camden residents.

The General election count provided a huge opportunity to demonstrate how Camden rises to the occasion – the event also provided many learnings. The service successfully hosted over 100 media representatives across national and international media at a count venue being used for the first time, meeting their technical and editorial requirements.

Following significant political change at a local level, colleagues across PPC worked directly with the new Leader and his Cabinet providing inductions, advice and guidance as they stepped in to their new roles.

The team supported the Leader and Cabinet Members as they participated in themed debates at Full Council meetings throughout the year. This year's themed debates have covered topics such as supporting Camden's carers, the Council's response to the government's 10-year health plan, the private rented sector in Camden, homelessness and temporary accommodation, and how the Council can work with partners and institutions to benefit our borough.

The PPC directorate continue to manage high levels of activity and demand through forward planning arrangements and conversations with senior leaders and Cabinet Members.

Key campaigns in 2024/25 included cost of living; general elections and voter ID rules; Health and Wellbeing campaigns including Look After You; and inclusion campaigns, including community reassurance during the August riots. The service also supported Camden Community Wealth Fund (CCWF) and We Make Camden Missions; CQC's inspection of ASC and Ofsted's inspection of Children's Services.

There is high level of requirement for internal communications, particularly with inspections; supporting staff networks and inclusion work; supporting Atrium briefings and staff engagement.

The growth of the Community Champions programme and We Make Camden Kit has strengthened participation infrastructure. Applications for the Kit continue to grow and demand out-weighs funding, so work continues with Camden Giving to increase funding contributions from other organisations.

3.7.2 *Opportunities*

This year, the service will be work closely with the incoming Chief Executive to support their priorities. The cost of living campaign continues – including responding to benefits changes and promoting all support available to residents. In addition, the team will be

supporting regeneration and housebuilding projects – e.g. trial pedestrianisation of Camden High Street, and Camden Investment Programme (CIP) and an expected Housing Services inspection.

The team will play a key role to support the implementation Community Wealth Fund, and Cost of Living Community Fund, particularly in relation to participation and communications elements. The team are working with citizen scientists, establishing a Youth Panel and designing a mass online participation approach.

The partnership with Demos and New Local received €1 million (euros) in funding from Google to develop an online deliberative democracy platform, which will enable the service to strengthen our online approach to engagement.

The recruitment of partner Mission Ambassadors can present exciting opportunities for the borough. The collaboration with Arsenal's No More Red Campaign and NW5 led to the football pitch refurbishment on the Peckwater Estate.

Across 2025 the service will prepare a comprehensive Member development and induction programme in preparation for the local elections in May 2026. This is the right time to develop and update Members on key policies. Media and communications handling around this election is in development.

3.7.3 *Learning*

The implementation of a partner Customer Relationship Management system to coordinate, manage and evaluate partnerships has enabled the team to strengthen the approach to partnership working. Evaluation of our Community Champions programme and We Make Camden Kit is being used to develop programmes for next year.

PPC continually evaluate campaigns and collate insights from their channels, council services and communities – e.g. the women's and community safety messaging is informed by survey data and community insights. Insights and data about channel preferences and campaign recognition rates from our 2025 channel survey will inform refreshed approaches to campaigns and channel usage.

The toxicity of social media is under scrutiny currently due, for example, to changes to the way the platforms are operated. We will continue to assess how Camden can effectively use social media to communicate with its residents and provide a customer service, while ensuring we remain true to our organisational values.

Co-location of Member Service and working alongside multi-disciplinary teams have enabled the service to resolve some of the more complex cases more quickly. The Neighbourhood approach has helped Members and officers gain a better understanding of each other's roles.

The number of Member Enquiries remains high, but the on-time response rate has significantly improved from 65% in 2023/24 to 84% in 2024/25. Providing fortnightly Member Enquiry performance updates to Council Heads of Service and Monthly to Council directors and offering Member Enquiry training has enabled senior managers and officer to keep on top of responses.

4 CHILDREN AND LEARNING

4.1 Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

4.1.1 *Challenges*

The increased volume of work coming in at Front door via contact and conversation to Referral which, in turn recognises the need to ensure all basic Social Work functions are progressed in a timely way and recorded, including assessments, visits, Child Protection conferences and Child in Need reviews.

There is a recognition that black and brown families are disproportionality represented in children in care in Camden. Work to mitigate this includes newly established Edge of Care service, a programme to keep children and young people on the edge of care, within education and from being unnecessarily placed into care.

Recruitment and retention – while agency usage is coming down and better workforce stability, continual work and attendance is required in this area.

Delivery of national Reforms blueprint on service redesign and delivery by March 2026 – with significant work ongoing/ resourcing to ensure discovery work/ exploration of practice is comprehensive to fully inform whole system redesign

4.1.2 *Opportunities*

Engagement in the codesign sessions that are set up to consider the implementation of the Social Care reforms and progress planning about the model and service deliver design that brings together Early help and Social Work in one Family Help Service. The second phase will consider the development of Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams.

Co-production and participation from parents, carers and children in redesign and delivery of reforms that benefits service user experiences and improves outcomes.

4.1.3 *Learning*

Appreciation of the delivery of Ofsted inspection with an “outstanding” grading provides the evidence of good practice and service to children across the system from Early Help, Children in Need, Child Protection Children Looked After, Children and Young People's Disability Service and Care Experienced.

4.2 The Children and Young People's Disability Service (CYPDS)

4.2.1 *Challenges*

Increasing number of disabled children with SEND (Special Education Needs and Disabilities) that require specialist support and on-going social care and social work support due to complexity of need.

There has been an increase in number of families with disabled children that require specialist support, via the CYPDS 0-25 service (from an average number of 400 per year this has gone up to average 550 per year over the last 2 years).

Specialist commissioned short breaks provision are unable to deliver to the increase in need and demand for specialist care. That means that spot purchasing of specialist support had to happen, that led to financial instability as budget management could not be predicted – risk of overspending

4.2.2 *Opportunities*

Developed the wider offer for children and young people with SEND by bringing Early years, Early Help, Youth Service and Adults Social care neighbourhoods teams on board with areas related to SEND/ Autism

Increased Direct Payments hourly rate for families in line with London Living Wage and to enable families to recruit and retain specialist Personal Assistants for longer.

The implementation of the Short Breaks Practitioner model (named worker model) in CYPDS that works to a family help type of approach. This increased trust, relationship building with families and the ability to allocate more so that all families can have an allocated worker, when supported under Children in Need Enhanced Short Breaks plan

Implementation of the Frontline Hub, will increase ability to allocate assessments and reviews in CYPDS service from September 2025.

Being inspected by 2 regulators – CQC and Ofsted - helps CYPDS maintain focus and achieve good performance. Preparing for Adulthood model noticed by both regulators as good practice, and other LAs interested in the 0-25 model in CYPDS

4.2.3 *Learning*

Further training for all the workforce in areas related to assessment of and care planning for disabled children with special education needs, would need to be developed with Learning and Development. In this way, all support services would feel well equipped and confident in responding to the increasing and diverse needs of disabled children and their families, and the focus will not be on specialist services only

Maintaining and developing strong collaboration with partners and the community we support remain a key element to our delivery. This is achieved through monthly engagement with Parents forum, attendance of families of disabled children at Short Breaks panel, quarterly CYPDS newsletter to all families supported by the service, annual engagement events on preparing for adulthood themes for families and children/ young people or for the diverse and rich community of families we work with.

Commissioning to develop a good understanding of the demand within this cohort for when Short Breaks support is recommissioned and to develop a framework for spot purchase providers used in CYPDS

Regarding recruitment: CYPDS has to make the offer clear to potential candidates, changed the adverts, clarify caseloads will be either in Childrens or in Adults based on individual practitioner interest and area of work

Unknown factors in the service currently include: there is more work to be done to analyse families resilience in relation to our offer of support and if this is timely,

sufficient and responds to need. There is also an aspect around staff morale in relation to their ability to respond to increase need and complexity, and their reasoning for wanting to move on.

4.3 Integrated Early Years and Family Hubs

4.3.1 *Challenges*

The development of the Family Hub network is progressing with partners coming together termly to agree local priorities, share information and build relationships. Information sharing agreements need to be developed with VCS partners to enable other venues to share responsibility for providing a 'single point of access' or, gateway to services, that is described in the Family Hub programme guide.

DfE funding for Family Hubs has been extended for one further year pending the outcomes of the government's spending review. Although some of the work, and certainly the approach, will be maintained, some of the projects which could potentially deliver significantly better outcomes for children and families may not be sustainable without on-going funding.

While focus moves to the Family Hub provision for older children, the importance of the first 1001 days and engaging families in services at this critical stage must be sustained and embedded. A new contract for the provision of Health Visiting, key to the delivery of our enhanced healthy child programme, Best Start for Baby, is due for implementation this year. This reflects the forthcoming transformation of children's early help and social work and the move to an 'all-age' model of Family Help. Former arrangements that included shared management of early years family workers and health visitors will no longer be appropriate in an 'all-age' model and different ways to sustain the integrated approach will need to be implemented.

4.3.2 *Opportunities*

The development of Family Help, delivered through a neighbourhood model, is a significant opportunity to improve our offer to residents. Providing help across the continuum of need, close to home may remove some barriers to the identification of need and the offer of support. The 'single point of access' described in the Family Hub programme guide encourages signposting and referral to local teams who can respond outside of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). An opportunity to trial this approach could lead to earlier help for some families and prevent the escalation of need.

A pilot of Team Around the School arrangements is about to commence in one locality, supporting school attendance and responding to the feedback from Headteachers about the challenge they face securing support for their families. The pilot will inform a boroughwide approach rolled out in the coming months.

The children's social care reform programme provides an opportunity to simplify and further integrate support for families. The development of Family Help will bring early help and children in need services together in an integrated service meeting the needs of families across the continuum. This will mean better continuity for families who will

be able to sustain a relationship with their Family Help practitioner even if their needs change.

4.3.3 *Learning*

There is a strong appetite among partners to work together more closely. Joint work with midwifery services and health visiting to try and increase the number of ante-natal contacts has shown the importance of persistence in partnership working. The number of ante-natal contacts is increasing and there is a commitment from midwifery services to offer more clinics from Family Hubs.

4.4 Family Support and Complex Families

4.4.1 *Challenges*

Increased volume of work coming in at Front door via contact and conversation to Referral has led to a 35% increase in the volume of work held in Early Help despite the percentage of referrals that are passed to Early Help appearing to have dropped. The increase in volume speaks to the increase in complexities in families lives and highlights the need for earlier intervention and prevention work for school aged children.

Families of global majority backgrounds are disproportionately represented in referrals and in the number of families that are escalated to the Children In Need service (requiring statutory intervention) work being undertaken with public health and the Family Hubs to increase global majority families' access to universal services.

In line with national trends, children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) as a presenting issue at referral, continues to show a considerable increase - when compared to 2021/22 there has been an increase from 21.7% to 42.9%. There is limited SEND specific parenting support (mainly autism) available across Camden for school age children. Consideration to be given to how the SEND work being undertaken by the hubs for Early years children can be extended for 5-19 year old children. Initial discussions underway with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) and Commissioning regarding this challenge and possible opportunities.

4.4.2 *Opportunities*

The new Children and Families Grant (previously Supporting Families) currently contributes to £1 million of the Early Help budget. The renewed funding will ensure that we maintain the existing Early Help offer (Family Support, the Early Help front door, Family Group Conferencing, play provision etc.) with the opportunity to review/adapt to the current socio/political context and the development of multi-agency Family Help teams.

Early Help Co-ordinators have completed attendance training to enable delivery of the Team around the School's pilot. The pilot should support with earlier identification of children with attendance issue and enhance the understanding of the (universal/targeted) support that these children/families may require. Some concerns about scalability of the model/offer. Early Help will continue to provide a casework offer to children whose attendance falls below 90% and the continuation of the Rebuilding

Bridges Project will continue to provide support to children with severe absenteeism. The Families First guidance identifies a need for schools and local partnerships to agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils as part of their Family Help offer.

There has been recruitment into the Team manager post for the Perpetrator Intervention team and will be recruiting into 4 intervention workers and 1 Survivor support worker role. The team will bridge a gap in our existing Domestic abuse perpetrator offer (Drive and Restart). Will support the development of a coordinated community response (a multi-agency response) and increases opportunities to engage/respond to perpetrators, hold them accountable for their behaviours whilst ensuring that survivor's safety is maintained at its core. This work will form a key part of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy – strategy development currently underway.

Learning

In the period leading up to Ofsted, we have seen a significant improvement in the timeliness of Early Help assessments and Team Around the Family (TAF) reviews 80-90%. Working to identify how this is maintained without the lever of Ofsted.

Early Help Quality Assurance (QA) moved into the Children and Learning QA service, now that the QA framework has launched, working to establish/support the auditing cycle across Early Help and ensure that learning continues to be embedded.

We have identified a decrease in feedback from families and are working to increase feedback opportunities from families from all backgrounds that access all areas of the offer - supporting Family Help discovery work and participation.

Reviewing impact measures at the Early Help front door, we understand that 2/3 of referrals that are passed to Early Help close with the provision of Information advice and guidance. Only 1/3 (approximately 1200 contacts) become casework. We are currently completing analysis of this to determine the efficacy of the model, this will support understanding of the role out of the single point of access in the family hubs for children aged 5-19 and will support intake practices across all the Early Help services (incl. Integrated Youth Services and Early Years Service).

Currently undertaking a skills audit to inform workforce development strategy in preparation for the Social care national reforms (Family Help). Previously developed an Early Help capabilities framework which had been informed by the Professional Capabilities Framework and the DfE's Knowledge and Skills Statement, this will be reviewed to determine potential to use it to develop a learning and development pathway into Family Help.

4.5 Integrated Youth Services

4.5.1 *Challenges*

Increase in risk and complexity of children held outside the Youth Justice Service (YJS). This has required further development of the voluntary support packages to be able to offer families and professionals a more bespoke intervention prior to formally being referred through the police and courts.

Greater emphasis in the scrutiny of the victim work across the partnership. The new His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) inspection framework requires more analysis of the service's victim data and requirement to think broader in terms of our responses to victims. To support with the development of this work there has been a refresh of Camden's victim policy document for the YJS and committed to the development of a cross-partnership victim strategy over the next 12 months.

Paying attention to disproportionality and social graces. There is a cross-directorate race equality plan and a full system review of data across the children's prevention, family help and safeguarding directorate to ensure that the service are considering the whole journey of a family and child through the system particularly at points of critical decision making.

From a review of the team's data and reporting they have identified vulnerabilities in the unique systems that are used within Integrated Youth Services for reporting across, youth work, youth justice work, young people not in education, employment or training (NEET), substance misuse and youth early help and that these are restricted to single user analysts and do not feed into wider directorate level reporting. There needs to be an in-depth review of the current model and seek further integration with the wider directorate.

We have seen the impact of COVID-19 on the data: From 2018/2019 to 2024/25 Q1-3, the number of first-time entrants to the Youth Justice System has reduced from 62 to 32. This drop was influenced by COVID but numbers are now rising again. The number of court disposals that start in the period have reduced from 141 in 2018/19 to 58 in 2024/25 Q1-3. In 2024/25, 62% of children are engaging in Education, Training or Employment

We saw an increase in overall offending in Q1-3 24/25, compared to 23/24, though there have been some notable changes in the proportions of offending type. Violence against the person continues to be the most prevalent offence, alongside drugs, motoring, robbery and theft & handling. However, we have seen an increase in criminal damage, non-domestic burglary, vehicle theft and sexual offences.

4.5.2 Opportunities

In Camden, a third of the children's budget is broadly targeted towards prevention – as a result there has been relatively lower rates of children taken into care and lower rates of entry into the youth justice system. The investment is long-standing with £1.5 million allocated to Camden's enhanced offer of early education for disadvantaged 3 & 4 year-olds and we continue to invest in Youth Hubs, Family Hubs, and the independent Domestic Abuse advice service. The Council's VAWG work has seen new investment in establishing a perpetrator service, legal service to support victims of Domestic Abuse, and the work in schools around positive masculinity.

Camden is committed to delivering integrated Youth Services: investing more than the inner London average on youth services. The LGA have noted that two thirds of councils have not increased spending on youth services between 2019 and 2024, whilst Camden has increased spending on Integrated Youth Support services by 9% since 2020/21. Camden spent £1,030,00 on Youth Services in 2024/25, with an

additional £293,000 funded by the Violence Reduction Unit – making the annual investment £1,323,000.

A new Relational Practice Framework and Quality Assurance framework was introduced in 2024/25, for all the Children and Learning Services, led by the Council's Director of Relational Practice.

When the Youth Safety Partnership was set up in 2018, there were 96 knife crime victims, and in November 2024 there has been a reduction to 29 victims. In 2017/18, there were 102 violence against the person offences excluding weapons, which has now reduced to 16 in 23/24.

Collaborative working across the council: focusing on delivering a set of strategic shared priorities, including work across Supporting Communities and Inclusive Economy on Employment, Education and Training linked to our Youth Mission, neighbourhoods, VAWG.

Camden hosts the London Accommodation and Resettlement Partnership (LARP), and the Council's Director of Children Services is chair of the Board: the work highlights the commitment to innovation with the LARP piloting intensive alternatives to custody in the community to allow children who normally would be remanded to youth custody to be in alternative accommodation.

4.5.3 Learning

A review of data within the Youth Justice Service this year has told us:

- The vast majority (92%) of children are boys and 76% are 16-17 years old.
- 59% of children have a current Child in Need or Child Protection Plan
- 19% of children have special education needs
- 17% of children are Care Experienced
- 67% of or children are from Global Majority backgrounds, there has been an increase in last 5 years of 'other' children
- Nearly 75% of children have issues with their emotional or mental health, 31% are accessing support from YJS CAMHS
- 89% of children agreed or strongly agreed that they had made some positive changes in their life
- 89% of Children surveyed said their case manager helped them work through their goals + targets

4.6 Education, Commissioning and inclusion

4.6.1 Challenges

Over the last 5 years there has been a significant reduction in demand for school places within Camden and the wider London area. Forecasts of pupil demand have also been created in times of unprecedented change and challenge for families in Camden. Specifically, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have fundamentally altered people's lives and changed patterns of migration within central London and Camden Borough specifically. The impacts of these have reduced the anticipated level of demand for school places. These factors also created a significant degree of

uncertainty, and a less stable environment in which to plan ahead as well as challenging the viability of the pattern of school provision across the borough.

In response to these changing local demographics the Council has taken a proactive approach to school place planning. Since 2018 the Council, in partnership with its family of schools, has removed 10 forms of entry from our reception intake, responding to a 24% reduction in birth rates across the borough. These difficult decisions including four school closures, the most recent being the closure of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School, ensure that our family schools remain both sustainable and responsive to the needs of their communities.

Throughout 2024/25 the Service continued to support the School Place Planning Group. This group of school leaders and wider stakeholders interrogate the data around school organisation, propose further lines for enquiry and highlight direct challenges facing education providers.

Operationally Q2 and Q3 were the busiest time for school admissions colleagues, as they processed the applications for Reception and Year 7 places for entry in September 2025. Through this process we considered the implications for potential changes to entry numbers for that year to support schools in reducing overall surplus levels.

There have been a range of workshops with parents, schools and partners across the partnership to embed a relational approach that leads to improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The number of children and young people in receipt of an Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG) or an Educational, Care and Health Plan continue to increase, resulting in additional pressures on the system across the local area partnership, particularly our mainstream schools.

Alongside the previously mentioned strategic planning there has been additional investment in the SEND Team who are reviewing processes and policies to ensure a consistent and transparent approach to service delivery that will be available of the refreshed Local Offer Website. Policies under development include a SEND Admissions Policy and the Moderation of Schools Notional SEND Budgets. The team are also preparing for a possible inspection early in 2025/26.

Challenges for the Virtual School, who coordinate educational services for children in care, include a reduced school attendance of Children Looked After (CLA). There is also an issue around highly complex CLA cases where appropriate specialist education is not always available.

4.6.2 Opportunities

Reorganisation of the Virtual School, including additional funding, to ensure that the service is able to adapt to the changing needs.

The annual School Capacity (SCAP) return has provided the opportunity to integrate the work of the Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) alongside mainstream demographic forecasting to map future sufficiency statements relating to provision of specialist places and resources. This work will continue by both the School Place Planning Group and the High Needs Subgroup.

There will be changes proposed in the new Schools Bill. This will include a greater role for Council's in managing the capacities of Academies, in addition an increased role for the Authority, outside of the Officer of the Schools Adjudicator in providing directions for admission. Whilst not yet included in guidance, the service are anticipating that the admissions code will be amended to include a coordinating role for Authorities in relation to in-year school admissions.

4.6.3 *Learning*

Adult Community Learning - New structure to improve information, advice and guidance (IAG) based on a consultation. Improved accredited learning in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). Removal of hybrid learning at low levels in digital inclusion courses.

The SEND area Self-Evaluation identified areas of strength and focus which are being further developed and encompassed in the SEND Strategy Implementation Plan. Performance oversight needs to be strengthened, and the development of a SEND Local Area Performance Dashboard is ongoing.

5 ADULTS AND HEALTH

5.1 Adult Social Care (ASC)

5.1.1 *Challenges*

Responding to increased volume of referrals and requests to our services: The newly established Neighbourhood Teams, launched in June 2024, continue to embed new structures, new ways of working and processes for receiving contacts and referrals directly via Contact Camden. As the teams take on new responsibilities, they face challenges related to both the complexity and volume of work.

The Community Learning Disability Service continues to face pressures due to an increasing volume of complex work. This is affecting leadership capacity, overall service throughput, and the operations of the First Contact (duty) team. There has been a rise in the number of individuals waiting for allocation, however, urgent cases are being promptly addressed by the First Contact team.

Adult Safeguarding: The volume of work related to Adult Safeguarding in 2024/25 remained consistent with previous post-pandemic years; however, the complexity of individuals' needs continues to rise. Those facing multiple disadvantages—including homelessness, mental ill health, substance misuse, and social isolation—are often at heightened risk of abuse and exploitation. Due to the intersection of these challenges, individuals may sometimes fall between services, necessitating a more integrated approach.

Provider resilience: One of the strategic risks that is being closely monitored is financial viability of providers. This has been a continuous risk and issue for the sector for some time, due to inflationary pressures, recruitment issues and sector-wide market sustainability concerns. The increase in employer National Insurance contributions and

the rise in the national living wage are likely to bring significant financial pressures for care providers and agencies.

5.1.2 *Opportunities*

CQC Assessment of Camden's Adult Social Care: On 24 June 2024, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) announced its assessment of Camden's Adult Social Care Directorate. The first stage was completed with the submission of the service information return on 12 July 2024, covering 38 specified areas within the four CQC themes: Working with People, Providing Support, Ensuring Safety, and Leadership.

Camden became the first borough in the country to receive an 'Outstanding' rating under the new CQC Assurance framework. The report, published on 28 February 2025, scored Adult Social Care services at 89% overall, with the same score for equity—significantly higher than other local authorities—and top ratings for governance, management, and sustainability.

Integrated Neighbourhood Teams: The development of Camden's Neighbourhood approach continues to be a major opportunity area for Adult Social Care, and is an area highlighted as a significant strength within the 2024 CQC assurance visit. The test and learn Integrated Neighbourhood Team (INT) in the East Neighbourhood remains the clearest demonstration of innovation towards a neighbourhood service model and brings together the East ASC Neighbourhood Team with a variety of primary care and community health colleagues. Adult Social Care have a central role within the Neighbourhoods agenda and the strategic coordinator for the East INT is part of the ASC leadership team.

Carers Strategy and Action Plan: The Carers Action Plan represents a strategic commitment to recognizing and supporting carers more effectively across the Camden Borough Partnership. Developed through a comprehensive two-year coproduction process, the plan was launched at the full Council meeting in July 2024. The initiative received strong support, acknowledging the contributions and lived experiences of unpaid carers in Camden. The launch was accompanied by a series of activities, including an art exhibition showcasing carers' work and the official activation of the Carers Action Plan website.

Co-production Framework: The Co-Production Framework in Camden's Adult Social Care, launched in July 2024, is called "Moving Forward Together." It was co-developed with residents, family members, carers, and colleagues, aiming to strengthen partnerships across Camden's services.

5.1.3 *Learning*

CQC Inspection: Preparation for inspection, including our Self-Assessment provided a comprehensive overview of our strengths and achievements, as well as highlighting our challenges and areas of focus across the four themes. This assessment was supported by robust evidence and in-depth engagement with staff, residents, and partners. The data and evidence compiled for the information return has provided key insight is continuously updated to ensure we maintain a current and accurate picture of progress and accountability for the work taking place across Adult Social Care in Camden.

Quality Assurance: The ASC Oversight Board, established in October 2024 and chaired by the Executive Director, Adults and Health), integrates the former Quarterly Quality and Performance Activity and Finance Boards. It provides strategic and operational oversight of Adult Social Care and commissioned services, ensuring accountability, transparency, and continuous improvement. Key focus areas include Quality, Assurance, Data Insights, Inequality, Activity and Finance Overview, Statutory Reporting, Benchmarking, and quarterly reporting cycles.

Over the last 12 months there has been extensive attempts to understand the wellbeing related outcome measures in the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF). This led to the creation of the Equalities Data Action Group (EDAG) which continued to meet during Q4 2024/25. Recent work includes a regression analysis of whether there are any links between demographic factors and the likelihood of someone who is referred to ASC going on to receive services. This work will report in Q1 2025/26. Q4 also involved planning for a series of workshops that will seek to develop strategies to address the issues seen in ASCOF around improving the level of social contact people for people who draw on ASC support. These workshops will use the Working Together For Change approach used by Social Care Futures, and will involve around 40 people with lived experience, adult social care practitioners, public health and voluntary sector partners. The workshops will take place in June 2025 at the Greenwood Centre.

Adult Early Help: In September 2024, the Council launched an 18-month Adult Early Help pilot to strengthen resilience, enhance prevention strategies, and align with other corporate programmes. They currently support 12 individuals and offer bespoke one-on-one support, internal drop-ins, and monthly outreach surgeries.

A six-month review in January 2025 confirmed the pilot's value while identifying additional needs. Three new workstreams—scoping prevention indicators, developing a preventative model, and shaping investment discussions—are now preparing to launch. Insights will inform long-term strategies for supporting adults beyond the pilot.

5.2 Adult's Public Health

5.2.1 Challenges

Over the period 3rd March – 7th March 2025 there was a cluster of non-fatal drug overdoses in the north and centre of the borough. These incidents were hyper localised to this area of Camden and do not seem to have affected any other parts of the borough / London. The drugs seized during these incidents was found to contain nitazenes (a super strength synthetic opioid) and medetomidine (which acts as a sedative and does not respond to naloxone) but notably had no heroin in them. Commissioners, commissioned drug and alcohol services and the police worked in partnership to share intelligence, agreed shared comms and met regularly to discuss actions required. Commissioned drug and alcohol services offered weekend provision in March offering access to rapid prescribing, naloxone and harm reduction advice.

5.2.2 Opportunities

The excellent partnership working with the police during the response to the incidents has provided an opportunity for police colleagues and commissioners to work together

to develop a joint drug alert system. This will result in agreed comms being shared by both the Council and the Police at the same time with consistent messaging.

5.2.3 *Learning*

If the volume of non-heroin opiate supply increases commissioners and services may need to amend assessment, screening and medical assessment processes for people entering or re-entering treatment (e.g. drug screening is usually undertaken to detect presence of heroin/opiates and a negative screen could be produced as drug screening may not currently detect synthetic opioids).

As a result of this incident and the regular flow of information about managing overdoses there is a need to be aware of the potential for adding to the trauma of people who have previously experienced overdose. Commissioners will work with services / service users to consider how we tailor comms for different audiences during critical incidents and to ensure that ways to access support if adversely impacted by the content or tone of the communications are clearly stated.

If future incidents involve adulterants such as medetomidine (which is resistant to naloxone), commissioners and drug and alcohol services will need to tailor and amend harm reduction advice messaging.

6 SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES

6.1 Housing

6.1.1 *Challenges*

Homelessness: Staff recruitment and retention has been difficult in the homelessness prevention service. Roles have been reviewed as part of the service restructure and will see an increase in grade which it is hoped will help with retention and recruitment. The Allocations and Lettings service has also undergone a major restructure. The new structure is creating a new property procurement function containing the skills and specialism to deliver a more efficient and less costly Temporary Accommodation provision.

The Routes off the Streets (RTS) service, funded by the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) 22-25, has faced reduced grants based on the assumption that rough sleeping would decline. Instead, socio-economic factors have caused an increase, straining resources. Budget cuts have led to staff reductions and higher caseloads, limiting service effectiveness. A review by the Council's Executive Director of Adults and Health and the Portfolio lead for Adults and Health confirms that current funding is insufficient, highlighting the critical need for increased support.

As a result, RTS resources have been increased recently with Council resources to fill the gap from RSI decreasing in the final year.

Temporary Accommodation: National challenges on the provision of Temporary Accommodation (TA) continues to result in a challenging operating environment. It is extremely difficult to secure accommodation for people facing homelessness due to Local Housing Allowance limits and scarcity of homes of any kind; socially or privately rented. Like most London boroughs, Camden has seen large increases in households in temporary accommodation. In March 2025 numbers reached 1,018 households, and as a result the service is overspent by £14.9m in 2024/25. The TA taskforce, chaired by the Executive Director for Supporting Communities, is overseeing the response to this challenge, looking at improving data and processes, increasing supply and improving support options for the residents in TA. The Temporary Accommodation Purchase Programme (TAPP) which involves buying back ex-Right-to-Buy properties for sale on the open market and using them for the purpose of temporary accommodation has seen a total of 159 properties purchased across the 3 allocations (TAPP, TAPP2, TAPP3). There are currently 126 in occupation with the rest anticipated to be available once they have been brought up to Camden's lettable standard.

The redevelopment of Camden Road and Chester Road hostels into family hostels is severely delayed. The two hostels will deliver 89 additional rooms and has been incorporated into the TA model but has experienced severe delays and is now projected to be available from 2026.

35 units from Agar Grove estate have been allocated for TA use and will shortly be fully occupied.

The service has onboarded a new hotel brokerage company, Jigsaw, for out-of-hours accommodation. As Jigsaw partner with several registered providers, they secure lower nightly rates when booking hotel rooms which helps to lower the overall costs. It is worth noting that since January 2024, new providers of nightly accommodation have been onboarded which has provided access to 242 rooms, delivering a 30% cost reduction when compared with the average Premier Inn room rate. Without these interventions, it is estimated that the TA bill in 2024/25 would be £4.4m higher.

The service has undertaken some analysis to identify the most expensive providers of nightly self-contained accommodation and continues to take steps to onboard alternative & cheaper accommodation providers. The work to decant households has begun and will deliver an annualised £0.275m saving.

Rent Arrears: The newly implemented team structures will ensure Income Recovery & Arrears Prevention, Welfare Benefit Advice, Enforcement and Rent Accounting functions will report to an Income Manager, ensuring closer collaboration.

The Rents Team has an arrears improvement plan that ensures tenants have access to necessary support, improving rent collection systems, reviewing internal rent collection policies and processes, establishing a rent-first, performance-driven culture, and reviewing roles and responsibilities within the rent collection process.

The plan aims to support tenants who are struggling to pay their rent by helping them maximise their incomes and bring their finances under control, while also enabling enforcement measures for tenants to encourage timely payments.

Pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA): Inflation and external pressures have significantly impacted the HRA. Rising costs in energy, repairs, maintenance, and housing services, driven by inflation, remain high despite a reduction

in CPI (Consumer Price Index). Additionally, high interest rates have increased financing costs, contributing to budget overspends. New regulatory requirements, such as the Social Housing Regulation Act and the Building Safety Act, have further added financial pressures, compounding the challenges faced by the HRA.

To address funding gaps, several actions have been proposed. These include a rent increase of 2.7% starting from April 2025 to generate additional income, adjustments to tenant service charges to support full cost recovery, and the implementation of savings targets through efficiency improvements and budget adjustments.

Historical policies have resulted in £168m of lost rental income since 2016, significantly impacting the ability to maintain and improve housing stock. Additionally, policy changes such as rent reductions and caps have undermined the financial stability of the HRA.

Rising living costs and arrears trends are significantly influencing financial planning, with a particular focus on improving rent collection and managing void properties. To address these challenges, dedicated teams and new software are being utilised to enhance rent collection rates and manage arrears more effectively.

6.1.2 *Opportunities*

Some immediate priorities continue for the Housing Transformation Programme that include transforming the Housing 'Front Door', the Housing & Property Digital Change Programme, the action plan for the Housing Investment Strategy, starting to implement a Relational Practice Model, improving data services, and working closely with the corporate Neighbourhoods Programme.

Homelessness: The Housing First Project that will create 30 new Housing First tenancies in Camden through a combination of acquisitions, National Housing Group (NHG) properties and some of our own voids. The Service is now going live and beginning to accept referrals – this is likely to have a significant positive impact for many people rough sleeping in the borough without other housing options.

The Service will also be opening this year a 16 bed 'off-the-street' accommodation project on Gray's Inn Road for people rough sleeping. The service is due to begin accepting referrals in Q1 2025-26. Both are Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme (SHAP) funded.

The Routes off the Street (RTS) service provided by Change, Grow, Live (CGL) has been allocated an additional £375,000 from the Rough Sleeping Prevention and Recovery (RSPAR) Grant 2025-26. This is to recruit additional outreach workers to support with the significant rise in people rough sleeping across Camden. The service is due to be recommissioned with a new contract starting in April 2026 – work with stakeholders and Procurement to undertake the recommissioning has begun.

Rent Arrears: A new IT system called RentSense was introduced in July 2024 on a pilot basis until November 2024. This system helps prioritise activities to address arrears, enable earlier intervention, and provide additional reporting and communication options. The pilot was successful, and have seen rent recovery targets exceeded, so a new 18-month contract has been issued.

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.

After reviewing the Rent Team pilot, a new Income team was established to manage rent accounts on a permanent basis moving forwards, with closer links to support and enforcement teams.

To enhance the services and strengthen their commitment to residents, the Service will further develop our offerings by embedding our co-produced Service Standards. Collaborating with a number of residents through various means they designed and delivered service values, ensuring their needs and perspectives are integral to their operations.

6.2 **Property Management**

6.2.1 *Challenges*

The housing stock requires significant investment in key components and infrastructure. In particular, there are communal heating systems that have pipework that is significantly deteriorated leading to multiple leaks. Additional capital works are being commissioned, including large schemes at Rowley Way, Mayford and Maiden Lane, this following approval of the £670m Housing Investment Strategy; however, in the immediate term, the Council is having to repeatedly repair some systems leading to poor outcomes for residents. This is reflected in the fall in resident satisfaction for Mechanical and Electrical repairs (76% in Q3, and a slight recovery to 81% in Q4).

The constraints on HRA revenue budgets, and the additional work related to fire safety, damp and mould, and disrepair, means that the waiting time for general day to day repairs has increased. This has led to a sustained fall in satisfaction (81% in Q4, compared to 89% in Q1) and an increase in complaints received. The Council is focused on improving productivity across the resources that it has and embedding the system changes enabled by the new ROCC housing repairs and maintenance software. This is leading to improved productivity, scheduling and budgetary control, however residents will remain understandably frustrated that the Council cannot shorten diary wait times while these other pressures are managed. These frustrations are also reflected in casework volumes – which have increased – with common themes being the waiting time for repairs, communication during the repairs process and repairs determined to be the responsibility of residents. The Council's lessons learned officer is examining the root causes of the cases being received to determine the targeted action that can be taken despite the constraints on the service. The Council has also introduced a 'completions team' who examine complaints outcomes and make sure the corrective actions identified are tracked through to completion.

The data shows that the Council continues to see a steady volume of disrepair cases, this common across the social housing sector and activity by 'claim farmers', a person or organisation that encourages people to pursue a claim against their landlord for compensation, even when the reason may not be legitimate. The Council is focused on tackling claims promptly, introducing a new Disrepair Programme Manager in Q3,

and has proactive communications that encourage residents to contact the Council if they are concerned about repairs to their homes. This has seen a reduction in live cases which now stand at 383 in Q4, compared to 516 in Q1. Fees payable to solicitors are however placing a significant demand on the HRA.

The Council is proactively adapting to the new Gateway processes introduced by the Building Safety Act 2022 (BSA) which requires regulatory approval for most works to tall buildings, of which the Council has 188. There are 80 applications underway at present, all requiring structural and fire engineering advice. The Council has met with the Building Safety Regulator to discuss how landlords can help it plan resources and expedite applications, however the Gateway process will see works delayed by between 6 to 12 months as application and approval processes are navigated.

6.2.2 *Opportunities*

The Council has strong arrangements in place to respond to the BSA (and regulations under the Fire Safety Act 2021), and the recommendations of the Grenfell Inquiry report phase 2. It has a well-established team which is developing the Building Safety Cases (BSCs) required for 188 of the Council's tall buildings. By the end of Q4, the Council had submitted 13 BSCs in response to requests from the Regulator. The safety cases will further improve our approach to managing our tall buildings and keeping residents safe; this through works undertaken, regular inspections and information made available. At the time of writing, the Regulator had issued a Building Assessment Certificate (BAC) for one of the buildings covered by the 13 BSCs, the BAC determines that the Council is compliant with the law with regards its management of the building. The Council is only the second London borough to have a BAC issued.

The new Housing Investment Strategy was approved in January 2025. It provides a significant opportunity to invest additional capital resources in the Council's housing stock – adding £350m to the existing programme of £320m. It also enables the Council to proactively manage its assets and make best use of resources. This is a significant step towards maintaining compliance with the Consumer Standards and maintaining a sustainable HRA business plan. Furthermore, in 2024/25 the Council started its additional internal stock condition surveys. This will see internal condition data gathered for all of its tenanted homes, to supplement the 10% internal surveys and 100% external and communal surveys already completed.

In Q4 the Council commenced a restructuring of its front-end customer service teams and minor changes within the repairs service. The new structure will mean that the case management team will become neighbourhood-based, with case management officers handling cases within their area and collaborating with tenant participation and resident liaison functions. The changes also make sure support for Tenants' and Residents' Associations (TRAs) and panels is in one place and the Council can co-ordinate its engagement activity and track outcomes. This includes additional activities such as the Neighbourhood Action Days which are being rolled out in 2025/26.

6.2.3 *Learning*

The Council continues to work closely with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) on its response to the Regulatory Notice issued July 2023. All historic high-risk Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) actions have been addressed and good progress continues on remaining medium and low-risk actions. Progress is posted online monthly, and reports

considered at the quarterly Housing & Fire Safety Advisory Panel with residents, members and the London Fire Brigade. The aim is for most fire actions to be completed by December 2025, with those remaining subject to the Gateway processes outlined above or due to non-access procedures.

As part of its customer service team changes, the Council is appointing a second Lessons Learned Lead as part of the work to tackle root causes and prevent repeat issues where this is possible. This will also support our work in delivering the Council's action plan responding to the Housing Ombudsman's (HO) report. A further positive meeting was held with the HO in Q4 and they are satisfied with the progress made by the Council. Additional work is planned, for example the Council will be improving its systems and introducing a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to help staff track and manage casework.

From our complaints analysis, it is clear some of our most challenging cases relate to complex issues such as structural work. Such cases may also require residents to be relocated. As well as looking at the process improvements required for such work, the Council needs to reduce its exposure to this risk through the Housing Investment Strategy and related work such as the Family Friendly Housing Purchase Programme, where high-cost / high-risk homes have been disposed of and proceeds used to buy suitable purpose-built homes for families.

The emphasis on channel shift has continued and in both Q3 and Q4, 87% of repairs were raised online or through messaging services. This transition is expected to continue with the introduction of the Madetech system in December 2024, which allows residents to book repairs easily and manage their appointments online, with status updates also now provided. This work means that phone lines remain free for emergency repairs or for those who need additional support. Efficient management of casework continues with 85% of cases responded to in target times despite the increase in volumes.

6.3 Development

6.3.1 *Challenges*

In the face of the many factors working against us, this year Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP) has continued to progress schemes where many others have stalled. Having specifically tailored the procurement and contracting approach to individual projects and sites, has successfully attracted 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 1,700 homes completed, approximately 277 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 both new homes and employment space at Camley Street.

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 194 properties acquired through the TAPP programme which will be used for temporary accommodation and housing Ukrainian and Afghan refugee families.

6.3.3 *Learning*

The Service continually receive construction market updates via Arcadis and Beacon which provides useful context with which to assess our own 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.

Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) provide the Council with ongoing sales market advice and commentary. The CIP private sales activity has continued to be resilient - all private sale properties at Maitland Park have now been sold 8 months ahead of target and the sales receipts have exceeded the business plan target. There are currently only private units for sale in Agar Grove 1c, a scheme that completed in Q2 2024.

6.4 Planning and Area Regeneration

6.4.1 *Challenges*

Development Management income targets from pre-application and applications remain challenging due to a slow-down in development activity across London over the last 18 months. While there was a moderate increase in performance, there has still been a significant shortfall in applications, which as well as affecting fee income also translates into delivery.

The delivery of self-contained housing remains challenging due to market conditions for residential homes. Land-owners and developers are prioritising other uses such as student housing, offices and hotels, but where policy allows, the Council continue to secure good affordable housing outcomes. However, the viability challenges developers face mean that some are seeking to avoid their affordable housing obligations on existing permissions.

Both of these issues will continue to be challenges that require focus and proactive work with developers and landowners to encourage housing and affordable housing development specifically to come forward.

6.4.2 *Opportunities*

Support is already being receiving support from the Policy Design team in changing the way the team works within Development Management to increase speed of processing planning applications – the first part has gone live with the free pre-application advice service for retro-fit. The team are also already seeing benefits from

the introduction of online self-service where residents can check if they do need planning permission or not, which has reduced call volumes to the duty planner service, freeing up officer time for other work.

Good progress is being made on the MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) funded digital projects which the Service will be testing this year, with continued support from procurement and IT.

There is the potential for significant planning reform and the government has recently consulted on changes and a new planning bill is working its way through parliament. This could lead to significant change in the way planning applications and planning policy are approached and will have an impact on the draft local plan.

The Knowledge Quarter continues to grow as a cluster for health, life sciences, AI and Quantum technology – through both the planning system and the inclusive economy service, this creates opportunities to deliver growth for the national economy in vital strategic industries, while also creating opportunities for our communities to access good work.

6.4.3 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 considering using its powers, such as land appropriation or compulsory purchase orders (CPO) to help bring forward new homes on the 02 and Regis Road sites where good progress is being made.

6.5 Euston and HS2

6.5.1 Challenges

Government decision making around HS2 and Euston is still highly uncertain and at times unpredictable. The team are using all available levers through the Euston Partnership and political lobbying to influence decision making. The government has confirmed delivery of the final leg HS2 to Euston – however the spatial plan, delivery model and budget remain undetermined, although it is intended that decisions will be taken in the summer of 2025.

6.5.2 Opportunities

In 2024/25 the Euston Housing Delivery Group (EHDG) has been established with Bek Seely as chair, and will be focussed on an ambitious housing and regeneration initiative for Euston, working alongside our communities. Opportunities for Camden to work to deliver more housing through the EHDG and Camden's Community Investment Programme (CIP) if coordinated and supported by community conversations. This could also support a bid to government as part of the spending review process.

Support to resource the development of the Council approach to potentially create a locally-led Development Corporation in the Euston area, 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 have commissioned studies into Development Corporations and Funding Mechanisms.

6.5.3 *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.

'Meanwhile Uses' happen with interim occupation of vacant or underutilised premises, sites or spaces, in advance of redevelopment, or in a long-term vacant space. Delivering 'Meanwhile Uses' around Euston is challenging due to the Government's drive to restart construction and complexities to get sites ready for use. The team kick started the development of 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.

6.6 **Inclusive Economy/Good Work Camden (GWC)**

6.6.1 *Challenges*

Residents presenting with long-term, chronic mental health conditions, coupled with a lack of specialist provision who the team feel we can confidently signpost to.

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

6.6.2 *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. The service 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 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.

In 2025/26 we will deliver in partnership with Central London Forward, one of the youth guarantee trailblazers. Focusing on care experienced young people, we will be providing personalised support to enable this group to find training and work. The

overall central London approach will create opportunities for shared learning as we test learn and grow the interventions that show evidence of success.

6.6.3 Learning

Over the last year: there has been 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 (Not in Education, Employment or Training) figures in time, though Camden's NEET figures are currently low. School non-attenders have been identified as a priority group for the Youth Mission.

Other planned 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.

There is an evaluation of 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.

6.7 Environment and Sustainability

6.7.1 Challenges

An Increase in graffiti and offensive graffiti / fly-posting, which is monitored through Environment Services and Community Safety teams. Prompt removal of reported incidents and focus in hot-spot areas (high streets in the central area of the borough).

Appropriate resourcing and organisational focus on the climate risk agenda and climate adaptation. Work to ensure that there is ongoing cross-Camden focus on the creation of resilient communities and infrastructure across the borough to cater for increasing heat risk and increasing likelihood of surface water flooding, alongside the emergency management response during excess heat and flooding episodes.

The size and ambition of the Camden Transport Strategy delivery plan creates a broad resource ask beyond the Transport Team and Division, requiring ongoing alignment of organisational resources. Developing schemes brings together a range of participation and engagement resources and as schemes develop through their phases an enhanced reputational focus is required. Also, key elements of Camden's highways network and transport infrastructure is outside of our control, particularly with respect of Transport for London (TfL) who manage the "TLRN" (red route) network, (most of) the public transport network in the Borough, and assets on our highways network (e.g.

signals). Lack of resources, funding and some issues around competing priorities within TfL means that progress in delivering transformational change on the TLRN, or public transport upgrades at the pace required is challenging.

Increase transport demand for Special Educational Needs children with high needs / EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans). Over the past few years there has been a sharp rise in children requiring costly one to one transport where an average place for this level of transport can cost £25,000 to £50,000. In addition, we have seen other costs increase including vehicle rental which in some cases have seen an increase by 10 to 40%.

Recruitment and retention in some key service areas including Parking Services, Building Control and Transport Strategy. There is high competition for experienced, qualified personnel across the public and private sector with pay rates often out of the realm of public sector pay scales. The recruitment process has proven to be inflexible and lengthy leading to long lead in times to get key roles recruited to.

Staff wellbeing: experienced an uptick in the number of officers that are sharing issues concerning their mental and physical health. This has been challenging as the rising numbers mean that the priority on sustaining that officer support means that we see a rising impact upon service delivery.

6.7.2 *Opportunities*

The next iteration of Camden's Climate Action Plan (2026-30) is the big opportunity that would benefit from cross organisational support, particularly alongside the delivery of the We Make Camden "local economy tackles the climate emergency" Challenge and working with Camden's business community to increase climate action across the borough. Building on links between environmental improvements and improving public health to further better outcomes for Camden's communities.

Working in London with the Lane Rental Strategy Group, which comprises Transport for London, Enfield, Lambeth, Kensington & Chelsea to develop and deliver a Lane Rental Scheme for borough roads. This scheme will allow boroughs to charge utility companies for 'occupation' on the most traffic sensitive streets at traffic sensitive times. This should improve local road congestion and improve air quality by encouraging utility companies to better plan their works.

The co-ordination of area-based service delivery and public infrastructure development requires strong internal and external partnership working – need to ensure that local opportunities, resources and funding are regularly socialised and reviewed in order to get full value at a local level.

Recruitment continues to be an issue where flexibility is required to capture opportunities. There are a number of vacancies across services and finding it increasingly difficult to offer up a recruitment process / offer that is speedy and flexible enough to meet service needs.

6.7.3 *Learning*

Ongoing engagement of local government with the new Government is essential relating to their implementation of the Waste and Resources Strategy, particularly the

impact on local government services from the national Deposit Return Scheme (recyclable materials) and Extended Producer Responsibility funding for local recycling services.

Government consultation and proposals relating to the application of Emissions Trading Scheme to Energy from Waste facilities (NLWA facility) from 2028, which could have significant financial impact for local government whilst having limited impact on the emissions from publicly disposed of waste. Camden officers engaging with work and considering the potential impact on the NLWA levy charges in 2028.

Air quality improvements post COVID-19 have been sustained:

- Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)
245 out of 261 diffusion tube monitoring locations were legally compliant (16 exceedances) and Camden has achieved our 2026 interim target at 183 of these locations. However, we still exceed the 2034 World Health Organisation (WHO) target.
- Particulate Matter (PM)
Camden's have four PM monitoring sites both PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}. For PM₁₀ all four of the sites achieved our Clean Air Action Plan (CAAP) interim target, with two of these already compliant with the WHO 2021 guidelines for this pollutant. For the first time, all four PM_{2.5} monitoring locations have achieved the interim target (seven years ahead of schedule). None have yet achieved the WHO 2021 standard for PM_{2.5}

Continued monitoring of a range of output and outcome metrics relating to Camden's transport and active travel interventions. When benchmarked with other London Boroughs, Camden continues to perform exceptionally well with respect of Healthy Streets delivery as evidenced by our 3rd place position in the latest independent [Healthy Streets Scorecard analysis](#).

In the last decade Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) casualties on roads in Camden have reduced by 36% - the third largest reduction by Borough in inner London. Motorcycle KSIs in the Borough have reduced by 50% in that time period; pedestrian KSIs by 25% and pedal cycle KSIs by 33%. All of this data is pointing in the right direction in terms of achieving "Vision Zero" (no KSIs) by 2041.

6.8 Public Safety

6.8.1 *Challenges*

Resourcing remains a significant challenge within the relevant environmental health and statutory/regulatory services. The increased investment into the Food Safety service has provided scope to establish a new service model with an increased priority attached to recruitment and retention.

Sustained high level of demand, particularly for environmental health related services continues to present service challenges. Ongoing IT/system upgrades combined with changes to the environmental health service models/structures are designed to ensure that the Council continues to be able to respond to the sustained demand trends.

Tension remains high due to external factors impacting Camden such as the ongoing conflict in the Middle-East. The Community Safety service continues to prioritise activity delivered in partnership with the Metropolitan Police with an emphasis on community engagement and reassurance. The internal tension monitoring group also continues to play an important role in co-ordinating the tactical and operational response to a range of issues.

The Metropolitan Police provide staffing for the Coroner's office and earlier this year they gave notice of their intention to retract from this arrangement, effectively passing this resource requirement to Local Authorities. Senior level discussions between lead authorities and the Met have taken place and focus is on a managed handover.

6.8.2 Opportunities

The upgrade of the IT system used by the relevant environmental health and regulatory services is designed to support the ongoing development of agile front-line services. The opportunity to upgrade the existing systems is designed to provide efficiencies whilst also providing scope for the services to use data more effectively.

The development of Licensing Charter in partnership with stakeholders has provided an important opportunity to further support the key aspirations outlined within the Camden Evening and Night-time Economy Strategy. Responses suggested wide awareness of what good practice looked like, especially for prominent venues who understand the importance of managing relationships and understanding their neighbourhoods and training staff.

Opportunity to refresh the delivery of the Inner North Coroner service model is considered an opportunity to improve the service for the consortium boroughs. Co-locating the Coroner service remains a plan for the service also.

6.8.3 Learning

Learning from the ASB review continues to inform the delivery of the revised cross-council approach towards tackling anti-social behaviour. Feedback from local residents and communities continues to be used to inform the development of action plans designed to address anti-social behaviour, particularly in Camden Housing Estates that are most disproportionately affected.

The Council undertook a major multi-agency emergency planning exercise in March 2025, involving the Police, Fire Brigade and Health partners to test our resilience planning and command and control systems. This learning is continuing our developments of the service and processes.

6.9 Recreation

6.9.1 Challenges

This year has seen a number of library closures for periods whilst building improvements take place, these are now complete with Highgate, West Hampstead and Holborn Libraries and Children Library section at Swiss Cottage all having significant work completed and reopening. Managing the impact of these major

investments is challenging to ensure our communities maintain access to library services as best as practicable.

The resolution of the GLL Leisure Centre service charge and turnover rent positions is a priority following a number of years of accruing the charges due to discussions about the impact of COVID-19.

6.9.2 Opportunities

Following the renewal of some spaces at Holborn Library, a community offer will go live in May this year and similar plans will be incorporated to create the same offer for the updated Kilburn Library following major works there over in 2025/26.

To place our teams in the best position to respond to the heightened pressures on our communities, the Library and Leisure service are commissioning bespoke training for frontline team on Trauma Informed Practice.

6.9.3 Learning

The Reading Strategy has given us data insight as well as connected to two doctorate projects looking at the impact of libraries one with the British Library and linked to the Living Knowledge Network and the other looking at Community building and the role of libraries. A third will start soon looking at the role of libraries as social infrastructure.

To support our future investment proposals, a green space survey launched in February 2025. The insights received from this survey will be combined with asset condition surveys and other factors such as deprivation to prioritise the investments through an update Green Space Investment Programme.

7. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

- 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 further comments to add.

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 2024/25

REPORT ENDS