

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE: Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership – Annual Report 2024-25	
REPORT OF: Executive Director Children and Learning and Director of Children's Services	
FOR SUBMISSION TO: Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE: 9 December 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>Following the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and the updated <i>Working Together to Safeguard Children</i> guidance (2023), the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP) is jointly led by four locally recognised lead safeguarding partners: Camden Council, NHS North Central London Integrated Care Board (ICB), the Central North Basic Command Unit of the Metropolitan Police Service, and Camden Learning, which represents the education sector. Together, these partners share equal responsibility for safeguarding children and ensuring strong multi-agency collaboration across Camden.</p> <p>The 2024–25 Annual Report (Appendix 1) reviews the CSCP's impact on governance, strategic oversight, and the quality of safeguarding arrangements across Camden. It has been submitted to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel as required and is available on the CSCP website: www.cscp.org.uk.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Tim Aldridge, Executive Director of Children and Learning, Camden Council, 8th Floor, 5 Pancras, London, N1C 4AG Tim.Aldridge@camden.gov.uk</p>	
RECOMMENDATIONS The Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee asked to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Comment on and note the outcomes achieved by the CSCP set out in the 2024-25 Annual Report (Appendix 1); 2) Provide feedback to the local statutory safeguarding partners for children; and 3) Note the report. 	

Signed: 

Tim Aldridge, Executive Director Children and Learning and Director of Children's Services (DCS)

Date: 13 November 2025

1. Purpose of Report

This report provides strategic oversight of Camden's multi-agency safeguarding work. It offers scrutiny and assessment of service performance, highlights strengths and areas for improvement, and outlines actions taken to enhance safeguarding practice, to improve outcomes for vulnerable children. This is a statutory report, produced annually in line with national safeguarding requirements, and is presented to the Committee each year for consideration.

2. Key questions for the Committee

- *Are you assured that lead safeguarding partners work collaboratively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children both individually and collectively?*
- *Are you assured of an open and transparent safeguarding culture?*
- *Are you assured that learning analysis findings inform our multi agency safeguarding arrangements to protect children?*

3. Introduction (Annual Report - Section 1-3)

CSCP's vision is that all children in Camden are safe, thriving, and heard, achieved through collaborative practice, continuous learning, and a commitment to understanding children's lived experiences. Camden is home to approximately 44,000 children, who make up 20% of the estimated resident population of 220,000. The CSCP Annual Report is a joint report from lead safeguarding partners, evidencing the Partnership's activities and its effectiveness in developing safeguarding practice across the partnership. The report demonstrates our learning and improvement framework, which focuses on multi-agency priorities, partnership learning, impact, evidence, and improvement. This report provides a summary of the CSCP Annual Report for 2024–2025.

4. Background (Annual Report - Section 2)

In December 2023, the Government published statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023' (WT23), which sets out what is expected of organisations, individually and jointly, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. WT23 states that Safeguarding partners should be transparent in how they co-ordinate, deliver and fund services for children and families locally. There are two requirements of safeguarding partnerships as part of the reporting on service delivery and leadership which include the publication of working arrangements and the yearly partnership report. WT23 requires that copies of all published yearly reports by safeguarding partnerships should be sent to the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Department for Education. The annual report is an important source of learning and the findings from analysis also informs national work being taken forward to reform multiagency safeguarding arrangements for protecting children.

5. The CSCP objectives are to:

Objective 1: Prompt and effective multiagency safeguarding response: Ensure agencies collaborate effectively to safeguard children by providing a prompt, appropriate, and effective response when a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. This includes ensuring that preventative and early help services are provided in a joined-up and effective manner.

- **Objective 2: Collaboration and accountability:** Ensure agencies work together effectively, holding each other accountable and addressing evolving safeguarding challenges and risks.

- **Objective 3: Child first practice:** Enable accurate and timely decision-making by combining the voices of children and families with practitioners' knowledge and data insights to identify strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Objective 4: Learning and improvement:** Promote a learning culture supported by senior leaders, with effective training programs to develop an inclusive and collaborative safeguarding environment.
- **Objective 5: Quality Assurance and Performance Management:** Ensure senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families.
- **Objective 6: Data and Intelligence:** Drive effective information sharing and systems across agencies to identify and address new safeguarding risks, issues, and emerging threats.

The CSCP identifies three safeguarding priority areas to take forward biennially. For 2023-25, our key priorities are (Annual report Section 5):

- Re-engaging vulnerable children in education (including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities [SEND])
- Mental Health in the family
- Children Looked After and those that are Care Experienced

6. **Governance and independent scrutiny and leadership** (*Annual Report: Section 1*)

Effective safeguarding takes place when cultures are open and transparent, where informed senior leaders are close to and sighted on frontline issues, where those senior leaders are accessible and visible and where risk is owned throughout organisations and the partnership is collaborative. CSCP is jointly led by three Lead Safeguarding Partners, who are joined by Education in key strategic decision-making:

- Executive Director, (DCS) Children and Learning, Camden Council
- Director of Safeguarding, North Central London Integrated Care System
- Chief Superintendent, Basic Command Unit (BCU) Commander Central North, Metropolitan Police Service
- Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning (Strategic Safeguarding Education Lead)

In 2024–25, Camden strengthened links with other strategic partnership boards to align priorities, share learning, and support joined-up planning that improves outcomes for children. These connections enable effective mutual challenge and assurance across systems. In line with *Working Together to Safeguard Children* (2023), Camden has embedded robust independent scrutiny through roles such as the Independent Scrutineer, safeguarding auditors and reviewers, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) authors, CSCP Young Advisors, and Lay Members. This diverse approach fosters openness, strengthens multi-agency practice, and ensures children's voices remain central to safeguarding arrangements.

7. **Multiagency Challenge and Support**

Multi-agency challenge is essential for effective safeguarding because it brings different views together, checks decisions, and makes sure everyone shares responsibility for keeping children safe. Some examples of how agencies work together to identify risks, share learning, and hold each other accountable include:

- **Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews** enable scrutiny and challenge of safeguarding practice, promoting reflection, shared learning, and continuous improvement across the partnership.

- **CSCP multiagency meetings** demonstrate active challenge from health partners during multiagency discussions, evidencing robust engagement.
- **CSCP Escalation Policy** has been updated to support professionals in raising concerns and resolving differences in safeguarding practice.
- **Lay Members** act as the voice of the community within the CSCP, offering constructive challenge and helping ensure safeguarding reflects local perspectives.
- **CSCP multiagency audits** provide opportunities to collectively review practice, share learning, and identify good practice. These are led by Independent Reviewers to promote openness and reflective practice.
- **Independent Auditors and Scrutineers**, commissioned by the CSCP, works closely with the partnership to maintain transparency, challenge performance, and foster a culture of learning and improvement.
- **Section 11 safeguarding audit** of Camden schools, early years and university settings forms part of the wider national safeguarding reform agenda.

8. **Key Performance by our Lead Safeguarding Partners** (*Annual Report - Section 3*)
Health: All Health Trusts in Camden are rated *Good* by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CSCP Health Subgroup provides safeguarding assurance across the local health sector and facilitates a communication network for key safeguarding professionals. The subgroup monitors the CSCP's business plan and priorities, ensuring decisions are implemented by relevant agencies. It also plays an advisory role on health-related safeguarding issues, supporting strategic alignment and shared learning across the system.

Camden Council – Children's Services: Camden Council's children's services were rated *Outstanding* by Ofsted in April 2025. Inspectors praised the impact of experienced leadership, strong corporate and political support, and a well-trained workforce. Ofsted highlighted strong collaboration between Camden's leaders and a wide range of partners, including local businesses, sports agencies, and the voluntary and community sector to enhance support and opportunities for children. The report highlighted effective multi-agency safeguarding partnerships, strategic leadership on issues such as child exploitation and anti-racist practice, and a robust mental health and education offer for care-experienced children and young people.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS): Following the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection in October 2023, the MPS has faced scrutiny in its approach to child protection. In response, the MPS launched a five-year Children's Strategy in September 2024, introducing a "Child First" policy and a milestone plan with HMICFRS. Improvements include training for officers on childhood vulnerability and safeguarding, revised risk assessment protocols for missing children, and increased staffing in child protection teams. Performance is now monitored through audits and data dashboards, with regular public updates. HMICFRS revisited the MPS in September 2024 and confirmed that all accelerated causes of concern have been closed. The CSCP continues to seek assurance on the sustainability and impact of these reforms.

Early Years Provision and Schools: Camden has a diverse range of educational institutions, including primary, secondary, and independent and special schools. 99% of Early Years provisions and 100% of school are rated either 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. Camden Early Years Service works with early years providers to ensure

nurseries meet statutory safeguarding requirements and local policies. This includes monitoring safer recruitment, staff child protection training, and procedures for responding to welfare concerns. CSCP reviews Early Years audits, Ofsted reports, and local authority findings to identify strengths and gaps, with the aim of promoting consistent safeguarding standards across maintained and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) nursery settings. As part of national social care reform, Camden will build on its existing early years and family hub models to strengthen locality-based safeguarding. This approach aligns with the national vision for integrated services that improve outcomes for children and families.

CSCP assures school safeguarding by reviewing governance and operational practices against statutory requirements. This includes checking policies, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) capacity, and staff training compliance, alongside analysing data on referrals, attendance, exclusions, and incidents to identify risks and trends. Schools are engaged through audits, challenge sessions, and thematic reviews to test effectiveness and escalate concerns where needed. In 2024, attainment for children leaving primary and secondary school exceeded national averages, and the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils remained narrower than London and England benchmarks. Recognising the vital role of schools, CSCP supports safeguarding through the termly DSL Forum, co-chaired by Camden Learning and the Local Authority, with input from Police and Health. This forum provides a network for state and independent schools to share challenges, stay updated on policy changes, and reflect on local learning. Over 2025–26, early years settings and schools in Camden will undergo Section 11 safeguarding audit programme to assess compliance with national safeguarding standards.

9. Elective Home Education (*Annual Report: Section 7*)

Since the pandemic, there has been a sustained increase in the number of children being electively home educated (EHE), both nationally and locally. Camden ended the 2024-25 academic year with 350 children on the voluntary EHE register which mirrors a national increasing number of EHE cases. Camden Learning has an established voluntary register of children who are electively home educated which will support new expected EHE guidance, including registration and child employment, which is expected as part of the Children Wellbeing and Schools Bill in Autumn 2025. Camden continues to monitor new notifications, assess educational provision, and engage with families through its Home Education Advisor and review processes.

10. The Voice of the Child within safeguarding arrangements (*Annual Report: Section 7*)

Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership continues to listen, hear, and take into account children's views. This shapes all partnership work and every element of our work, and enables us to understand children's lived experience, and their experience of the safeguarding system. Throughout the annual report, there are examples of work across the partnership to strengthen the voices of the children in the communities we work with, some of which are included below:

- 100% of children looked after contributed to their reviews, with Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) writing to children to explain decisions and celebrate successes.
- The Youth Safety Multimedia Competition and Youth Celebration Awards engaged over 3,700 young people, with more than 1,000 receiving external awards, amplifying youth voice through creative expression.

- The Young Inspectors Programme led to practical recommendations for Camden's Virtual School, including improved accessibility, interpreter use, and co-designed resources for higher education.
- Family Group Conferences (FGCs) received 260 referrals, empowering families to lead their own safeguarding plans using their strengths and support networks.
- Early Help feedback showed 86% of families felt their worker helped them progress toward goals, and 100% of Early Years families agreed their support worker knew how to help and connect them to services.
- Youth hubs and peer mentoring programmes such as Fitzrovia Youth in Action and Rebuilding Bridges provided accredited training and wellbeing support, with four Level 3 youth work apprentices nearing completion.

11. **Safeguarding in the Community** (*Annual Report: Section 12*)

The Community Safeguarding Partnership Project listens to the voices that emerge from Camden's Voluntary sector communities and takes a solution focus approach to supporting them with their safeguarding challenges. It examines the specific vulnerabilities and contextual factors affecting children from minoritised cultural and ethnic backgrounds and aims to deliver services that recognises potential barriers to accessing support with delivery alongside community organisations.

12. **Themes from our local serious incidents and reviews** (*Annual Report - Section 9*)

The purpose of a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) is for agencies and individuals to learn lessons to improve the way in which they work both individually and collectively to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Camden Statutory Partners (including Education) meet to discuss and reach consensus on each serious incident notification, rapid review, including jointly reaching a decision on whether to progress with a further Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review or alternative methodology of learning. In 2024–25, Camden Local Authority (on behalf of CSCP) submitted six Serious Incident Notifications, leading to five Rapid Reviews and one new LCSPR. aggregated themes below are shared for strategic scrutiny to support systemic and practice improvement.

- **Intersectionality and Identity:** Embedding Social GRACES ¹and anti-racist practice across safeguarding arrangements to better understand how overlapping identities affect vulnerability and access to support.
- **Supporting Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC):** Strengthening trauma-informed care, legal advocacy, and culturally responsive placements for UASC, with a focus on transitions to adulthood and mental health support.
- **Suicide Prevention and Transitional Safeguarding:** Learning from serious incidents involving care-experienced young adults has led to multi-agency commitments around suicide prevention, transitional safeguarding, and working with non-acceptance of help.
- **Safeguarding in Short-Term Residential Settings:** Continued scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements in residential summer schools and hotels for asylum-seeking families, with emphasis on staff training and trauma-informed practice.
- **Using History to Understand Risk:** Reviews highlight the importance of understanding historical trauma, placement instability, and systemic delays in shaping current safeguarding needs and responses.

¹ Social GRACES" is a concept used in social work and therapy to help practitioners reflect on aspects of identity that influence relationships and care. It's an acronym that stands for: Gender, Race, Age, Class, Ethnicity, Sexuality.

- **Infant Safety and Overcrowded Housing:** Ongoing concern about the safety and welfare of infants living in overcrowded or unsuitable housing, with new policies and training focused on safer sleeping and environmental risk factors.
- **Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation:** Camden's approach to child sexual and criminal exploitation includes contextual response plans, targeted disruption tactics, and recognition of online exploitation as a growing risk.
- **Transitional Safeguarding and Developmental Needs:** A new Transitional Safeguarding Forum has been launched to coordinate support for young people moving into adulthood, with a focus on relational, trauma-informed, and participatory practice.

13. Children and Families Contact Service (*Annual Report - Section 6*)

Camden's Children and Families Contact Service is co-located with multiagency partners and is responsible for making decisions on referrals and requests for services to ensure that children and families receive the most suitable support depending on their level of need. There were 8,583 referrals made to the Children's front door in 2024-25 (5% increase from previous year). Children services redesign has incorporated recommendations from the Partnership. This includes an education representative now co-located to provide advice and information and strengthening management oversight, through a dedicated service manager role, to help ensure that the *right decision is made at the right time*.

14. Family Help (*Annual Report - Section 6*)

There continues to be a high demand for Early Help services and there were 2131 contacts progressed to the Early Help team in 2024-25. Camden statutory arrangements have enabled significant investment in early intervention and prevention which is embedded within community services through our 'Family Hubs'. Early Help teams across services work to the same core principles, using the Resilient Families Framework as the foundation, providing the right help at the right time to prevent problems escalating and help families become more resilient.

15. Child Protection – Abuse and Neglect (*Annual Report - Section 7*)

In 2024-25, there were a total of 155 children subject to a child protection plan which shows a continuous decline from the spike in 2020-21. The most common reason for children becoming subject to child protection in 2024-25 is emotional abuse followed by neglect, physical abuse and sexual abuse. This year has seen a shift from neglect being the largest category. The most prevalent social work assessment factor in 2024–25 relates to domestic violence, with 32% of assessments identifying domestic violence (parent/carer) as a concern. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 recognises that a child, who sees, hears, or experiences the effects of domestic abuse and is related to the victim or the suspect is regarded as a victim of domestic abuse. This has led to the increase in domestic violence child subject risk factor identified during assessment in 2024-25.

16. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) (*Annual Report - Section 7.8*)

A multi-agency VAWG Board continues to lead strategic developments, with Serious Incident Domestic Abuse Review (SIDAR) learning informing 2024-25 workshops focused on coercive control and partnership responses. Camden Safety Net and Independent Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocate (IDSVA) services are now fully embedded within Children's Services, improving access to specialist support. Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation has strengthened survivor-led approaches across housing, with lived experience shaping service delivery. Training is being developed to support implementation of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and

Clare's Law, with a focus on practitioner confidence and legal literacy. A Camden and Islington Police pilot is underway to improve responses to standard risk domestic abuse cases, particularly where victims do not support prosecution. Operation Encompass remains embedded in 56 Camden maintained schools, ensuring timely safeguarding for children exposed to domestic abuse. Healthy relationships education continues through commissioned programmes: Whisper Me Happy Ever After (primary) and Tender (secondary), supporting early intervention and prevention. Progress against VAWG recommendations includes embedding GRACES in supervision, strengthening responses to adultification, and developing a joint domestic abuse strategy for 2026.

17. Children looked after (*Annual Report: Section 7.3*)

There was a slight decrease in children becoming looked after in 2024-25 compared to previous years. 61% of children coming into the care of the Local Authority were aged 13 years and above. Camden has made progress in a series of initiatives to address the sufficiency and increase the availability of local placements. 85% of children looked after were placed within 20 miles of their home address and most of our children are in foster care within Camden. Partners have focused attention on moving young people, especially in less diverse areas back into Camden, prioritising those who are isolated and/or experiencing mental health difficulties. 89% of children looked after have an up-to-date health and dental check and 78% of children who have been looked after for at least a year, aged under 5 have received an up-to-date development check.

18. Vulnerable Adolescents - Risk and Exploitation (*Annual Report - Section 8.1*)

Extra-familial risks and harm can be defined as risks to the welfare of children that arise within their local community or peer groups. The CSCP Vulnerable Adolescents – Risk and Exploitation Strategy Group oversees and coordinates the multiagency response to the risks facing young people in Camden. The work is across three key areas of exploitation. They include:

- harmful sexual behaviour and child sexual exploitation (CSE).
- youth violence, child criminal exploitation (CCE) including trafficking/ modern slavery.
- radicalisation and forms of extremism leading to terrorism.

The strategy has a pillared approach; Prevent, Identify, Support, Disrupt and Enforce/Prosecute.

19. Child exploitation (*Annual Report - Section 8.1*)

Online exploitation remained the most frequently identified model in 2024–25 for children who had been sexually exploited, with a continued rise in male identification. For child criminal exploitation, children were most frequently exploited through gangs, youth violence, and drug-related activity. CSCP continues to commission multiagency training delivered by Barnardo's, focusing on Camden's refreshed approach to responding to exploitation and supporting vulnerable young people. Our cross-borough multiagency panel assessing potential child victims of Modern Slavery has positively impacted children by significantly reducing decision-making time, with lead professionals sharing the child's lived experience to improve access to specialist support.

20. Children going missing (*Annual Report - Section 8.3*)

The correlation between missing young people at risk of CSE and CCE is recognised. In 2024-25, 127 young people were reported missing 870 times with 79.4% of missing episodes lasting 24 hours or less. To further understand the lived experience of the

child, Camden's children missing service offers internal return home interviews to children reported missing. This has resulted in improved relationships with placements and carers, increased information sharing and an increase in successful Return Home Conversation (RHC) (78%).

21. Youth violence and knife crime (*Annual Report - Section 8.4*)

Our statutory arrangements allow an understanding of the local contexts of youth violence in Camden which is vital to prevention and support to those affected. The CSCP continues to develop an understanding of the relationship between serious youth violence and criminal exploitation, whilst continuing to identify other underlying causes and triggers. Camden has seen a sustained downward trend in knife crime with injury among young people, with 26 victims aged 10–24 recorded in 2024, down from 45 the previous year and significantly below the 2018 peak. To monitor the prevalence of gangs in Camden, the multiagency daily gangs risk briefing, and Camden's Gangs Partnership continues. Conflict between peer groups has been identified as an indicator of subsequent risk of youth violence and exploitation.

22. Reflections and priorities for 2025-26

In response to emerging safeguarding challenges and learning from 2024–25, the CSCP has identified key priorities to strengthen multiagency practice and improve outcomes for children and families in Camden. These priorities reflect our commitment to continuous improvement and are shaped by feedback, inspection findings, and the lived experiences of children and families. They include:

- **Overseeing the development and implementation of national social care reforms** for children, ensuring local practice aligns with national priorities.
- **Strengthen victim support and transitions** by improving pathways from youth to adult services, ensuring continuity of care and safeguarding for vulnerable adolescents.
- **Address disproportionality** in safeguarding responses, particularly for children from Black ethnic communities, through improved data analysis, inclusive practice, and community engagement.
- **Enhance early identification and multiagency coordination** by developing responses to emerging risks such as online exploitation, peer-on-peer harm, and changing gang structures.
- **Seeking safeguarding assurance across early years settings, schools, and universities** in the borough to ensure that all children and young people are protected and that statutory standards are consistently met.
- **Monitor the impact of the cost-of-living crisis** on child vulnerability and family stress, ensuring services remain accessible, responsive, and trauma-informed.

23. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

The Director of Finance has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no further comment to make.

24. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

The CSCP must prepare and publish a report on what the CSCP have done as a result of the safeguarding arrangements and how effective these arrangements have been (Section 16G of the Children Act 2004). Further detail regarding the contents of this report is set out in the statutory guidance Working Together 2023 at paragraph 107. This report covers these requirements. Such reports are required to be submitted to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review panel each September from 2024.

25. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications proposed in this report.

26. Appendices

Appendix 1 - CSCP Annual Report 2024-25

REPORT ENDS