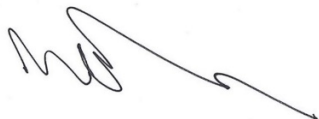


LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families: December 2025	
REPORT Of Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 9 th December 2025
SUMMARY OF REPORT The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families provides the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee with his annual report for discussion. The report gives an overview of the work and achievements made across schools and learning, health for children and families, adult and community learning, children's services and safeguarding, children's special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision, corporate parenting and Early Years & Family Hubs. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report Contact Officer: Hannah Bennai Cabinet Officer Corporate Services 5 Pancras Square London N1C 4AG Telephone: 020 7974 1750 Email: hannah.bennai@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATION The Committee is asked to comment on and note the contents of the report.	



Signed by:
 Councillor Marcus Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families

Date: 25 November 2025

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. The Best Start for Children and Families annual report comes to scrutiny every year to summarise the activities and achievements within the Best Start for Children and Families portfolio.
- 1.2. This report summarises the key initiatives and strategic priorities aimed at improving the lives and wellbeing of children and families across the Camden.
- 1.3. The report is presented to Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee to fulfil constitutional requirements for accountability and transparency within the portfolio. The report also informs key stakeholders about the progress made across the portfolio.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. The Best Start for Children and Families portfolio plays a central role in fulfilling Camden's commitment to protecting and empowering children, families and communities. Our mission is rooted in reducing child poverty, strengthening family support, and maintaining exceptional educational standards across all Camden schools. Through close collaboration across our schools and services, we ensure that every young person has the opportunity to thrive academically and grow into a confident adult.
- 2.2. At the heart of this work lies our focus on engaging with the community and early intervention. Our early years services continue to build strong foundations for lifelong learning, ensuring every child has access to the right support from the very beginning.
- 2.3. Camden's education system remains a model of excellence and inclusion, with all schools rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. In the 2024-2025 academic year, pupil achievement exceeded national averages and the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils was amongst the smallest in the country.
- 2.4. In April 2025, Camden's Children's Services were rated "Outstanding" by Ofsted. Inspectors praised our experienced leadership, well-trained workforce and our commitment to partnership working. Their report highlighted our strong safeguarding services, anti-racist practice and excellent mental health and education support for care-experienced young people.
- 2.5. Innovation continues to shape Camden's education offer. This year four of our test-and-learn Opportunity Centres became operational. These learning venues address inequalities faced by young people access to technology and study facilities outside traditional school hours. In March we launched our AI Campus Opportunity Centre in partnership with Google to offers Camden students activities specifically designed to be inclusive and engaging around AI.
- 2.6. Music continues to play a transformative role in our education offer. In 2025, over 3,600 students took part in Camden Music activities. From whole-class instrumental lessons, to choir ensembles to holiday course. Music education had helped build the confidence of so many of our young people across Camden.

- 2.7. Camden's Healthy Schools and nutrition programmes are equally vital in helping children learn, grow and flourish. Currently 72% of Camden schools have achieved or are working towards the Healthy School award. The Council continues to promote healthy eating and access to nutritious meals through our Magic Breakfast Programme which provides free breakfast to 3089 pupils on a daily basis, Free School Meals offer which has a 61% uptake as well as our Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme.
- 2.8. This report summarises the work across the Portfolio from December 2024-December 2025.

3. Camden Learning

Camden School Attainment

- 3.1. Camden Learning is our innovative and successful partnership between the Council and Schools. Within Camden Learning, schools are seen and recognised not only as individual providers, but as civic institutions contributing to the collective success of children and communities. This requires deep, purposeful, long-term collaboration which is anchored in trust. Through this partnership, schools in Camden remain locally aligned and working collectively to share practice and expertise to successfully deliver the Council's Education strategy Building Back Stronger.
- 3.2. Camden schools including academies, diocesan schools and voluntary-aided schools continue to be successful and active members, with all providing a good or better quality of education reflected in Ofsted inspections and none opting to convert to academy status. Nearly all continue to be maintained schools.
- 3.3. Many Camden schools continue to face staffing and budgetary challenges related to falling pupil rolls, and the resource needed to support increasing numbers of pupils presenting high needs. Pupils receiving their GCSE results this year are the first group of pupils whose entire secondary education has been impacted by the pandemic and, arguably, the group with the most disrupted primary to secondary transition. They are also the first of two cohorts who are missing Key Stage 2 data, their tests having been cancelled due to the pandemic, therefore there are no Progress 8 measures.
- 3.4. Exam outcomes for 2025 in this report are all provisional, with final validated outcomes released later in the year.

Primary School Attainment Provisional 2025		Secondary School Provisional 2025	
Early Years (end of Reception year)	71% achieved a 'good level of development', an increase year on year since 2022 and above the 2024 national and London averages.	Key Stage 4 (year 11)	The provisional attainment 8 average score in Camden was 48, similar to previous years and slightly higher than the 2024 national average (46). This was a slight fall from 2024; and lower than the London average.

Key stage 2 (end of Year 6)	73% of pupils reached expectations, above the London average and 11% above the national average	Key Stage 5 (Year 13)	<p>The average point score (APS) per A level entry was 35.47, slightly above the last year average of 34.5. This is equivalent to a grade B-.</p> <p>The provisional average point score for Applied General (vocational) qualifications for Camden schools was 29.9, which was above the 2024 results and also above national and London averages for 2024 (based on schools and colleges data). This is equivalent to a Merit +.</p>
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- 3.5. Camden schools are highly inclusive and continue to show a narrower gap in the achievement of disadvantaged and other pupils (the **disadvantaged gap**) compared to national benchmarks in 2025.

Primary School Attainment Provisional 2025		Secondary School Provisional 2025	
Early Years (end of Reception year)	-15% , similar to recent years and narrower than the national FSM gap for 2024 (-21%)	Key Stage 4 (Year 11)	The achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils achieving a standard pass in English and mathematics (grade 4 or above) was -21% which was narrower than the national gap in 2024 (29%).
Key stage 2 (end of Year 6)	-17% , narrower than the national gap for 2024 (-21%)		



Opportunity Centres

- 3.6. Camden's Education Strategy, *Building Back Stronger*, set out a bold ambition to develop a network of Opportunity Centres—high-technology learning venues operating outside traditional school hours. These centres are designed to address inequalities faced by young people who lack access to quiet study spaces, digital resources, or personalised support at home.

- 3.7. Since Easter 2023, Acland Burghley School and La Sainte Union have hosted Camden's first school-based Opportunity Centres. These centres have provided a mix of academic and enrichment activities during evenings, weekends, and holidays. Students have accessed: Homework support and one-to-one tutoring; GCSE revision sessions across a wide range of subjects; Digital and AI, cookery, martial arts, robotics, and creative arts. Attendance has been strong, with data showing that FSM and SEND pupils are well represented in academic-focused sessions, suggesting that targeted academic support offers greater value for equity.
- 3.8. The Euston Skills Centre, launched this year, has focused on careers enrichment for Years 9–11. Activities include taster sessions and short courses, with input from nine local businesses. In January 2025, we launched the Camden Career Club pilot at the Euston Skills Centre, offering career-focused enrichment for Years 9–11. Developed in partnership with local businesses and shaped by student feedback, the programme included: interactive taster sessions on apprenticeships, money management, and entrepreneurship, four-week courses in business start-up and design/build, relaxation time, food provision, and incentives to encourage attendance. Students rated sessions highly, with 100% reporting new skills gained and a significant increase in understanding of business and enterprise. The programme will now expand borough-wide, with full-scale delivery planned for Autumn 2025.
- 3.9. In March 2025 we launched the AI Campus Opportunity Centre in partnership with Google to offer Camden students in Years 7–13 a calm, tech-enabled space for after-school study and digital skills development. Activities are designed to be inclusive and engaging, with no prior experience in AI required. Recent sessions included: *What is AI? How does it work? Train your own AI* using Google Teachable Machine; *Create and test an AI Escape Room*. The Opportunity Centres programme has already delivered meaningful learning experiences and valuable insights, helping close gaps in access to technology, tutoring, and enrichment.



School Governors -Diversifying Cohorts

- 3.10. Camden remains committed to ensuring diversity in school governing bodies. This is essential to effective decision-making, community representation, and equitable educational outcomes. This work aligns with the Camden 2030 mission: “By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow.” Camden Learning has actively promoted the voices of Global Majority (GM) governors through case studies, leadership showcases, and representation in borough-wide forums. This advocacy work aims to challenge structural barriers and

ensure GM governors are not only recruited but retained and supported in leadership roles.

- 3.11. In partnership with Islington Council, Camden Learning supported a thriving network for governors from Black, Asian, and other ethnic backgrounds. The network hosted sessions on anti-racist leadership, neurodiversity, and inclusive governance, fostering peer support and shared learning.
- 3.12. A cohort of 13 young adults (aged 18–30) were placed on Camden governing bodies as Associate Members forming the Young Governors Programme. This initiative, delivered in partnership with Governors for Schools, aimed to address age imbalances and bring fresh perspectives to school leadership. Early feedback indicates the cohort is more representative of Camden's school population than the wider governor body.
- 3.13. Camden Learning attended events such as the Windrush celebration, Camden Melas (arts fair), and secondary school transition fairs to promote governor roles. These efforts led to increased applications from underrepresented groups.
- 3.14. The annual diversity survey, now in its fourth year, continues to inform Camden's strategy. While White British governors remain overrepresented (approx. 60% vs. 35.4% borough population), there has been a modest increase in representation among first-time governors from Global Majority backgrounds. Female governors continue to outnumber male governors (approx. 59% vs. 40%). We will continue to build on this work going forward.
- 3.15. Camden Learning introduced a revised Induction Pledge and toolkit to support new governors, including buddying, mentoring, and tailored guidance for parent and staff governors. Schools were also encouraged to reflect on diversity and succession planning during professional partner visits.
- 3.16. In the coming year Camden Learning are seeking to increase participation in the annual diversity survey and improve data collection methods. Also, the aim is to expand outreach to community events and deepen engagement with underrepresented groups. Camden Learning will continue to evaluate the Young Governors Programme to inform future cohorts, strengthen the Global Majority Governors' Network: developing strategic aims for advocacy, peer support, and leadership development.

School attendance

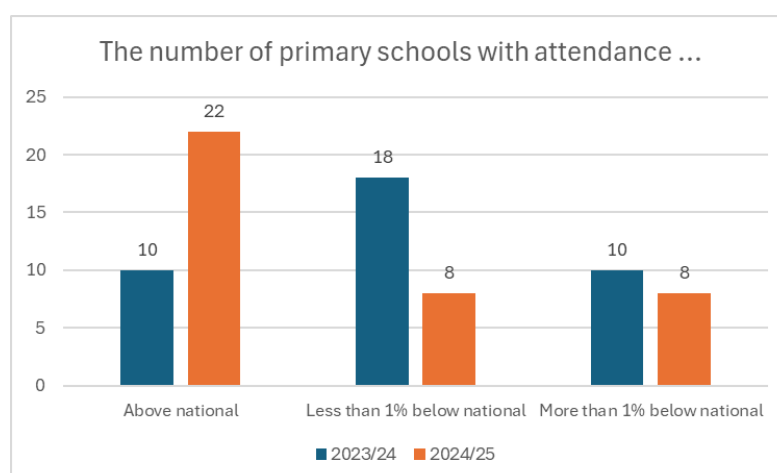
- 3.17. We continue to see improvement in our attendance rates since 2022/23 in Primary schools. The overall attendance percentage for Camden's primary schools was 94.1% in Autumn and Spring term 2024/25.. However, our overall figures are lower than the comparable rate for Inner London and England primary schools.
- 3.18. There has been a welcome reduction in the rates of persistent absence in Camden primary schools since 2022/23, however the rate remains higher than the rate for Inner London and England primary schools. The persistent absence rate for Camden primary schools was 16.7% This is a 1%-point improvement of the same period in 2023/24, which was 17.7% and a 5.5%-point improvement on 2022/23. Rates of persistent absence are not uniform across the pupil

population. Disadvantaged pupils in Camden primary schools are almost twice as likely to be persistent absentees compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. The same is true of Inner London and England. In the Autumn/Spring 2024/25 data, 22.1% of disadvantaged Camden primary school pupils were persistently absent compared to 11.2% of non-disadvantaged pupils. For both groups of pupils this was an improvement on 2023/24.

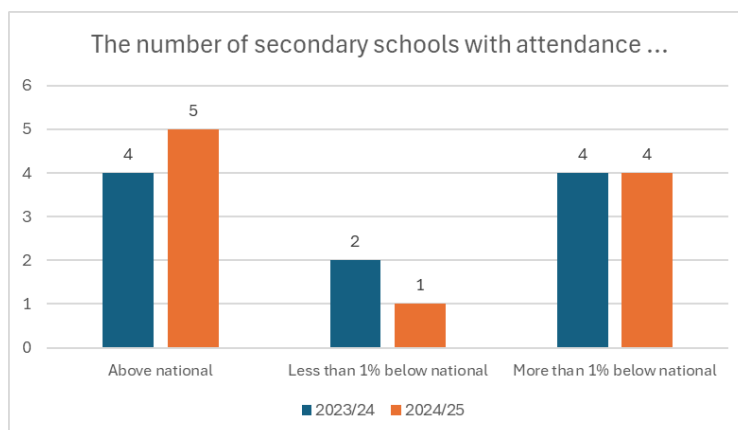
- 3.19. There is a strong correlation between attendance and attainment in the end of Key Stage 2 tests at primary school. In 2025, provisional data indicates that 78% of children with an attendance of 95% or better achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths compared to just 53% of children with attendance below 80%.
- 3.20. In 2022/23 and 2023/24 Camden secondary schools' overall attendance was higher than the rate for England, but lower than the rate for Inner London. In the Autumn/Spring term 2024/25 overall attendance declined by 0.9%-points from 92% to 91.1%, which is lower than 91.5% overall attendance in 2022/23. In the Autumn/Spring terms in 2023/24 the rate of persistent absence in Camden secondary schools increased by 3.2% points from 24% to 27.2%.
- 3.21. As with primary school, disadvantaged pupils in Camden secondary schools are more likely to be persistently absent compared to their non-disadvantaged peers. In the Autumn/Spring 2023/24 data 34.1% of Camden secondary age pupils were persistently absent. This compares to 18.4% of non-disadvantaged pupils.
- 3.22. At the secondary phase there is a similar correlation between attendance and attainment. Children with attendance of 95% or better had a provisional Attainment 8 score of 56.2, compared to just 27.3 for children with attendance below 80%.
- 3.23. School attendance is a strategic priority for Camden and a focus of work for schools. Schools have been promoting the benefits of regular attendance and working with children and families to overcome barriers to attendance. They have been supported by Camden Learning and Camden Council in this work in numerous ways, both in terms of core practice and initiatives.
- 3.24. Given the correlation between attendance and outcomes, attendance forms a key part of Camden's approach to school improvement. Camden Professional Partner's (CPPs) meet termly with headteachers to discuss performance and strategies across a range of metrics, including attendance. Where schools are identified as needing additional support this can be provided. Attendance at each school is tracked and considered at termly Schools Requiring Additional Support attended by service leads from across Camden Learning and Camden Council.
- 3.25. Schools have access to a comprehensive range of resources to support their practice as part of Camden Learning's attendance strategy and resources. Camden Learning produces bespoke school attendance data booklets for school leaders. These support them to identify cohorts and trends to focus on, as well as benchmark themselves against regional and national data. A monthly Camden Learning attendance update is e-newsletter is sent to all Camden school attendance leads, attendance officers and headteachers. In the updates

include the latest data, improvement practice tips, suggested areas to focus upon, and the latest learning from research. Camden Learning also convenes attendance network meetings for school attendance leads. These are an opportunity for attendance leads in schools to come together to review data, look strategically at attendance issues and share examples of effective practice. The Camden Learning training offer includes training for attendance leads and officers to ensure they are equipped with the necessary knowledge to undertake their roles effectively.

- 3.26. The deployment of family support workers in some Camden schools, funded by the Richard Reeves Foundation, saw a positive impact on persistent absence. As a result we are piloting a ‘team around the school’ model in two primary schools, which consist of fortnightly meetings between schools, Camden Learning and the local Family Hub. The focus of the meetings will be on children whose absence is between 10% and 20%. These provide an opportunity to build a closer relationship between the Family Hub and the school, better understand the barriers to regular attendance and enable the best support offer for the child to be identified.
- 3.27. Since their inception in January 2023, Camden Learning’s three School Inclusion Support Officers (SISO) have worked closely with Camden schools to improve attendance. Each state-funded school is visited at least once a term, but more regularly for schools with the greatest attendance challenges. They assist schools to identify the most appropriate support for those pupils at the highest risk of non-attendance. For the schools with the greatest challenges, we have been able to increase the number of visits to those schools from three to four per term from September 2025.
- 3.28. These approaches have had a positive impact with 22 of our 38 primary schools now being above national average, compared to just 10 in 2023/24. Of the remaining primary schools, eight were less than 1% below national average in 2024/25 (compared to 18 in 2023/24).



- 3.29. Overall attendance at five secondary schools was above national average in 2024/25 (compared to four in 2023/24) and there was one school at less than 1% below national average (compared to two in 2023/24). Four of our secondary schools remain more than 1% below national average, and they remain a priority for additional targeted support.



- 3.30. Under the national framework schools are required to consider referring to the local authority for a penalty notice where a pupil has 10 sessions (five days) of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period. In 2024/25, Camden Learning issued 602 fixed penalty notices on behalf of Camden Council. 496 of these were for unauthorised leave in term time.
- 3.31. In the Spring term 2025, a text messaging pilot was trialled in three primary schools and one secondary school. Messages were sent to the parents of 300 pupils with attendance between 85% and 95%, which is around the persistent absence threshold. The results showed a statistically significant improvement at primary school, with a 1% improvement in attendance. This was strongest in the week immediately following the message being sent. There was not a similar improvement seen in the secondary cohort.
- 3.32. We are also piloting a 'team around the school' model in two primary schools. These are fortnightly meetings between schools, Camden Learning and the local Family Hub. The focus is on children whose absence is between 10% and 20%. These provide an opportunity to build a closer relationship between the Family Hub and the school, better understand the barriers to regular attendance and enable the best support offer for the child to be identified.
- 3.33. There has been an increase in the number of children reporting increased anxiety around attending school, sometimes called Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Camden Learning is working with schools and experts in this area to develop a toolkit that can be used by schools to help bring a common understanding about what is working well in school, and what might be the underlying reasons behind why a child might be feeling anxious about attending school. This will be trialled with a few schools in the first instance and then launched later this academic year.

Suspensions and Exclusions

- 3.34. Suspensions from Camden primary and secondary schools are lower than the comparable rates for Inner London and England. The most recent available data from 2023/24, showed 56 (0.5%) Camden primary school children received 95 suspensions. This is lower than 0.6% of Inner London primary school pupils and 1.0% of primary school pupils nationally.
- 3.35. Provisional data for 2024/25 indicates that the number of primary pupils who received a suspension is 1.0%, however it is anticipated that this will remain below comparable Inner London and national rates, which will be published in July 2026.

- 3.36. In 2023/24, 527 Camden secondary school children received 629 suspensions. This equates to 6.1% of Camden secondary school pupils, which is the same 6.1% rate as Inner London secondary school pupils and lower than the 7.8% rate for secondary school pupils nationally. Disruptive behaviour was the largest single reason for suspension accounting for 43% of suspensions. Provisional data for 2024/25 suggests that the percentage of secondary school pupils who received at least one suspension has decreased to 5.7%. In 2023/24, there were no permanent exclusion from a Camden primary school and 0.25% permanent exclusions from Camden secondary schools, which is the same as the national average.
- 3.37. Camden's approach to reducing secondary exclusions has delivered many successes through the combined impact of the Camden Pathways Programme and the Off-Site Directions framework. Camden Pathways continues to provide high-quality, tailored alternative provision for students at risk of disengagement, ensuring that 83% of students completed their placements and 92% progressed into education, employment, or training post-16. The programme's emphasis on vocational qualifications and structured academic reviews has strengthened progression planning, while rigorous quality assurance through the North London Quality Assurance Partnership guarantees standards across providers.
- 3.38. Alongside this, the introduction of Off-Site Directions to Heath School offers a proactive alternative to permanent exclusion, enabling short-term, dual-registered placements focused on reintegration and behaviour improvement. This inclusive approach has shifted the narrative from punitive measures to investment in young people, reducing the number of permanent exclusions and improving long-term outcomes for Camden's most vulnerable learners.

Safeguarding in Schools

- 3.39. All Camden schools have been judged to be effective for safeguarding results at their last Ofsted inspection. Schools are supported in this endeavour by Camden Learning, who during 2024/25 carried out ten safeguarding reviews, which made a range of recommendations to practice that have enhanced safeguarding. In addition, there were further focused pieces of safeguarding work in several schools.
- 3.40. The number of safeguarding related complaints that we received via Ofsted reduced from 29 in 2023/24 to 14 in 2024/25. Most complaints related to the behaviour of other pupils.
- 3.41. In June 2025 Camden Learning carried out its biennial safeguarding in schools audit on behalf of the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership. This had a 100% response rate and highlighted the work done in Camden's state funded and independent schools to safeguarding children.
- 3.42. Schools were asked to identify the top safeguarding issues that they were dealing with which were; responding to mental health and anxiety (child) and mental health and anxiety (parent). This was followed by domestic abuse and neglect in primary schools, absence and child criminal exploitation in secondary schools and online safety in independent schools.

- 3.43. Camden primary and secondary schools are represented on the Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership, ensuring the voice of schools is heard in that forum. Camden Learning chairs the termly Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Forum, which is well attended by safeguarding leads from state funded and independent schools to help ensure safeguarding leads are kept up to date with developments in the sector.

4. Supporting the arts and technology

The Schools Art Biennale

- 4.1. Following the success of the first Camden Arts Biennale that took place in July 2024, a second Arts Biennale is planned for July 2026. The Biennale is a borough-wide celebration of Camden students' achievements in visual arts, delivered in partnership with Central Saint Martins, Camden Council, Camden Learning and our family of schools.
- 4.2. The 2026 programme will include a two-week exhibition at the Lethaby Gallery, a private view event, and a rich programme of workshops, cross-phase visits, and co-curation opportunities with professional artists and curators. Students will engage in ceramics projects, photography Extended Project Qualifications funded by The Photographers' Gallery, and tailored SEND opportunities with leading arts organisations including Action Space, Cockpit Studios Theatre Company and Camden Art Centre. Teachers will benefit from professional development sessions with University Arts London (UAL) and Cockpit, supporting high-quality art curriculum delivery. The Biennale continues to raise the status of art in Camden schools, build long-term partnerships, and celebrate the creativity and diversity of all our young people.



Camden Music Trust/Service

- 4.3. Camden Music's vision is to give every child the opportunity to experience, enjoy and learn music. Our mission is to bring children and young people together to make music—building confidence, creativity and community through shared musical experiences.
- 4.4. Camden Music offers over 40 ensembles, including *Voyagers*, our inclusive music group for children with SEND. We continue to reduce barriers to participation, supporting over 200 students through our fee remission policy and awarding bursaries to more than 50 students via Camden Music Trust, KOKO Foundation and the London Music Fund.

- 4.5. In March, we launched two new steel bands with financial support from KOKO Foundation and Camden Music Trust. These groups diversify our offer, engage students not previously involved in music activities, and celebrate Camden's rich pan heritage. Their debut performance at Camden Town Hall marked the unveiling of a blue plaque commemorating the first British Caribbean Carnival in the 1950s.



- 4.6. April saw the return of the Camden Schools' Music Festival at the Royal Albert Hall, bringing together 1,800 students from 51 schools for a high-quality, large-scale performance. This amazing event showcased the musical talents of Camden's young people and the strength of collaboration across our school communities.



- 4.7. In May, Camden Music partnered with Camden Libraries and the Lang Lang Foundation to place digital pianos in Swiss Cottage and Holborn Libraries. These instruments, equipped with self-learning technology, enable children without access to instruments at home to practise, particularly during weekends and holidays.
- 4.8. In July, the Camden Youth Jazz Band was selected to perform at the National Music for Youth Festival at Birmingham's CBSO Centre. This national platform showcased the exceptional talent of Camden's young musicians and highlighted the high-quality provision delivered by Camden Music.



- 4.9. Camden Music continues to support schools through regular network meetings and bespoke guidance tailored to individual needs. In summer 2025, we launched *Composition Challenges*, a partnership with London Sinfonietta to enhance composition teaching at Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 3, we are working with the English Folk Dance and Song Society and the Royal Academy of Music to co-develop pedagogical approaches with four schools, aiming to increase engagement and improve outcomes.
- 4.10. Our longstanding partnership with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment continues to enrich primary music education, reaching over 350 students annually across six schools.

“My son has loved doing Cam Jam for years now. He's very creative, but is not always easy to teach. Not only have they taken great care of him at Cam Jam, they've inspired him and shaped the teaching around him so that he's been able to develop his amazing musicality.”

“Camden Music has been a lifeline for my daughter. She's found confidence, friendship and a sense of purpose through her music lessons and choir. It's made a huge difference to her wellbeing.”

“Camden Music recognises that children love to engage with music from the youngest age and provides an excellent offering for the smallest ones. My daughter has flourished in confidence and musicality in the group.”

Support in technology

- 4.11. As part of Camden's commitment to reducing the digital divide and a continuing focus on developing digital competence for students and teachers, the London AI Campus demonstrates how innovation, partnership and inclusive education can help young people build the skills and confidence needed to shape their futures. Created in partnership with Google, Camden Learning and Camden Council, the Campus has completed a remarkable first year through its flagship AI Connect programme, which enables Camden sixth form students to explore Artificial Intelligence and its role in improving lives.
- 4.12. The first cohort of 30 students from across Camden's ten secondary schools took part in an ambitious year of learning. Developing an understanding of AI

fundamentals, AI and Robotics with researchers from University College London's Sainsbury Wellcome Centre, and then designing and building their own robots. The project helped students gain first-hand insight into how AI links to neuroscience and behaviour.



- 4.13. AI and Sustainability was also explored looking at how technology can address environmental challenges, and later took part in a work experience week focused on AI in education and employment. Using tools such as NotebookLM, they researched how AI is transforming workplaces, created digital CVs and reflected on how these technologies could influence their own career paths.
- 4.14. Each student was also paired with a professional mentor from organisations including Google, DeepMind, AstraZeneca and Springer Nature. Mentoring sessions gave students the opportunity to engage directly with professionals working in AI-related fields, helping them develop communication skills and self-belief. Teachers have reported that students who previously struggled to participate are now contributing actively in-class discussions, demonstrating greater curiosity and resilience. Many have spoken about how the AI Campus experience has changed their attitude towards learning and opened new possibilities for their futures.
- 4.15. Following the success of this pilot year, recruitment is now underway for the new Year 12 cohort, marking an exciting new phase for the programme. A new group of mentors has already been recruited, with the mentoring network now expanded to include professionals from a wider range of partners. Plans are in place to offer further enrichment opportunities and industry-led masterclasses throughout the year. The London AI Campus continues to bring Camden's *Flourishing Lives* vision to life by widening access to high-quality Science, Technology, Engineering Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) learning, promoting inclusion and helping young people from all backgrounds to see themselves as part of the future of technology.

"The AI Campus taught me not to be ashamed of having confidence."

"It felt amazing to meet professionals I look up to and have real conversations about my future."

- 4.16. Within and beyond the AI Campus, from a Primary perspective, Camden Learning Centre's Creative Computing service has continued to deliver its well-received hands-on service that focusses on providing high quality and inspiring computing curricular activity to the majority of primary schools in Camden. This

service encompasses early years to Year 6 provision with STEAM-aligned activities delivered both in school and at the newly enhanced London AI Campus in Charrington St.

- 4.17. The Service Level Agreement service targets schools' current day needs including physical computing 'learning by doing', with an up to date and age-appropriate range of educational equipment to develop students' digital literacy and physical computing skills. Operation continues to be undertaken in collaboration with the London AI Campus.
- 4.18. The schools-led Digital Learning plan has been refreshed in consultation with schools and other stakeholders and has focussed on 'three pillars' of Digital Leadership, Digital Learner and Digital Foundations. Digital Leadership has been supported by multiple Core Professional Development sessions from Camden Learning including one from Professor Rose Luckin a global expert on AI in education, as well as the activity relating to and based at the AI Campus by partners. Digital Learner now has a focus on SEND and inclusion and ensuring a safety-first approach to use of AI in school.
- 4.19. An exemplar AI policy for Camden schools has been developed alongside a set of 6 school case studies by an industry expert during summer 2025. Digital Foundations includes activities undertaken by Camden Council directorates and services in parallel (e.g. the technical support provided by SITSS is critical for ensuring that schools are in a position to comply with the Filtering and Monitoring requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025). All resources are being shared with schools through dedicated pages on the Camden Learning website and updates in the Camden Learning newsletter.

Camden Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM)

- 4.20. The Camden STEAM partnership has achieved exceptional growth and community impact as it has striven to deliver its strategic vision to make Camden a beacon of inclusive opportunity and innovation.
- 4.21. A primary objective for the year was to expand young people's awareness of STEAM industries and support the development of skills needed by employers. The partnership achieved its most successful year to date, demonstrating a significant increase in reach and engagement. The number of schools engaged in STEAM activities nearly doubled, rising from 26 to 51. This expansion included securing engagement with 36 of 38 primary schools. In total, the partnership coordinated 13,891 unique student engagements between September 2024 and August 2025, which represents a notable increase from the 6,526 reported in the previous year.
- 4.22. A major highlight was the Primary Careers Day held in June 2025. More than 200 Year 4 pupils from 24 schools came together to engage with over 20 STEAM employers, showcasing real-world roles with interactive stalls ranging from robot dogs to 3D-printed bones.

"I didn't know I could be a scientist or an architect—it made me excited!"



- 4.23. Creating Pathways and Opportunities for Success: As part of creating clear pathways for young people to enter and succeed in STEAM careers. The 2025 STEAM Work Experience Week successfully mobilized over 500 placements across the partnership, including new placements within Camden Council's Public Health and Legal departments, generating fantastic feedback from students, employers, and educators.
- 4.24. The partnership is committed to building a diverse talent pipeline by proactively engaging young people from underrepresented backgrounds. Data from the work experience programme demonstrates success in this area, with participation rates exceeding previous years' performance. 75% of work experience participants identified as being from Global Majority backgrounds. 41% of work experience participants were eligible for Free School Meals, indicating strong socio-economic inclusion.
- 4.25. This commitment to inclusion was further demonstrated by a pilot that successfully placed three care-experienced students in tailored work experience during STEAM Week. The tailored support provided valuable insights into developing truly inclusive future placements.

"As a business, this work experience programme opens our doors to the local community, helping us to connect to and identify future talent. We can prove to our clients that we are a responsible company taking the steps to improve accessibility and equitability by nurturing the next generation of architects right here in the borough" Dan Gavan of Piercy & Company"

- 4.26. The Bloomberg Associates report, *Innovation District and Local Communities: A Field Guide for Action* published in July 2025, featured Camden STEAM extensively as a full case study, showcasing it as a model for how institutions, schools, and communities can collaborate to expand opportunities and improve outcomes. Furthermore, the Camden Council Strategy team showcased the STEAM model at the OECD conference in Paris in October 2025, during a workshop on Inclusive Growth. At a resident-level, Camden STEAM sponsored an article in the Camden New Journal to share with the local community on key successes of 2025 and preparations for the new school year.



Shah is a Year 13 student at Regent High School and a London AI Campus AI Connect student (*positioned second to the left in this photo*). The STEAM team supported Shah in applying for a Camden Council Digital Services placement. Building on the connections made in hosting work experience students, the Council team offered students the opportunity to apply for four two-week paid summer placements supporting the Camden Schools IT Support Service. Shah thrived during his placement with his natural leadership skills and hardworking character positioning him to secure one of these coveted placements.

He described the experience as "*absolutely brilliant*" and "*incredible*," highlighting that he was part of a school-wide project alongside IT managers and engineers. Shah thanked the Council team for the opportunity, noting that he gained "*so many valuable skills*" and hopes to utilize them in the future, ideally with Camden Council again.

5. **Support for Students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and the Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS)**

School Sufficiency Programme

- 5.1. Camden's education system is undergoing significant transformation in response to declining pupil numbers, increasing financial pressures, and rising demand for SEND provision. In response to these challenges, the Council launched the School Sufficiency Programme, which combines governance, data intelligence, and targeted intervention, focused on three key areas – Admissions, School Finance and SEND. The programme launched in July 2025 and since then, all schools have received a finalised scorecard which has been developed to help identify schools most in need of support. This has been used as a starting point for joint work with schools to help them mitigate their respective challenges. The programme will continue throughout the 2025/26 academic year, with a review of progress in the summer term that will also identify any recommendations for further action."

Camden all-age Autism Strategy

- 5.2. In September, Cabinet approved Camden's all-age Autism strategy and draft implementation plan. As an all-age strategy, this is a draft strategy and implementation plan between the Best Start for Children and Families and Health, Wellbeing and Social Care portfolio's. The strategy outlines our support autistic residents. This Autism Strategy is our co-produced vision and strategy for how we will reduce the barriers faced by Camden's autistic community and

create a cultural change across the system. It is a strategy for those with and without a diagnosis, and those with or without a learning disability.

- 5.3. This strategy takes a life course approach, looking at how we can support autistic people to Start Well, Live Well and Age Well under 7 key themes which have come from co-production groups and meetings, and have been adapted from Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) themes. The implementation plan will be monitored to ensure we are making progress to improve the lives of autistic parents in Camden:
- Theme 1 Information and advice - Having the information I need, when I need
 - Theme 2 Health, Wellbeing and independence – Living the life I want, staying safe and well
 - Theme 3 Active and Supportive communities – Keeping families, friends and connections
 - Theme 4 Flexible and integrated care & support – My support, my own way
 - Theme 5 Transitions: When things need to change – staying in control
 - Theme 6 Workforce
 - Theme 7 Access, inclusion and equity across diverse identities

SEND Inclusion Board

- 5.4. The SEND Inclusion Board meets every two months with strong representation from across the partnership, including social care, schools, Integrated Care Board, health providers, Camden Parent Carer Forum and SENDIASS. The key purpose of this strategic board is to oversee the implementation of the Local Area SEND Strategy and have wider strategic oversight for Camden's SEND services. This includes preparation for any quality assurance visits and inspections. The board receives a progress report on the implementation of the SEND Strategy at each board, as well as updates from across the partnership and deep dives into pertinent issues.

Support to schools and settings from The Early Years Inclusion Team (EYIT)

- 5.5. The EYIT plays a vital role in promoting inclusive practice across Camden's early years settings, supporting children with SEND in nurseries and schools. During academic year 2024–2025, the team supported 363 children, including 153 new referrals, and delivered a wide range of services such as coaching in specialist approaches, workforce development through central training and bespoke training sessions. The team also continued to strengthen partnerships with nurseries and schools to ensure early identification and timely intervention for children with emerging needs.
- 5.6. In March 2025 the EYIT introduced new ways of working to address rising caseloads and longer waiting times. The key change was the implementation of an initial consultation model, requiring schools and settings to have an initial consultation with an Inclusion Teacher before making a formal referral. This approach allowed schools and settings to receive timely advice without waiting for full case allocation and reduced pressure on the referral system. The impact has been significant: 100 consultations were completed within an average of 16 days, ensuring faster access to guidance. While waiting times for full observations had previously increased, the new model improved responsiveness and maintained quality.

- 5.7. The EYIT supports children transitioning from nursery to reception throughout the autumn term and works proactively in spring and summer to identify those needing an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Exceptional Needs Grant. In May 2025, the EYIT manager shared lists of children with known SEND with each Camden primary school's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SENDCO), headteacher, and EYFS lead. This early notification enabled schools to plan staffing and resources for September, ensuring a smooth start for children with additional needs.
- 5.8. In September 2025 the Early Years Inclusion Team supported 108 children with transfer to 32 Camden maintained schools. Many children had a diagnosis of autism or were undergoing assessment on the social communication pathway with Camden's child development team. Support from the EYIT was provided through visits to schools to coach/demonstrate specialist strategies and approaches which had already been put in place for individual children at nursery. Support also included a range of bespoke staff training. Out of the 108 children who were supported with transition to Reception, 58 were able to close to the EYIT after a successful transition. 50 children will remain open until the end of the autumn term.

6. School Nutrition

Food and nutrition in School

- 6.1. Improving food and nutrition in schools remains a key priority, due to the strong evidence for impact on learning, wellbeing, and current/future health. A range of actions have been taken with schools over recent years, including addressing hunger at the start of the day through breakfast support, ensuring school meals are attractive, tasty and nutritious, enabling learning about food, and supporting families outside school hours. Challenges remain around attitudes, convenience, and the wider food environment. Schools have been very receptive to building on progress made during the school day.
- 6.2. The Health and Wellbeing department support schools to take a whole school approach to health and wellbeing through the umbrella Healthy Schools London (HSL) programme which addresses a range of health and wellbeing priorities, including good nutrition. Over the past year the HSL Team has refreshed the programmes to reflect changes in the Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (HE) curriculums and to make the process more user-friendly and streamlined. The updated programme was launched in September 2025, and Camden has been able to adapt the award tools to reflect local priorities. In Camden, 38 schools (26 primary, 7 secondary and 5 special) are actively engaged in the programme, with 27 schools currently recognised as Healthy Schools and a further 11 schools completing their Health and Wellbeing Review and working towards recognition. By participating in the programme, schools demonstrate how they meet a range of criteria that contribute to the health and wellbeing of pupils and the school community. A key focus of the programme is on food and nutrition throughout the school day with criteria related to cooking and nutrition curriculum requirements, improving the culture and environment around school food and supporting pupils to make healthier choices.

Camden School Breakfast programme

- 6.3. Magic Breakfast has been commissioned to deliver the Camden School Breakfast Programme since 2023. Since its inception, Magic Breakfast has extended support to 25 of the most deprived Camden primary, secondary, and special schools, up from 9 in 2022. As of July 2025, this service provides free breakfast to 3089 pupils on a daily basis, a step change from 587 pupils in 2022.
- 6.4. The Department of Education has committed to funding up to 750 of the most deprived schools nationally to provide access to a free, universal breakfast club. This offer is only open to schools that have never had a prior breakfast service. Where the national offer only covers the cost of food, Magic Breakfast offers ongoing engagement and support to participating schools in Camden, which schools value, and enables a broader approach to addressing hunger at the start of the day. This support enables schools to test and learn from a variety of delivery methods with the aim of increasing uptake and improving the pupil experience of the programme. The impact of this support has enabled several schools to increase the uptake of breakfast.

La Sainte Union secondary school experimented with Grab & Go breakfast stations at the school gates so pupils who miss the breakfast club can grab food before classes, leading to the highest uptake of school breakfast among participating secondary schools with 43% of the school roll eating.

Before the introduction of the school breakfast program, [Pupil A] frequently arrived at school tired and unable to focus. Teachers noted she was often withdrawn during morning lessons. After the school began offering free breakfast to all students, she started eating regularly each morning. Within weeks, her teachers reported a noticeable improvement in her concentration, participation, and energy levels.

Universal free school meals in primaries

- 6.5. In 2023, The Mayor of London committed to extending Free School Meals (FSM's) to all primary aged pupils. When the extension of FSMs in primary schools was first extended, a concern was that it would impact the Pupil Premium payments that schools receive since pupils need to be formally registered for FSMs for schools to receive the funding. However, data in 2025 shows that there are no negative impacts on Pupil Premium funding levels resulting from this programme with total Pupil Premium increasing from £9.5m to £10.1m over this period.

Extension of Free School Meals to households on Universal Credit

- 6.6. In 2025, the government announced the extension of Free School Meals to all households receiving Universal Credit. This changes the current eligibility criteria from a £7,400 income cap and enables more Camden families to benefit from the Free School Meals programme. This new policy will have no impact on the Pupil Premium payments that schools are eligible to receive.

- 6.7. This policy change will be implemented in September 2026. In Camden we will work with the school catering company, Caterlink, to ensure that they are prepared for the potential increase in the uptake of school meals. We will also continue working with them to ensure that they are continuously making improvements to school meals to make sure they are tasty, nutritious, and appealing for pupils of all ages.

School Meals in Secondary Schools

- 6.8. FSM uptake is measured twice a year during the School Census survey. Data from January 2025 shows that 61% of those that are eligible for FSMs actually ate their school meals on the day of the census, this is in line with the Spring 2024 uptake of 61.5%. The uptake of FSMs varies significantly when among individual secondary schools with an uptake range from 47.3% to 76%.
- 6.9. To address the low uptake of FSM in some secondary schools, the FSM Test and Learn project was developed to engage with pupils, staff, and parents to identify opportunities to improve the experience of school meals in secondary schools. Insights from this project contributed to the development of the school meals contract which started in April 2025 in 37 primary, 3 secondary, and 3 special schools. Since its inception, the school meals contract has focused on the use of higher quality and sustainable ingredients and inclusive dietary options (religious and cultural diets). The new school meals contract in will continue to focus on ways to improve and enhance the pupil experience of school meals in Camden. Work will take place with the caterer to ensure meaningful pupil engagement to identify any issues and opportunities to improve the school meals service; Opportunities for pupils to taste the food (i.e. taster sessions) will be introduced to ensure that pupils are able to feedback on the food and to ensure that menu planning is not based on feedback on what was previously provided. Further opportunities to engage pupils and make continuous improvements to the service will be explored with Caterlink.
- 6.10. The FSM Test and Learn Project also identified hunger as an issue for secondary school pupils during breaktime. By working closely with pupils, a universal free breaktime fruit and vegetable service was launched across all Camden Secondary Schools. Pupils and school staff have provided positive feedback on this scheme and have explained that the offer helps to bridge the hunger gap at breaktime. Schools have started to experiment with a range of delivery methods, with one secondary school setting up themed or cultural days to encourage pupils to try a range of fruit and vegetables.
- 6.11. Additionally, following learnings from the Test and Learn project, Camden will be implementing FSM Auto-enrolment in January 2026. The auto-enrolment process will use Camden benefits data to help identify those pupils that are eligible for FSMs. The FSM Coordinator will then be able to complete the FSM applications on behalf of families. All families identified via this process will be given the opportunity to opt out. It is expected that this will increase the number of pupils registered for FSMs across Camden.

Cooking in the curriculum

- 6.12. Cooking and food education is a compulsory part of the national curriculum for pupils up to the end of key stage 3. This curriculum emphasises the principles of a healthy and varied diet and equips pupils with food and cookery skills.

- 6.13. In the 24/25 academic year the Health & Wellbeing Department delivered practical cooking in the curriculum for all staff in 1 primary school. Termly Food in Schools networks for primary and secondary schools where food leads come together to share best practice, receive continued professional development and learn about funding support have now been combined with the Design and Technology network to increase reach. £200 was also provided to 9 primary schools and to purchase basic classroom cooking equipment.
- 6.14. Camden are exploring the establishment of 'School of Food sites, building and transforming existing site spaces into a teaching kitchens that to provide courses to support schools to meet the food and cooking curriculum requirements. If implemented, this service would be open to all Camden schools to book cookery sessions for entire classes.



Holidays, Activities and Food Programme

- 6.15. The 2024-2025 Camden Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme had a strong year, offering children and young people nutritious meals and engaging positive activities during the school holidays. This year the programme provided 5,367 places, ensuring that children and young people had access to valuable resources and support, provided across the equivalent of 6 weeks (comprising at least 1 week in spring holiday, at least 4 weeks in the summer holidays and at least 1 week during the winter holiday). One in four children and young people eligible for free school meals accessed the programme in the summer holiday, the most important time for holiday support, with a smaller proportion benefitting in the other holidays. The summer programme involved 30 providers across 48 venues, including youth clubs, schools, charities, and social enterprises, ensuring a wide range of enriching activities such as arts, sports, music, and more.
- 6.16. Camden's HAF programme also provided support for children with SEND. In 2024, the programme funded 325 SEND spaces, demonstrating the programme's commitment to inclusivity and comprehensive support. Camden Council bolstered the programme with an additional £88,000 of funding for Summer 2024 delivery, which helped to support 116 additional SEND spaces.
- 6.17. Throughout 24/25 there were some fantastic collaborations incorporated into the HAF programme to benefit children and young people, these included donations from 4 major supermarkets, book shops, publishers, and local and national businesses. This enabled reading material, period products and toys to be distributed to HAF attendees. HAF fundraising also ensured that children who were eligible for HAF but wouldn't be able to attend local provision over Christmas due to staff shortages could be supported through the provision of supermarket vouchers and play kits.

- 6.18. Young people's views and insights were captured through photography workshops at five youth centres, and were attended by over 100 young people. Photographs taken by young people from the workshops were used in the 2024/25 Annual Report and were displayed in a Central London art gallery. This project strand also involved the production of a video highlighting the impact of the programme.
- 6.19. Actions for coming year include:
- Continuing to promote and move to greater engagement in the Little Steps to Healthy Lives and the Healthy Schools programme across Camden
 - Extending the reach of School Breakfasts to support more children in Camden, especially those living in the most deprived areas/eligible for free school meals, ahead of the roll out of the national breakfast in schools' initiative
 - Working with schools to develop further whole class curriculum cooking opportunities
 - Ensuring that universal support services like Family Kitchen and Families for Life continue to reach into our communities with the greatest needs, through an ongoing and targeted programme of support
 - Continuing to offer an extensive Holiday Activity and Food programme across Camden, including opportunities for those with SEND and raise awareness with central government regarding the need for a stable commitment to funding this programme.



7. Children and Family Health

Breast Feeding/Breast Milk Nutrition

- 7.1. The nutrition of babies, children and young people across Camden continues to be a key priority this portfolio oversees so our communities truly get “the best start in life”. We recognise the importance of ensuring our babies are well nourished across Camden and do our best to support our parents and guardians keep their babies healthy.
- 7.2. 81.5% of babies born in Camden between September 2024 and February 2025 received some form of breast milk up to 6 – 8 weeks of age (either partially or exclusively breast feeding) which is considerably higher than both the London and National average.

- 7.3. 100% of new parents had contact with the Baby Feeding Team since the start of the 2024/2025 year. This is up from 82% in (2023/2024). All new parents are offered a New Birth Feeding Call within the first week of giving birth. The team now has 34 Infant Feeding Volunteers.
- 7.4. We continue to work on this success and improve our accessibility which is why we have redesigned our Camden Crisis Infant Feeding Pathway to improve our services and encourage frontline staff to continue working with families.
- 7.5. We also recognise the importance of supporting families when transitioning their babies to solid food. This year, Early Years, Schools and Families team delivered Starting Solids sessions to 252 unique families (491 total attendees). 100% of attendees followed up weaned their babies at around 6 months in line with recommendations. 44% of attendees were from Black and minority ethnic groups.
- 7.6. Our Baby Feeding Team have been undertaking an equity deep dive to understand population groups where breast feeding is lower and undertaken targeted support and outreach work. This work will both inform immediate practice as well as informing the Camden Baby Feeding Strategy that will be completed in 2025/2026. The Baby feeding Team have also started Baby Weaning Consultancy Training, to enable them to support parents to safely baby wear after the high-the profile baby death in September 2024 in a London Borough.

Childhood vaccinations

- 7.7. The support Camden babies continues into their early years where we monitor and encourage childhood vaccinations while engaging with families who choose not to vaccinate their children to hear their opinions and approaches too. We are conscious that this work proves crucial for so many of our babies and parents which is why we want to ensure we reach all families across the borough so they are aware of our support offer.
- 7.8. COVER data for routine childhood vaccines (0-5 years) is reported annually and we have seen slow but steady increases since 2020-21 for children aged 1 and 2 years. This is not the case yet for children aged 5 in Camden. The number of children who attend their 3 and 4-month vaccine appointment is considerably lower than the national average and slightly lower than London COVER. The Camden Health and Wellbeing Team in partnership with the Integrated Care Board are carrying out a project with 5 of our GP practices with large numbers of unvaccinated children aged 5 years to try and understand the reasons for this.
- 7.9. Camden has also been successful in a national bid for funding a Health Visitor pathway to help target “hardly reached” families in the borough and ensure that they receive a vaccine offer that is clearly communicated and that access suits their needs.
- 7.10. Flu vaccine uptake for pre-school children (aged 2 & 3) has been low nationally, regionally and locally for several years. This year 2- & 3-year-olds can still receive their vaccine in G.P. practices but the offer has been extended to community pharmacies and a small number of nurseries that are attached to

primary schools in Camden are taking part in a pilot for delivery (delivered by Vaccination UK).

- 7.11. School age vaccines are delivered by Vaccination UK and was strong partnership as between National Health Service England (NHSE) (commissioner), Vaccination UK (provider) and Central and North West London (CNWL) school nursing team has been established to improved immunisation uptake. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine COVER for 2025 year 8 students is not available yet, but Vaccination UK have reported an increased uptake in Camden schools for both boys and girls during a period where we are seeing a national downward trend in uptake for this group.
- 7.12. This year our Health & Well-being team hosted a group of young people from year 12 in Camden secondary schools to take part in a STEAM project. They were tasked with producing communications that could be shared on social media to promote the HPV vaccine. We now have a selection of videos co-produced using the “Look after you” campaign design that can be shared both in Camden and with our colleagues in North Central London to promote catch-up HPV vaccine for young people who missed the vaccine in school. We will be building on the learning from HPV vaccine delivery to further improve other school delivered vaccine programmes in Camden across 2025/26.
- 7.13. New Horizons is a pan-London centre for homeless young people living and this year Vaccination UK have offered to provide flu vaccine clinics for our eligible young people who find it difficult to access their GP. We co-hosted a “look after yourself” stall at a recent student freshers’ event in Camden with Vaccination UK and promoted breast screening, cervical screening and HPV vaccine. Vaccination UK offered HPV catch-up. Our colleagues from CAMIS (sexual health service for young people in Camden and Islington) were also at the event and we identified a way for Vaccination UK and CAMIS to work together to offer cervical screening and HPV vaccination to young people attending New Horizons.
- 7.14. We will offer 60 places on Jitsuvax an evidence-based vaccine hesitancy training, our health visitors and school nurses in Camden and will also offer on-line training to other key staff who have conversations with parents about immunisations (e.g. health improvement officers, community champions).
- 7.15. Resident engagement is crucial to this portfolio ensuring we are reaching out to all of our communities. We held several workshops with our Somali community (10-12 attended each session), sharing information on Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) immunisation, addressing the perceived link between MMR and autism and an information session was also delivered recently on HPV vaccine by a Somali GP. Coproduced films were developed with Somali young people were shared on social media, via Somali WhatsApp groups. The young people who took part in the programme said that they had a better understanding of vaccination and increased confidence in making decisions about vaccines.



Oral Health

- 7.16. Camden has lower access to dentists compared with the national average. This is improving but remains below pre-pandemic levels. The mean number of decayed missing and filled teeth (d3mft) among 5-year-old children has also almost doubled in Camden over the past decade, in a trend that mirrors worsening oral health nationally. A well-established Oral Health Promotion contract with The Whittington NHS Trust is in its third year of delivery, providing a range of oral health programmes across early years settings, schools, social care, mental health services, sheltered housing, residential homes, nursing homes, and day centres.
- 7.17. In March 2025, the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department of Education invested £11m across England local authorities to deliver a supervised toothbrushing (STB) programme in early years settings that voluntarily sign up. Through this programme, LB Camden has been allocated £45,902, and delivery is launching in November 2025. A national STB toolkit has been published to support local authorities to ensure activity is evidence-based and able to demonstrate impact. Delivery of the national supervised toothbrushing programme sits alongside Camden's local commissioning and an NCL pilot that targets 3-4 year olds. Together, supervised toothbrushing programmes in the borough are expected to reach 50-60 early years settings in Camden's most deprived wards this year.
- 7.18. The government also agreed a partnership with Colgate-Palmolive, which has committed to donate 23 million toothbrushes and toothpastes over the next 5 years. In July 2025, Camden received, individually repacked and distributed 3,552 home dental packs to 3-4 year olds in settings across Camden's most deprived areas. A thousand more dental packs have been distributed at the start of this academic year. Dental packs to families include information about good dental hygiene and how to register with your local NHS dental practice.

Asthma

- 7.19. Asthma remains the most common long-term condition among Children and Young People (CYP) in not only Camden, but the UK. In 2025 those aged 6 years and over had a prevalence of 4.0% in Camden, which was lower than London (4.7%) and England (6.5%). Based on 2022/23 data, the rate of emergency hospital admissions for young people in Camden with asthma has been decreasing. This is linked at least partially to improved early identification and management of asthma in children which has been the focus of work through the locally commissioned service in Camden and Camden Asthma steering group. Young people living with asthma in most deprived areas are

more likely to be admitted due to environmental triggers like pollution, fuel poverty and tobacco smoke.

- 7.20. The Camden Asthma Friendly Schools supports schools to provide a safe environment for CYP with asthma with 45 of 54 (83%) schools engaged and 12 schools having received full AFS accreditation.
- 7.21. As part of a collaborative project between primary care clinicians across NCL and the secondary care respiratory team at the Whittington Hospital, virtual parent workshops have been delivered to support families in managing childhood asthma. These sessions increased parental confidence in improving understanding of asthma control and promoting practical management strategies at home by 33% in session 1 and 42% in session 2.

“Really practical, accessible, and responsive – wish I had her on call!”

“I’m so impressed by this resource as a first- time mum.”

- 7.22. A face-to-face education and training programme has been delivered by the Camden CYP lead. This initiative aims to equip NCL’s healthcare workforce with the skills and knowledge and to enhance the overall quality of care delivered to children and young people with asthma in line with national standards. Work in ongoing to improve engagement with these sessions.
- 7.23. Camden is planning the launch of the Children and Young People (CYP) Respiratory Diagnostics Hublets. This new model is designed to close the gap in asthma prevalence and diagnosis in Camden's CYP, with implementation planned for 2025. Further work on vaping, damp and mould and indoor air pollution is planned and with a refresh on our action plan for delivery in line with national bundle of care.

Mental health and wellbeing services

- 7.24. We have continued to work closely with our NHS, voluntary and community sector partners to deliver Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to children, young people and their families. During 24/25 we have continued with our focus on early intervention and prevention, delivering services including a robust, perinatal mental health offer (part of Best Start for Baby), parenting programmes and whole family support, through to co-produced peer mentoring and peer education to raise awareness of / offer support on mental health issues and where and how to get help.
- 7.25. Services are provided by the Council or commissioned both directly, or in collaboration with, North Central London Integrated Care Board. The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust deliver our community service via their North and South Camden teams. The Tavistock also deliver more complex services e.g. for care experienced CYP and through their Whole Family Team which is co-located with Council services including Mutli-Agency Safeguarding Hubs, Early Help, SEN, Youth Offending Service (YOS) and Family Hubs where a high level of integration is needed between CAMHS and other agencies. Despite the high level of prevalence of mental health conditions

among CYP in Camden, waiting times for first appointments with Tavistock services continue to be shorter than those in other NCL boroughs.

- 7.26. Camden's Growing With You team is our multi-disciplinary team co-located with Camden social work and including CAMHS psychiatry, clinical psychologists and drama and art therapy, who have expanded their work to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and include dedicated provision for care experienced young people up to the age of 25. Often children looked after will make tentative approaches to CAMHS but are not ready to engage with services therefore these developments will help avoid disruptions to engagement and treatment. The new provision also supports those care experienced young people who engage with mental health services or seek a diagnosis after the age of 18, easing the transition to adult mental health support.
- 7.27. A range of innovations within our out of school services such as Fitzrovia Youth in Action's (FYA) Peer Mentoring and Peer Education service for children and young people who deliver exciting ways to facilitate conversations about mental health, listening to the voices of young people on how best to reach their peers. In 24/25 FYA's targeted peer education worked with young people with SEND to co-produce Crossroads – a film about the experience of young people with SEND about to leave school, and Beyond The Avatar – exploring self-doubt and insecurity and a virtual realm where they can escape their real-life challenges. Other co-produced films covered themes including gaming addiction and schizophrenia. The films are used as educational resources at events such as FYA's Peer Education workshops, which reached 1163 young people in 2024/25. The Peer Mentoring Service involved 256 children and young people who took part in 480 support sessions across 19 schools and youth clubs.
- 7.28. The Rebuilding Bridges in Camden pilot project ran over three years, funded via the Department for Education which ended in March. Using learning from the pilot, the Council has launched a new mentoring service offering targeted support for children and young people aged 6-16 with SEND and mental health needs who are not engaging with or avoiding school. The service aims to increase engagement with services, improve self-confidence and wellbeing, achieve personalised goals and improve engagement with education. Families of children and young people not attending school are offered support and respite. Young people will receive regular community-based 1:1 mentoring support during term-time and during school holidays. The service will work in partnership with Camden's Educational Psychology Service to act as a bridge to the school system and to advocate within the network around the young person to support reengagement with education.
- 7.29. The Hive Youth hub offers flexible emotional support and holistic care to young people transitioning out of CAMHS, or when adult mental health teams cannot meet their needs as well as a wide range of wraparound support, received a record 5,921 visits from 1,173 individual young people, meaning footfall has nearly tripled from last year. This is due to an increased number of activities, partnerships with the NHS and a range of local community organisations; and having additional staff capacity thanks to additional grant funding. The Hive has now a full-time careers coach, and a stable partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Good Work Camden. This has enabled the

team to deliver 366 employability sessions to young people, as well as 92 group employment workshops.

- 7.30. Having noticed an under representation of males engaging with their services, the Hive utilised NHS grant funding to employ a male qualified youth worker to use flexible, creative, physical activity based and primarily non-verbal therapeutic approaches to engage the young men. This included art, music, sports, biweekly sessions focused on identity and masculinity, mental health stigma and healthy relationships and tailored 1:1 session based on how what works best for each YP. Youth Offending Teams, Colleges and Youth Centres to gain referrals. They have received referrals from the police, crisis teams and schools. The feedback from the young men engaged in the project has been overwhelmingly positive. In the twelve months of the project the Hive has seen a 154% increase in young men accessing The Hive, a 345% increase in Black/Black British/ African/ Caribbean young men, a 152% increase in Asian/Asian British young men and a 63% increase in young men from at risk groups.
- 7.31. We are recommissioning our Young People's Pathway (supported accommodation offer for care experienced young people aged 16-25). As part of this, we will be strengthening the mental health and wellbeing support offer through asking our providers to build specialist support workers in some provisions. We will also develop a longer-term plan to grow our Pathway capacity to support more of those young people experiencing complex mental health or behavioural needs, to reduce the number of young people we have to place far from Camden in specialist private provision.

8. Early Years and Family Hubs

Child health and equity and family hubs Programme

- 8.1. Family Hubs continue to offer a warm welcome to Camden families offering advice, guidance and support but also a fun place to drop-in to enjoy. Through a universal front door, the service actively promotes the engagement of parents and children who have the greatest potential to benefit from services. Guided by effective monitoring and a robust outreach strategy families whose children are at the greatest risk of poorest outcomes are encouraged to attend activities and courses to help break the link between circumstance and achievement.
- 8.2. A family's introduction to family hubs is often through the midwifery service who run antenatal clinics from the buildings offering maternity care but also introducing families to the hub. Additionally, the new family hub pregnancy grant is now operational where families who are in receipt of benefits are offered a 'no strings attached' grant to £500 and, invited for an introductory visit to the family hub to meet the team.
- 8.3. Once children are born Camden offers an enhanced healthy child programme. New parents are invited to 8 contacts in the first 2 years rather than the mandated 5. This enables any additional support needs to be identified and supported early on. There are also designated leads for the 6 high impact areas across early years with an additional one for child health equity
- 8.4. The hubs have been working to create a more inclusive experience for neurodiverse families and those with children with special educational needs or

disabilities (SEND). Following co-design work with parents a quiet 'Step in and Play' session has been introduced in Kilburn, Sensory Support bags have been made available at every hub t, sensory rooms have been upgraded, and are we also have bookable for parents with children who have SEND and coffee mornings to help build relationships with other parents and reduce isolation.

- 8.5. The service has continued its focus on supporting early language development through our Camden Kids Talk project. Children are screened using the Wellcomm tool at the 12-month health review, on entry to nursery and in the term before school entry. Those children who are screened as 'red' or 'amber' are offered additional support to develop their language and communication skills. Early data from school nurseries who have participated in the programme (17 to date) have showed a decrease of 21% in the number of children who are scoring 'red' or 'amber' at the end of their nursery year. The percentage of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the foundation stage (reception year at school) has increased 4.5% since 2022, faster than elsewhere and the gap in achievement between those entitled to free school meals and their peers has decreased by 3.7% compared to an increase of 0.1% across England.
- 8.6. Bookings for parenting programmes delivered by the Family Hubs team during the first six months of this year have surpassed last year's total. Work has been underway to increase engagement in parenting programmes through publicity on social media channels. Targeted social media posts aimed at parents of Reception-aged children and Secondary school pupils, highlighted the age-appropriate courses for each group. Updates were informed by user testing which shared insights on the design which is modelled on the Local Offer site. Information has also been re-categorised by age for easier navigation. Promotion has led to a significant increase in traffic, with positive anecdotal feedback so far.
- 8.7. Family Hubs continue to broaden their reach by meeting the multiple needs of families, thereby attracting them into the centre. The Housing Advice team run sessions from the hubs as this is one of the most frequently requested areas for support. UCLH also runs follow-up clinics for families with repeat attendances in A&E for non-medical reasons, ensuring that their wider social support needs can be more adequately met.
- 8.8. Camden's Children's Trust Partnership Board (CTPB) is the guardian of a happy childhood in the borough and brings together partners throughout the year. The board has representation from partners in health such as CNWL's Head of Children, Young People and Family Services, education with headteachers and governors from both primary and secondary schools. Senior leaders from across Children's services in the council attend meetings, alongside new representation from the Head of Neighbourhood's (Housing Services). Colleagues from VCS organisations like The Winch, Fitzrovia Youth in Action and Coram are also in attendance, whilst professionals from the police service are also invited to attend board meetings.
- 8.9. Following a refresh in 2024, meetings are themed around emerging needs, trends and projects within the children, young people and families' landscape. Meetings are hosted in community spaces in an effort to increase awareness of the breadth of provisions available for children and families in the borough.

Boards have had a chance to visit Euston Skills Centre – a community-based skills centre, focusing on the practical skills our residents need to work in the construction industry and The Greenwood Centre – the base for a range of organisations providing activities and services that support Disabled people and carers to lead more independent lives.

- 8.10. In May the CTPB meeting was focused on Relational Practice and included a listening circle with partners and discussion of what we mean by Relational Practice across the partnership. Key methods for the approach were discussed highlighting the use of participatory, anti-racist and restorative practice as well as values at the heart of the council's Relational Practice framework such as mentalisation and empathy. The meeting also included a discussion on upcoming changes to Children's social care with National Reforms and the introduction of the Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill, due to be law in 2026-27. Changes to Children's social care will be the most radical system redesign for 30 years. Reforms provide an opportunity for real change, using the strengths already present in Camden to make a real difference to children, young people and families. Partners heard about the council's plans to design a new model of Family Help which involves increased multi-agency approaches. They had an opportunity to consider what a combined Family Help system could look like and how it can build on what is already delivered in the borough.
- 8.11. Health Equity and Young Carers was the focus for the CTPB in July. Councillors and colleagues from Public Health joined together for the opening item on an introduction to health equity approach, which included an overview of *Raise Camden*- a strategic programme aimed at narrowing the health inequalities gap. Members were shown data snapshots from an audit commissioned by the Institute for Health Equity and Barnardo's which highlighted 40% of children living in social housing will have an adult with significant care needs in their household. The remainder of the meeting focused on this cohort of children and young people with a deep dive into Camden's Young Carer's Strategy and presentation from The Children's Society and their work with Young Carers. The meeting concluded with partners being invited to discuss ways to increase identification of young carers in schools and through Camden's Family Hubs. Connections were also made with Adults and Health's Carers Action plan supporting adult carers.
- 8.12. Ahead of each CTPB, we run a session with parents on the meeting theme to bring their perspective into the room. Parents have fed back how useful they find these sessions, as they provide a space for them to collectively share their experiences of Camden services. Questions vary from how families experience SEND help, challenges they had faced navigating services for children with SEND, or the benefits of being a young carer.

"Professionals need to listen – parents know what is going on with their child. Parents know if there is something wrong with their child – it would be nice for our voices to be heard. Our voice is important to be heard. Some professionals think they know more than any parent and voicing opinion on child voice, health."

“A young carer doesn’t have to be somebody who is looking after someone with a disability. It could be a young child looking after their siblings”

- 8.13. The views gathered from parents are presented to members at the start of the CTPB meetings to help frame participant thinking ahead of free-flowing discussions on each topic. Parent input continues to prove important in reflecting the lived experience of families in Camden. In an effort to ensure views of parents are gathered in a considered way, we have worked with colleagues to make sure there is the right amount of support for parents during focus groups.
- 8.14. Our November meeting, will feature a forward planning exercise that invites members and parents to contribute in a shared space. Hosted at the London AI Campus, the meeting will reference Camden’s work on AI and will include a tour of the space for partners and parents. The forward planning activity will help to bring views of partners and parents into meeting themes for 2026, asking them to consider what is changing in Camden and reflect on presenting needs that are becoming more urgent.

9. Corporate Parenting and Voices of Families and Children

- 9.1. As of the end of September 2025, we are corporate parents to 219 children, of whom 87 have been in the care of the Council for more than two years. Sixty-nine children in our care are subject to section 20 (voluntarily in care), of whom 38 are unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). Seventy-one children are aged 16 and 17, and 148 are aged 0-15 (aged under 16). We have 85 children subject to Care Orders (the court has permanently granted London Borough of Camden parental responsibility) and 59 children still in care proceedings and subject to Interim Care Orders. We have one child in custody. All children continue to be visited regularly and have their wishes and feelings included in the children’s looked-after reviews and plans developed for their care.
- 9.2. The Virtual School has developed a dedicated educator navigator role to start working with children in secondary school who are displaying the potential to study at university. The team continue to support social workers in completing Personal Education Plans (PEPs) for all children and nineteen-year-olds in full-time education. A Virtual School Education Achievement Celebration was held at the Arsenal Stadium in late October 2024 to celebrate children's achievements.

Care-Experienced Young People

- 9.3. There are 305 Care Experienced Young people (previously children looked after (CLA) receiving a service from Camden, of these young people 147 are former UASC. We do not close qualifying or former relevant young people’s cases if we have safeguarding concerns for them. The service supports 386 young people, including those aged 16 and 17, as they prepare to transition into adulthood. Of the 16 and 17 year olds, 31 are UASC/former UASC. These young people have shown remarkable resilience and determination; their achievements are a source of pride and inspiration for us all

Corporate Parenting Strategy

- 9.4. Camden made care-experienced a protected characteristic in January 2024. Our Full Council themed debate on care-experienced which heard directly from care leavers, personal advisors, and public speakers, on what it means to grow up in care and be care experienced. Directly following this debate, the motion to make care experience a locally protected characteristic was voted unanimously by all councillors.
- 9.5. Within the delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy we have undertaken a review of Camden's Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that the way the Board works aligns with our Corporate Parenting Promises. We have reviewed the membership of the Board to identify affiliated members to sit alongside our permanent Board members; this allows us to bring in a broader range of partners who are committed to delivering on our Promises including our youth justice and welfare rights services as well as local employers, community leaders and STEAM partners. We have also recruited two care experienced young people to Co-Chair the Children in Care Council who will sit as permanent Members of the Corporate Parenting Board and help us ensure that the Board continues to be an inclusive space where the voices of our children looked after and care experienced young people are heard.
- 9.6. Camden's Corporate Parenting Strategy a cross-council commitment to our care-experienced young people, and was developed in partnership with care-experienced young people. The strategy was approved by Cabinet in April 2025 and is being monitored by the Corporate Parenting Board. It includes 5 promises to care-experienced young people:
1. We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you
 2. We promise to ensure that all the people who support you are care conscious and act as your Corporate parent. We will advocate for your rights and aspirations, ensure your voice is heard, and protect you from facing disadvantage from wider services and the community.
 3. We promise to support you in adopting a happy and healthy lifestyle and to help you navigate how you feel and life's ups and downs, ensuring your health and emotional wellbeing needs are met.
 4. We promise to champion you and help you find and succeed in the right education, training, and employment aligned with your life goals and interests
 5. We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find a stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually help you find a place you can call home.
- 9.7. We are also developing a dedicated care-experienced hub by working alongside architects to design the plans as well as our care-experienced young people. In October 2025, a welcome event Supporting 16 & 17-year-olds transition into adulthood also took place. This event will help young people to understand their entitlements and local offer, bringing together DWP and colleagues. The event also supported people with a seamless transition to CLA and care experienced, and offered practical advice on employment, housing, and financial independence.

10. Children's services and safeguarding update

- 10.1. The role of the Camden safeguarding children partnership (CSCP) is to ensure good governance and strategic oversight of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements for children in Camden. The CSCP's shared vision is that all children and young people in Camden are *safe, thriving and heard*.
- 10.2. In light of Working Together 2023, a review of the Camden safeguarding arrangements will take place to reflect the joint commitment to safeguarding children across our statutory and community partners. The updated version will be published by the end of this year. The CSCP also produces an annual report to reflect on the years achievements and improve safeguarding practices, test working arrangements, and measure the impact on local families.
- 10.3. 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.
- 10.4. 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.
- 10.5. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has faced scrutiny in its approach to child protection, as highlighted by the Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. In response, the MPS launched a five-year Children's Strategy in September 2024, introducing a "Child First" policy. Officers now receive training on childhood vulnerability and safeguarding. The way risks are assessed when children go missing has been updated, and more staff have been added to child protection teams. In September 2024, the Police Service confirmed that all urgent concerns had been addressed. The Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership oversees how these changes are lasting and making a real difference.
- 10.6. Camden has a wide mix of schools, all rated 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted. In 2024, student achievement was above the national average, and the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged pupils was smaller than elsewhere in London and England. Safeguarding is supported through a termly Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Forum, co-led by Camden Learning and the Local Authority, with input from Police and Health. This forum helps schools stay informed and share learning.
- 10.7. In partnership with Voluntary Action Camden, the CSCP supports local organisations by listening to community voices and understanding the unique risks faced by children from minoritised cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The

partnership provides safeguarding training and resources to help address these challenges.

- 10.8. During 2024–25, the CSCP responded to six serious safeguarding incident notifications. Key themes emerging from these cases included domestic abuse, serious youth violence, mental health challenges among care-experienced adolescents, transitional safeguarding, and non-accidental injuries to infants. These issues reflect the complex realities faced by vulnerable households and highlight the need for stronger strategic coordination across Camden's safeguarding systems. Drawing on the learning from these incidents and wider system reviews, the CSCP's priorities for 2024–26 of re-engaging vulnerable children in education, (including those with SEND), supporting mental health within families, and improving outcomes for children who are looked after or care experienced. These priorities aim to strengthen Camden's safeguarding framework and ensure children are safe, thriving, and heard.
- 10.9. Early Help; in the past year 48% of all contacts into social care are responded to by Early Help (EH). From April 2024 to March 2025, 3899 families were closed to Early Help with the provision of Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) from an Early Help Coordinator. 80% of those 3899 families remained free from re-referral after one year. Audit activity into the 20% found support at this time was appropriate and further need could not have been predicted.
- 10.10. Early Help are continuing to increase proactive outreach to take family information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) closer to the community. This has seen EH Coordinators delivering Healing Together our trauma informed program providing support to children and young people affected by domestic abuse, anxiety and angry feelings to children in schools. We also have continued offer of IAG in an increased number of community spaces including food banks, libraries, stay and plays and within multi disciplinary health spaces attached to each Camden locality. Further to this, Front door Early Help Coordinators are now the direct link for schools as part of the 'Team Around the School' to improve school attendance. The parallel focus alongside this has been on upskilling partners to offer IAG themselves to reach a larger proportion of the community and allow EH as a service to move onto varying different spaces to repeat the offer. Through upskilling food bank partners at Kentish Town Foodbank we are now able to offer EH IAG to 110 residents per week. Future plans involve upscaling this model into identified areas of need under the locality and neighbourhoods model.

Rebuilding Bridges

- 10.11. Following the successful completion of the Rebuilding Bridges pilot, Camden Early Help committed to sustaining the programme by funding a revised offer of 20 places. The programme continues to support children and young people with SEND and mental health needs who are regularly missing education.
- 10.12. A key principle underpinning the programme is the shift away from penalty-based approaches to school attendance. Instead, the focus is on understanding the underlying barriers that prevent children, young people, and families from engaging with education.

- 10.13. Now fully embedded within Early Help, Rebuilding Bridges offers a tailored package of support that includes: 1:1 mentoring sessions, therapeutic support and assessment by an Educational Psychologist.
- 10.14. While maintaining a core offer, the programme now places greater emphasis on early intervention, particularly at key transitional stages. Priority is given to children and young people not accessing other services, though those receiving some level of support are also considered.
- 10.15. Currently, the programme is supporting 18 young people with varying levels of need. Positive progress has been observed, particularly in engagement with mentoring and Educational Psychology input. Additionally, 5 young people from the pilot cohort have continued to receive support to address ongoing vulnerabilities. Tailored transitional plans have facilitated access to specialist services and holiday provision.

“My child is now able to open up more, becoming more confident and suffering less anxiety about the thought of attending school.”

- 10.16. To date, the programme has evidenced successful transitions back into school for 25% of the cohort. The project will continue to evaluate impact and access to the programme to ensure that an equitable offer is being accessed for all children and families in need of support.



Support for Refugees and Displaced Children and Families

- 10.17. Camden continues to welcome and support vast numbers of displaced and refugee families to resettle or are accommodated by the Home Office in the borough. Families have reported the support received from Early Help to be a lifeline in accessing services, integrating and understanding systems in the UK. Over the last year 26 households (13 Afghan, 12 Ukrainian, 1 Syrian family), including 34 children have been resettled into long term accommodation in the borough. A further 6 households are due to be resettled in coming months.
- 10.18. As the war continues in Ukraine, hosting has continued in Camden, although numbers of new arrivals have decreased. 83 hosted households remain in Camden, 11 of which are families. Early Help have supported 141 hosted families and 14 unaccompanied minors since 2022 and many have resettled in the borough. The visa for Ukrainians has now been extended for another two years

10.19. Targeted outreach support continues for all families accommodated by the Home Office in procured hotels and dispersed accommodation in Camden. Across two mixed occupancy hotels and 3 dispersed properties, the team have supported 135 families to access education, health and local services, with all 247 children accessing education or provision, to date. There are currently 30 families (with 50 children) supported in Camden with frequent movement of service users across the country. Once families are granted refugee status, the team support them to access housing options, benefits and employment.

11. Adult Community Learning and Virtual School

11.1. Camden Adult Community Learning (ACL) is our adult community learning Service that targets deprivation in Camden. Its mission is to “Encourage and support adults to make their first steps back into learning and so become more active economically, in their families and communities, and maintain better health.” It is funded primarily via the Greater London Authority with a range of other financial sources of income. The Service continues to be free at the point of access.

- 2,166 adults were taught by the Service: 94.5% were retained on their courses of study and 99.4% passed their course . A very high rate of Achievement was therefore gained for learners on programme in the Service
- Attendance at class was an average of 90.2%.
- Most learners were women of economically active age and non-white British, though a broad range of learners were engaged throughout the year in a range of curriculum and geographical settings. The cohort of learners also contained 621 learners of 65-plus, which included 17 learners of 95-plus. 26% of all learners self-declared as having a disability/learning disability in 2024/25.

11.2. Courses are predominantly at the lower entry levels, but some vocational programming was at level 2 and level 3. Provision continues to be predominantly delivered in the most deprived areas of the borough and face to face. The Service maintains high standards of teaching, learning and assessment as well as retention and achievement.

11.3. Students successfully completed learning across Camden in courses in: Family Learning; Digital Inclusion; Health and Wellbeing; English as a second language (ESOL); Vocational training (Digital and Hospitality and leadership and Management); as well as a Youth Employment Programme (Targeted at those in danger of violent crime or being the victim of violent crime)

11.4. Furthermore, the ESOL Advice Service supported refugees into courses of study, and in hotels specifically, as well as Camden’s settled communities. The EAS continues to trade effectively into Islington. Camden ACL holds the Local Authority sub-regional partnership Lifelong Learning London Central.

12. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

12.1. The Director of Finance has been consulted and has no additional comments to add.

13. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 13.1. Legal Services have been consulted and their comments are incorporated in this report.

14. Environmental Implications

- 14.1. This report should contain no significant environmental implications for Camden.

15. Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Formal Decisions taken by the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families 2024-25

REPORT ENDS