

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE** held on **MONDAY, 23RD FEBRUARY, 2026** at 6.30 pm in Council Chamber, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Councillors Sylvia McNamara (Chair), Matt Cooper, Julian Fulbrook, Jenny Headlam-Wells, Patricia Leman, Tom Simon and Nanouche Umeadi

Co-opted Members Zarin Bakhshzaad (Camden Youth MP and Camden Youth Council representative), Jules Belton (Church of England Diocese representative) and Margaret Harvey (Roman Catholic Diocese representative)

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Councillor Lotis Bautista

ALSO PRESENT

Councillors Marcus Boyland (Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families) and Councillor Sabrina Francis (Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture)

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lotis Bautista.

2. DECLARATIONS BY MEMBERS OF STATUTORY DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS, COMPULSORY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND VOLUNTARY REGISTERABLE NON-PECUNIARY INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THIS AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Webcasting

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live to the internet and would be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available on request. Those participating in the meeting were deemed to be consenting to being filmed.

Welcome to Dame Jane Roberts, the Chair of Camden Learning

The Chair warmly welcomed Dame Jane Roberts on behalf of the Committee. This was her first meeting attending in this capacity, for the Camden Learning Achievements and Standards Report.

Government White Paper

The Chair stated that on 23 February the Department for Education (DfE) released a new Schools White Paper outlining major Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms. The reforms focussed on a shift toward early intervention, national consistency, inclusion in mainstream settings, and shared accountability across education, health and care. The Council would be reviewing the reforms and preparing a local response to the consultation.

4. DEPUTATIONS (IF ANY)

There were no deputations.

5. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There was no notification of urgent business.

6. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2026 be approved and signed as a correct record.

7. CAMDEN'S SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGY YEAR 3 PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion.

The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families (Councillor Boyland) highlighted the significant work underway in the SEND system, noting that a radical transformation was needed. A stronger culture of listening and closer collaboration with schools was emerging, with all partners contributing to better outcomes for children and families. The Cabinet Member noted that the national White Paper published earlier in the day reflected many of Camden's existing principles, though clearer emphasis on preventing exclusions and avoiding cliff-edges between phases would be needed, and feedback would be provided through the forthcoming

government consultation. Camden Learning continued to prioritise SEND and Camden's family of schools was well placed to respond to proposals.

The Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion (Vikram Hansrani), accompanied by the Head of SEND and Inclusion (Di Osbourne) and the Assistant Director for Service Development - CYP and CAMHS for North Central London [NCL] Integrated Care Board [ICB] (Penny Mitchell), introduced and summarised the report. Their presentation set out: the key principles underpinning the upcoming reforms and alignment with Camden's current approach, the local context, principles and local context of the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Commissioning Plan, how data was informing the approach, options being explored, overview of the Year 3 SEND Strategy progress and pillars of delivery, and areas to continue to improve from 2025. The Director outlined the priorities for the year ahead, which included reducing waiting times across the SEND partnership, strengthening the use of data to demonstrate impact, and deepening co-production and relational practice, particularly in light of the stress and uncertainty families were experiencing around the national reforms. The work of the SEND and AP Change Programme would continue to be taken forward, with learning from the pilot being embedded across services.

The Assistant Director for Service Development - CYP and CAMHS for NCL ICB noted the significant attention on Camden's neurodevelopmental pathways and acknowledged the concerns raised by children, young people, families, carers and schools about long waiting times. These pressures were set in the context of substantial increases in demand over recent years. Additional capacity had been added to local services, leading to a growing number of assessments being completed, and providers were working together to streamline pathways. Camden's strong triage system remained a key strength, with a very high likelihood that children entering an assessment pathway would receive an accurate diagnosis, giving confidence in early decision-making. Support in Camden was needs-led rather than diagnosis-led, so children continued to receive help while awaiting formal diagnoses such as autism or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). As of November 2025, waiting times had begun to improve, reducing to around 70 weeks for under-fives and ranging from 30 to around 100 weeks for over-fives depending on the pathway, but it was recognised that these remained too long.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member asked about the fall in Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessment timeliness from 96% to around 50% and noted that the report referred to a detailed recovery plan without setting it out. Officers explained that a detailed recovery plan was in place and that the rationale for reduced compliance had already been outlined. The service now had a permanent workforce and that an incremental recovery plan was being followed, with a 10% improvement expected each month. Officers confirmed that they reported regularly to the internal Departmental Management Team (DMT), who had oversight of the plan, and that the plan could be shared with the Committee. It was noted that requests for EHCP assessments had risen by 65%, which had added pressure to timeliness. As part of the recovery plan, children were now guaranteed access to

support from 20 weeks even if their EHCP had not yet been issued, with support going directly into schools. Officers aimed to return timeliness to between 75-85% by the start of the next academic year and reported they were on track to do so. Officers agreed to share the EHCP timeliness recovery plan with the Committee.

Action By: Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion

- A Member noted that although 51% of children with SEND were in mainstream provision, which was above the national average, this still meant that 49% were not. They said the report did not explain how that group was being educated, and they asked for the data that the service held on this. Officers explained that the 51% figure referred to children in mainstream provision and not inclusive of children in AP or Additionally Resourced Provision APR. The remaining children were educated in specialist settings, out of borough placements, and an increasing number of young people were receiving Education Other Than At School (EOTAS) packages and home tuition packages. Officers confirmed that the breakdown of how children with SEND not in mainstream provision was being educated could be shared with the Committee.

Action By: Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion

- A Member asked about tribunal appeal outcomes and requested information on how the Camden Council performed, noting that there had been 60 appeals and 1,707 EHCP maintained. Another Member asked how the Camden Council's appeal rate compared with London and national figures. Officers explained that the Camden maintained around 1,600 EHCPs and confirmed that the proportion of appeals was roughly in line with London and was not an outlier or receiving more appeals than other areas. The service tried to resolve tribunal cases as early as possible and carried out remedial work with families because the child was at the centre of the process. Tribunals had waiting lists of around a year, so early resolution was important, although some cases did still proceed to hearings. 97% of tribunal decisions were found in favour of families.
- A Member asked about the projected £7 million deficit in the High Needs Block (HNB) and requested the figure for the previous year to understand whether the position was improving or worsening. Officers reported that the deficit in the previous year had been £4.85 million and confirmed that the deficit was increasing. The main reasons included an increase in the number of EHCP maintained by Camden Council, higher demand for the Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG), rising need for specialist provision, increased use of EOTAS and private tuition, and growth in the 16-25 age group cohort.
- A Member asked why the number of EHCPs had increased at this accelerated rate. Officers explained that it was not the number of EHCPs that had increased, but the number of EHCP assessment requests. Around 70% of those requests would result in a plan and officers believed the increase was linked to parental anxiety following the regarding the White Paper. A Member noted that the White Paper published earlier in the day was closely aligned with work already taking place in Camden and asked whether Camden expected small adjustments or major changes. Officers explained that the DfE had asked local authorities to use a data maturity toolkit to align with the reforms. Camden had already been part of the change programme pilot, which included work on AP and the specialist task

force. Officers stated that they had been asked to produce, over the next two months, a document setting out how far Camden was aligned with Government policy, which would go to the internal Camden SEND Inclusion Board and be shared with this Committee in due course. There was a national focus on school clusters working together and on support for children that did not rely on an EHCP, which aligned with Camden's ENG approach which focussed on inclusive practice. Officers confirmed that they would need more time to review the White Paper, and that developing the required toolkit would be the next step.

- A Member asked for an update on the plan to create a further 70 specialist places, noted in section 4.33, and asked when the Committee would be able to see the plan. Officers explained that this work had been referenced in the presentation and formed part of the wider Schools Sufficiency Strategy, with a focus on developing provision locally. A round table event had taken place before Christmas with school leaders, professionals, the Parent Carer Forum and other groups. Data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Camden Council's internal information had identified priority areas, including the transition from primary to secondary school and whether schools could meet more acute levels of need. A key question was how to develop provision within the resources and levers held by the local authority, with stronger engagement across the local authority and opportunities to reflect feedback from school leaders. There was strength in existing provision and that work was now focused on sharing practice more widely across primary and secondary schools. Officers confirmed that they were meeting regularly with the SEND and AP working group and that by the end of February 2026 they expected to have a range of options from the discovery phase. Officers added that the next few months would involve work on funding, understanding the impact on school communities, and considering how proposals would operate in practice.
- In response to a Member, officers confirmed they could provide further information to the Committee setting out what the range of ARP looked like in Camden.

Action By: Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion

- A Co-opted Member asked whether the priorities outlined would require more specialist staff, whether they were easy to recruit and whether additional training would be needed. Officers stated that workforce capacity was an important issue and had been highlighted in the White Paper. Camden was well placed to respond to both challenges and opportunities and had a strong team, including the Educational Psychology team. The focus remained on early intervention and providing the right support at the right time, while acknowledging wider workforce challenges across the partnership. The NCL ICB representative reported that the NHS faced similar workforce pressures, with London attracting people at the start of their careers before they often moved to other areas. They stated that local providers were strong and were looking at ways to support trainees and continue integrated working. Officers added that, over the past year, additional funding had been provided to Camden Learning to increase the number of SEND advisors, and positive feedback had been received from schools on the impact of this support.
- A Member asked whether there would be enough Speech and Language Therapists for Camden schools to employ if schools were given budgets to

employ their own therapists, as appeared to be suggested in the new White Paper. The NCL ICB representative stated that there was no simple answer and that this remained a challenge. They explained that the White Paper was trying to address this and that wider work across NCL was looking at therapy provision. The White Paper helped set parameters for what therapy should be, with an offer from universal through to specialist provision. They noted that Camden had strong providers, that more could be done to support parents and schools, and that to ensure best practice was used there would be a close watch on this as the reforms developed.

- A Member welcomed the areas where progress was being made, including SEND case workers visiting schools, which was positive for parents, Special Educational Needs Disabilities Coordinators (SENDCos) and teachers. The Member also welcomed the gold, silver and bronze approach to EHCP quality.
- A Member asked that the Committee on their future work programme look at the next steps arising from the White Paper. The Member also asked for the wider place-planning work, including the SEND element, to come back to a future Committee

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

8. ACHIEVEMENTS AND STANDARDS REPORT 2025 AND UPDATE ON THE EDUCATION STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive Officer, Camden Learning.

The Chief Executive Officer of Camden Learning (Stephen Hall), accompanied by the Chair of Camden Learning (Dame Jane Roberts), introduced and summarised the report. Appendix 1 provided the Committee with an overview and analysis of Camden school performance and contained an analysis of overall published school outcomes from the academic year 2024-25 in Early Years, the Year 1 Phonics check, Key Stage (KS) 2, KS4 and KS5, alongside other key performance indicators including Ofsted inspection outcomes, attendance, and suspensions data. Appendix 2 set out the 2024-25 annual report that reviewed the implementation of Camden's education strategy, Building Back Stronger. It was noted that the Education Strategy Board was focusing on the broad priorities in the Building Back Stronger strategy, while narrowing these down to a smaller set of priorities that required deeper analysis. This approach aimed to develop a clearer understanding of the issues and to assess current activity against those needs, informing work over the next one to two years. Some areas were long term - with no quick fixes. KS4 outcomes and attendance were identified as central priorities, and the Board would keep the number of priorities limited to ensure a strong focus.

The Chair thanked Camden Learning for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member described Building Back Stronger as a visionary document but noted disappointment with some results and asked why Camden ranked lower than some London boroughs. The Member queried whether this was linked to the predominance of the independent sector in Camden and suggested the division might be worsening, while also noting that there were some exceptional schools in the borough. Camden Learning responded that performance was benchmarked against boroughs with similar challenges and that Building Back Stronger set a broad ambition for all children, focused on the skills needed for a successful life. Camden Learning stated that the needs of all children were the priority regardless of background and that the service did not attribute outcomes to the independent sector. Camden Learning also noted that increases in SEND had affected budgets and confirmed that it did not wish to accept a culture of low expectations.
- A Member noted that the report was impressive and set out many positive areas, but said that Camden could still do better, particularly in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE). The Member stated that the local authority had a responsibility for children who were educated outside the school system. Camden Learning explained that EHE was challenging because the statutory framework limited the local authority's powers to understand what was happening for those children. It was known that EHE worked well for some children but not for others, particularly those who were children in need. Camden Learning reported that capacity had been increased, including a qualified teacher working in this area, and that EHE formed part of wider national reform work. It was emphasised that locality based partnership work was important in identifying the most vulnerable children and encouraging parents to return children to school where appropriate.
- A Member raised the issue of outcomes for White working class boys and noted that this had been discussed for many years, including commitments to close the gap. The Member asked how this would be addressed when revisiting the Strategy. Camden Learning explained that disadvantage remained the core issue and noted that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had set progress back. It was difficult to view White British pupils as a single coherent group because the cohort included a wide range of vulnerabilities and challenges, meaning there was no consistent approach that would work for all. Camden Learning referred to research showing the importance of working with parents, ensuring they understood the value of school and strengthening active partnerships between parents and schools.
- A Member welcomed the report and the information on absence. They stated that if a young person was not in school then the child could not achieve and neither could the school, and that this needed to be addressed. They asked how the work with the Health sector operated in practice, noting that illness was a clear factor and asking whether this connected to low vaccination rates, social disadvantage or housing. Camden Learning reported that joint work with Public Health had provided useful insight. Schools reported illness but there had been no mechanism for identifying the type of illness, so work had taken place to map this across the year to understand patterns. Public Health had identified types of advice that could help with particular issues, including period pain, which had

informed Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education curriculum work.

- A Member raised the usefulness of the ranking system for schools based on exam and attainment results, noting that different schools had very different pupil numbers. Camden Learning stated that the data was helpful for understanding the overall landscape and variation, but agreed in saying that they did not promote ranking Camden schools in that way. Camden Learning explained that small cohorts, levels of SEND and new arrivals all affected those statistics. This information was used to start conversations with schools, and that they usually knew in advance if a challenging cohort was expected. Even where this was not the case, Camden Learning would still discuss with the school what it knew about the cohort and identify what support might be needed.
- A Co-opted Member noted that 23% of suspensions were due to violence, which was nearly double the national figure, and asked whether this reflected more violence or less tolerance, and how schools could deter repeated fighting. Camden Learning reported that over the last few years work had focused on ensuring behaviour policies were robust and fair while remaining inclusive, and on how behaviour support teams managed issues when they arose. They referred to restorative justice and trauma informed practice, and to making sure these principles were understood in schools, including restorative work between students. They stated that Ofsted did not view Camden schools as having higher levels of violence or disruption and that behaviour in Camden schools was reported as good. It was noted that small numbers could make the percentages look larger. Camden Learning agreed it was a good question and would take it away to explore further.
- A Member raised concerns about the long standing underperformance of White working class boys, and reflected on scrutiny work undertaken more than a decade ago to understand this and queried whether earlier recommendations had been acted on. The Member highlighted the recent letter from the Secretary of State commending Abacus Primary for its national performance with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and expressed pride that such excellence existed within Camden's family of schools. Camden Learning emphasised that disadvantaged pupils generally achieved well locally compared with national trends, but acknowledged that intersectionality, such as disadvantage combined with SEND, ethnicity, or other vulnerabilities, required sustained attention. They stated that 25 Camden schools had recently received national recognition for their work with disadvantaged learners, providing strong practice that could be shared across the system.
- A Member raised concerns that KS4 outcomes continued to present a challenge for Camden. Relative performance against statistical neighbours appeared to be slipping, despite ongoing interventions. They noted Camden was still performing well amongst England comparison, but lower compared to London. Camden Learning reported that three secondary schools previously identified as weaker in recent Ofsted inspections were now judged to be good or better. While improvement work could take time to embed, the level of collaboration across the secondary system had strengthened, with schools working together towards shared priorities and benefitting from increased support. Camden Learning explained that securing a strong and well sequenced KS3 curriculum remained essential to sustaining long term improvement, and that clear checkpoints were being developed to assess the effectiveness of KS3 provision. Although three

years could feel like a long period in accountability terms, the overall system had shifted considerably during that time and that progressive improvement across schools was becoming more evident.

- A Member asked whether a comparison had been made between attendance at all girls schools and all boys schools, and how much education about the menstrual cycle affected attendance. Camden Learning reported there were differences in attendance between girls and boys, with girls having better attendance, including girls only schools having better attendance. They explained that reasons for absence were reviewed in schools with mixed cohorts, and menstrual health appeared to be an area that could be addressed and they confirmed that support would be sought from Public Health.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR JOBS, YOUNG PEOPLE & CULTURE 2026

Consideration was given to the report of the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People & Culture.

The Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People & Culture (Councillor Sabrina Francis) introduced and summarised the annual report. It highlighted the significant achievement of Camden's Youth Justice Service being rated Outstanding by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), recognising Camden's strong culture of care, leadership and partnership working. Camden Youth Mission was highlighted, which aimed to ensure all young people could access education, training and employment through initiatives such as apprenticeships, care-experienced internships, targeted employment programmes and expanded support for young people facing barriers, outlined in the report. The report also covered improvements in employment support, skills programmes, culture and libraries, and described continued partnership work to support inclusion, safety and opportunities for young people across the borough.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the report and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member welcomed the Outstanding rating for the Youth Justice Service and reflected that less than 10 years ago the borough had experienced a difficult summer, after which many changes had been made by bringing partners together to solve problems. The Member noted that results were now being seen, with young people across London reported as safer than before, and asked what the next steps and future investment would be. The Cabinet Member stated that the priority was to maintain the rating and stronger multiagency partnerships, recognising the current position had grown from the response to that difficult summer. Going forward the focus would be on spreading this work to make Camden people safer, working across shared boundaries and exploring

tri-borough approaches to ensure developments elsewhere did not adversely affect Camden's Young People.

- A Member congratulated the service on the Outstanding rating and asked what work was being done to support young people in the Youth Justice Service with their ongoing schooling and education. The Member also asked for more information about the Deferred Exclusion Programme referred to in section 7.5. The Cabinet Member stated that the Council did its best to keep young people in education, but was honest in that some young people did not want to remain in school and preferred routes such as Honest Grind or other apprenticeship programmes. Officers reported that they did not have full detail of the Deferred Exclusion Programme but explained that there was a piece of work with schools focused mainly on Global Majority children, looking at restorative outcomes for young people. The Programme involved schools using restorative responses to behavioural issues and supporting a way back into school for these children. Officers agreed to share more information with the Committee about the Deferred Exclusion Programme.

Action By: Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

- A Member referred to youth hubs and recalled that in the last report the take-up for girls had been low. They said it was good to see this was now being addressed and that the 35% figure was starting to rise through targeted programmes. The Member asked whether there had been any data analysis on ethnicity in relation to gender and whether the lower take-up reflected specific communities or was a broader gender issue. The Cabinet Member stated that they did not have the figures to hand but agreed that this related to intersectionality and which characteristics might be keeping some young people away from youth hubs. They said it would be useful to compare take-up with other girls' groups to understand how they reached a range of young people. It was explained that further data would be sought, if available, to determine whether the lower take-up for girls of youth groups reflected specific communities or a wider gender pattern.

Action By: Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

- A Member reflected on music development in schools and on post-school training and employment, noting that music was central to Camden's economy and expressing concern that Camden might not be doing enough to develop its own musicians, even though people came from around the world to work in the sector. The Member said they wanted Camden's young people to benefit. The Cabinet Member reported that there were strong opportunities in Camden and that the Culture Team used Camden musicians at events, including DJs and musicians, to give them exposure to the creative ecosystem rather than preparing them only for specific jobs. They added that many jobs in the portfolio were in the creative industries, such as advertising and graphic design, and that work continued to provide a range of opportunities. The Cabinet Member referenced the Roundhouse as a Youth Mission ambassador, noting its role in helping young people into jobs in the sector and providing low-cost space to develop skills, practice, and record. An officer added that, as a Youth Mission ambassador, the Roundhouse reached around 10,000 young people each year, including those

outside Camden, and also worked with young people over 18 on routes into creative careers.

- A Co-opted Member said that when they had been campaigning for the Camden Youth Council, many young people had asked for more political education and they asked whether this could be implemented. The Cabinet Members explained that youth clubs and youth hubs could develop programmes if young people wanted this, and that there were organisations that could help. They noted that politics took many forms and was not limited to formal settings, and that many charities offered opportunities for young people to get involved in issues they cared about, including campaigning and think tank activity. They added that young people were desired to become school governors and take an active role in their schools.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

10. UPDATE OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR BEST START FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Consideration was given to the update of the Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families.

The Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families introduced the update. He noted that alongside the data-focused work relating to his portfolio discussed earlier in the meeting on the SEND Annual Report and the Achievements and Standards reports, there was a wider cultural, artistic and pastoral offer for children, including opportunity centres, the AI campus, the Euston Skills Centre, the Royal Albert Hall festival and the Camden Schools Art Biennale. This together showed a broader picture of support that helped children to develop and celebrate their achievements.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for the update and invited questions and comments from the Committee. The following was discussed:

- A Member referred to breakfast in schools and stated that Magic Breakfast was excellent and asked for the Committee to consider work on making sure children were fed before lessons, as this could have a significant impact. The Cabinet Member reported that 4 or 5 schools had received additional government funding for breakfast clubs and were in the first cohort. They said that those schools had been able to put more teachers in place at breakfast time, offer a wider range of food and extend provision to nurseries. The Cabinet Member said they were proud of the work being done and noted feedback from parent focus groups who had raised concerns that school meals were not nutritious enough or large enough, and that work was continuing on this.
- A Member thanked those involved in corporate parenting and said they were incredibly impressed and described attending a prize-giving event for looked after children and care experienced young people as a joyous experience, adding that the quality of corporate parenting in Camden had made a real difference to the

lives of those young people. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council was the corporate parent to around 200 children in the borough and said this responsibility was taken very seriously.

- A Member asked for more information about the kinship care programme referenced in section 2.9, noting the role of wider family members in taking on responsibilities when parents could not, and asked whether there was broader work on community role models. The Cabinet Member stated that kinship care was very important, with annual practice reviews and a major focus on kinship last year. The Cabinet Member reported that they had attended practice meetings which showed the lengths taken to provide kinship care, and noted the work of corporate parenting and the Fostering Panel in considering such arrangements, adding that they would be happy to meet Members to discuss this further and that it was positive when children could be placed with people they knew. Officers stated that kinship care had long been a key strand of children's social care and that, since the Children Act 1989, the principle had been to keep children within their birth or extended family where possible. Officers explained that current reforms aimed to strengthen support for kinship carers from the outset, and that Camden had used Family Group Conferences for many years to help families identify solutions that kept children within their family networks. The Kinship Strategy sought to treat kinship carers on a par with foster carers, including access to respite, breaks and the right practice support, and to ensure both carers and children received the right level of services. Officers added that this extended to Children Looked After and Care Experienced young people, with work to sustain lifelong links so that, as children reached adulthood, they could maintain relationships with the wider extended family and with those who mattered to them.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

11. CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE'S WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER 2025/26

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director Children and Learning.

The Executive Director Children and Learning introduced and summarised the report. The following points were made:

- The 2026/27 provisional work programme (Appendix 3) was drafted to broadly reflect the report pattern the Committee received in 2025/26.
- It was noted that it had been discussed that the Committee may want to receive a report on how Camden would respond to the SEND reforms.

The 2026/27 provisional work programme would be considered at the Committee's annual work planning session, to be scheduled in due course. At this session Committee Members would also review the Committee's activity in the previous year.

RESOLVED –

THAT the Committee note the report.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND FUTURE MEETING DATES

It was noted that this was the final meeting of the municipal year and the final meeting before the upcoming local elections. The provisional meeting dates for the 2026/27 municipal were listed on page 6 of the agenda. The provisional meeting dates were due to be formally agreed at Annual Council in May 2026. The next meeting was provisionally scheduled to take place on 1 July 2026.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THE CHAIR DECIDES TO CONSIDER AS URGENT

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END