

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Children's Social Care National Reform: July 2026 Progress Update	
REPORT OF Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding Director of Relational Practice, Children and Learning	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 1 July 2026
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report provides an update on Camden's delivery of the Children's Social Care National Reforms. It provides a high-level overview of the reform programme for the new Committee, summarises the national reform context, and sets out progress since the Committee's previous updates in October 2025 and January 2026. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report. Contact Officer: Nana Bonsu, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding, Children and Learning 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG Nana.Bonsu@camden.gov.uk Jessica Eneberi, Director of Relational Practice, Children and Learning 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG Jessica.Eneberi@camden.gov.uk	
RECOMMENDATIONS The Committee is asked to comment on and note the contents of the report.	

Signed:



Jessica Eneberi, Director of Relational Practice, Children and Learning

Date: 22 June 2023

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Committee on the implementation of the Children's Social Care National Reforms agenda in Camden and gather any feedback from members on the programme's shape and progress.
- 1.2. As this is the first update to the new Committee, following the May 2026 local elections, the report also provides a high-level overview of the national reform process and the local approach in Camden. Further updates on National Reforms will be coming to the Committee as the programme progresses.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Children's Social Care National Reforms are a significant national programme of change intended to transform how children and families are supported. The reforms aim to strengthen prevention, keep families together wherever it is safe to do so, improve partnership working and support children to grow up in stable family environments. Further information on the key aspects of the Reforms and local approaches to implementation is set out in the Committee report of 16 October 2025 – Children's Social Care National Reform: Initial update, and can be found [here](#).
- 2.2. Camden began the implementation of the Reforms in January 2025. Key progress includes:
 - January to May 2025: Discovery Phase – understanding current service delivery, strengths, areas for improvement and future demand. As part of this discovery phase, a Design Group and Sounding Group with parents with lived experience of the system was set up. The discovery phase noted that there are 5 key practice areas to change our approach to – domestic abuse, disproportionality, family-group decision-making, adolescents and managing risk in the community.
 - June to December 2025: Phase One Design, Test and Learn – prototyping changes on a small scale, to test and refine the new approaches and ways of working. Further information on the prototype and key learning is set out in the Committee report of 13 January 2026 – Children's Social Care National Reform: Progress Update - and can be found [here](#).
 - January 2026 onwards: Phase Two Implementation – building on learning from Phase One, scaling and embedding the Family Help model across the borough.

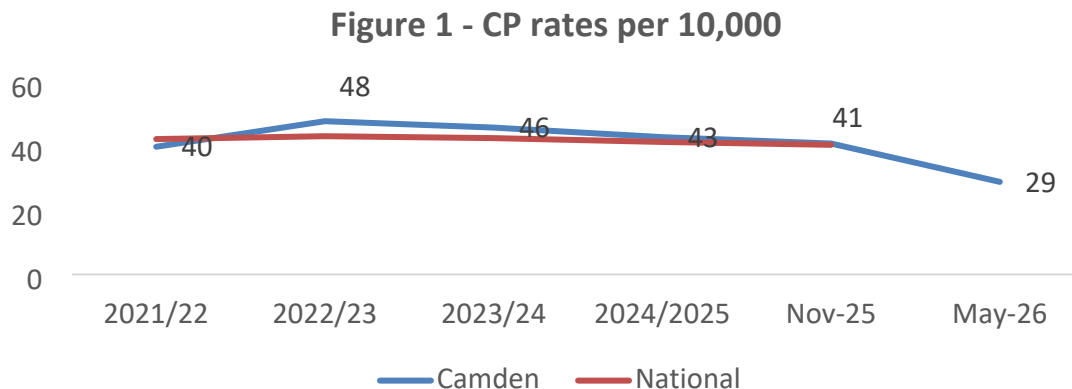
- 2.3. Since October 2025, the Committee have received regular updates on the implementation of the Children's Social Care National Reforms, ensuring members remain informed and able to provide effective oversight.
- 2.4. This report provides an update on progress since the previous Committee updates and sets out the current position as Camden has moved from Phase One: Design, Test and Learn, to Phase Two: Implementation.

3. Family Help Implementation and Rollout Update

- 3.1. Family Help is a central component of Camden's response to the national reforms. It is intended to bring together Early Help and Child In Need support into a more integrated model, supported by multi-disciplinary working and stronger links with local communities and partner agencies.
- 3.2. A key milestone has now been reached. New structure charts for Family Help and Universal and Targeted Services launched and became effective from Monday, 20 April 2026, marking the formal move from prototype and design activity into Family Help being live across all wards in the borough.
- 3.3. This wider rollout builds on the East Family Help prototype, which went live on 8 September 2025 across Gospel Oak, Haverstock, Kentish Town North and South, and Camden Square. The East prototype tested how families could be supported through a more coordinated locality-based model, with fewer handovers and stronger multi-disciplinary working. Staff received a training and induction programme about new ways of working – ensuring they had an induction to the locality and had training on practice.
- 3.4. Learning from the prototype has shaped wider implementation. Positive learning included stronger local relationships with partners, improved multi-disciplinary working, more seamless access to support for families, and positive feedback from families on the language and identity of "Family Help".
- 3.5. The prototype also identified areas to refine ahead of rollout, including streamlining training and induction, creating more time for reflection, resolving case management and workflow issues, and clarifying the role of specialist practitioners within the wider model.
- 3.6. Family Hubs also play a key role in neighbourhood place-based service delivery, and as part of the work, looking at how to ensure they are working across the 0-19 age range is key.

4. Impact since Family Help implementation and rollout

- 4.1. Since the introduction of the Family Help prototype in September 2025, there has been a significant reduction in the number of children subject to child protection (CP) plans in the borough. See Figure 1 below.



- 4.2. 85% of families in 2025/26 remained free from further intervention following Early Help front-door work, and there was a 66% decrease in step-ups between 24/25 and 25/26.
- 4.3. In addition to the data showing early indications of positive impact, we are continuing to see families experience a more responsive, joined-up service, while staff report feeling better supported within the new Family Help model.
- 4.4. Case study 1: Improved practice enabling a faster response for a family experiencing domestic abuse
A Family Help Lead Practitioner (FHLP) brought a family they were working with to group supervision. Drawing on the range of expertise within the session—including domestic abuse workers, social workers, and family workers—the group identified risks relating to domestic abuse. A Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCP) was then brought in to work alongside the FHLP. This additional support enabled the allocated worker to feel more confident in managing the risks while maintaining the strong relationship already established with the mother. Through a rapid and coordinated response, the mother and her children were supported to move to a safer environment. The new practice and ways of working in the Family Help team meant a strong infrastructure of support was in place around the family and allocated worker, enabling quicker identification of risk, a more coordinated response and timely decision-making.
- 4.5. Case study 2: Family-Led Decision-Making
A sibling group of 3 became known to the Family Help service after one child disclosed physical abuse to their teacher at school. Child protection

procedures were followed, and after a joint visit by the FHLP, LCPP and Police colleagues, the children were police protected. Upon further assessment of the situation, the FHLP understood the vulnerability of the parents who showed cooperation, engagement and remorse. Recognising the potential for safe reunification with the right support, the FHLP swiftly convened a Family-Led Decision-Making meeting. Ten members of the wider family network were brought together, including extended family, close friends and the family's church leader. Concerns were openly discussed; a Family Plan was devised; and the children returned home with the support of the parents and wider community. Involving the wider family network in planning and devising a Family Plan created the conditions for sustainable safety, ultimately enabling a positive and stable outcome for the sibling group of 3.

4.6. Case study 3: Effective multi-agency working

An FHLP met with their allocated LCPP for a consultation on a family they were working with. Upon completion of the consultation, a comprehensive strategy discussion was carried out with both police colleagues and the Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT). Professional curiosity and respectful challenge meant the trajectory of cumulative neglect was understood and acted upon. The insight and collaboration provided by the police proved invaluable. The FHLP was sighted on the wider family network following several Family-Led Decision-Making meetings that had already taken place. With this knowledge, the children were able to be placed with their extended family network. High-quality multiagency collaboration, combined with a clear understanding of family networks, strengthened decision-making and led to safer, more timely outcomes for the children involved.

5. Engagement with staff and partners

- 5.1. Supporting staff through the transformation journey and strengthening partnerships to enhance local collaboration has remained a key priority in successfully embedding the Family Help model.
- 5.2. From January to April 2026, 264 staff across the directorate attended in-person Practice Summit sessions facilitated by the Directorate Management Team. These sessions provided an opportunity to come together, explore real-life case studies, and envision how practice changes can truly shape the future of our work with families. Since January, the service has also launched the Practice Pioneer of the Month award to celebrate and recognise colleagues championing practice changes
- 5.3. In April 2026, a Partner Practice Summit was held, bringing together 34 local partners to reflect on upcoming changes, share early learning from our prototypes, and hear their insights. Colleagues shared both positives and challenges, including the importance of reaching families who might otherwise

be missed, responding well to diverse and complex needs, making better use of community strengths, and continuing to build a shared language and understanding across teams and services.

- 5.4. Further staff and partner engagement events are planned throughout the rest of the year to continue to embed the practice changes that are critical in delivering the vision and ambitions of the national reforms.

6. Adolescent Services Transformation

- 6.1. Alongside the rollout of Family Help, Camden is developing a more focused adolescent support offer for young people who may be at risk of escalation, exploitation, harm outside the home, disrupted education or overlapping vulnerabilities.
- 6.2. In June 2026, Camden launched a six-month pilot to test out an enhanced offer for vulnerable children and young people in the form of an extension of the Connecting Families offer. The extended offer added adolescent workers to the Connecting Families team who provide responsive support to children and young people aged 11 to 25 with a focus on overrepresented groups and those experiencing multiple vulnerability factors. The aim is to reduce handovers and provide more consistent, relationship-based support.
- 6.3. Learning from the prototype will inform future decisions about the adolescent support model, including how Camden responds to risk outside the home, exploitation, contextual risk and overlapping vulnerabilities through a more integrated preventative offer.

7. Kinship

- 7.1. Kinship care is where a child is cared for by relatives or someone within their wider family or friendship network, when they cannot safely live with their parents. Kinship is a priority for the next phase of the reform programme. This work supports the national reform ambition that more children can remain safely within their wider family networks where this is in their best interests.
- 7.2. The priorities for the next phase of kinship work are to develop:
 - a) a specialist kinship workforce, with dedicated management and practitioners holding kinship cases end to end to improve continuity, accountability and consistency for families;
 - b) immediate wraparound support from the point of assessment, including coordinated support from family workers, youth workers, family therapists and children's social workers where this is needed;

c) meaningful work with birth parents, including updated assessments where circumstances change, support to improve family relationships, and clearer links with specialist services such as Pause;

d) a clear long-term support offer, so kinship families feel “held, not dropped” after legal orders are made, with a trusted route back into support before difficulties escalate;

e) intensive support during the first year of a kinship arrangement, with purposeful contact, whole-family support and a peer-to-peer support model.

8. Fostering Hub

8.1. Camden is also involved in the Department for Education’s fostering reform programme through an application for the North London Fostering Hub. The proposal brings together six North London boroughs to develop a shared fostering recruitment and assessment hub, with the aim of creating a single regional fostering front door, shared recruitment and assessment processes, improved foster carer support, and a more consistent data-led approach to recruitment, retention and placement sufficiency.

8.2. The proposal is subject to Department for Education approval, with the outcome expected in Summer 2026. If approved, Camden would host the North London Fostering Hub. Mobilisation would then take place during the remainder of summer 2026, with an expectation that initial hub functions would go live by September 2026 and phased implementation would continue through 2026/27.

9. Regional Care Cooperative

9.1. Camden is also playing a leading role in the development of a London Regional Care Cooperative (RCC). Regional Care Cooperatives are part of the national reform programme and are intended to improve how children’s care placements are planned, commissioned and delivered. The aim is to address rising placement costs, improve placement availability and reduce reliance on for-profit care placements.

9.2. London is developing a pan-London RCC proposal in partnership with the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance and the Association of London Directors of Children’s Services. This remains subject to the Department for Education process and confirmation of borough participation. Tim Aldridge (Camden’s Executive Director Children and Learning and Director of Children’s Services) is chair of the London RCC Board and would be the lead DCS for the pan-London RCC. If the proposal progresses, Camden would host the RCC, which would provide pan-London strategic leadership on

commissioning, sufficiency, standards and performance, ensuring consistent and accountable delivery through fostering hubs.

10. Next Steps

- 10.1. The next phase of the reform programme will focus on embedding the new Family Help operating arrangements. This will include supporting staff and managers through the transition, monitoring demand and performance, ensuring that pathways and thresholds are clear, and continuing to gather feedback from families, practitioners and partners.
- 10.2. The next phase will also progress wider reform activity. The live six-month adolescent services prototype will continue to test an extended Connecting Families offer for children and young people with escalating or multiple vulnerabilities, with learning used to inform the future adolescent support model. Kinship will also be a priority, with work focused on developing a prototype around the agreed priorities of a specialist kinship workforce, immediate wraparound support, meaningful work with birth parents, a clear long-term support offer and more intensive support during the first year of a kinship arrangement.

11. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

- 11.1. This report provides an update on the delivery of the Children's Social Care National Reforms.
- 11.2. The 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement confirmed the Council's allocation of Children, Families and Youth grant for the period 2026/27 to 2028/29. Within the Children, Families and Youth grant allocation for 2026/27, there is a ring-fenced amount of £3,401,900 to deliver the government's national Family First Partnership programme of transformation, investing in prevention, Family Help, multi-agency protection teams, and family network support. The three-year financial settlement provides an indicative allocation of £3.4m in 2027/28 and £2.9m in 2028/29 for the Family First Partnership programme.
- 11.3. Strengthening our prevention and support, to keep families together wherever it is safe to do so, should see a positive impact in helping the Council to manage the growing cost pressure of children's social care placements whilst improving outcomes for Camden families and children.
- 11.4. It is anticipated that the Family First Partnership grant for 2026/27 will be fully utilised to support the Council's delivery of the National Reform objectives, building on the activity undertaken in 2025/26 as discussed in this report. Grant expenditure is reported quarterly to the DfE in line with the grant conditions.

- 11.5. A bid was submitted to the DfE to establish a North London Fostering Hub across six boroughs, which Camden would host. If successful, the Hub would be funded from a one-off DfE grant in year one, with an agreed shared contribution from each borough from year two onwards. Camden's contribution would need to be funded from the reallocation of existing resources.
- 11.6. Camden would be the lead authority for the proposed RCC, and if successful, would receive additional funding to support carrying out this role. The London Innovation and Improvement Alliance would be responsible for the programme delivery, with the majority of the funding transferred to them.

12. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 12.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make at this time.

13. Environmental Implications

- 13.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this.

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