

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Insight, Learning and Impact Report – Children and Learning Directorate - Quarter 4/End of Year 2025-26	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Executive Director Children and Learning	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Children, School and Families Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 1 July 2026
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report focusses on the performance over the year 2025-26 for each division across the Children and Learning Directorate. In this report, Council Directors have been asked to provide a narrative covering key areas of challenge, opportunity, and learning.</p> <p>This report is divided into three main sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A summary table which highlights key responses from individual services for the year 2025/26 across each of the Children and Learning Directorate.</li> <li>• A more detailed narrative of those service responses</li> <li>• Appendix A contains the data dashboard</li> </ul> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> James Coumbe – Insight, Learning and Impact Lead London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square, London N1C 4AG Email: <a href="mailto:james.coumbe@camden.gov.uk">james.coumbe@camden.gov.uk</a> Tel: 020 7974 5965</p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATION:</b></p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the report, including the most recent data and trends and the emerging challenges identified.</p>	

Signed:



Tim Aldridge, Executive Director Children and Learning

Date: 18 June 2026

## 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The Insight, Learning and Impact (ILI) Q4/End of Year report covers the period between April 2025 – March 2026.
- 1.2 The ILI report is submitted to all scrutiny committees twice a year (mid-year at Q2 and end of year at Q4). The report will go to all the scrutiny committees but they will no longer receive the full report, instead just the extract from the report relating to the committee's remit.
- 1.3 The ILI report includes both service narratives and the data dashboard. The service narratives (in the body of this report) provide an overview of the key issues identified by officers for each service. The data dashboard (Appendix A) gives Scrutiny Committees the opportunity to view service performance data collected across the year and compared to previous years.
- 1.4 To produce the service narrative, all Camden Council Directors were asked to provide a narrative covering key areas of challenge, opportunity, and learning, looking back over 2025/26 on the following points:
  - What were the biggest challenges to your service delivery i.e. what challenges are going to require the organisation's attention and focus
  - What are the biggest opportunities i.e. where could you most benefit from support to deliver improvement?
  - What have your services learned and what do you need to learn in the future e.g. from data or evaluation, regional or national research.
- 1.5 The main report begins with a tabled summary of service issues for Q4 2025/26 in responses to the three key questions above. That is followed by a more detailed narrative of those individual service responses.
- 1.6 The Corporate Performance Data Dashboard is at Appendix A which provides the latest performance data and previous years for the key measures from the services, and which accompanies this report.

## 2. Summary of Responses

### 2.1 Children & Learning response summary

	Challenges	Opportunities	Learning
<b>Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New strategy from government with stretched targets for the number of children reaching a good level of development (GLD) by the end of the Foundation Stage</li> <li>• Placement Sufficiency and ability to meet the demand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kinship strategy has been published in 2025 looking to support our families to care instead of the use of the care system</li> <li>• National Reform - the learning from the developed East Prototype Service, with teams of differing qualified staff, based in the Community at Harmood Family centre.</li> <li>• Review of Adolescent services and the publication of the New Youth Strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Persistent racial disparities within various systems, including Education, Children Looked After services and Youth Justice</li> <li>• Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) in April 2025</li> <li>• His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) Inspection June 2025</li> </ul>
<b>Education, Commissioning and Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant reduction in demand for school places in Camden/London</li> <li>• the need for additional Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision has risen sharply</li> <li>• Camden schools also experienced a notable decline in financial resilience, presenting risk to the Council's general fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a school sufficiency programme to help identify schools most in need of support</li> <li>• Developing a SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Commissioning Plan to address the sufficiency and viability of our provision – working with school leaders via working group</li> <li>• Place Planning Advisory Group assisting in shaping opportunities to test options to manage surplus places and sufficiency strategy</li> <li>• Developing a programme for capital works across the school estate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Falling school rolls discussed with other London boroughs</li> <li>• Cross-London programme of identifying the acute level of surplus school provision within the capital</li> <li>• Lobbying central government to address contributory concerns including support for falling-roll funding</li> </ul>
<b>SEND &amp; Inclusion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Volume and complexity of requests has resulted in challenges with meeting the statutory 20-week timeframe for Education, Health and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of reorganisation to strengthen delivery and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service delivery over the last year has reinforced the importance of forward planning, transparent communication and strong multi agency collaboration</li> </ul>

	<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Learning</b>
	<p>Care (EHC) needs assessments. In part this has been due to anxiety in the system regarding government reforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demand across the wider SEND system has continued to grow, with increasing numbers of children and young people supported through Exceptional Needs Grants (ENGs) and EHC Plans.</li> <li>• This has placed additional strain on the local area partnership, particularly mainstream schools and health services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in workforce development and joint training and workshops with partners</li> <li>• Schools White Paper published in February 2024 – signalling significant SEND reforms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data, feedback and learning from regional and national practice have highlighted the value of clear governance, consistent quality assurance and a shared commitment to improvement across the partnership</li> </ul>
<b>Virtual School and Participation and Progression Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment continues to reflect long-standing national challenges and local, cohort-specific factors</li> <li>• Improving attendance also remains a priority</li> <li>• Engaging and effectively supporting a small cohort of young people who persistently remain not in education, employment or training (NEET)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recent leadership changes in the team provides a clear opportunity to strengthen system leadership, increase strategic influence across the council</li> <li>• Exploring joint opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in STEAM partnerships (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment at Key Stage 4 remains below that of peers locally and nationally reflecting the cohort's complex educational profiles</li> <li>• The proportion of children with a social worker who are persistently absent remains around the mid-40% range</li> <li>• 96.8% of children in education, employment or training (EET) reflecting the sustained impact of the service</li> </ul>
<b>Community Adult Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct cuts from Central Government and the Greater London Authority (GLA) for Adult Skills Funding Grant</li> <li>• Further external budget cut is being expected in academic year 26/27</li> <li>• National pattern of declining participation is expected across multiple academic and financial years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A re-invigorated marketing/Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) should offer more opportunity to reach hard to access learners</li> <li>• Strong relationship with housing offering bespoke and targeted programming into estates.</li> <li>• The Women's Forum is investing in the Service to promote Women's employment in the borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Service is preparing for the new OFSTED framework, which it is liable for from 26/27 and a Matrix re accreditation visit in May 2026.</li> <li>• Reviewing the amount subcontracted and Essential Skills changes in the following year</li> </ul>

### **3. CHILDREN AND LEARNING**

#### **3.1 Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding**

##### *3.1.1 Challenges*

##### **Camden's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP)**

The percentage of Camden children that achieve a good level of development (GLD) at the end of the foundation stage is improving. 69.8% of Camden children achieved a good level of development in 2025 compared to 65.3% in 2022. For children entitled to free school meals, the percentage of children achieving GLD increased from 53.9% to 63.1%, an almost 10 percentage points increase indicating that the achievement gap in Camden is closing.

In July 2025 the government published a new Best Start in Life strategy and made a commitment that 75% of all children in England would reach a GLD by 2028 backed up by local targets for all Local Authorities.

There are two targets, one for all children and one for children eligible for Free School Meals. Camden's local target is to ensure that 78.8% of all children reach a GLD and 69.2% of children who are entitled to free school meals.

To support the new statutory targets for GLD, Local Authorities are required to draft a Best Start Local Plan, setting out how the local targets will be met. Camden published its plan on 30th March 2026 and centres interventions under 5 key outcome areas that have been shared as part of a London-wide Family Hub outcomes framework. Interventions including building on partnership work with Midwifery services on programmes such as the Family Hub pregnancy grant, increasing the availability and access to evidence-based parenting programmes and a strong focus on supporting language development through the Council's Camden Kids Talk initiative.

##### **Placement sufficiency**

Placement sufficiency and ability to meet the demand specifically for Camden children and young people looked after and care experienced continues to be a significant challenge both within Camden and nationally. We currently have 208 children looked after and 34 of these children have been in residential placements. The challenges are a national we see both a reduced in providers and a significant increase in costs for those providers that are in the market. In 2028 we have plans to open Camden owned residential units that should support some of the pressures, alongside the work with families robustly within connected families and the ongoing creative use of fostering.

### 3.1.2 *Opportunities*

#### **Kinship Strategy:**

Our kinship strategy has been published in 2025 and the Council are creatively working to support our families to care instead of the use of the care system where possible. There is an opportunity to develop a competitive offer of post order support to the Council's carers both immediately and longer term. This should create a reduction of the number of children needing to come into care but continue to receive the support that is necessary.

#### **National Reform:**

The learning from the developed East Prototype Service, with teams of differing qualified staff, based in the Community at Harwood Family centre, working alongside and with partner agencies and voluntary services to ensure easy access for children and families to provision that avoids duplication, highlights the following key learning

- Family Help teams enhance the provision to families, who get help quicker, close to home, avoiding any delay to support.
- The use of the newly designed Single Assessment narrates the family story, mentalising the child's needs and supports a plan of help, co-produced with the family to enable families achieve their goals/change.
- The importance of Family lead Decision Making is implicit and facilitates working with the wider family and network, working with rather than doing to.
- The use of the Lead Child Protection Practitioner (LCPP) has facilitated proportionate intervention in safeguarding matters permitting the LCPP to have a deep understanding of the family circumstances, attending to matters of disproportionality and providing a safe and sensitive approach to safeguarding.
- Early data demonstrates a reduction in the use of Child Protection plans and a more flexible, child centred approach in working with children and families at risk or suffering significant harm.

#### **Review of Adolescent services:**

This is a really exciting time for Youth work nationally. The publication of the New Youth Strategy, the work being undertaken with the Young Futures agenda and the broader piece of how children are supported with the implementation of family help and the National Reform. This presents us with an opportunity in Camden to think differently about how we work with our young people and ensure that we are ready for the next 10 years. In recent years, safeguarding concerns affecting adolescents have increasingly been understood through the lens of extra familial harm, including exploitation, peer on peer abuse, serious youth violence and online abuse. These harms are often shaped by social and environmental contexts over which parents and carers have limited control, and they frequently intersect with issues of inequality, marginalisation and unmet need. In response, national safeguarding systems have begun to move away from models that focus solely on individual risk or parental

capacity, towards approaches that recognise the importance of addressing the wider contexts in which harm occurs. There is an opportunity now for us to review our adolescent services and learn from evidence, research and practice to ensure that services are structured and supported in the right way.

### 3.1.3 *Learning:*

#### **Camden Youth Justice Disproportionality report March 2026**

Camden has witnessed persistent racial disparities within various systems, including Education, Children Looked After services and Youth Justice. Black and Mixed children, while representing a significant proportion of Camden's youth population, face systemic overrepresentation across all sectors and systems. In the last 3 years there has been an increase in our 'Other' cohort, namely children from North Africa and the Middle East. We have seen that these children often and disproportionately committed the most serious offences and received significant sentences as a result.

The key disparities include:

- **Free School Meals:** Black children are almost twice (1.9 times) as likely to receive free school meals than White children with Asian and Other, 1.6 times more likely. The trends have not significantly altered over the last 5 years
- **Suspension Rates:** Black and Mixed children are 1.3 times more likely to be subject to a suspension than White children. This is a reduction from previous years (1.8 for Black children, 1.6 for Mixed). Other children receiving suspensions have increased from 0.8 to 1.2 times more likely. Notably in this year there is a group of 'unknown' children who were twice as likely to receive suspensions which requires some further analysis.
- **Permanent Exclusions:** In 2024/2025, there were 30 permanent exclusions in Camden secondary schools, which have been increasing steadily since 2021. 80% of the children permanently excluded in 24/25 were Global Majority. Black and Mixed children comprising 63% evidencing a considerable overrepresentation.
- **Special Educational Needs (SEN):** There are small differences between ethnicity groups receiving SEN provision, which have not changed over the last 5 years. However, our Other children are underrepresented in SEN provision compared to their White counterparts.

#### **Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED) inspection of local authority children's services" (ILACS) inspection April 2025:**

Following an Ofsted ILACS in March 2025, Camden was judged Outstanding across all four areas: help and protection, children in care, care leavers, and leadership, confirming the borough as one of the strongest performers nationally. In their report of April 2025, the Inspectors highlighted Camden's strong early help offer, effective safeguarding, and consistently high-quality social work practice, praising Camden's relational and anti-racist approach, skilled workforce, and ambitious leadership. Their

report also noted that children and young people benefit from timely, well-coordinated support and strong, lasting relationships with professionals. Only a few minor areas for further improvement were identified.

### **Camden HMIP Inspection:**

Camden's Youth Justice Service (YJS) was rated Outstanding by His Majesty's Inspectorate Prisons (HMIP) in June 2025. This was completed under the new inspection framework focussed on our work with children and victims. This was the highest grade that can be received, the YJS was one of the first inspected under the new HMIP framework and was the first to receive this rating nationally. The inspection found that Camden YJS has an authentic culture of care and innovation for the children, families, and victims it works with. It highlighted that the service is supported by a strong management board, which has ensured that the needs of YJS children and families are prioritised across the partnership.

## **3.2 Education, Commissioning and School Organisation**

### **3.2.1 Challenges**

In Autumn 2025 the service's Annual School Place Planning Report was presented at Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny committee. This annual report provides an update on the latest demographic trends in the borough and outlines the programme of work underway to maintain the sufficiency, quality and viability of Camden's family of schools and provision for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

In 2025, Camden recorded its lowest number of births in three decades, representing a 36% decline since 2012 (this compares with a 14% decrease across London and 17% nationally over the same period). This, coupled with the continued effect of reductions in families moving into Camden, presents a continuing challenge for school planning.

Since 2018/19, the borough has closed four primary schools—Carlton, St Michael's, St Dominic's, and St Aloysius—and reduced capacity by 10 Forms of Entry (FE) in primary and 4.5 FE in secondary schools. These difficult decisions ensure that our family schools remain both sustainable and responsive to the needs of their communities

The acute fall in Primary Numbers is now being experienced within the secondary sector and a number of secondary schools within Camden remain very vulnerable to falling rolls and the implications that this has on financial sustainability. Current surplus places in year 7 have risen to 20% for entry in 2025. This is a significant increase on 2024 and ahead of existing forecasts.

At the same time, the need for additional SEND provision has risen sharply. The proportion of pupils with SEND increased from 16% in 2015/16 to 19.5% in 2023/24. The High Needs Block overspend reached £4.9 million in 2024/25 and an £8.1m deficit is forecast for 2025/26. The increase in spend is primarily driven by increases in the number of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools. Despite this, the Council still operates a highly supportive financial model with £16.8 million devolved to mainstream schools – more than double the £7.7 million allocated in 2020/21.

In the 2024/25 financial year, Camden schools also experienced a notable decline in financial resilience. School reserves were reduced by £5.8 million, reflecting the growing pressure on budgets across the borough. The number of schools operating in deficit rose to 12, up from 8 the previous year, indicating a widening financial vulnerability. Additionally, 41% of schools had to draw on their reserves to support operational costs, a significant increase from 32% in 2022/23.

### 3.2.2 *Opportunities*

These factors have created a level of anticipated surplus provision and significant pressure on schools' and Council budgets. To address this, the Council, in collaboration with Camden Learning and schools, has established a comprehensive School Sufficiency Programme, to secure a balanced, high-quality, and inclusive education system for the future.

The School Sufficiency Programme combines governance, data intelligence, and targeted intervention, with a focus 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 and to ensure that all schools remain sustainable, inclusive, and high performing.

Alongside, and fully integrated with, this work, the Council is developing a SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Commissioning Plan to address the sufficiency and viability of our provision offer to pupils with additional need. This will seek to meet children's needs locally, wherever possible, by expanding provision so more children can access high-quality, specialist support within their local community, reducing the reliance on independent and non-maintained specialist provision and out-of-borough provision.

Supporting these is the Place Planning Advisory Group, chaired by the Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion, involving headteachers, chairs of governors and both Church of England and Catholic Diocese representatives. This group plays a critical role in shaping the operational aspects of place planning and sufficiency strategy. Regular engagement with school leaders is maintained through headteacher

briefings and the Place Planning Advisory Group, fostering transparency, shared ownership, and collective problem solving across the education community.

Following the completion of condition surveys across the community school estate, a forward programme for capital works is being developed, which will commence scoping and design stages from the beginning of 2026. This will be prepared and reviewed in conjunction with the school sufficiency programme to ensure strategic alignment. Alongside this, there has been a review of the status of the school estate to identify opportunities to strengthen access and inclusion. This has resulted in grants totalling £4.7m being awarded to 32 schools to complete capital works that enable their buildings to better meet the needs of children with SEND since 2024.

### 3.2.3 *Learning*

Falling school rolls are not unique to Camden and are discussed widely across London due to the sudden and significant falls in actual registered births impacting on most authorities. Together with London Councils, Camden has been active in raising this issue at a local and national level. Specifically, the Council have been involved in a cross-London programme of identifying the acute level of surplus school provision within the capital and lobbying central government to address contributory concerns including support for falling-roll funding.

## 3.3 **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion**

### 3.3.1 Challenges

Throughout 2025/26, Camden's SEND service has experienced sustained pressures that have affected our ability to consistently meet the statutory 20 week timescale for EHC needs assessments. A continued rise in both the volume and complexity of requests has placed significant demands on service capacity. This has been compounded by workforce disruption following the service reorganisation, as new structures and roles have been embedded.

In addition, securing timely multiagency contributions has remained challenging, reflecting capacity pressures across partner services. Together, these factors have led to variability in assessment timeliness and compliance.

Demand across the wider SEND system has continued to grow, with increasing numbers of children and young people supported through Exceptional Needs Grants (ENGs) and Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. This has placed additional strain on the local area partnership, particularly mainstream schools. Alongside this, the service has worked with parents, schools and partners through a series of workshops aimed at embedding inclusive practice and a more relational approach,

ensuring this cultural shift is sustained alongside rising demand remains an ongoing challenge.

### 3.3.2 Opportunities

In response to the sustained pressures, the service has implemented a strategic reorganisation that presents a significant opportunity to strengthen delivery and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The new model introduces increased capacity to support EHC needs assessments more effectively, with the creation of dedicated teams focused on quality assurance and improved engagement with families, ensuring relational practice impacting on outcomes of children and young people.

These changes provide a stronger operational foundation, enabling more consistent practice, clearer accountability and better coordination across the system. Investment in workforce development and joint training and workshops with partners also creates opportunities to embed collaborative ways of working, ensuring services are more responsive, joined up and centred on the needs and voices of children, young people and their families.

### 3.3.3 Learning

The service delivery over the last year has reinforced the importance of forward planning, transparent communication and strong multi-agency collaboration. We have learned that improving performance and compliance depends not only on process and capacity, but also on building trust with families and partners to maintain meaningful engagement throughout the assessment journey.

Data, feedback and learning from regional and national practice have highlighted the value of clear governance, consistent quality assurance and a shared commitment to improvement across the partnership. These lessons are informing the next phase of service development, with a renewed focus on delivering timely, high-quality assessments and EHC Plans that reflect the aspirations, strengths and needs of Camden's children and young people with SEND.

## 3.4 **The Virtual School and Participation and Progression Team**

The Virtual School is a statutory service within the local authority, with a lead responsibility for championing educational outcomes, wellbeing, and engagement for:

- Children Looked After
- Previously Looked After Children
- Children with a Social Worker
- Children in Kinship Care

The Virtual School operates systemically, providing both support and constructive challenge to schools, children's social care, health services, and wider partners to improve educational outcomes and experiences for children and young people.

The Participation and Progression Team focuses on ensuring that young people of statutory school age, and those aged 16 and over, receive high-quality careers information, advice, and guidance, and that they remain engaged in education, training, or employment.

#### 3.4.1 *Challenges*

Educational outcomes for Children in Need and Children Looked After remain broadly in line with regional and national comparators. However, attainment continues to reflect long-standing national challenges and local, cohort-specific factors. These include the impact of frequent changes in care placement, which can lead to school moves, disrupted learning, and the enduring effects of adverse childhood experiences on learning and achievement.

Attainment at Key Stage 4 remains below that of peers locally and nationally. This reflects the cohort's complex educational profiles, including a high proportion of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans, interrupted schooling linked to placement instability, and a high prevalence of emotional and mental health needs. The Virtual School is undertaking a rigorous analysis of contributory factors, creating an opportunity to strengthen how the service both supports and challenges schools, and to further develop expertise in the effective use of the Pupil Premium Plus grant to improve outcomes.

Improving attendance also remains a priority. The proportion of Children Looked After who are persistently absent remains in the low-to-mid 20 per cent range, while for children with a social worker it is higher, at around the mid-40 per cent range. Although these figures reflect wider contextual and vulnerability-related factors, sustained improvement will require a rigorous and coordinated response from schools and children's social care. The Virtual School will play a leading role in Camden's multi-agency response, with a focus on early identification, emotionally informed practice, and strengthened partnership working. Long-term improvement depends on addressing vulnerability and reinforcing children and young people's sense of belonging.

The proportion of Camden young people aged 16 and 17 who are in education, employment, or training continues to compare favourably with that of other local authorities. In the most recent quarter, this figure stood at 96.8 per cent, reflecting the sustained impact of services, including the Participation and Progression Team.

There are two key challenges in the Participation and Progression Team. The first is engaging and effectively supporting a small cohort of young people who persistently remain not in education, employment, or training. The second is ensuring that the Participation and Progression Team continues to respond and adapt to policy and practice developments across the post-16 education, training, and skills landscape.

#### **3.4.2 Opportunities**

These challenges provide an opportunity to develop a broader and more targeted range of interventions that better meet the needs of specific groups of young people. The Head of Service is leading a comprehensive review of the Participation and Progression Team to ensure that, over the longer term, it remains sustainable, effective, and well-aligned with the needs of young people and partner services.

There are already positive indications of progress. Forthcoming priorities include strengthening collaboration with the Inclusive Economy Team and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths) partnerships and ensuring alignment with Camden's developing Adolescent Service and the work of Family and Youth Hubs.

Recent leadership changes across the Virtual School and the Participation and Progression Team represent an important milestone for both services. This transition provides a clear opportunity to strengthen system leadership, increase strategic influence across the council, and sharpen the focus on early intervention, prevention, and evidence-informed multi-agency practice.

### **3.5 Adult Community Learning (ACL)**

#### **3.5.1 Challenges**

The direct cuts from Central Government and the Greater London Authority (GLA) for Adult Skills Funding Grant across the London and the UK has represented significant challenges for the sector and for Camden ACL. Camden ACL restructured early and amalgamated departments, held vacancies and rationalised some of the offer in order to be able to end the financial year still financially in the black and not put pressure on Council Central Funds. This meant that alongside the national pattern declining participation is expected across multiple academic and financial years. A further external budget cut is being implemented in academic year 2026/27. The Service aims to maintain learner participation at or above 2000 students. The ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Advice Service was funded again short term to carry it through another financial year.

#### **3.5.2 Opportunities**

A re-invigorated marketing/IAG (Information, Advice and Guidance) should offer more opportunity to reach hard to access learners in the following years. We also have

developed a strong relationship with housing offering bespoke and targeted programming into estates. This was particularly useful with Tenants Participation team and courses such as Food Hygiene were popular and successful. The early intervention and prevention work we continue to do through our courses with adult social care learners has proved effective in supporting the council local offer. Family learning contributed strongly to school and early years offers across the borough and the creation of a school attendance programme appears at early stages to be impactful. The new Essential Skills department has come together under new leadership and has serviced its funding targets in conjunction with a range of partners. The Service still maintains its youth employment programme in conjunction with Inclusive Economy and the Integrated Youth Service with good outcomes achieved. Overall Achievement rates for the Service remain strong. The Women's Forum has decided to invest in the Service to promote Women's employment in the borough. The Service continues to trade its peripatetic creche into Family Hubs and the NHS.

### 3.5.3 *Learning*

The Service continues to adapt its marketing strategy and intends to invest more in this. It is becoming increasingly difficult to predict the managed financial decline of government investment when it is translated over to the Learner participation. The Service is preparing for the new OFSTED framework, which it is liable for from 2026/27 and a Matrix re-accreditation visit in May 2026. We will be reviewing the amount subcontracted and Essential Skills changes in the following year. It was a successful year regardless of the external financial challenges and the quality and scope of the offer was maintained and new initiatives engaged with.

## 4. **Finance Comments of the Director of Finance**

4.1 The Director of Finance has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

## 5. **Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

5.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no further comments to add.

## 6. **Environmental Implications**

6.1 There are no proposals with environmental implications made in this report.

## 7 **Appendices**

7.1 Appendix A: Corporate Data Dashboard 2025/26– CSF Scrutiny

**REPORT ENDS**