

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE We Care - Citizen Expectations for Adult Social Care (AH/2026/10)	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet	DATE 6 th July 2026
STRATEGIC CONTEXT	
<p>Adult Social Care is at a pivotal moment nationally. The Government has established an independent commission into adult social care, chaired by Baroness Louise Casey, as part of the first steps towards delivering a National Care Service. A central aim of the Commission is to start a national conversation about what Adult Social Care should deliver for citizens and to build public consensus on how current and future needs should be met.</p> <p>Against this backdrop, Camden has undertaken <i>Who Cares?</i>, a borough-wide conversation about care and support involving more than 1,500 residents. Through an online deliberative process, residents explored what matters most to them, developed a greater understanding of Adult Social Care, and considered the roles that individuals, communities, employers, local government and national government should play in supporting people to live healthy, independent and connected lives. The resulting <i>We Care: Citizens' Expectations</i> provide a unique evidence base for future policy development and reform discussions.</p> <p>The project directly supports Camden's Adult Social Care strategic plan, <i>Supporting People, Connecting Communities</i>, which focuses on helping residents live and age well by building on people's strengths, relationships and community connections. It also reflects the ambitions of <i>We Make Camden</i> by creating opportunities for meaningful participation, community power and shared responsibility. Many participants engaged in Council decision-making for the first time, demonstrating both the appetite for involvement and the value of informed public deliberation on complex policy issues.</p> <p>The findings provide important insight to inform the next phase of Adult Social Care strategy in Camden, including work on prevention, neighbourhoods, information and advice, care and support at home, and co-production. They also position Camden to make a distinctive contribution to wider national conversations about the future of care, including the Casey Commission and broader discussions on Adult Social Care reform.</p>	
SUMMARY OF REPORT	
<p>This report presents the findings and learning from <i>Who Cares?</i>, Camden's borough-wide conversation on Adult Social Care involving more than 1,500 residents. At a time of growing national debate about the future of social care, the project sought to increase public understanding of Adult Social Care, explore what matters most to residents, and develop a shared view of the roles and responsibilities that underpin a strong care and support system.</p> <p>The report highlights strong public consensus around dignity, compassion, fairness, choice and control, support to remain at home and connected locally, clear</p>	

information and advice, and stronger recognition of carers and care workers. It also presents the We Care: Citizens' Expectations, developed by a representative residents' panel, which set out what residents believe should be expected of individuals, communities, the workforce, Camden Council and Central Government in creating the conditions for people to live and age well.

The report is being presented to Cabinet because the findings have significant implications for the future direction of Adult Social Care in Camden and demonstrate the value of large-scale deliberative participation in shaping public policy. Cabinet is invited to note the learning from the project and the Citizens' Expectations as a foundation for future strategy development, service improvement and Camden's contribution to national discussions on Adult Social Care reform.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.

Contact Officer:

James Fox
Senior Policy and Projects Officer
London Borough of Camden
5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG
James.fox@camden.gov.uk
Telephone: 0207 9745827

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the report, including:
 - key reflections and learning from the work set out in section 3;
 - the citizens' expectations of individuals, communities, the workforce, Camden Council and central government in relation to Adult Social Care, as set out in Section 4; and
 - the next steps, as set out in Section 5.
2. Agrees to support and take forward the public affairs and influencing approach set out in section 5 of this report.
3. Recommends to the Mayor of Camden that they consider putting forward the following topic, to be presented to Full Council for a themed debate:
 - 'Most of us will need care and support in our lives. Citizen expectations and Camden's contribution to a national conversation about the future of adult social care'.

Signed:

Jess McGregor



Date: 24.6.26

1. Context and background

- 1.1. We all want to live in the place we call home, stay connected to the people and things that matter to us, and get the right support when life becomes harder. Adult Social Care is the support that helps make this possible - whether someone needs assistance to recover after illness, manage a disability, stay safe at home or remain active and connected in their community. Statutory Adult Social Care is also part of a wider ecosystem of support in local communities, alongside families, friends, voluntary organisations, community and faith groups, housing and health services. When social care works well, it supports independence, dignity and connection; when it does not, people are more likely to become isolated or reach crisis.
- 1.2. Adult Social Care is one of local government's most significant responsibilities, but public understanding of what it is, who it supports, and how it works remains limited due to the complexity of the system. Many people do not consider social care until they, or someone close to them, needs to draw on support. Even then, awareness of what Adult Social Care is, what help may be available, and how the system operates can still be low. Camden therefore identified a need to create a broader public conversation about care and support, one that raises awareness, builds understanding, and enables citizens to help shape the future of care.
- 1.3. *Who Cares?* was developed as a borough-wide conversation about care and support in Camden, running from 22 September 2025 to 11 March 2026. It was designed to be both educational and impact-oriented, giving residents the opportunity to reflect on what matters to them, learn more about Adult Social Care, and develop expectations of the different parts of the system that shape people's experiences.
- 1.4. The project also reflected Camden's wider commitment to meaningful participation. *Who Cares?* provided an opportunity to test whether a large-scale, digitally enabled, deliberative approach could support informed participation on a complex policy issue. It also formed part of the wider "Waves" pilot programme led by Demos, a cross-party think tank, and funded by Google.org in 2024 to explore new approaches to mass participation alongside partners across the democratic, civic, and technological sectors.
- 1.5. Camden chose to focus this pilot on Adult Social Care because care is fundamental to all of us. Most people will need care at some point in their lives, whether in older age, through disability, or following ill health. The system is under significant strain nationally and locally, and this work comes at a pivotal moment for social care reform, with the independent commission led by Baroness Louise Casey creating renewed national focus on the future of care.

Evidence from The King's Fund ¹also shows that limited public understanding of social care can make reform harder to advance, because it is less likely to be seen as a priority for action. In that context, the project created an opportunity to begin a more honest and constructive conversation with residents about what good care means, what people value most, and where responsibilities sit across individuals, community, workforce, Camden Council and Central Government.

- 1.6. A full account of the project is included in the annex to this report, including how the work was carried out (Appendix A) and the detailed policy findings (Appendix B). This report is intended as a cover report to that material. It sets out the Council's reflections on the project and highlights some key insights and areas of focus to consider as the learning is taken forward.

2. Project aims

- 2.1. *Who Cares?* had four main aims, these were to:

- Learn more about how mass digital participation could work in Camden and across the UK;
- Increase resident understanding of what Adult Social Care is and its relevance to all of us;
- Understand what matters to residents to inform Camden's future Adult Social Care Strategy and Baroness Louise Casey's independent commission for Government;
- Explore what people, communities and institutions understand and expect as their roles and responsibilities in the Adult Social Care system, and what contributions everyone is willing to make towards service reform.

- 2.2. The project was designed as a four-phase conversation that moved from participation at scale into more in-depth resident deliberation, then back out to the wider public for reflection, before returning to a final resident panel to agree expectations across the system. The aim was to support a balanced process of learning and deliberation around a complex area of public policy.

- 2.3. Different technologies were used cross the different phases to support online engagement. These tools sought to innovate existing participation methods (i.e. surveying, facilitation, discussion) and challenges (i.e. cost of scale, facilitation, participant access to policy information), with an emphasis on improving project delivery.

- 2.4. Camden also wanted to test whether a different conversation about care was possible, one that did not begin only with services, thresholds or people who already draw on care or support from Adult Social Care, but with residents as citizens, carers, family members, neighbours and future recipients of care. This wider framing reflected the view that Adult Social Care is not a niche issue affecting only a small part of the population, but a collective societal concern that raises questions about fairness, independence, community and responsibility. This led to the closing deliberative activity of creating citizen 'expectations' across different responsible areas of the system.

¹ <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/not-my-priority-how-the-public-social-care>

2.5. Over the four phases, more than 1,500 residents took part. Phase 1 engaged over 1,200 residents, Phase 3 engaged over 550 residents, and a representative residents' panel took part in deeper deliberative Phases 2 and 4 in late 2025 and early 2026.

3. Key reflections and learning from the conversations

3.1. Across the project, a major strength of this work is that over 1,500 residents took part, reflecting the diversity of Camden's communities. The project showed that representative **participation at scale and pace is possible**. In Phase 1 alone, more than 1,200 people were engaged in four weeks, supported by significant outreach through Camden's trusted voluntary and community sector networks and Council communications channels. This underlines the **importance of strong local relationships in enabling broad and inclusive participation**. It also suggests that technology on its own does not guarantee scale or meaningful engagement - scale of engagement was achieved through active outreach, trusted community channels and deliberate efforts to make information accessible.

3.2. One of the most significant features of the project was **successfully engaging many residents who might not ordinarily see Adult Social Care as relevant to their lives**. In Phase 1, 59% of participants had not previously taken part in a Council decision-making process, 64% did not draw on care or support, and 60% did not have caring responsibilities. Similar patterns were seen in Phase 3. This shows that the project successfully reached beyond established or already-engaged groups and opened up the conversation to residents who may not initially identify as knowing about social care, but who in fact brought valuable lived experience to the discussion.

3.3. Participants spoke with insight about unpaid caring, people having to meet the full cost of Adult Social Care support because the service is means tested, the realities of care work, the pressures on families, and the importance of trust, continuity and dignity in care relationships. This reinforced that while the term "social care" may not always resonate and can feel unfamiliar or technical, the issues it relates to absolutely do. When framed through real-life experiences, residents engaged meaningfully, imagining what would matter should they or someone they love need care. Others drew on their own knowledge and experiences of care.

3.4. Another important finding was the **extent of consensus across the conversation**. Residents consistently returned to a common set of priorities, including choice and control, fair funding, dignity and compassion, support to remain at home and stay local, stronger support for and recognition of carers and care workers, clear information and advice, and stronger accountability for quality. These are issues that Adult Social Care knows matter, but the project has provided a wider democratic mandate and showed that they resonate strongly beyond those already engaged with services.

3.5. There was **significant alignment** between what residents said through this process and **what the Council already hears through co-production work with people drawing on care and support, and the priorities we already are focusing on**. For example, during Phase 2, residents ranked *choice and*

control as one of their top two priorities, highlighting the importance of personalisation and preference when it comes to the 'where' and 'how' of care, with one participant reflecting:

"I've seen other people who've been taken away from their own environment and they seem to deteriorate really quickly. But if they can choose to stay in their own home, or even in their own area or community, I think people are a lot more happy."

- 3.6. This reflects Adult Social Care's ambitions for Care and Support at home, a new procurement strategy that represents a deliberate reimagining of how care and support at home is organised and delivered. The approach includes a shift away from task-led care towards enabling, relationship-based support; greater investment in care worker time and development; and stronger integration with neighbourhood and health services.
- 3.7. Although some familiar themes emerged, the process also generated important **new insight and learning**. Participants brainstormed a wide range of ideas and actions to make a difference to the key challenges facing care and support, helping us to understand where residents see opportunities. The majority of these ideas are things the Council already does, which points to a need for better communications around Adult Social Care. Ideas we don't yet do are areas for further exploration including further public awareness raising activities, care workforce development, and ways of reducing financial barriers both for carers and those drawing on care.
- 3.8. One particularly strong theme from resident discussions and input from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) was the **role of information and advice**. Residents were clear that if people do not understand what social care is, they are unlikely to recognise when information is relevant, what support they might need, or how to ask for help. The challenge, therefore, is not simply whether information exists, but whether it is accessible, timely and presented in ways that help people prepare earlier for drawing on care and support in the future, rather than only at the point of crisis. The VCS similarly noted stigma and fear around care as reducing independence and the need for prevention measures that instil a sense of agency and empowerment.
- 3.9. It is notable that the Council's statutory responsibilities and reporting routes around **safeguarding** - to protect adults with care and support needs from abuse, neglect and harm whilst promoting their wellbeing and human rights - didn't come through strongly in the deliberative outputs. Instead, residents spoke about safety of care in terms of quality and training of carers and care providers. As one of the Council's statutory responsibilities, this highlights the need to do more awareness-raising work with citizens and communities.
- 3.10. A marker of success for the project was for **more residents to become actively vocal about the importance of Adult Social Care, and the need for proper social care funding**. There are signs that the project achieved this, for example in the final phase, 83% of the panel reported a significant shift in how they thought about their own role in the social care system. One participant went on to contact ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services)

nationally to campaign for free Transport for London travel for care workers. This suggests that the project not only captured views but also inspired activism and a more engaged public conversation about care.

3.11. The project also demonstrates the **value of a deliberative participation approach to support informed public discussion on complex policy issues, of relevance in the context of public service reform**. Camden will use this learning to shape participation in the future, both within Adult Social Care and across the wider Council. In particular, the project suggests value in using a blended model of scale and in-depth deliberation to support broad participation, while also creating space for deeper discussion and reflection. The digital nature of the conversation was also seen to support participation for some residents, showing the value of mixed methods for people to take part. In this sense, *Who Cares?* is not only a source of insight on Adult Social Care, but also a practical example of how Camden can involve residents meaningfully to shape policy in complex areas.

3.12. The project shows a real appetite for and **value of deliberative processes for residents in Camden**. The majority of participants had not taken part in a Council decision-making process before. Residents praised the opportunity to take part, to learn from each other and experts, and contribute directly to change. All 30 resident on the in-depth panel also joined Camden's 'We Are Camden' Citizen Participation group to stay informed about future engagement opportunities. In participants' own words:

*"I really like the idea that something like this was implemented. There are issues that will affect us all at some point but then you don't know what's been done, or if anything is being done, or if the Council cares about what happens. It's nice to be a part of this and feel like we're making changes. Whether we are in care or know someone who is, or not, **we're all learning something.**"*

*"I think this [process] is good for **breaking down social barriers and putting weight and pressure behind changes suggested in political circles. I appreciate this... Doing this type of community involvement is good for democracy.**"*

3.13. Alongside the valuable policy insight generated through this project, our experience trialling digital participation tools was a source of learning. The use of technology, particularly focused on enhancing civic voice and decision-making, is rapidly evolving. From *Who Cares?*, we know digital methods of engagement work better for some residents but also can be a barrier for others. As an organisation, we continue to have a preference in-person or hybrid participation approaches as opposed to fully digital. Where technology is used to support engagement, we will look for deliberative technologies that are customisable, open-source, and user-tested where possible. Camden will continue to explore how these new and emerging capabilities might support meaningful involvement of residents and help build opportunities for influence in an inclusive and accessible way.

4. Next steps: What we will do with what residents have said

4.1. A key output of the project is the **We Care: Citizens' Expectations**, developed and agreed by the resident panel in the final phase of the conversation. The expectations point to the collective responsibility of care and support and set out what residents believe should be expected from individuals, community, workforce, Camden Council and Central Government. They represent an important statement of public values and priorities in relation to Adult Social Care and provide a strong basis for future action through Camden's neighbourhoods agenda. Cabinet is therefore invited to note them as a meaningful output of the project. Further descriptions of each expectation can be found in the impact report. The expectations at a glance are:

<p>Individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know & Look Out for Each Other • Act Respectfully & With Kindness • Contribute to Community • Share Information & Opportunities • Take Action to Improve Our Health 	<p>Camden Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access information and advice • Support & celebrate carers • Support & listen to unpaid carers • Citizen Voice • Quality Assurance of Care Providers • Resident-Led Commissioning • Support the Voluntary Sector
<p>Workforce:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of High-Quality Care • Fair Pay & Career Progression • Clear Scrutiny & Complaints Process • Values-Led Behaviour 	<p>Central Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A National Conversation • National Standards of Care • Citizen Voice • Fair & Sustainable Funding • Funding: Independent Oversight • Financial Transparency
<p>Community:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection & Belonging • Informal Ways of Support • Compassionate Support Offer • Cultural Inclusivity • Access to Information & Support • Recognition & Resourcing 	

4.2. The insight from this process comes as Adult Social Care begins to consider the next iteration of its strategic plan, *Supporting People, Connecting Communities*. The findings will inform the next steps of strategy and policy development in Camden which will come back to Cabinet on completion.

4.3. The findings will also influence the development of the Adult Social Care **information and advice offer** in Camden. Survey data suggests that people who draw on care and support find it relatively easy to access relevant information and advice, while our carers survey was less positive although improving. However, it was clear during *Who Cares?* sessions that people without prior knowledge of social care did not have a good understanding of where to access information, or who they could ask for information or for help. Residents were clear that knowledge is empowering and that people want clearer, earlier and more accessible information about care, their rights, carers' roles, prevention and available support. This is particularly important for people who may be required to fund the full cost of their own care and support under the current means-tested system, and who need accessible information in the places where they live and at an early stage, to understand likely costs, available options and how to prepare for the future.

4.4. This connects to a question of how the Council as a whole supports people to live and age well, including through our focus on prevention, health and wellbeing, and early action to maintain independence, as well as through our

role as an employer. **The findings therefore have implications across the whole Council**, since residents often come into contact with other services well before Adult Social Care. The Council should consider how those wider contact points can be used not only to share information, but also to encourage and support earlier planning and a focus on prevention, including within our own workforce so that people can plan proactively for their futures, and retain greater choice and control for longer.

- 4.5. Delivering these next steps aligns with Camden's ambitious approach to Neighbourhoods, the health agenda and place-based service delivery. We know when services are **local, connected** and built on **relationships**, they **enable** people to come together to find solutions. We believe this approach can also effectively deliver across early intervention and prevention - activating resources of our communities and partners, including Camden's voluntary and community sector, community and faith leaders and neighbourhood partners working alongside residents. This work is already progressing and provides a real opportunity to mobilise collaboration and grow shared understanding, commitments and contributions driving forward residents' expectations for Adult Social Care in tangible ways across responsible areas of the system.
- 4.6. A key next step from *Who Cares?* will be to ensure that the insights and resident perspectives gathered through this project continue to inform future work. This includes connecting the findings and Citizens' Expectations to existing and emerging participation routes, including Camden's Adult Social Care co-production panel, so that residents, unpaid carers and people with lived experience remain involved in shaping strategy, commissioning and service improvement. The project also reinforces the importance of Camden's strategic approach to co-production in Adult Social Care, through which people who draw on care and support work with officers to improve services, identify priorities for change, and help shape strategies and longer-term plans. The aim is to ensure that resident voice, and particularly lived experience, is consistently embedded in Adult Social Care decision-making.
- 4.7. The project has highlighted the importance of **feeding back to residents** to maintain trust in the participation process. Residents who took part have contributed a significant amount of time, reflection and expertise, and many expressed a clear expectation that their input should lead to visible change, and a desire to be involved in that change. Of the system actors, participants expressed the highest degree of confidence that the Council and community would carry forward their insights. This points to an existing sense of trust towards the organisation and leaves us with a responsibility to champion their ideas and act. Camden has committed to bringing participants back together later in the year to report on how the work is being taken forward.
- 4.8. Camden has started to share the learning from this project more widely. New Local, Camden's learning partner through the Waves programme, has showcased the work across a Learning Network of other local authorities and at the Stronger Things conference in June. Camden has also shared learning from the project at the ADASS (Association of Directors of Adult Social Services) Spring Seminar. In addition, the project's wider advisory Sounding Board continues to provide routes for dissemination and discussion nationally.

Together, these opportunities have helped ensure that the findings contribute locally, across the sector and nationally about how a stronger public conversation on Adult Social Care can support national reform. Camden hopes this learning will encourage other local authorities to create similar opportunities for borough-wide conversation and engagement on Adult Social Care in ways that reflect their own local context.

- 4.9. Learning and insights from the project will be shared with the [Royal Independent Commission on Adult Social Care](#)² led by Baroness Louise Casey. Contact and relationships with the Commission have already been formed and the Commission team have expressed interest in both the process and the findings. Given the Commission’s aim of starting a national conversation about what Adult Social Care should deliver and building public consensus on the need for national reform, the project offers valuable insight and learning on the substance of residents’ expectations and how to frame Adult Social Care in ways that resonate more strongly with the public. The Council will formally submit the findings of the *Who Cares?* deliberation to the Commission as well as draw on its insights to feed into and participate in the LGA coordinated conversation with local government: [Care where we live](#)³.

5. Next Steps: A Summary

Commitment / next step	What Camden Council will do	Indicative timescale
Note the Citizens’ Expectations	Invite Cabinet to note the <i>We Care: Citizens’ Expectations</i> as a key output and basis for future action.	Cabinet July 2026
Use findings to inform Adult Social Care strategy	Feed the findings into strategy and policy development for <i>Supporting People, Connecting Communities</i> .	Cabinet approval during 2027
Improve information and advice	Use residents’ feedback to strengthen Camden’s Adult Social Care information and advice offer, with clearer, earlier and more accessible information about care, rights, carers’ roles, prevention, costs and support options.	Beginning summer 2026
Embed prevention and early planning across the Council	Consider how wider Council contact points can support earlier conversations about ageing well, prevention, independence, planning and support.	Ongoing cross-Council discussions and development activity
Connect the work to neighbourhoods and place-based delivery	Use Camden’s neighbourhoods approach to mobilise residents, communities, voluntary and community sector partners, faith and community leaders, and local services around the Citizens’ Expectations.	Ongoing neighbourhoods and place-based development work
Keep resident voice embedded in decision-making	Connect the findings to existing and emerging participation routes, including Adult Social Care co-production, so that residents, carers and people with lived experience continue	Part of ongoing service development activity

² <https://caseycommission.co.uk/>

³ <https://lga.clevertogogether.com/welcome>

Commitment / next step	What Camden Council will do	Indicative timescale
	shaping strategy, commissioning and service improvement.	
Report back to resident participants	Bring participants back together to explain what has happened as a result of the project and how their input is being taken forward. Invite the Casey Commission to join and hear directly from those involved on the work that has been done.	Autumn 2026
Public affairs, influencing and sharing learning	Continue sharing learning from the project through the Waves programme, New Local, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS), the project Sounding Board and wider sector networks. Reach out to parliamentarians via All Party Parliamentary Groups to share good practice and ask MPs to encourage their Local Authorities to have similar conversations. Submit the findings of the Who Cares? deliberation to the Royal Commission on Adult Social Care in Autumn 2026, including a cover letter drawing out key themes to shape the commissions' recommendations. Copy in Stephen Kinnock MP (Minister for Care).	Throughout 2026-2027 via sector networks and partnership activity

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Whilst there was no statutory requirement for the Council to have undertaken the comprehensive phases and measures outlined in this report (between September 2025 to March 2026) and gather the information as noted in the accompanying appendices; the report notes the Council's wider ambition to create a borough-wide conversation about the Adult Social Care lived experience in the borough in order to inform related decision making going forward.
- 6.2. Whilst this report does not seek a formal decision from Cabinet (the report and findings are for noting) sections 4 and 5 of the report do detail the anticipated next steps and how the information gathered will be used to inform the Council and relevant stakeholders going forward.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There is a small financial implication of c.£3.5k, however any further actions which would result in commissioning as a result of recommendations would need a new business case with financial implications included and reviewed then.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications from this project.

8 APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Process report (Summary)

- Appendix B: Impact report (Summary)

REPORT ENDS