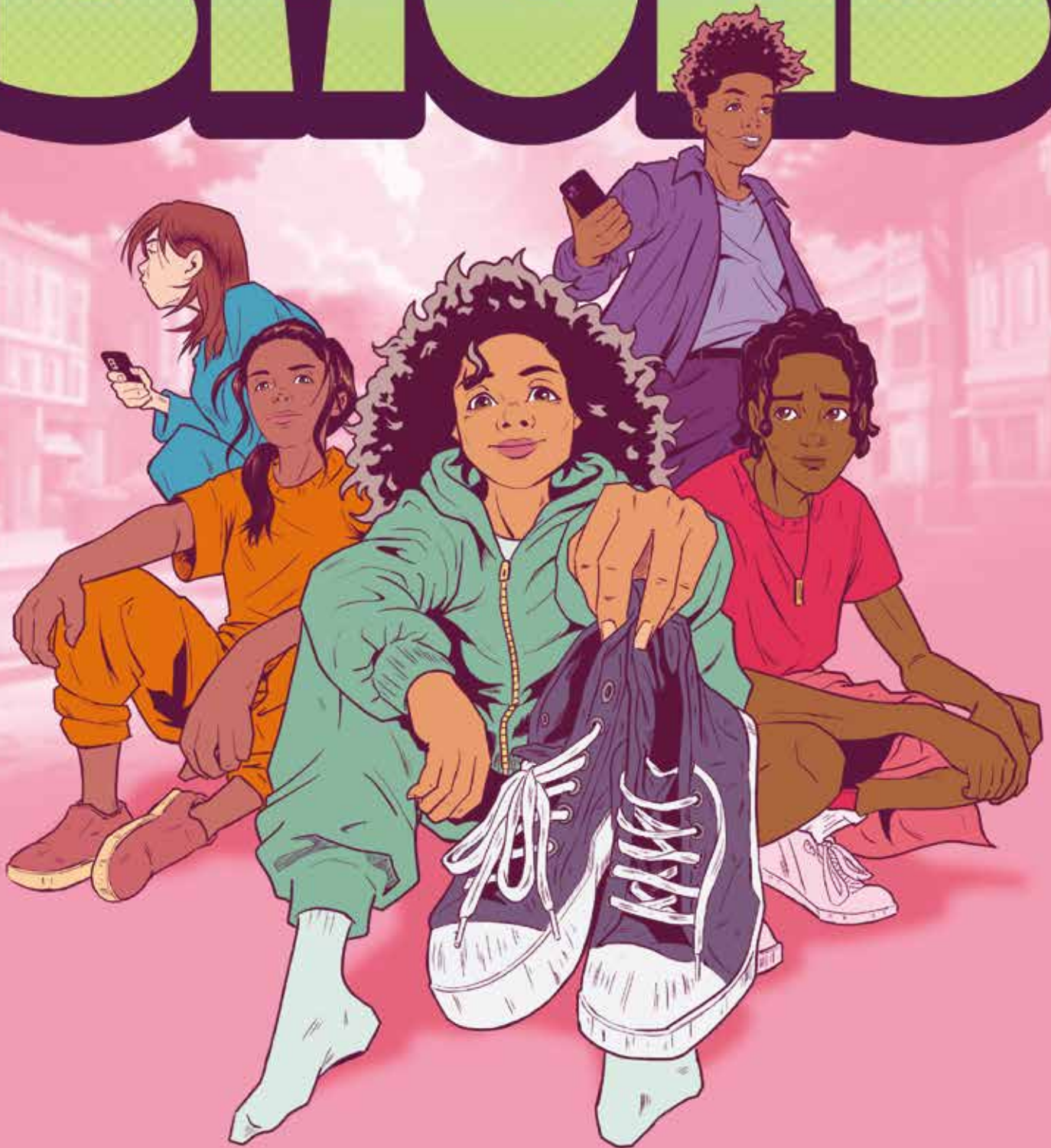


# STEP INTO OUR SHOES



REALITIES AND HEALTH INJUSTICES  
FOR CAMDEN ADOLESCENTS

BY CAMDEN YOUTH: TELL THEM

# STEP INTO OUR SHOES WITH CAMDEN YOUTH: TELL THEM

Camden decision makers and influencers – do you work with adolescents? Do you know about the challenges and inequalities facing adolescents in Camden? What can we do together to improve mental and physical health for young people in our borough?

## Who are Camden Youth: Tell Them?

*Camden Youth: Tell Them* are a new voice for young people in our borough. Aged 16 to 21 and working, living or going to school in Camden, they communicate young people's views and experiences to decision makers on the most important issues in Camden.

All of the young people in *Camden Youth: Tell Them* have been taking part in a communications and events training programme funded by the Council and delivered in partnership with creative agency Break Comms. Everyone in *Camden Youth: Tell Them* is paid the London Living Wage for their time in the programme.

The programme was established in response to the findings of the annual public health report, which highlights the importance of quality training and employment for short and long term health for Camden adolescents.

The young people in *Camden Youth: Tell Them* are:

**Ajani Downie**

**Idris Mohamud**

**Aya Algool**

**Kaylla Lafayette**

**Ebunoluwa Ruby Bano**

**Shaima Jannath**

**Farjana Khan**

**Sha'Mar Phillips**

**Frankline Souamounou**

**Zara Loyas**

## Camden's annual public health report 2023

Every year every council, including Camden, has to publish an annual public health report. An annual public health report is an assessment of health and wellbeing for local population groups, provides detailed data for council departments and partners, and is a baseline of population health that can be used to track progress.

This year Camden Council's annual public health report is on adolescent health.

Adolescents are aged 11 to 19. This is a critical time in young people's development, that comes with biological, social, psychological and behavioural changes that can have long term impacts on your health and wellbeing.

The report focuses on five key themes that particularly affect young people:

1. Physical activity, food and healthy weight
2. Long term conditions
3. Safety and violence
4. Education, employment and training
5. Mental health.

## Report findings

The report showed that young people in Camden and across the country have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the pandemic and the of the cost of living crisis, which has highlighted and deepened inequalities.

Adolescents' age impacts how they access health care systems. They don't always know how or where to get the health care they need, and are the second highest users of A&E after under 3s.

It also showed that a tailored approach is needed for adolescents' very specific needs and to reduce the health inequalities young people in Camden face, and included some recommendations for how the Council and its partners in Camden can work together to achieve this.

## A graphic interpretation

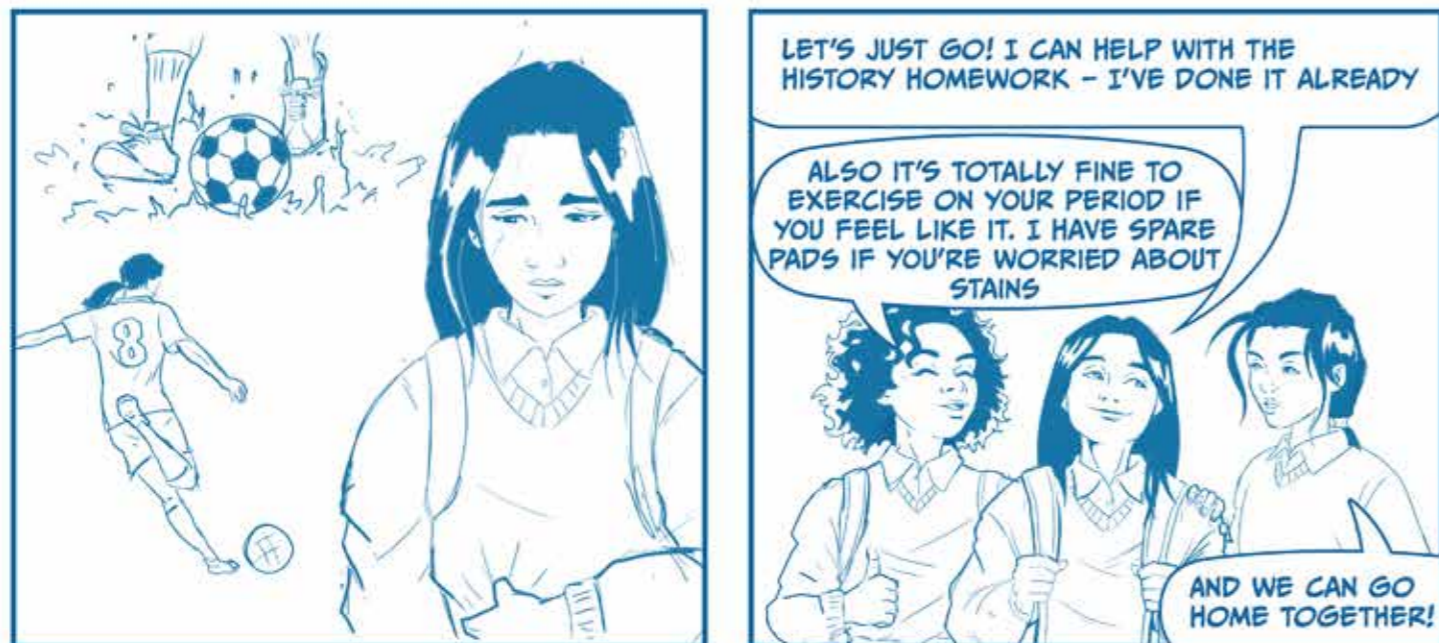
To help us and you – Camden decision makers, council staff, partners and Camden young people – understand the findings and themes of the annual public health report better, we've created this graphic novel *Step into Our Shoes*, where we explore the realities and what we see as health injustices for Camden adolescents.

In each chapter you'll find a snapshot of findings from the annual public health report and the story of a young Camden person.

They aren't real adolescents but they are based on the real data and statistics of the report, as well as our own experiences of being young people in Camden.

Our characters are Alex, Farjana, Abel, Ezekiel and Sasha – and we'd like you to meet them...

# ALEX



# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, FOOD AND HEALTHY WEIGHT

Adolescence is a time where young people start to have independence and make their own decisions on what food they eat and how physically active they are. Environment, friends, income, family, culture and the wider community affects what you eat and your activity levels, but healthy eating and physical activity become less common as young people get older and the time spent not moving increases.

This year's annual public health report found that:

- Having breakfast improves brain function and school performance but in 2020/21 29% of students in year 8 and 10 in Camden didn't have anything for breakfast.
- In 2020/21 37% of year 8 and 10 girls in Camden said that they hadn't completed 60 minutes of physical activity on any day in the last week compared to 28% of boys.
- The cost of living crisis has continued to impact the food security of young people and their families. This is likely to affect their behaviours around food and physical activity, but we don't know the full impact of this yet.
- In Camden, 38% of girls in Year 10 say that they have been picked on or bullied about their size or weight.
- For a range of supervised activities, competitions, a sports education programme for 16+ NEET young people, community outreach activities and targeted girls programmes, visit [camden.gov.uk/sports-children-young-people](https://camden.gov.uk/sports-children-young-people)



# FARJANA



# LONG TERM CONDITIONS

Long term conditions can develop and be diagnosed for the first time in adolescence, and this is the peak age for diagnosis of Type 1 diabetes and asthma. Genetics and the environment you live in can increase the risk of developing a long term condition. Access to good healthcare, healthy eating habits, exercise, and improving air quality can help to reduce the risk of long term conditions for young people.

This year's annual public health report found that:

- Young people with long term conditions are more likely than their peers to be admitted to hospital and experience poor mental health, including anxiety, social exclusion, bullying and lack of self-esteem.
- Long term conditions can increase adolescents' dependence on their family and carers, which may lead to feeling left out or behind their friends, at a time when independence is increasing for most young people.
- Young people with long term conditions want to 'have a say' about their treatment, but young people aged between 12-18 years report the lowest levels of satisfaction with GP services and have the shortest consultation times.
- Asthma is by far the most common long term condition amongst adolescents in Camden. In 2021 4.5% of adolescents in Camden had asthma. Young people with asthma living in the most deprived areas are more likely to be admitted to hospital for asthma than those living in the most affluent areas.
- Increasing the availability and access to youth-friendly services is one of the most important ways to improving young people's health and wellbeing.



# SAFETY AND VIOLENCE

Violence is driven by, and contributes to, inequality – this includes health inequalities. Serious violence affecting young people is a public health issue, and creating safety is the counterweight to this violence.

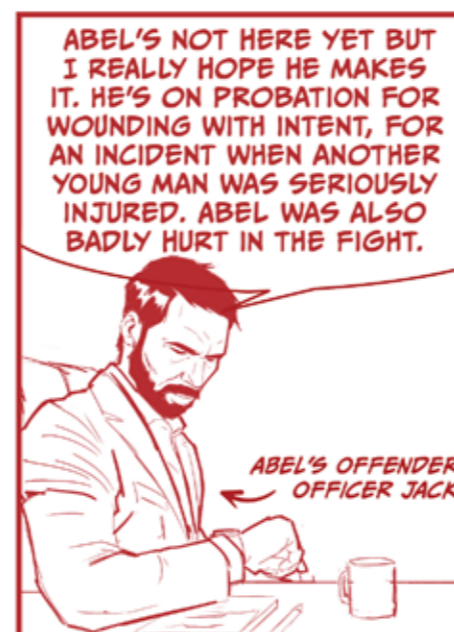
In Camden, we believe that by continuing to take a public health approach and focusing on root causes and prevention, we can break this cycle and empower young people to thrive.

This year's annual public health report found that:

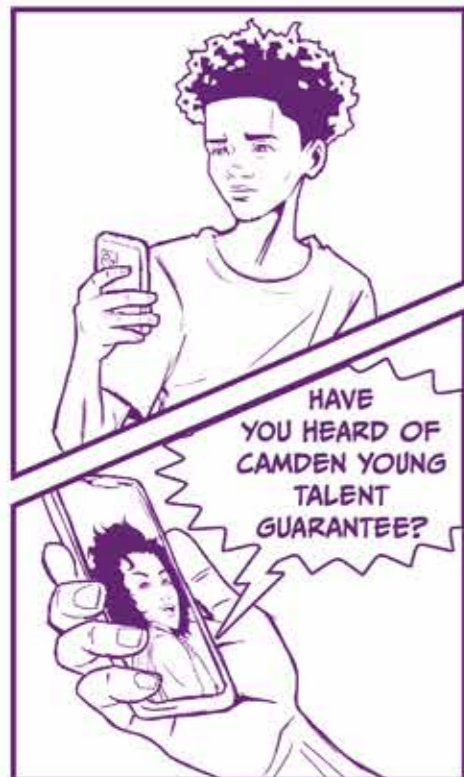
- The most vulnerable young people are at the greatest risk of youth violence. In a study of young people in Camden who received a caution or conviction and reoffended in the next 12 months, 77% had experienced signs of deprivation, 33% had been care experienced children and over half had experienced neglect. 44% had poor adolescent mental health.
- Not all young victims of youth violence are linked to gangs and most knife crime in Camden is not gang-related. However gang-related knife crime tends to be more violent and young Black and ethnic minority males are disproportionately affected.
- 59% of young people think that Camden is a safe place to live but there are differences in the perception of safety by age, gender and ethnicity – for example only half (52%) of Black young people feel safe in Camden, compared with 73% of White young people.
- Young people in Camden said that the main causes of violent crime in Camden are 'gangs', 76% 'drugs' 72% and a 'lack of youth services' 69%.
- Find out more about youth safety in Camden at [camdenrise.co.uk/stay-safe](https://camdenrise.co.uk/stay-safe)



# ABEL



# EZEKIEL



# EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Quality of education and training for young people has short and long-term impacts on employment opportunities, income, and job satisfaction. Good employment supports better physical and mental health.

This year's annual public health report found that:

- Fewer disadvantaged Camden pupils achieved a standard pass in English and Maths in 2022/23 (56.1%) compared to pupils with no disadvantage (79.9%).
- The number of secondary school pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Camden rose from 2,825 in 2018/19 to 4,191 in 2022/23, an increase of 48%.
- Among young people aged 16-19 eligible for free school meals, the proportion who achieved Level 3 qualifications in 2021/22 was higher in Camden (63.2%) than in London (57.8%) and England (39%). However this is significantly lower than Level 3 qualifications achieved across all Camden 19 year olds, which was 74.8%.
- Deprivation impacts school attendance and attainment. Students eligible for free school meals have the highest absence rates in Camden secondary schools.
- If you're looking for employment but not sure where to start, visit [camdenrise.co.uk/education](https://camdenrise.co.uk/education) for apprenticeships, local job opportunities, training and advice.



# SASHA



# MENTAL HEALTH

Adolescence is a formative time for short and long term mental health and wellbeing. It's a time of educational, social and psychological change, and for adolescents in 2023, all of these were severely disrupted by the pandemic.

This year's annual public health report found that:

- Young people with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), young carers, young people living in social housing, or young people who are in care are at increased risk of mental health conditions.
- It's estimated that 19% of 11-16-year-olds and 23% of 17-19-year-olds in Camden have a mental health disorder.
- Children and young people living in social housing are over twice as likely as those living in a house owned by parents or caregivers to have a mental health disorder. 52% of children in Camden live in social housing, more than the London and England averages.
- As a result of the pandemic 6,810 additional people aged under 25 in Camden are predicted to seek help from mental health services over the next 2-3 years.
- Visit [camdenrise.co.uk/emotional-wellbeing](https://camdenrise.co.uk/emotional-wellbeing) for mental health and wellbeing information and support for young people in Camden.



# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING ADOLESCENT HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The annual public health report makes recommendations in each chapter. These are recommendations for how the Council, the NHS and its partners across the borough can work together with young people to improve adolescent health and wellbeing, based on the findings of the report.

*Camden Youth: Tell Them* have chosen what we see as the most important recommendations to focus on. We look forward to working with the Council and other decision makers in our borough to help to make these important changes happen.

As well as the specific recommendations we've made for each of our chapters below, we want everyone working with young people in our borough to feel empowered to make a difference wherever they can for adolescent health in Camden.

Have you considered adolescent health in your role? Have you asked young people what they think? How do you know it's working for them? What can you do to improve adolescent health for young people like Alex, Farjana, Abel, Ezekiel and Sasha?

## Physical activity, food and healthy weight (Alex)

To make changes to ensure that all adolescent young people in Camden are given the opportunity and the support they need to take part in sports and physical activity – especially girls, Black boys and young people in the most deprived areas of the borough.

## Long term conditions (Farjana)

To raise awareness of early signs and symptoms of conditions for earlier diagnosis and treatment for everyone in Camden. To provide communications campaignst and information for young people and families who are more at risk from different conditions.

## Safety and violence (Abel)

To make addressing trauma in families' and children's lives a priority, to reduce offending and reoffending. Have a strong focus on early intervention and prevention of violent crime.

## Education, employment and training (Ezekiel)

To encourage more Camden businesses to provide young people with work experience across all employment sectors.

## Mental health (Sasha)

To make sure that every young person can get mental health support they need as quickly as possible, however they access it, and that no young person who needs mental health care in Camden has to tell their story more than once.

Read the Council's annual public health report 2023 on adolescent health which also details the wide range of services to support young people in Camden at [camden.gov.uk/adolescent-health-2023](https://camden.gov.uk/adolescent-health-2023)

