



**London Borough of Camden
Corporate Parenting Service
Annual Report**



2024-2025

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1. Introduction

Corporate parenting is the legal and moral responsibility of the local authority and its partners to provide the best possible care, protection, and opportunities for children in care and care leavers. Rooted in the Children Act 1989 and strengthened by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, this duty requires us to act with the same commitment, ambition, and care that any good parent would show.

This report provides an overview of Camden's Corporate Parenting Service and sets out our progress, strengths, and areas for development between December 2024 and November 2025. It summarises how we are meeting our responsibilities to children in care and care-experienced young people and outlines the activity delivered through our Corporate Parenting Strategy.

Camden is committed to being a consistent, trustworthy, and ambitious corporate parent for all children in our care, whatever their age, background, identity, or needs. Our refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy 2025–2028, approved by Cabinet in April 2025, sets out five priorities that guide everything we do:

1. Your sense of belonging and relationships
2. Your rights and aspirations
3. Your wellbeing
4. Your interests and life goals
5. Your home

Each priority is supported by clear promises that reflect what children and young people have told us matters most to them, being heard, being loved, feeling safe, being supported in education and employment, and having a stable home.

We recognise that care-experienced young people face additional barriers and are taking action to address inequality and structural disadvantage. In January 2024, Camden made care experience a locally protected characteristic, signalling our commitment to fighting discrimination and improving outcomes.

While our strategy applies to every child and young person we care for, we know that some groups face greater challenges, therefore we are focusing additional attention on four priority cohorts:

- Unaccompanied children
- Young people needing safe and supported transitions
- Young people with experience of the justice system or risk of exploitation
- Young parents

Our ambition is that no young person is left behind. This report outlines how we are delivering on that ambition, through strong corporate parenting, multi-agency partnership, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

2. Key Achievements 2024–2025

- **Outstanding Ofsted Judgement:** Camden retained an ‘Outstanding’ rating in the March 2025 ILACS inspection, with both children in care and care leavers judged outstanding.
- **New Corporate Parenting Strategy:** Launched in April 2025, setting out five clear priorities and an implementation plan co-produced with young people.
- **Better Placement Stability:** Introduction of Placement Stability Meetings reduced the proportion of children experiencing three or more moves from 17.2% to 13.1%.
- **Fostering Growth:** Increased in-house fostering capacity by 15 carers.
- **Kinship Care:** 222 children supported in family-based arrangements, including 192 under SGOs.
- **Specialist Foster Carer Scheme:** Recruitment to begin early 2026 to support children with complex needs.
- **Care-experienced Hub:** Hub will open in 2026 as for 18–25-year-olds.
- **Camden Youth Justice Service:** Rated Outstanding by HMIP; praised for education, training, and employment focus and innovative prevention work.
- **Health Outcomes Improved:** Immunisation uptake rose to 80% (from 64.5%), dental checks reached 92%, and 97.5% statutory health assessments were completed in the reporting year.
- **Education:** Three young people achieved Level 3 BTEC (A Level equivalent), 41 out of 47 completed Level 1 vocational/functional skills and CLA achieved strong outcomes.
- **SEND Support:** 43.5% of CLA identified with SEND/EHCP.
- **Youth Participation and Leadership:** Relaunched Children In Care Council; with two care-experienced young people as Co-Chairs.
- **Employment and Training Success:** 61 care-experienced young people engaged in the “Full Potential” programme; 14 job outcomes and 23 in training.
- **Capital Investment:** New homes to expand local placement capacity.

3. Governance and Accountability

Corporate Parenting is a whole-council responsibility, underpinned by statutory duties in the Children Act 1989 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. Camden’s Corporate Parenting Board, chaired by the Lead Member for Children’s Services, provides strategic oversight and meets quarterly. Membership includes elected members, senior officers, partner agencies, and care-experienced young people.

The Board:

- Monitors delivery of the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Implementation Plan.
- Reviews performance data and risks.
- Ensures young people’s voices shape decisions.

Progress is reported to Cabinet and the Children's Scrutiny Committee, ensuring transparency and accountability. Partner agencies contribute through multi-agency governance arrangements, and risks are regularly reviewed to ensure the basics are done consistently to drive improvement.

4. Service Activity

Inspection of the Local Area Children's Services (ILACS)

"The borough is ... delivering outstanding services to care-experienced young people. As a result, many of Camden's children and care-experienced young people are making exceptional progress".

In March 2025 Ofsted carried out a full inspection of our children's services; this was the first inspection in Camden following changes to the inspection framework which included the introduction of a standalone judgement for 'the experiences and progress of care leavers where previously this had been included in one broader judgement area covering both children in care and care leavers.

The inspection report published in April 2025, confirmed that the overall effectiveness of children's services in Camden continues to be 'outstanding' following our last full inspection in 2022, with the 'experiences and progress of children in care' and 'experiences and progress of care leavers' both judged to be outstanding. Inspectors found that children and young people in Camden continue to receive excellent support, underpinned by a stable, happy and well supported workforce who are fierce advocates for Camden children. Inspectors highlighted Camden's innovation and ambition and our approach as community parents for all Camden children.

"Children in Camden's care receive outstanding support, and as a result are making good progress. Social workers undertake creative, purposeful and fun direct work with children."

Inspectors observed that children come into care in a timely way either when it is not safe for them to remain at home, or when they present as unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. They noted that our children benefit from a good range of specialist support and close working with partnership agencies; this is particularly strong for our unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and in our response to the emotional and mental health needs of our children looked after. The inspection found that our fostering service has been highly successful in increasing fostering households, with foster carers offering an impressive range of support and training. They also noted our close work with Adopt London North in achieving successful adoptions and providing adoption support. Inspectors did find that for some children our drive to secure permanence at the earliest stage could be more robust – with clearer permanence options and earlier recognition. They also noted that we could do more to strengthen our oversight and scrutiny of practice where children on care orders are placed with their parents. We are addressing these findings through our post-inspection action plan and service activity plans.

“The progress and experiences of care leavers are outstanding. Practice by social workers and personal advisers (PAs) is consistently strong and often exceptional. This is resulting in sustained improvement in care-experienced young people’s lives.”

Inspectors found that care-experienced young people feel ‘safe, cared for and valued’ and that impressive PA support ensures care-experienced young people are not disadvantaged through their care status. They noted a particularly strong mental health offer and impressive accommodation pathway that ensures that care-experienced young people receive the right level of support. Inspectors observed that our care-experienced young people are achieving well educationally and that our local offer aspirational and thoughtful, reflecting our commitment to helping care-experienced young people become thriving adults.

Launch of our Refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy

In Camden, we are deeply committed to ensuring that Camden’s children in care and care-experienced young people are supported, valued, and given every opportunity to thrive. We are committed to working together with young people to achieve meaningful change; however, this responsibility does not lie solely with the council. Corporate parenting is everyone’s responsibility: schools, health practitioners, employers, and our local businesses and community all play a part in helping care-experienced young people thrive.

To that end, in April 2025 we launched our refreshed Corporate Parenting Strategy which outlines our plans for the next three years, from 2025-2028. It focuses on the areas we need to improve and builds on our strengths to ensure that every child and young person in our care feels safe, supported, and proud of who they are. It sets out how we will communicate with care-experienced young people about our plans to provide them with a stable and loving home, as well as the steps we will take to enhance their education, training, and life opportunities.

Development of the strategy was led by a cross-council working group, chaired by the Executive Director of Children and Learning. This time limited group brought together key senior leaders from across the council to lead five workstreams, which aligned with our corporate parenting priorities. Sitting behind the strategy is a comprehensive implementation plan which defines how we will address the challenges identified and deliver the vision our strategy sets out. The implementation plan brings together a combination of discrete projects and ‘business as usual’ practice underpinned by a series of indicative success measures to help us gauge if our work is delivering meaningful impact and outcomes for our children and young people.

Since the strategy was published we have commenced delivery against the implementation plan and have been working to refine reporting on delivery of the strategy to Corporate Parenting Board and other invested groups, ensuring that we bring together timely updates which incorporate performance data and specific action updates to ensure there is sufficient oversight of delivery against our priorities.

National Reform

In November 2024, the Government published the policy paper *Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive*, outlining plans for comprehensive reform of children's social care in the UK and a commitment to keeping families together while ensuring children are safe. The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill includes provisions to support the reforms once it becomes law. The paper sets out four main principles:

- Families are supported, children are kept safe, and barriers to opportunity for children in care and care leavers are removed.
- Family networks are empowered to offer secure, loving homes through kinship arrangements.
- Placements are secure, high-quality, and designed with children's interests in mind.
- Key enablers, including leadership, multi-agency working, and workforce development, receive investment.

Camden is progressing rapidly to implement these national reforms, strengthening our Corporate Parenting responsibilities and creating a proactive, collaborative system that reduces risk, supports families, and ensures children in care receive consistent, high-quality support. During the early part of 2025, Camden completed a five-month discovery phase to understand current service delivery, strengths, areas for improvement, and future demand. Building on this work, we are now prototyping changes in the East of the borough, focusing on:

- Strengthening connections across the system through multidisciplinary and multi-agency working.
- Tackling disproportionate outcomes for global majority families by reshaping our approach to practice.
- Enabling more children to remain safely at home or with extended families through family-led decision-making and an enhanced kinship offer.

Edge of Care Innovation – Connecting Families

As part of Camden's implementation of national children's social care reforms outlined in "*Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive*", the Connecting Families team launched in January 2025 following initial set-up and training in late 2024. This multi-agency prototype, based within the Children in Need (CIN) service, reflects the reform principle of empowering family networks and reducing the need for care through intensive, relationship-based support.

The team's purpose is clear:

- Reduce the number of children entering care by addressing family breakdown early.

- Prevent costly, unsustainable placements through proactive intervention.
- Strengthen Camden's commitment to keeping families together where safe to do so, giving children the best start in life.

Comprising two social workers, two youth workers, a team manager, and a newly recruited family worker from Early Help, the team delivers wraparound, in-home support for up to 14 weeks, co-allocated with referring teams. Referrals are made where there is risk of family breakdown leading to Section 20 accommodation, risk of entry into care before age 18, or additional support needed for reunification following a period in care.

Since January 2025, the team has worked with 34 young people aged 11–17, keeping 27 at home and reunifying two young people after periods of accommodation. Only one young person entered care, and three remained in care despite intervention. In 13 additional cases, the team provided advice and guidance to social work teams where direct work could not proceed. The team also addresses disproportionality, with around two-thirds of referrals from Black and Mixed ethnic groups, predominantly boys, aligning with Camden's Race Equality and Justice Plan.

The Connecting Families team will continue as part of Camden's edge-of-care strategy, contributing to national reform goals by reducing unnecessary care admissions, supporting reunification, and embedding family-led decision-making.

Corporate Parenting Board

Over the past year Camden's Corporate Parenting Board has continued its annual programme of work monitoring and reviewing the services provided to Camden's children in care and care-experienced young people and providing a hub for collaboration and accountability.

In January 2025 the Board considered the annual report of the 'Young Inspectors' Programme: our programme involves young people with lived experience of services, who are trained and supported to inspect our work and make recommendations aimed at service improvement. This year's report focused on the Virtual School for Children Looked After and Previously Looked After and the experiences of children and young people and the support they receive from the Virtual School.

The Young Inspectors carried out research into the legislative background of the Virtual School as well as holding focus group discussions with young people and conducting interviews with Virtual School staff.

The Young Inspectors found that the Virtual School offers children and young people an excellent service and made a number of recommendations focused on building these foundations. Recommendations included supporting young people's engagement in developing their education plans and attendance at meetings through use of accessible language and co-designing resources with young people and Personal Advisors about higher education options and choices.

Across the spring and summer, we undertook a review of the Board's Terms of Reference and ways of working to ensure alignment with the newly published Corporate Parenting Strategy and agreed priorities, as well as in consideration of recommendations made by the National Implementation Adviser for Care Leavers which focused on making the board more participatory and increasing its reach and impact.

The Board held a workshop in June 2025 where board members reimagined the board's purpose and responsibilities, as well as membership and mechanisms for hearing from our children looked after and care-experienced young people.

We have refreshed the membership of the Board to identify affiliated members to sit alongside our permanent Board members; allowing us to bring in a broader range of partners who are committed to delivering on our Promises including our youth justice and welfare rights services as well as local employers, community leaders and STEAM partners.

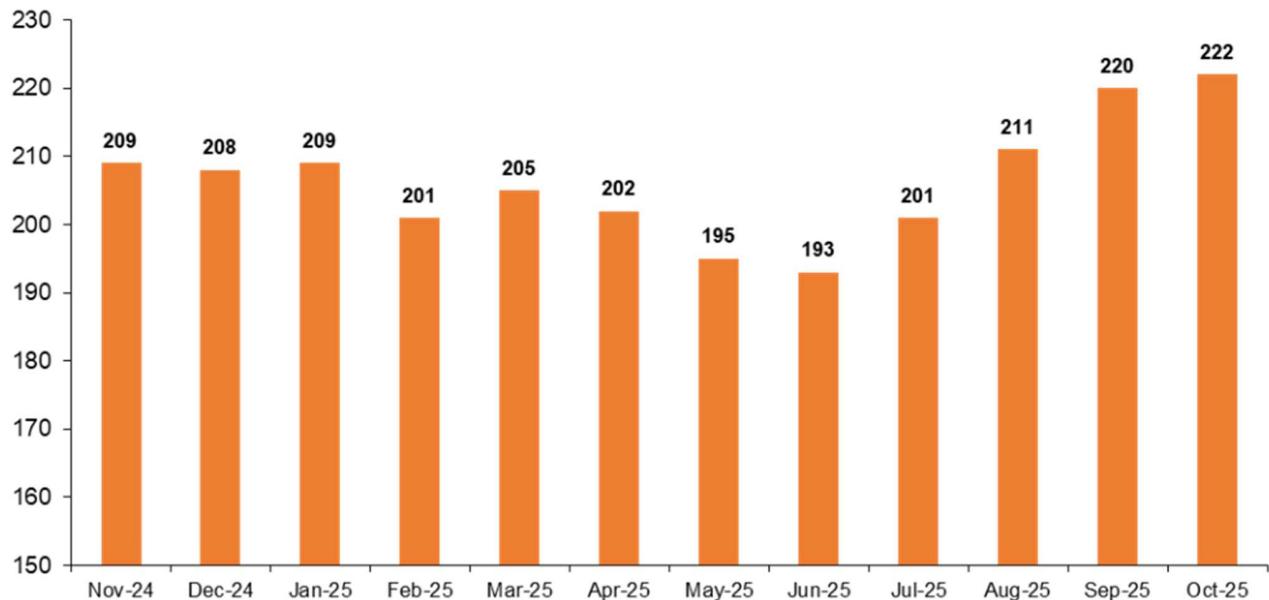
We have also recruited two care-experienced young people to Co-Chair the Children In Care Council who will sit as permanent Members of the Corporate Parenting Board and help us ensure that the Board continues to be an inclusive space where the voices of our children looked after and care-experienced young people are heard.

5. Profile of Camden's Looked After Children

Who are Camden's Children Looked After (CLA)

Over the last 12 months, Camden's number of children in care has grown from 209 at the end of November 2024 to 222 at the end of October 2025. There was a decrease during May and June 2025 (when 193 children were in our care), before increasing between July and October 2025. 222 children equate to 62.9 children looked after per 10,000 children under 18 living in Camden. This is an increase of 4.8 since March 2025 (58.1) but continues to be below the national rate although it is now in line with statistical neighbour average rate.

Figure 1 CLA numbers (October 2024 – October 2025)



Who is coming into care, and what is their legal status

There has been a decrease in unaccompanied children entering our care, with 24 young people becoming looked after in the last 12 months (compared to 30 in the 12 months previous to this period). In October 2025 we have 37 unaccompanied children in our care. All our unaccompanied children are aged 14 to 17, and 25 have been in our care for more than 6 months. By country of origin; one from Afghanistan, one from Egypt, three from Eritrea, one from Ethiopia, one from Gambia, five from Guinea, two from Iran, two from Iraq, two from Morocco, one from Senegal, one from Somalia, thirteen from Sudan, one from Syria, two from Vietnam and one from Yemen. 75.7% are from African countries and 24.3% from Asian countries.

Most children come into care through care proceedings. There are 81 children subject to care orders, meaning that care proceedings have been concluded for them, and the family court has decided that the local authority should hold parental responsibility. There are 61 children subject to interim care orders, which means there needs to be more clarity about their care arrangements. There are 13 children on placement orders, meaning care proceedings have concluded for them with an adoption plan. 65 children are subject to section 20 of the Children Act 1989, meaning they have come into care voluntarily; 44 of these children are aged 16 and 17. There is one child remand to the local authority, and one child is looked after under an Emergency Protection Order.

Table 1: Legal status of Looked After children (31.10.2025)

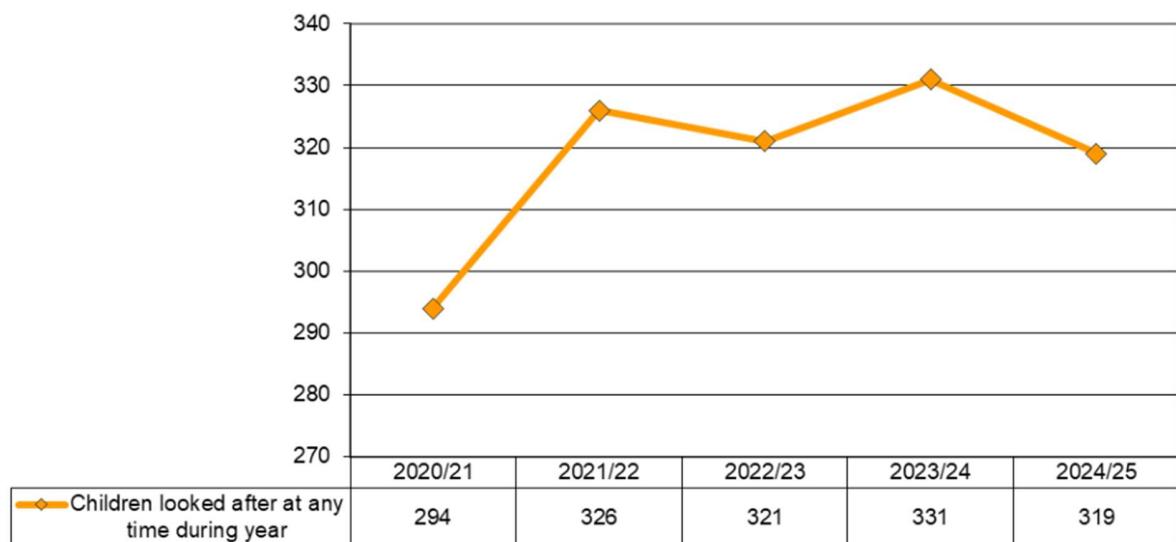
	Child in need teams	Children looked after teams	Children and Young People with Disability Service
Interim Care Order (section 38)	5	53	3
Full Care Order (section 31)	0	71	10
On remand	0	1	0
Placement Order (section 21)	0	12	1
Emergency Protection Order	1	0	0
Accommodated (section 20)	13	52	0

Table 2: Length of time in care

The table below shows that the length of time children spend in care has grown.

Time in care	Number of children	% of children
2+ Years	87	39.2%
19 - 23 months	31	14.0%
13 -18 months	18	8.1%
7-12 months	32	14.4%
0 - 6 months	54	24.3%

Figure 2: Number of Children Looked After – 2020-2025



Age, Gender and Ethnicity of our children looked after

There is an overrepresentation of Black and Global Majority children in our care. Black or Black British children continue to be the most highly represented group in our care. The overrepresentation of global majority children is visible from infancy (less than a year old), with mixed-race children being more likely to be in our care and Black or Black British children emerging as overrepresented from the age of two. We continue to work with the Regional Adoption Agency, who have a Black Adopters Program, to try and ensure that if permanency planning for these children means they cannot return to the care of their parents, we try and identify Black Adopters for them. To support their time in care, we continue to provide Replenish Boxes to placements to support conversations about race, ethnicity and heritage to enable carers to support the needs of our children. Most of our foster carers are also White British. As such, we have continued to facilitate appropriate training to develop their cultural competency in caring for children of other races. Social workers are also encouraged to have conversations on diversity within team and service meetings, and we continue to try to recruit a diverse workforce.

Table 3: Children in care banded ethnicity (5-year trend)

	31.03.2022	31.03.2023	31.03.2024	31.03.2025	31.10.2025
Asian	8.9%	11.7%	13.1%	10.7%	9.5%
Black	35.6%	38.1%	43.5%	44.9%	41.0%
Mixed	13.6%	12.7%	12.7%	16.6%	18.0%
Other	12.6%	10.2%	6.5%	7.8%	8.6%
White	29.3%	27.4%	22.4%	20.0%	23.0%

6. Profile of Care-Experienced Young People

Who are Camden's care-experienced young people?

There are 507 relevant and formerly relevant Care-experienced Young People (CEYP) in Camden aged 16-25. The Children and Social Work Act 2017 extend local authority duties for care for experienced young people until their 25th birthday, regardless of their employment, education, or training status. Young people may use our services between the ages of 21-25 for variable lengths. When they cease to have a need, in discussions with them, they may have their cases closed and return when they need a service. This enables them to manage their lives effectively without creating dependency on services. Where young people have established relationships with staff, they maintain periodic telephone informal contact. We write annually to CEYP at their last known address to remind them that we are available, and they may access a service. For those aged 18-20, we mainly keep their cases open as they are yet to be settled into their permanent accommodation and are more likely to require regular help and support. We don't lose

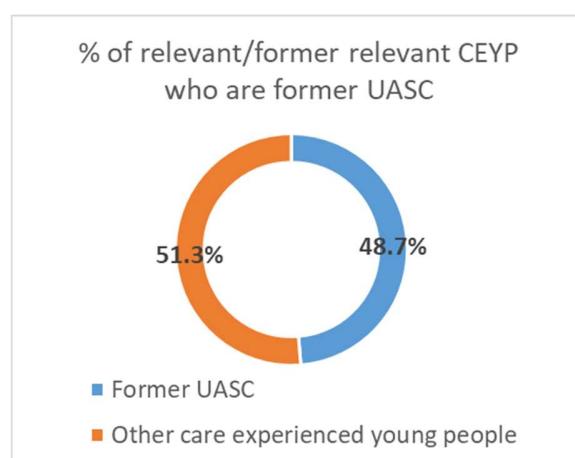
CEYP cases when they receive a custodial sentence. We continue to work with them to plan for release and support them while in custody.

Of the 507 relevant and former relevant CEYP, 295 young people are currently accessing the service. We aim to offer a service to all CEYP; however, due to their lived experience of working with services, some young people may choose whether or not to actively engage. As these young people are adults, cases are only kept open where there are safeguarding concerns or concerns about mental capacity. For the remaining relevant young people who are supported through the Care-experienced service, we continue to maintain regular contact and oversight, even where they are not actively accessing the service. For those without an allocated Personal Advisor, we maintain an annual contact list overseen by a team manager. This includes a phone call as a first step to check wellbeing, accommodation, and education or employment status, followed up by email or letter and provide a copy of the Local Offer to ensure young people are aware of and can access available support.

Care-experienced by their legal status – including Former Unaccompanied Children

Care-experienced young people receive services based on their status. There are two qualifying statuses post the age of 18. Those in the local authority care for 13+ weeks before their 18th birthday are relevant as young people eligible for a pathway plan. Those who have been in care for less than 13 weeks are defined as qualifying or exit care because of a special guardianship order (SGO) also qualifying young people. The distinction is that relevant or former relevant (post 18) are eligible for personal advisor support and a pathway plan that defines the support available until their 25th birthday. Qualifying young people receive a service until it is determined that their needs are met. They are not subject to the same minimum biannual review of their plan of support.

Figure 4: % of care-experienced former Unaccompanied Children



Age, Gender and Ethnicity of our care-experienced population:

67 young people aged 16 and 17 will be eligible for service as care-experienced within the next two years. At the time of writing, 122 CEYP were aged 24 and 25, of this cohort; one young person aged 25 is still receiving a service. 166 CEYP were aged between 18 and 20, and 213 were aged between 21 and 23.

It is noted that there are some young people who identify with a different gender or as non-binary. Due to possible identification, these numbers have been suppressed for the purposes of the report. Young people are provided with support and correctly identified by their sex on Mosaic (Database system). There are 574 CEYP aged 16-25 (eligible, relevant and formerly relevant statuses). Males are overrepresented in this cohort, making up 74.9%.

Table 5: Age and Gender assigned at birth

Age	Total CEYP	Female	Male
Sixteen	29	8	21
Seventeen	44	11	33
Eighteen	56	17	39
Nineteen	50	8	42
Twenty	60	15	45
Twenty-one	75	11	64
Twenty-two	67	17	50
Twenty-three	71	19	52
Twenty-four	57	17	40
Twenty-five	65	21	44
Total	574	144	430

Table 6: Care-experienced banded ethnicity (31.10.2025)

	% of care-experienced young people 31.10.2025
Asian	10.3%
Black	40.4%
Mixed	9.6%

Other	17.4%
White	22.3%

Table 7: Care-experienced nationalities (31.10.2025)

Nationality	Number of care-experienced young people 31.10.2025	% of care-experienced young people 31.10.2025
Afghan	35	6.1%
Albanian	18	3.1%
Algerian	6	1.0%
American	1	0.2%
Angolan	2	0.3%
Bangladeshi	1	0.2%
British	234	40.8%
Chinese	3	0.5%
Colombian	1	0.2%
Congolese	2	0.3%
Egyptian	2	0.3%
Eritrean	59	10.3%
Ethiopian	21	3.7%
Filipino	1	0.2%
German	1	0.2%
Guinean	4	0.7%
Iranian	20	3.5%
Iraqi	16	2.8%
Irish	4	0.7%
Italian	1	0.2%
Ivorian	1	0.2%
Kuwaiti	2	0.3%

Latvian	1	0.2%
Malian	1	0.2%
Moroccan	15	2.6%
Nigerian	1	0.2%
Other	7	1.2%
Pakistani	1	0.2%
Polish	1	0.2%
Portuguese	3	0.5%
Sierra Leonean	1	0.2%
Somali	5	0.9%
Spanish	2	0.3%
Sudanese	64	11.1%
Syrian	4	0.7%
Turkish	1	0.2%
Vietnamese	11	1.9%
Not recorded	21	3.7%

7. Outcomes for Children Looked After & Care-experienced Young People

Priority 1: Your sense of belonging and relationships

"We promise to celebrate you for who you are and help you feel like you belong to your local community. We will support you in developing long-lasting, supportive relationships with people who are important to you."

This promise focuses on our aspiration to increase participation and co-production with young people and create a physical hub where they can meet; Camden's children told us that relationships are essential to them.

Children In Care Council

This year we re-launched the Children In Care Council with a strong focus on community building through fun, youth-led activities. We have organised trips to escape rooms, cinemas and theme parks, as well as running our own Easter scavenger hunts, summer sports day and a Christmas party. All of this is helping us deliver this by building connection, strengthening relationships and creating a real sense of belonging. We have increased the number of children and young people engaging in participation by offering reward vouchers for attending council meetings, which has helped encourage consistent involvement. Looking ahead to 2026, the goal is to build on this momentum and support the council to share young people's views on their experiences of being in care, and how those experiences can be improved.

Youth Leadership

Alongside this, Camden strengthened youth leadership by recruiting two care-experienced young people into Council Co-Chair roles, responding to the national challenge to embed care-experienced voices in governance. Both young people joined the FGC and Participation Service in November and now sit as standing members of the Corporate Parenting Board, chairing and running the In-Care Council. This marks a significant shift towards young people leading and shaping corporate parenting arrangements.

Youth involvement also extended to the Rights in Action project, where care-experienced young people co-designed how Camden embeds a rights-based approach across Children & Learning. Together, they developed the 'Yungy' model, based on Laura Lundy's participation framework. This will be rolled out in 2026 and will underpin how Camden promotes children's rights to participate and influence decisions.

Care-experienced Service – Events 2025

Welcome Event for young people aged 16-17 October 2025

The Care-experienced Service hosted its first annual Welcome Event to support 16–17-year-olds in care (CLA) who are currently transitioning into the Care-experienced Service. This initiative is designed to give young people direct access to professionals who can support their journey into adulthood.

The event brought together Personal Advisors (PAs), social workers, mental health services, DWP representatives, Drive Forward, housing colleagues, FWD, drugs and alcohol service and other professionals. Young people were provided with face-to-face access to their corporate parents, Director of Children Service, Director of Relational Practice, and Head of Corporate Parenting, who play a vital role in supporting their transition.

The aim of the event was to help young people understand their entitlements and available resources through the Local Offer. Feature a stall hosted by 18+ young people, sharing real-life experiences and advice from those who have already made the transition to the care-experienced service and into their own accommodation. While attendance could have been higher, the young people who did attend engaged meaningfully in activities and conversations with staff. Their participation highlighted the importance of creating opportunities for direct interaction with professionals and corporate parents.

A significant amount of information was shared, with resources provided for young people to take home and reflect on. This ensured that the event's impact extended beyond the day itself, supporting continued awareness and access to guidance on education, employment, housing, and independence.

Iftar Gathering for Care-experienced Young People March 2025

Ramadan is the holiest month in Islam, marked by fasting, prayer, reflection, and community. To honour this special time, the care experience service hosted an iftar gathering where care-experienced young people came together to break their fast with the open prayer followed by a buffet of food and drinks.

Attendees were greeted in a supportive, inclusive environment where they could connect with peers, staff and their Corporate Parents. Everyone broke fast together at sunset, enjoying a variety of traditional dishes and refreshments that highlighted the cultural richness of Ramadan. The event fostered a sense of belonging, offering young people the chance to build friendships and strengthen networks.

Short talks, call to prayer from one of our young people and discussions provided insight into the meaning of Ramadan, encouraging mutual understanding and respect across different backgrounds and religion. The evening emphasised the importance of valuing experienced voices, ensuring that young people felt seen, heard, and celebrated. The Iftar event was well attended, with a good number of care-experienced young people taking part. Some already knew each other and enjoyed reconnecting, while others met

for the very first time, building new friendships in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Care-experienced Hub

The development of the Care-experienced Hub is fundamentally about relationships and belonging. The hub has been created with full participation from our care-experienced young people. It aims to be a social, welcoming, accessible 'home away from home' for 18–25-year-olds, offering spaces for cooking, study, advice, creativity and connection. We have completed the feasibility study, concept design and pre-planning application, and the estimated completion date is November 2026. This responds directly to what Camden's children told us: relationships and feeling connected really matter to them.

Lifelong Links

In 2025, Camden extended the Lifelong Links (LLL) service to include care leavers aged 18–25. Lifelong Links is embedded within the routine practice of the Care-experienced Service, with Personal Advisors proactively discussing the offer during statutory visits and through pathway planning. These conversations support young people to identify and strengthen meaningful relationships well before they leave care at 21 or 25, recognising that some may have lost contact with significant adults or family members during their time in care.

Nine referrals were received for young adults during the year, with eight cases starting and one concluding successfully after a care leaver reconnected with a significant person from their past. Care leavers frequently sought to rebuild relationships with trusted adults, including former social workers, describing these reconnections as providing a vital "safety blanket" during what can be an isolating period after leaving care. Staff consistently report that Lifelong Links helps reduce loneliness, build confidence, and support the development of lasting, supportive relationships. Celebrations continued to be a key milestone, with one case closing following a positive celebration and another scheduled for the new year. One case remains on hold pending immigration clearance, after which reconnection with siblings in Africa will begin.

Referrals for children and young people under 18 remained strong, with twelve referrals received during the year and three cases closing successfully following celebrations. Reconnection outcomes demonstrate the depth of impact of Lifelong Links, including the reunification of a father and son after years of no contact, leading to regular visits and renewed family bonds. Life story work, including genograms and circles, has supported young people to explore their heritage, take ownership of reconnections, and plan future celebrations. Adult relatives have also described relief and joy at being reconnected with children they feared they had lost, highlighting the service's role in rebuilding family relationships and strengthening long-term support networks.

Lifelong Links Case Study

A gravely ill grandfather was reunited with two of his four grandchildren following many years of separation. His expressed wish was to re-establish contact with all four

grandchildren. A carefully planned Lifelong Links celebration enabled meaningful reconnection, including shared time together and the creation of family memories. Work has now commenced to explore safe and appropriate reconnection with the remaining two grandchildren, with a clear focus on safeguarding, emotional wellbeing, and supporting the children's resilience. While this process will be gradual, the case demonstrates the long-term, restorative impact of Lifelong Links in rebuilding family relationships.

Priority 2: Your rights and aspirations

"We promise to ensure that everyone supporting you is care-conscious and act as your corporate parent. We will advocate for your rights and aspirations, ensure your voice is heard and protect you from facing disadvantage from wider services and the community."

This promise focuses on our pledge to be ambitious corporate parents who make being care-experienced visible and work towards reducing systemic barriers that Camden's Children may face in various areas.

Young Inspectors

The Young Inspectors Programme has been running in Camden since 2007, empowering young people with lived experience of services to inspect how these services are delivered and make recommendations for improvement. Each year, Young Inspectors carry out research to explore the views of children, young people, parents, carers, and professionals about Camden's services and partner agencies. This approach centres on listening to lived experience and hearing directly from those who use and deliver support to understand what is working well and where improvements are needed.

This year's team included seven Young Inspectors aged 16 to 22, recruited with a focus on diversity and inclusion, ensuring representation from Camden's Youth Mission Priority Cohorts. The group brought a range of perspectives, including care experience, special educational needs, and lived experience of siblings with SEN. Their unique insights shaped the questions they asked and the themes they explored, resulting in recommendations for services across Camden, direct from those who use them.

The Young Inspectors report will be presented alongside the wider strategy report at the Scrutiny Committee on 13 January, ensuring that lived-experience insights sit directly alongside service data and analysis. Earlier versions of this work were shared with the Children's Partnership Board in September and the SEN Inclusion Board in December, helping to shape cross-borough priorities.

Youth Justice and Care-Experienced Young People

Camden's Youth Justice Service (YJS) achieved an Outstanding rating from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) in May 2025, the first nationally under the new inspection framework. The inspection praised Camden's culture of care, strong partnership working, and innovative approaches to supporting children and victims. For children looked after and care leavers, this includes a clear focus on education, training, and employment

(ETE), with paid work experience placements and vocational pathways supporting positive futures.

Between December 2024 and November 2025, 43 children received criminal justice outcomes for 114 offences, with 12 children looked after (28%) represented in the cohort. Some of these children may be in the care of the local authority due to their offending behaviour. Camden sustains low first-time entrant rates and low custody use compared to London averages, despite a slight increase in custodial sentences this year.

Interventions such as trauma-informed practice, relational approaches, and targeted prevention programmes, including Turnaround and the Deferred Exclusion Programme (DEP) are critical for care-experienced young people, helping maintain education placements and support positive life trajectories. Camden is also embedding the Race Equality and Justice Plan to tackle systemic disproportionality.

Priority 3: Your wellbeing

“We promise to support you in adopting a happy and healthy lifestyle and to help you navigate how you feel and life’s ups and downs, ensuring your health and emotional wellbeing needs are met.”

Health & Wellbeing

This promise captures our work to support Camden’s Children to be happy and healthy children and adults with a desire to reduce the cliff edges of services experienced when children and young people transition.

This year we strengthened our CLA health offer through close partnership working with CNWL, the NCL Integrated Care Board, Public Health and People Services, supported by strong governance through commissioner-provider meetings, the Safeguarding Partnership and the Corporate Parenting Board. Our focus remained on prevention, improved access and ensuring high-quality, timely health assessments.

Health outcomes continued to rise. Immunisation uptake for children looked after more than a year increased to 80% (from 64.5%), with MMR coverage almost universal at 99% (one dose) and 97% (two doses). Dental health improved further, with 92% up to date with annual checks. Statutory health assessments remained strong: 97.5% of review assessments were completed and 100% of children had an up-to-date health plan. For new entrants, 96.5% were offered IHAs on time, although 69% were completed within the timeframe due to cancellations, non-attendance and consent delays. Outreach IHAs and interim plans helped ensure needs were still identified.

Emotional wellbeing remained a priority with 100% of SDQs returned, and average scores remaining stable. The CLA CAMHS team continued to provide specialist support, including targeted services for unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee young people. Our Health Improvement Practitioner and nurses delivered sessions on healthy lifestyles, sexual health and substance misuse, with 14.5% of older children identified with substance concerns and all offered support through FWD.

We strengthened transition support and continued to reduce “cliff edges” at 18. Care-experienced young people now benefit from free prescriptions up to 24, free eye tests and discounted spectacles, and protected characteristic status supporting access to housing, grants and leisure. All care leavers receive a personalised health summary and follow-up call, with additional mental health support through psychology posts at The Hive.

Young people’s feedback drove improvements, including wider access to sport, leisure and cultural activities. A new Health & Wellbeing microsite and multilingual WhatsApp signposting improved access to information. For CYPSSAR-U, we maintained an integrated pathway for mental health, infectious disease and screening, with multivitamins and catch-up immunisations offered at IHA.

Service demand increased significantly, with 21 out-of-borough assessment requests (a 320% rise in two years), affecting nurse capacity and contributing to early-year delays. We mitigated this through strengthened monitoring, outreach and prioritisation, supported by our monthly multi-agency health panel.

In 2025/26 we will focus on improving IHA attendance and consent processes, reviewing workforce capacity, co-producing a more accessible RHA format, enhancing foster carer health training and standardising data across NCL. We will also sustain immunisation gains, particularly HPV and school-leaver boosters, improving engagement with harder-to-reach adolescents and expand dental access through the Healthy Smiles pathway.

Virtual School

Camden has a rich and diverse support offer to its children in care and care leavers. The Head of Virtual School is a statutory role introduced in 2014 to ensure that the education of children in care is prioritised by the council, its partners and schools. In Camden the Virtual School comprises senior teachers, re-integration and inclusion workers and an education navigator (who focuses on pathways to university). Children from age 2 until the end of the statutory school age are well supported by a Personal Education Plan with SMART targets proposed and agreed by teachers, social workers or the virtual school and supported financially as indicated by Pupil Premium payments allocated by Government. The SMART targets are tracked and monitored via PEP meetings at which the child/young person’s views are garnered.

The Leaving Care Service leads on the monitoring of Education, Employment and Training for those care leavers who are over 18. They are supported in this by members of the Virtual School, as well as the Council’s Inclusive Economy Team, Camden Learning’s STEAM Team and the Participation and Progression Service (Connexions and Careers Advisors based in schools, Honest Grind, the Avalon Project and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards), all working together to increase the likelihood that our care leavers will have good outcomes as fulfilled learners and workers.

Post 18 support is also available to those outside of employment, education or training to ensure they can engage meaningfully. Camden’s support is strengthened by the London Compact (which offers free London bus transport) and provides financial support towards

engagement in education, employment and training activities. Work with local colleges and universities also forms part of the work of the Virtual School and Inclusive Economy colleagues.

In 2024, The Virtual School was subject to a young person-led inspection of the service. Recommendations will be reviewed with young inspectors in late 2025 and reported subsequently. A detailed annual report is prepared by the Virtual School, which will cover the 2024/25 school year and will include an overview of the educational attainment of children looked after.

Educational Outcomes for Children Looked After

Despite the challenges faced by our cohort, Camden's children looked after achieved notable successes in 2025. At Level 3 (equivalent to A-level), all three young people completing BTEC qualifications successfully achieved their awards, demonstrating resilience and commitment to learning. A small cohort of Year 11 students were supported through GCSEs and prepared for post-16 progression, with some heartening stories of effort and resilience, particularly for children with disrupted education histories, some due to the Covid-19 pandemic during their early secondary school years and many due to their life circumstances, highlighting the need for sustained input to this vulnerable cohort. At Level 2, seven young people sat GCSEs, with two achieving a standard pass (grade 4 or above), including one unaccompanied asylum-seeking child who achieved an exceptional grade 8 in Mathematics. At Level 1, 41 out of 47 students completed vocational courses or functional skills qualifications, supporting pathways into further education and employment. The average Attainment 8 score for the reporting cohort was 10.1, in line with last year and above Easter predictions, reflecting progress despite significant barriers such as placement changes, late arrivals, and school refusal. These outcomes highlight the determination of our young people and the impact of targeted support from the Virtual School and multi-agency partners.

Case Study: Re-engaging a Child Looked After in Education

A 13-year-old child entered care in 2021 following long-term social care involvement due to concerns about parental capacity and mental health. After a Full Care Order in 2022, the child experienced placement breakdown, which led to severe school refusal and withdrawal from support networks. The Virtual School worked closely with social care, foster carers, and multiple local authorities to maintain education continuity during this challenging period. Interventions included arranging tuition, providing technology to support learning, and advocating for a timely school placement while managing complex transitions. Enrichment activities were introduced to rebuild confidence and social engagement. Through persistent multi-agency collaboration, the child successfully enrolled in a local school, achieving 92% attendance and actively participating in planning meetings, significant progress given previous anxiety, and disengagement. The foster placement stabilised, supporting emotional wellbeing and educational progress, while additional tuition addressed learning gaps and improved social confidence.

Special Educational Needs and EHCP

At the end of the 2024/25 academic year, 91 of 209 children looked after (CLA) from Reception to Year 13 were identified as having either an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or a recorded special educational need or disability (SEND). This means that 43.5% of the cohort had an additional identified learning need. The distribution of need varies considerably across age groups, reflecting both the changing profiles of our CLA population and the point at which needs are typically identified, assessed and formally recorded.

The prevalence of EHCP/SEND is highest in Key Stage 2, where 75.7% of children looked after having identified needs, followed by Key Stage 3 at 65.4% and Key Stage 1 at 50%. The rate then reduces through Key Stage 4 (47.9%) and is lowest in the post-16 cohort (19%). These patterns indicate that needs are most frequently identified during primary and early secondary education, and that while some young people continue to require support post-16, others leave. This distribution highlights the importance of strong early identification and multi-agency planning to ensure that children looked after receive timely, appropriate support throughout their educational journey.

Key Stage	No. of CLA	EHCP/SEND	Key Stage %
Reception	7	2	28.6
Key Stage 1	12	6	50.0
Key Stage 2	37	28	75.7
Key Stage 3	26	17	65.4
Key Stage 4	48	23	47.9
Post-16	79	15	19.0

Case Study: Supporting a Child with Complex SEND Needs

A ten-year-old child entered care in 2022 following significant neglect and trauma, having missed formal education for over a year. Initial assessments revealed severe gaps in learning, speech and language delay, and high anxiety, requiring a highly individualised approach. Camden's Virtual School commissioned one-to-one tutoring to rebuild trust and reintroduce learning, supported by a multi-agency plan involving Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Educational Psychology.

An Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) was secured, and a phased transition into a specialist school was implemented. The school offered small class sizes, therapeutic support, and access to sensory resources. Transition began with home visits and short sessions, gradually increasing as the child's confidence grew. The Virtual School continued tutoring during the first term to ensure continuity.

By Spring 2024, the child was attending full-time with 100% attendance. Academic progress accelerated from Reception-level skills to Year 1 developing, and they are now writing in sentences, engaging confidently with peers, and demonstrating emotional regulation. This case highlights the impact of trauma-informed practice, phased transitions, and collaborative working in achieving positive educational and emotional outcomes for children with complex SEND needs.

Priority 4: Your interests and life goals

“We promise to champion you and help you find and succeed in the right education, training, and employment aligned with your life goals and interests.”

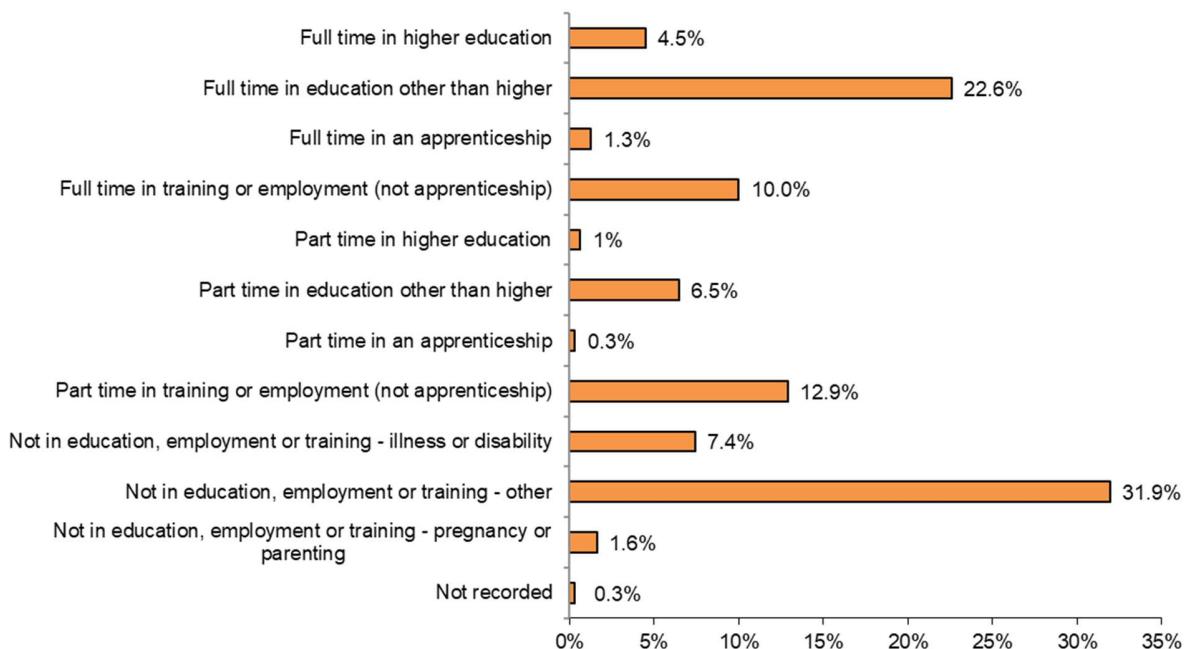
This promise speaks to our desire to be ambitious corporate parents who support children through their education, training and employment, enabling them to have high aspirations.

Care-experienced Education, Employment and Training Opportunities

On 31st October 2025, the most recent contact for allocated care leavers indicated that 58.7% were in Education, Training, or Employment compared to national (64%), statistical neighbours (68%) or inner London (70%) average based on the for 2023/24 SSDA903 return.

A breakdown of the EET/NEET categories for the cohort are detailed in the chart overleaf.

Figure 6: Care-experienced EET/NEET details 31.10.2025



Camden Full Potential Trailblazer programme, established 2025, funded by the GLA adopts a highly individualised and relational approach, ensuring tailored support for 17-25yrs old Care-experienced young people (CEYP) through small caseloads and strong personal connections. A dedicated project team has been established, comprising two

Training and Employment Officers, and a Training and Employment Trainee/Peer Advocate with lived experience of care.

The team is collaborating with DWP work coaches at Vadnie Bish, engaging supported housing services, and coordinating regular drop-in sessions at various accommodation centers. The project has been communicated internally, resulting in referrals from the Virtual School and the Care-experienced team. In addition, Drive Forward has been commissioned to deliver a range of support services, including mental health support, mentoring, and employability assistance for individuals who are ready to work. Signposting to wellbeing service, The Hive and the Council Mental Health initiative 'Growing with You' for care leavers. Furthermore, SPEAR has been engaged to provide a series of taster sessions specifically for CEYP, aimed at increasing awareness of their broader employability support offer. We have commissioned Word on the Curb to co-design an engagement campaign with CEYP.

Impact and Outcomes (April–November 2025) ,61 CEYP signed up, 14 job outcomes of these 8 are Camden council interns based across all divisions. 23 young people in training and 14 reported increased confidence. Four paid work experience placements started across Treehab, Dominus Hilton, internal legal and culture/events teams. One young person is set to begin an 18-month internship with Camden Council's Sports Development team on 10th December.

Educational outcomes have also been strong. Six care-experienced young people graduated during the academic year, including four undergraduate degrees and two master's degrees. Currently, 23 young people supported by the programme attend university: two in their first year, nine in their second year, nine in their third year, two undertaking master's degrees, and one completing a foundation year. Subjects studied include Business Management, Sport Science, Working with Children and Young People, Social Pedagogy, Engineering, Art, and Music.

Positive Employer Feedback: - *Example: CI's performance during a two-week onboarding period in a kitchen role has been outstanding. CI demonstrated adaptability, strong work ethic, and rapid skill development, earning praise for initiative and teamwork.*

Youth Mission

Camden's, We Make Camden strategy identifies care-experienced children and young people as a priority cohort within the Youth Mission, recognising the persistent inequalities they face across education, employment, income stability and housing. Priority 4 of Camden's Corporate Parenting Strategy sets the ambition to support care-experienced young people to access and succeed in education, training and employment aligned with their interests and life goals. The Youth Mission provides the practical framework for turning this ambition into action by coordinating services, partners and opportunities around the needs of this cohort.

The Youth Mission has supported changes in practice that remove barriers for care-experienced young people while improving consistency of support. In 2024, care experience was recognised as a protected characteristic, ensuring this cohort is routinely

considered in service design and decision-making. This has been complemented by practical interventions, including the provision of free Wi-Fi to all care leavers up to the age of 25, supporting engagement with learning, training and job opportunities.

Clear pathways into employment have been developed through mission-led alignment of internal opportunities and external partnerships. Camden's Care-experienced Internship Programme offers 18-month paid placements with tailored training, career coaching and pastoral support. Early outcomes show care-experienced young people progressing into permanent employment, with a second expanded cohort launching in April 2025. This includes enhanced financial support, access to apprenticeships and ring-fenced progression routes, delivered in partnership with the Drive Forward Foundation.

The Youth Mission has also supported testing new approaches through cohort-focused pilots within established teams. In 2025, a STEAM Work Experience pilot ran across Google and Camden Council teams to explore how best to support care-experienced young people. The pilot included three participants who are unaccompanied asylum seekers with additional needs. Collaboration between schools, employers and Camden teams provided translation and specialist support, enabling all three to start their placements, with one completed successfully. The pilot generated valuable learning to inform future cohort-specific programmes.

In parallel, progression into higher education is supported through the Head Start programme with the Inner Circle Educational Trust, providing personalised funding and ongoing guidance for 30 care-experienced young people as they navigate academic pathways and transitions.

Basic Income Pilot Scoping for Care-experienced Young People in Camden

As part of Camden's Youth Mission commitments to care-experienced young people (CEYP), we carried out a scoping exercise to develop an evidence base examining the potential for a basic income pilot targeting CEYP in Camden

A Basic Income is an unconditional cash payment, paid to individuals on a regular basis. As a national policy, this would be paid to every resident of the UK. But in a pilot, it would be targeted at a specific group. For care-experienced young people, a basic income could remove poverty traps, simplify support, and improve planning for the future. Evidence from an ongoing Welsh pilot shows positive impacts on meeting basic needs and reducing debt. The project was delivered over 9 months in partnership between C&L Strategy Team, the Care-experienced service and consultants the Autonomy Institute were appointed following a procurement process, (funded by Mission Catalyst Fund). The project involved consulting key audiences and incorporating the data collected into iterative drafts of a pilot proposal. Care-experienced young people were trained as peer researchers and facilitated a workshop with other CEYP. There were strong enthusiasm and support for the pilot with detailed discussions exploring the design of pilot, mapping risks and risk mitigation. The project produced a final pilot proposal, and this was presented at a learning event in November 2025 attended by Mark Riddell DfE. Due to high costs and funding challenges, we will not actively seek funding but remain

open to opportunities and embed learning into other Camden initiatives (Care-experienced Hub, Virtual School, Corporate Parenting Strategy).

Priority 5: Your home

"We promise that you will have a place to stay which feels safe and secure. We will do our best to find a stable accommodation that meets your needs, connects you to a community, and eventually helps you find a place you can call home."

This promise focuses on our desire for good quality stable accommodation that enables young people to enjoy their local communities and eventually offers them stable housing.

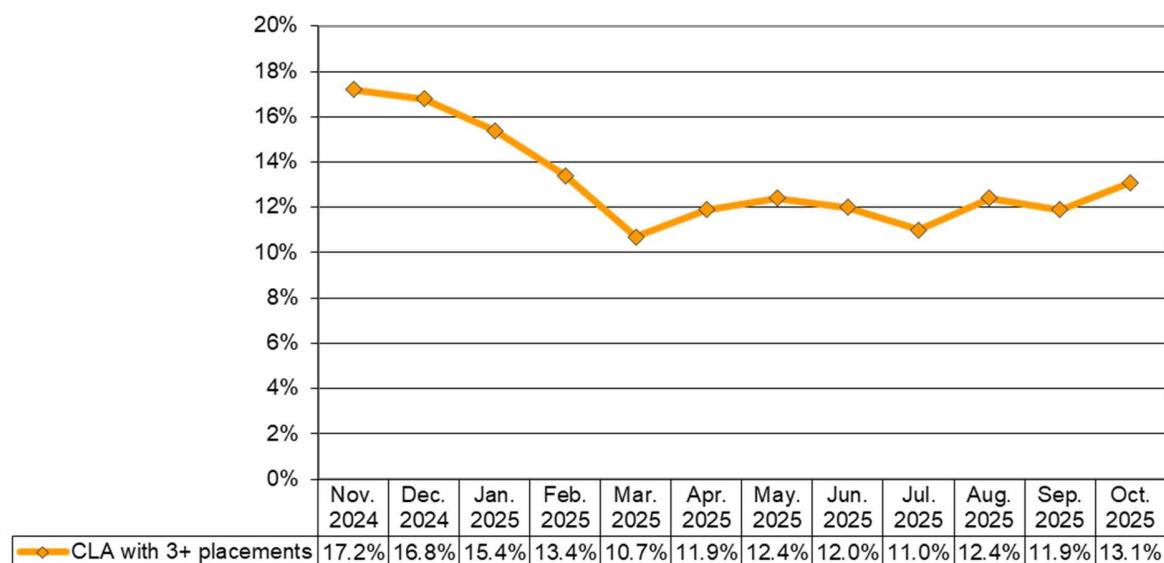
External Placements

Over the past 12 months, referrals for children with highly complex needs, including those requiring bespoke solo placements, have increased. In rare emergency situations where specialist support cannot be provided in-house, external or private provision, including unregulated placements, is used only as a last resort.

Placement Stability

To reduce reliance on external placements, weekly placement panels review availability and prioritise supporting children and young people within local, familiar environments. Formal Placement Stability Meetings have also been introduced for all children under 18 whenever a placement is at risk or a move is being considered. Chaired by Operational Social Work Team Managers, these meetings bring together key professionals to review circumstances, identify underlying issues, and agree on coordinated plans to sustain placements. Since implementation, the proportion of children experiencing more than three placement moves in a 12-month period has decreased from 17.2% to 13.1%, which remains above national and Inner London averages. This approach has now been extended to care-experienced young people aged 18 and over, promoting stability and reducing unnecessary moves.

Figure 7: CLA Short Term Placement Stability Metric (12 months)



Weekly High-Cost Panels

The Service continues to convene weekly High-Cost panels, chaired by the Head of Service for Corporate Parenting, which focus specifically on reviewing the most expensive residential and private supported accommodation placements. These panels provide a structured forum for senior managers and key professionals to assess the necessity, appropriateness, and cost-effectiveness of high-cost placements. By scrutinising each case in detail, the panels ensure that resources are used efficiently; alternative in-house or lower-cost options are considered, and placement decisions align with the individual needs of the child or young person. This proactive oversight supports both financial accountability and the delivery of safe, stable, and well-matched placements.

Pathways Supported Accommodation

Pathways currently provides 234 beds across multiple units for care-experienced children and young people aged 16–25. The cohort includes individuals transitioning from residential care, foster care, secure units or custodial settings, as well as those with complex behavioural or emotional needs, at risk of homelessness or crisis, or with additional vulnerabilities such as mental health challenges or prior experiences of exploitation.

To maximise occupancy, the Service has strengthened pre-placement risk assessments and profiling, alongside improving referral matching to ensure placements are timely and appropriate. Flexible bed allocation allows the Service to respond to urgent demand while maintaining suitability and full compliance with Ofsted standards. Weekly and monthly occupancy reviews monitor use, identify underused beds, and enable prompt corrective action. Tailored engagement strategies are also in place for young people with complex or specialist needs to reduce extended vacancies and support stable, successful placements.

8. Capital Projects

The capital programme continues to progress key residential schemes designed to expand local placement capacity, improve outcomes for children in care and care leavers, and reduce reliance on external provision. Overall, projects remain on track, with feasibility work, cost planning, and commissioning preparations advancing across all sites.

The new four-bed children's home at 17 Skardu Road is progressing well. NKED approval was secured in September 2025, contracts were exchanged on 28 October, and completion is expected on 15 December 2025. Condition and feasibility assessments are complete, with refurbishment costs estimated at £769k including contingency. Pre-planning advice is positive, maintenance plans are being developed, and commissioning will begin in March 2026. The scheme remains scheduled for completion in December 2027.

At 115 Brecknock Road, which will provide four beds plus one emergency bed, condition and feasibility assessments are complete, and refurbishment costs are estimated at £1.3m. NKED approval is planned for January/February 2026. Pre-planning advice has been positive and

maintenance arrangements are in development. Commissioning activities will begin in March 2026, with delivery expected in early 2028.

The Cecil House project will deliver 21 units of supported accommodation. NKED was approved on 1 December 2025 and purchase completion is anticipated by March 2026. Condition and feasibility work is complete, with refurbishment costs projected at £1.5m. Further design detail has been requested by Planning and will be addressed at Stage 2. Maintenance planning is underway. A service provider will be appointed by February 2026, with the contract commencing in June 2027. Completion is expected in June 2028.

At Prince of Wales Road, the scheme to provide a four-bed children's home and one unit capable of supporting children subject to Deprivation of Liberty (DoLS) orders has secured DfE funding (September 2025). A condition survey has been instructed, and work is underway to procure a design team for Stage 3. Refurbishment costs are estimated at £1.5m, with completion forecast for December 2027. The DoLS support unit will be designed to implement the necessary restrictions and safeguards on a case-by-case basis, reflecting the individual needs and conditions of each child.

Joseph House continues to operate with seven planned beds and one emergency bed, with increasing occupancy a strategic priority to reduce reliance on high-cost spot purchases. Weekly and monthly reviews support matching, demand management, and reduced private sector use. Short-term emergency placements have been used appropriately. Operating an eight-bed unit requires robust assessment and planning, with all admissions approved by the KPMS Registered Home Manager. Monthly strategic meetings support optimal use of capacity, and the minimum admission age has been reduced from 11 to 9 to widen the referral pool.

9. Fostering in Camden: Capacity, Quality and Support

Fostering remains a central part of Camden's sufficiency and corporate parenting approach, providing stable, family-based care that supports children to remain connected to their communities wherever possible. Over the reporting period, Camden continued to strengthen its in-house fostering provision, increase capacity, and improve oversight and support for foster carers, with a clear focus on improving outcomes for children and reducing reliance on external and residential placements.

Between December 2024 and November 2025, Camden increased its fostering capacity by 15 carers, reflecting sustained success in recruitment and approval activity. Most newly approved carers moved quickly into active placements, primarily long-term, alongside short-term, respite and emergency care. This has enabled more children to be placed locally with Camden foster families and contributed to a modest improvement in bed utilisation. While capacity has grown, a proportion of approved beds remained unused during the year. The reasons for this are well understood and include carers awaiting an appropriate match, changes in household circumstances, and the complexity of children's needs. The service is actively addressing this through improved matching, strengthened data accuracy, regular review through panel, and closer engagement with carers to remove barriers to placement.

Strong governance and independent oversight continue to underpin Camden's fostering service. The Fostering and Permanence Panel met 16 times during the year and considered 85 cases, including approvals, annual reviews, resignations and long-term matches. This resulted in 17 mainstream foster carer approvals, five family and friends' approvals, 23 annual reviews, and two long-term fostering matches, with all recommendations endorsed by the Agency Decision Maker. Panel leadership was refreshed during the year, including the appointment of a new independent chair, and work is underway to rebuild and strengthen panel membership. While challenges remain around late paperwork and delays in checks such as DBS and medicals, feedback from carers and practitioners continues to be positive, with carers reporting that they feel supported, listened to and treated respectfully.

Foster carer annual reviews remain a key mechanism for ensuring suitability, safeguarding and continuous improvement. During the reporting period, 49 annual reviews were completed, with 20 within statutory timescales. Delays were largely attributable to staffing changes, health issues, workload pressures and the resolution of significant events such as allegations or standards of care concerns. The Fostering Independent Reviewing Officer role has now been strengthened and operates on a full-time basis, with an expanded quality assurance function. Improvements include new Mosaic workflows, clearer guidance for social workers, improved tracking of timescales, and targeted training and support to improve report quality and compliance.

Supporting foster carers remains a core priority and supervising social workers continue to provide regular, tailored supervision, and the service has invested heavily in relationship-building, wellbeing and retention. Carers and children have benefited from a wide range of activities including support groups, coffee mornings, wellbeing sessions, seasonal events and celebration activities, alongside regular communication through newsletters and partnership working with Camden's foster carer association.

The launch of an online learning and development hub has expanded access to training and resources, and a new Training Programme for 2026–27 will provide a blended offer of online and in-person learning for foster carers, kinship families and supported hosts.

Camden is also progressing the development of a Specialist Foster Carers Scheme to support children with complex emotional, behavioural and developmental needs who might otherwise require residential care. Specialist foster carers are experienced carers with a therapeutic, trauma-informed approach and full-time availability, supported by enhanced fees, specialist training and dedicated supervision. The scheme was presented to the Placement Sufficiency Board in November 2025, with a business case agreed for completion in December 2025 and recruitment planned to begin in early 2026. The initial projection is to recruit five specialist carers in the first year, increasing to 20 over five years, supporting improved placement stability and reduced reliance on high-cost residential provision.

Strengthening performance and quality assurance.

The service has made significant strides in strengthening performance and quality assurance over the last year. Auditing practices are being embedded, with regular accountability and performance meetings taking place to review progress and share learning. The introduction of a Power BI reporting system has further enhanced our ability to track and analyse data to monitor the service effectively. Recent service changes have brought a renewed focus, and we are confident that these measures will drive ongoing continuous improvement. We recognise that building a strong performance culture requires a consistent approach and collective effort from all staff at all levels and we remain committed to achieving this together.

Kinship Care

Kinship care continues to play a vital role within Camden's family-based care offer, helping children maintain connections to their family, culture, and community. Currently, 222 children are living in formal kinship arrangements, including 192 supported under Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs), 16 subject to Child Arrangements Orders, and 22 with connected carers. This includes carers who are approved and remain on the connected carers register, those approved but awaiting a court permanence order, and carers temporarily approved under Regulation 24 or 25 while assessments and proceedings are completed. The growth in kinship care, particularly for younger children, reflects Camden's commitment to early permanence and family-based stability.

The Kinship Local Offer, co-produced with carers and young people, sets out clear entitlements around financial support, training, wellbeing, and legal advice, with delivery coordinated through close partnership working across children's services, including the Virtual School, Early Help, health partners, and schools.

When children cannot remain with their birth parents, Camden prioritises family networks wherever safe and appropriate, using statutory assessment pathways to ensure children can remain with trusted family members during periods of uncertainty and progress to longer-term permanence wherever possible.

Placement Sufficiency

The Placement Sufficiency Board oversees Camden's ability to secure sufficient, safe and stable placements for children and young people in care, ensuring statutory duties are met and placement quality and stability are improved. Chaired by the Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding, the Board brings together senior leaders across fostering, Housing residential care and commissioning to review performance, identify risks early, share good practice and agree mitigating actions.

Over the past year, the Board has strengthened its effectiveness by moving from fortnightly to monthly meetings, enabling more focused discussion and clearer oversight. Data sharing and risk visibility have improved, and collaboration across services has strengthened, supporting progress in foster carer recruitment, retention and planning for children with complex needs. Ongoing challenges remain, particularly in securing

specialist placements, managing the high cost of residential care, and meeting the needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and young people with additional vulnerabilities.

10. Workforce and Practice Development

Camden's Corporate Parenting services benefit from a highly skilled and committed workforce across Children Looked After, Care-experienced, and Fostering teams. Workforce stability remains a strength, enabling consistent relationships and high-quality practice for children and young people.

Children Looked After Service

The CLA service has an establishment of four Team Managers, twenty-one social workers, including seven Advanced Practitioners, reflecting significant depth of experience. The team prioritises child-centred practice, ensuring children's voices are embedded in care planning and reviews. Placement stability has improved through the introduction of Placement Stability Meetings, and strong partnerships with health, education. The service continues to strengthen permanency planning and court work, with all social workers progressing towards Parent Assessment and Merton-compliant Age Assessment training. Trauma-informed practice is embedded through Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP) training.

Care-experienced Service

This service supports young people transitioning to adulthood through purposeful relationships and practical support. The team comprises four managers, nineteen Personal Advisors, and three Advanced Personal Advisors, with staff development supported through the national Personal Advisor Learning Programme. Apprenticeship pathways and progression opportunities ensure Camden retains skilled practitioners, benefiting care leavers. The service works collaboratively with housing, education, and health partners to address gaps and improve opportunities, guided by feedback from young people.

Fostering, Family and Friends Service

The fostering service is structured into four specialist teams covering recruitment, assessment, and support for foster and kinship carers. Despite recent management changes, the service maintains a stable core workforce and is actively reducing reliance on agency staff. Professional development is a priority, with bespoke training on foster care reviews, kinship assessments, and panel processes, alongside induction and online learning through Camden's Reach and Practice platform. These initiatives ensure carers and families receive consistent, high-quality support.

11. Key Priorities for 2026

- Strengthen our focus on education, employment and training for our care-experienced young people through inclusive opportunities, internships and apprenticeships, peer mentoring and other approaches.
- Continue embedding our Corporate Parenting Strategy across the council using data collection and workforce development to increase the visibility and awareness of our children looked after and care-experienced young people.
- Expanding our approach to participation; working with our Children In Care Council to ensure it is the central forum for engagement and consultation with our children looked after.
- Advance our capital projects to continue expanding our local placement capacity and range, reducing reliance on external provision and keeping more of our children and young people closer to Camden.
- Strengthen quality assurance and oversight to improve practice consistency, compliance and outcomes across fostering and kinship care.
- Implement the Specialist Foster Carers Scheme to increase in-borough capacity for children with complex needs and improve placement stability.
- Expand enhanced support models, including extended foster family networks, to provide more resilient and sustainable placements.
- Strengthen out-of-hours support arrangements to ensure timely, responsive assistance for carers and reduce placement breakdown risk.
- Strengthening and embedding Lifelong links for Care Leavers and care-experienced young people through sustainable, Trauma-informed Practice.
- Develop and implement a relational lifelong support offer for through the care-experienced hub, promoting belonging for care-experienced young people aged 18 – 25.
- Continue to embed and build upon the edge of care and Reunification Project, supporting safe family reconnection, promoting long term stability for children and young people.
- Enhance transitional safeguarding and ETE pathways for care leavers, including paid work experience, vocational routes, and improved continuity with adult services.