

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Children's Social Care National Reform: Progress Update	
REPORT OF Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding Director of Relational Practice	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 13 January 2026
SUMMARY OF REPORT <p>This report outlines the latest progress on implementing the Children's Social Care National Reforms in Camden.</p>	
Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p>	
Contact Officer: <p>Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Safeguarding and Family Help 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG 020 7974 3466 / Rashida.Baig@camden.gov.uk</p> <p>Nana Bonsu, Director of Relational practice, Children and Learning 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG Nana.Bonsu@camden.gov.uk</p>	
RECOMMENDATION <p>Committee is asked to comment on and note the contents of the report.</p>	

Signed by:



Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding



Nana Bonsu, Director of Relational Practice, Children and Learning

Date: 29 December 2025

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of the report is to provide an update to the Committee on the implementation of the Children's Social Care National Reforms agenda in Camden and gather any feedback from members on the programme's shape and progress.
- 1.2. Further updates on National Reforms will be coming to Committee as the programme progresses.

2. Background

- 2.1. In October 2025, the Committee received an introduction to the Children's Social Care National Reforms, including an overview of the programme of work to design and deliver these reforms across Camden's Children's Early Help and Social Care services.
- 2.2. It was agreed that the Committee would receive a series of updates as implementation progresses, ensuring members remain informed and able to provide effective oversight.
- 2.3. This report sets out the latest position, highlighting progress to date, key learning, and the next steps in delivering the reforms.

3. Progress to date

- 3.1. Following detailed Discovery work undertaken between January and June 2025, including workshops, data analysis, and engagement with children, families, and practitioners, we have now entered Phase One: Design, Test and Learn. This phase is focused on identifying what works in practice and laying the foundations for wider implementation across Camden, by prototyping key changes at a small scale and refining them through iterative learning until they are ready to be scaled up.
- 3.2. Set out below is a summary of progress against the key areas of activity within Phase One: Design, Test and Learn.

Family Help East prototype team with a locality-based staffing model

- 3.3. Since Monday 8 September, the Family Help prototype has been in operation in the East of the borough, covering the Gospel Oak, Haverstock, Kentish Town North and South, and Camden Square wards. The prototype is testing and iterating new ways of working at a small scale before these changes are scaled up and rolled out borough-wide.
- 3.4. The prototype consists of three multi-disciplinary teams made up of social workers, family support workers, youth workers, and domestic abuse specialists.

- 3.5. A comprehensive onboarding and training programme has been delivered to ensure we deliver more than a structural change. The aim is to embed a new way of working that addresses areas where, as a whole system, we have not consistently achieved the best outcomes for families.
- 3.6. The prototype teams have been testing the following changes to the way they work and practice:
 - a. Locality based work – enabling practitioners to be closer to families they work with and better connected to communities. They are based part of their week in Harmood and Agar Family hubs, in Vadnie Bish and other community buildings.
 - b. A shorter single assessment – written to the child and family, so families only have to tell their story once. This has involved the development and testing of new workflows on the case management system.
 - c. Stronger professional networks – building relationships with other professionals in the locality and working with them to support families in a more joined up way.
 - d. Multi-disciplinary collaboration - Family workers, Independent Domestic & Sexual Violence Advocates (IDSVA), Youth Workers and Social workers, working together and each bringing their expertise and perspective to deliver holistic support for families.
 - e. Co-location of team in the community – to ensure collaborative working, sharing of expertise in real time, and delivery of seamless support to families.
 - f. Fortnightly group supervision - to collaboratively reflect on live cases together, enhance practice, and strengthen learning across the team.
 - g. Family led decision making – embedded into practice, with families offered the opportunity to have trusted person with them at initial contact, and all practitioners supporting families (including individuals not biologically related to a child) to come together to have a Family Meeting or gathering during the family help assessment stage.

Lead child protection practitioners

- 3.7. The Family Help prototype in the East has also introduced two new Lead Child Protection Practitioner roles. These are new roles set out in the Government's Families First Partnership Programme Guide, aiming to provide expert safeguarding input. In Camden, through our prototype our two Lead Child Protection Practitioners are testing an approach to child protection which builds on current strong practice and includes shorter meetings in the community, and meeting families beforehand to ensure the needs and risks of children experiencing significant harm are fully understood and responded to.
- 3.8. Work is ongoing in exploring the government's ambitions for establishing Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams. A series of workshops have been held to explore how the existing Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) in Camden will evolve into this new model.

Partner engagement

- 3.9. Prototype teams have been actively building connections with partners operating in the East of the borough to strengthen local collaboration. This includes colleagues from the voluntary and community sector, as well as other Council departments such as Housing, Adult Social Care, and Public Health.
- 3.10. At a strategic level, alongside regular briefings for partner colleagues through existing governance forums, newsletters, and other communications, we have convened a series of well-attended roundtable discussions with colleagues from Health, Education, and the Police. These sessions have focused on exploring the implications of the reforms for partner agencies, the cultural shifts required across the partnership system to ensure more children can remain safely within family networks and identifying opportunities for closer collaboration.

Governance structures to capture learning and assess impact

- 3.11. A structured learning and evaluation framework has been embedded within the prototype to drive continuous improvement and inform future scaling. This includes:
 - Weekly learning sessions – open to all practitioners in the prototype team to share feedback on what is working well, and identify areas requiring change
 - Fortnightly group supervision – as referenced in paragraph 3.5 above, strengthening learning across the team through reflection on live cases
 - Quality assurance audits – reviewing cases open to the prototype team to ensure standards and consistency
 - Monthly reflective sessions with staff – providing space to check progress and address challenges
 - Partner feedback – gathered through surveys and one to one interviews with operational partners involved in cases in the East due to take place from 2026
 - Parent feedback – to understand impact of changes from the perspective of families due to take place from 2026

4. Key learnings

Key themes from learning to date – what is working well

Connections with partners and multi-disciplinary working is improving response to families

- 4.1. Prototype teams have welcomed the opportunity to build stronger local relationships with Council services, voluntary and community organisations, schools, and GPs in the east of the borough. These closer connections are making it easier to link families with relevant information, events, and advice, ensuring quicker and more coordinated support.

4.2. Case study 1: multi-disciplinary working
On Tuesday, 16 December, a festive gathering brought together professionals across Adult Services, Children's Services, Education, Health, Housing, and the Voluntary and Community Sector who work with residents in Camden's East wards. The event offered the opportunity for professionals to reflect on the impact of multi-disciplinary working. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive - one professional working shared "*I am now attending regular meetings with Housing and Adult Mental Health teams, which means solutions are being achieved faster and residents are getting a more joined up service.*"

4.3. Case study 2: community connections

A Family Help Lead Practitioner attended the weekly Holmes Road housing meeting to seek advice on a housing challenge faced by one of their families. Through this direct engagement, the issue was resolved in a significantly shorter timeframe than would have been possible before the prototype model was introduced. This demonstrates how local partnerships are improving responsiveness and reducing delays for families.

Locality working

4.4. Staff have reported positive experiences of working on a locality basis and being embedded within the community, which is improving efficiency and strengthening relationships.

4.5. Case study 3: benefits of working in a locality model

A Family Help Lead Practitioner in the East prototype team shared that they were able to visit several families in a single day within a ten-minute walk of their base. This proximity significantly reduced travel time compared to previous arrangements, allowing the practitioner to spend more time delivering meaningful, face-to-face interventions with families. The shift to locality working is therefore enabling practitioners to maximise time with families and provide more responsive, impactful support.

Seamless access to services for families

4.6. The integration of Early Help and Child in Need functions is reducing the need for families to be passed between different teams for support. There is no longer a need for cases to "step up" or "step down", nor are referrals to multiple practitioners required. Instead, families benefit from seamless access to the combined skills and expertise within the multi-disciplinary teams, resulting in fewer delays and more consistent, holistic support

4.7. Case study 4: multi-disciplinary support without delays

A Family Help Lead Practitioner (Social Worker) was working with a family in the East where there were concerns about the young person experiencing exploitation and contextual harm. The Youth Worker with the Family Help team was able to deliver interventions to the young person alongside the social worker intervention. There was no need for the case to be stepped across to access youth work support. The integrated approach meant the

family received timely, coordinated intervention from both professionals, reducing delays and ensuring a more holistic response to risk.

New approach to child protection conferences

- 4.8. Pre-meetings with families ahead of child protection conferences are improving family experience and engagement, helping to build trust and clarity.
- 4.9. Case study 5: meeting families before child protection conferences
A Lead Child Protection Practitioner in the East prototype team arranged a pre-meeting with a family ahead of their scheduled child protection conference. The family had been invited to previous child protection conferences but did not attend. During the pre-meeting, the Lead Child Protection Practitioner explained what to expect and answered the family's questions. As a result, the family felt happy to attend and were able to engage during the conference to co-create clear, achievable goals for their child's safety and wellbeing. This approach is strengthening partnership with families and improving the quality of planning.

Family Help is family friendly

- 4.10. Feedback from families introduced to Family Help has been overwhelmingly positive. Families report feeling more comfortable with the name and what it represents, which is helping to reduce anxiety and build trust in the support offered.
- 4.11. Case study 6: family feedback on 'Family Help'
During an initial contact, a Family Help Lead Practitioner in the East prototype team explained they were a social worker from the Family Help team. The family reflected back "*the name Family Help is so much better – I know you're a social worker but I don't feel scared*". The simple change in language had a significant impact on the willingness of the family to engage and confidence in accepting support.

Key themes from learning to date – what needs adjustment

Training and induction plan

- 4.12. Feedback from the prototype team has reflected the training and induction plan they received consisting of 2.5 days per week of training and induction over a 5-week period, was too lengthy and intensive. Staff reported that practical, hand-on training methods were significantly more effective than theory-based sessions. Ahead of wider rollout, the training plan is being reviewed and streamlined to reflect this feedback, ensuring a stronger focus on applied learning and reducing time away from frontline practice.

Time and space for reflection

4.13. Feedback from the prototype team highlights the importance of creating more dedicated time for reflection during this period of significant cultural and practice change. Staff have expressed that opportunities to pause, share experiences, and collectively process learning would help embed new ways of working more effectively. Building structured reflective spaces into the implementation plan—beyond formal supervision—will support staff wellbeing, strengthen professional confidence, and ensure that insights from frontline practice inform continuous improvement.

System enablers

4.14. The prototype team has been the first to use the new single assessment and associated workflows embedded within the case management system. As expected with early implementation, some technical issues have arisen, which are being addressed through regular meetings with the development team. These collaborative sessions ensure that problems are resolved quickly and improvements are incorporated into the system design. The prototype team will continue to rigorously stress-test the system to confirm it is robust, user-friendly, and fit for purpose ahead of wider rollout.

Learning regarding youth workers and IDSVAAs as part of the team

4.15. Through our prototype teams, we tested bringing youth workers and domestic abuse specialists together with family workers and social workers. These roles contributed valuable expertise, particularly in supporting adolescents and addressing domestic abuse. The East prototype also highlighted that some specialist roles are most effective when focused on their core strengths. For example, youth workers are at their best when working directly with young people, and domestic abuse practitioners typically concentrate on supporting adult victims and may not always be positioned to undertake home-based work with children.

4.16. As we move into wider rollout, we therefore propose refining our model so that youth workers continue to work alongside social workers and family workers, as part of an adolescents' specialist service which is under development. This will allow them to focus fully on their skills in building relationships with teenagers and offering targeted support. We also plan to introduce new Child Domestic Abuse Specialist roles, with a clear remit to work in person both with child survivors, adult survivors and perpetrators in ways that are safe for all involved. This will strengthen our capacity to provide skilled and child-focused support, where it is most needed.

5. Next steps

5.1. Parent and partner feedback, as part of the prototype learning and evaluation framework, is scheduled for January 2026. This timing ensures that the first families supported by the East prototype team have completed their

assessments, allowing for meaningful insights into their experiences and outcomes.

- 5.2. Phase One: Design, Test and Learn will continue until the end of December 2025. Based on the learning gathered during this phase, Camden will move into Phase Two: Implementation from January 2026. This next phase will focus on scaling up and embedding the Family Help model across the borough.
- 5.3. Key activities for Phase Two: Implementation will include:
 - a. Developing business cases to support borough-wide rollout.
 - b. Implementing the full Family Help model informed by insights and evidence from the prototype phase to ensure best practice and sustainability.
 - c. Holding an all-staff engagement event in January 2026, to revisit the practice changes that are critical in delivering the vision and ambitions of the national reforms and provide staff with confidence and authority to adopt new ways of working immediately. This will be supported by a training and engagement programme that will be launched in January.
 - d. Further development of 0-19 (up to 25 for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) universal and targeted services, adolescent specialist services, and corporate parenting services (including kinship and fostering) to ensure all parts of the system work cohesively and align with the practice changes required to achieve better outcomes for children, young people and families.

6. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

- 6.1. In 2025-26 the government provided new grant in the form of the 'Children's Social Care Prevention Grant' to support national reforms to rebalance the children's social system and enable Local Authorities to invest in transformation and the expansion of preventative support.
- 6.2. Camden received a total allocation of government grant funding of £953,874 for the financial year 2025-26. This is comprised of £826,132 Children Children's Social Care Prevention grant and £127,742 Families First Partnership Transformation grant.
- 6.3. The grant conditions expect Local Authorities to spend approximately 30% of the funding on transformation and co-design activity. The planned use of the grant is summarised in the table below. The grant contributes to the cost of the prototype team which draws on existing staff across various children's social care teams to test and learn a new model of delivery.

Planned use of grant	Estimated spend Apr 25-Mar 26
Test and learn - contribution to the East Prototype team	£511,439
Programme Management team and critical friend	£336,956
Test and learn - youth workers	£77,669

Health role	£25,500
Training	£2,310
	£953,874

6.4. It should be noted that children's social care grant funding will be consolidated into one Children, Families and Youth Grant for 2026-27, as detailed in the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026-27. The settlement combines the Children's Social Care Prevention Grant and the Children and Families grant, which will be distributed using the new children and young people's services relative needs formula.

7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

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

8. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this.

REPORT ENDS