

## Appendix 1 - SEND Strategy Progress Report for 2025

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### 1. Foreword from Cllr Boyland, Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families

- 1.1 In 2025, we have made considerable progress in delivering our SEND strategy and developing services that meet the needs of local families. While I recognise that we are still on a journey to ensure that every child receives the right support at the right time, I am proud of what we have achieved to improve outcomes and experiences.
- 1.2 Both locally and nationally, we are working in a challenging environment. The levels of need and complexity of need continue to rise, and the available resource becomes ever more stretched. There is widespread recognition of the need for SEND system reform, and the Government have committed to addressing this in their upcoming Schools White Paper early in 2026. Despite these national challenges, we have created a strong local system in Camden that prioritises early intervention and innovation, notably through our strong partnership across education, health and care. Schools work collaboratively with each other and with council services and benefit through our funding model that devolves a higher level of funding to schools and provides non-statutory pupil-level funding to enable a school wide, responsive approach to meet the needs of pupils with SEND.
- 1.3 Over 70% of the actions from our SEND Strategy implementation plan are either completed or on track (46% completed, and 24% on track). We started the year with a clear picture of strengths locally, as well as the areas where we wanted to focus on. We have increased capacity for working with children and young people with SEND and their families, and their feedback has strengthened our delivery. Recommendations from the Young Inspectors will continue to inform delivery through 2026 and beyond. The SEND local area partnership [continue to progress the recommendations from the SEND Scrutiny Panel that reported in October 2024](#). We have brought our SEND services closer to the communities they serve, including increasing the opportunities for families to talk to a range of officers about their children and young people with SEND, regular meetings with schools and improving online information. We know that waiting times for diagnosis are too long, and we have increased funding so that more assessments are being completed each month in response to the increasing numbers of requests for assessment. We have published a Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit to support every Camden mainstream school to provide a consistent and high-quality approach to meeting SEND needs in their classrooms and have commissioned Camden Learning to provide additional support to schools to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. We have also worked with colleagues across the partnership to develop an all-age autism strategy and implementation plan which sits alongside this work.
- 1.4 I am not complacent about the work that we still need to do to deliver our strategy and make the improvements that children and young people with SEND and their families want and need to see. We know that next year will continue to provide both challenge and opportunity. We are delivering a clear programme of work to meet growing needs locally and look forward to delivering upcoming reforms to the system. The principles underpinning the upcoming reforms align with our local approach and this, along with our experience of testing potential reforms through the Change Programme, means we are well placed to take the reforms forward.

## 2. Executive summary

### We are working in a challenging context:

The number of children with SEND is rising locally. In 2025, the number of children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) increased from 1,607 to 1,708 and the number receiving Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG) increased from 288 to 309

The SEND system is widely regarded as one that is not working and underfunded. The Government Schools White Paper, including reform to SEND system, is expected imminently

As a result of growing need, the High Needs Block has fallen into deficit with £7 million deficit forecast for 2025/26.

### To meet this challenge, we have identified clear pillars for delivery:

**Empower families through collaborative support**

**Achieve excellence in SEND**

**Develop excellent provision and services**

**Strengthen inclusion in settings**

### In 2025, we have:

The service commissioned Young Inspectors to review EHCPs and young people's participation, which showed we increased engagement with families

Brought services closer to the community, strengthened decision-making processes and started to improve the quality of EHCPs

Increased autism assessment capacity, introduced outreach for children at risk of exclusion and inclusive Family Hubs offer

Published a Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit for schools, capital projects in schools to improve access and inclusion and training for staff

### In 2026, we will:

Strengthen coproduction with children and young people and their parents, including from underrepresented communities, and gather and respond to feedback

Strengthen pathways to adulthood, improve knowledge of SEND across the workforce and improve the quality of services

Commission specialist education provision to meet needs, and improve inclusion across services and support while waiting for diagnosis

Strengthen outreach services to schools, strengthen our cluster model, and embed use of Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit

### 3. System Overview: Headline Data

#### Rising Needs (January 2024 → January 2026)

- **EHCPs:** 1,607 → **1,652** (+2.8%)
- **ENG recipients:** 312 → **349** (+11.9%)
- **Education Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment referrals:** 246 → **428** (+74%)
- **Decision-to-assess rate:** 89% → **71%**
- **High Needs Block deficit (forecast 2025/26):** £7 million

#### Operational Pressures

- **EHCP timeliness:** 96.6% to **50%** expected for 2025
- **Tribunal activity: 2025:** 60 appeals; 1,707 plans maintained — **3.5%**, **2024:** 56 appeals; 1,605 plans maintained — **3.4%**; early resolutions increased from 37% → 55%
- **Independent/non-maintained special school spend:** £2.9m → **£7 million** (2021/22 to 2025/26)
- **Other local authority maintained:** £2.5m (2020/21) - £4.1m (2025/26)
- **Estimated additional specialist places needed: estimated 70** (autism & Social Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH))

#### Strengths of Camden's Local System

- **51%** of children with EHCPs educated in **mainstream** (above national/regional averages)

## 4. 2025 Delivery Highlights by Pillar

### 4.1 Pillar 1 — Empowering Families Through Collaborative Support

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#### 4.1.1 Key Developments

- Three new engagement roles increased capacity and improved relational practice
- Extensive parent feedback gathered through focus groups on communication, EHCP processes, and dispute resolution
- **Young Inspectors** programme evaluated children's voices in EHCPs:
  - 7 young inspectors
  - 18 surveys from young people
  - 9 professional interviews

#### 4.1.2 Targeted Outreach

- Community events tailored for Somali and Bengali families
- Local Offer Roadshow visited 6 schools; all parents reported improved knowledge of how to access support
- Stronger presence in school coffee mornings and community settings

#### 4.1.3 Digital Improvements

- Local Offer website usage **increased by 66%** following redesign and digital promotion
- Clearer language, simplified navigation, and reduced content duplication
- New coordinated parent carer newsletter introduced

## 4.2 Pillar 2 — Achieving Excellence in SEND

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A major focus of 2025 has been on improving quality, accountability and consistency of statutory SEND processes.

#### 4.2.1 EHCP Quality

- **Multi-agency Quality Assurance processes have been developed and embedded into practice to support improved quality of plans**
- **Monthly audits have shown an overall upward shift in Plan quality, with Silver-rated plans increased from 8% to 25%**, indicating a significant improvement in the quality of plans judged to be strong.
- **Bronze-rated plans decreased from 52% to 40%**, reflecting an overall upward shift in plan quality.

#### 4.2.2 Improved Accessibility & Responsiveness

- **SEND Surgeries** relocated into schools, significantly increasing accessibility
- Termly school visits by Case Officers are strengthening forward planning for children with EHCPs or ENG funding, with Special Education Needs and Disability coordinators (SENDCOs) reporting that termly planning meetings and visits have improved responsiveness, communication, and officer visibility

In the Autumn Term 2025, SEN Case Officers visited 65% of primary schools, 85% of secondary schools and 95% of post-16 settings.

#### 4.2.3 Tribunals & Complaints

- Complaints linked to communication are beginning to reduce following service changes
- In 2025, there were 60 appeals and 1,707 plans maintained (3.5%), compared with 56 appeals and 1,605 maintained Plans in 2024 (3.4%) and 45 appeals and 1,532 maintained Plans in 2023 (2.9%)
- Between 2024 and 2025, early resolutions improved from 37% to 55%
- Of the 60 appeals lodged in 2025, 70% included section I placement.

#### 4.2.4 Timeliness Challenges

- EHCP timeliness expected to fall from **96.6% to ~50%** due to:
  - 74% rise in Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) requests
  - Assessment delays occurred due to the onboarding of new staff during the service redesign period.
  - strengthening internal quality assurance processes sign-off
- Detailed recovery plan now in place with a target to increase to 65-70% over the coming months

### 4.3 Pillar 3 — Developing Excellent Provision and Services

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#### 4.3.1 Neurodevelopmental Pathways

- 140 autism assessments commissioned externally (to help reduce the backlog)
- 7 new permanent diagnostic posts recruited
- New **one day pathway** for under 5s
- Despite increased throughput, referrals continue to rise

#### 4.3.2 Family Hubs & Early Years

- Sensory rooms supported **92 children** in 2024/25
- 65 staff trained through Autism Education Trust: neurodiversity affirmative training boroughwide
- Camden Kids Talk outcomes:
  - Need identified at 1-year review: increased from less than 1% to **9%**
  - Red WellComm ratings in early years settings: decreased from **51% to 35%** after attending Camden Kids Talk setting for one year, meaning far fewer children were identified as being **one year or more below expected levels** in their speech, language and communication skills.

#### 4.3.3 Commissioning & Sufficiency

- Need identified for **~70** additional specialist places for Autism and SEMH provision
- Rising number of out-of-borough placements highlights the imperative of expanding local provision
- SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Commissioning Plan to be developed in early 2026, setting out how additional provision will be delivered

#### 4.3.4 Provision, Services and Opportunities

- We have continued to work with a broad range of local organisations to ensure children have access to high-quality opportunities for employment, training, and careers advice. These include through the Avalon Project, Honest Grind and Connexions Service.

- The Avalon Project is a local alternative education option for young people where student's complete qualifications in Engineering, Construction or Digital Media. Students who attend Avalon come from all backgrounds but there are a high number of young people from Pupil Referral Unit and those with SEND.
- Honest Grind is our award-winning paid work experience programme focused on children with experience of the Youth Justice System. The programme delivers one to one or small group work, training young people within the coffee industry, from bean roasting to customer service and online marketing.
- Connexions is a careers and advice service for young people in schools and the community. In 2025, the Connexions community team worked with 420 young people, providing 2044 individual contacts, while the schools team supported approximately 1,300 young people across the borough.

## 4.4 Pillar 4 — Strengthening Inclusion in Settings

### 4.4.1 Key Data

- **In Camden, 51%** of children with EHCPs attend mainstream schools. DfE January 2025 census data confirmed that nationally, 44% of pupils with EHCPs were being educated in mainstream settings.
- **349** children receive ENG funding aligned with level need for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA).

### 4.4.2 Tools and Staff Development

- **Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit** published January 2026 with plans to support embedding in Spring 2026
- Cluster Inclusion Forums provide professional supervision for SENDCOs
- Educational Psychology Service delivered strong outcomes:
  - **84% positive progress** across 304 early intervention targets
  - Trauma Informed Practice in Schools (TIPiC) model now embedded in **38 schools**
  - Satisfaction: **4.18/5** (children & young people (CYP)) and **4.67/5** (parents)

### 4.4.3 Early Years Inclusion Team

- Average feedback scores between **4.8 and 4.9 out of 5**
- Evidenced improvements in communication, regulation and learning for young children with SEND

## 5. Priorities for 2026

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### 1. Reducing Waiting Times & Improving Timeliness

- Deliver EHCP timeliness recovery plan
- Improve neurodevelopmental assessment throughput
- Strengthen shared pathways across education, health, and social care

### 2. Delivering the SEND & AP Commissioning Plan

- Create ~70 new local specialist places (ASD/SEMH focus) over coming years
- Reduce reliance on external placements
- Implement banding, admissions and resourcing frameworks

### 3. Embedding the Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit

- Ensure consistent practice across settings
- Support schools to meet predictable needs
- Strengthen oversight of ENG vs EHCP decision-making

### 4. Strengthening Workforce Capability

- Boroughwide SEND workforce development plan
- Improve SEND knowledge for pupils, professionals, and leaders

### 5. Deepening Coproduction & Relational Practice

- Standardise communication expectations
- Strengthen complaint resolution and dispute avoidance
- Increase CYP participation in EHCP reviews and decision-making

### 6. Improving Pathways to Adulthood

- Map pathways for all SEND cohorts
- Strengthen Year 9+ preparation, post-16 options and transitions
- Improve advice, mentoring and employability support

## 6. Context

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- 6.1 The SEND Strategy 2022-27 was approved by Cabinet and published in November 2022. This report provides an overview of progress against delivering this strategy in 2025, the third year of strategy implementation. As well as publishing a progress report each year, we develop an implementation plan setting out how the partnership will deliver our strategic goals. The implementation plan for 2026 can be found in Appendix A setting out our high-level plans for delivery over the next 12 months, and regular updates on progress on this plan will be published. The full strategy and previous progress reports and implementation plans can be found here: [Our SEND strategies - Camden Council](#)
- 6.2 Through 2025, the partnership of professionals from health, care and education, as well as families and organisations representing them, has made significant progress in delivering our goals. In 2024, we increased our evidence base on the strengths and areas of focus for the partnership, including through the SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee's SEND Provision Scrutiny Panel Report. This meant that the partnership was well set up to act on the recommendations and evidence provided, and focus interventions on the areas that would make the biggest difference for the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families.
- 6.3 In line with Local Authorities across the country, in Camden the number of children and young people with SEND is increasing significantly. Central Government have committed to reforming the SEND

system, but the announcement of these reforms has been delayed, and speculation is causing anxiety for families. In 2025 the partnership received 428 referrals for an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) compared with 246 referrals in 2024 – a 74% increase. This puts pressure on services across the partnership who all contribute to the assessment process. Whereas in 2024, there was a decision to assess for 89% of these referrals, in 2025 that has dropped 18 percentage points to 71%, showing a higher proportion of referrals that do not meet thresholds.

6.4 Our role in the Department for Education’s **SEND Change Programme** has enabled local practice to inform national decision-making and supported our readiness for reform. The Secretary of State for Education set out the key principles underpinning the upcoming reforms:

- I. **Early.** Children should receive the support they need as soon as possible. This will start to break the cycle of needs going unmet and getting worse, instead intervening upstream, earlier in children’s lives when this can have the most impact.
- II. **Local.** Children and young people with SEND should be able to learn at a school close to their home, alongside their peers, rather than travelling long distances from their family and community. Special schools should continue to play a vital role supporting those with complex needs.
- III. **Fair.** Every school should be resourced and able to meet common and predictable needs, including as they change over time, without parents having to fight to get support for their children. Where specialist provision is needed for children in mainstream, special or Alternative Provision, we will ensure it is there, with clear legal requirements and safeguards for children and parents.
- IV. **Effective.** Reforms should be grounded in evidence, ensuring all education settings know where to go to find effective practice that has excellent long-term outcomes for children.
- V. **Shared.** Education, health and care services should work in partnership with one another, local government, families, teachers, experts and representative bodies to deliver better experiences and outcomes for all our children.

6.5 These principles are well aligned with our local approach, where we have a strong, inclusive mainstream offer and a funding model which prioritises early intervention. The table below outlines how our delivery plans align with these national priorities.

National principle	Pillar of delivery	Planned work
Early	Developing excellent provision and services; Strengthen inclusion in settings	Local Inclusion Support Offer; Family Help model; Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit
Local	Developing excellent provision and services; Strengthen inclusion in settings	SEND and AP Commissioning Plan; Local Inclusion Support Offer; Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit
Fair	Excellence in SEND	Strengthened decision making; relational practice
Effective	Throughout	
Shared	Empowering families through collaborative support; Excellence in SEND	Improving quality of EHCPs

6.6 While improvements have been made over the last year, the partnership recognises that there is still significant work to be done to ensure that every child and young person with SEND receives the support that they need to improve their outcomes and experiences. The implementation plan for 2026 shows the ambitions that the partnership holds to continue this improvement journey and deliver our local strategy.

## 7. Educational outcomes

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- 7.1 At Key Stage 2 (end of primary school in year 6), 39% of pupils on SEN Support achieved the expected standard, the same as London average and 10% above the national average. 10% of pupils with an EHCP achieved the expected standard, ranked 49<sup>th</sup> nationally.
- 7.2 At Key Stage 4 (end of secondary school in year 11), pupils on SEN Support achieved an average of 34.1 points, slightly below the London average (38.5) and above the England average (33.7). Pupils with EHCPs achieved an average of 15.6 points, again slightly below the London average (18) and above the England average (14.8).
- 7.3 It should be noted that children receiving funding through ENG are included within the SEN Support cohort despite reaching the same threshold as children on EHCPs. This means that the SEN Support and EHCP cohorts include some children with higher levels of need than in neighbouring boroughs.

## 8. Pillars of work

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At the beginning of 2025 we set out the following pillars to prioritise how we worked:

**8.1 Empowering families through collaborative support:** Our ambition is to enhance our partnership approach, developing stronger connections at both individual case and strategic levels, while cultivating trusting relationships with local parent carers, children and young people.

8.1.1 We are committed to:

- I. Amplify family voices in decision-making processes
- II. Ensure seamless collaboration among support services
- III. Deliver tailored, comprehensive support to meet each family's unique needs

8.1.2 By achieving this ambition, we envision a SEND support system where:

- I. Children and young people with SEND and their families feel genuinely heard and valued
- II. Families actively participate in shaping the support they receive
- III. Services work together, providing integrated and effective support
- IV. Families experience a cohesive support network that responds efficiently to their needs

**8.2 Achieving excellence in SEND and Alternative Provision (AP):** Our ambition is to create a SEND and AP system that delivers excellent support, ensuring children, young people, and their families achieve the best possible outcomes.

8.2.1 We are committed to:

- I. Strengthening the quality and impact of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) to better meet individual needs and aspirations.
- II. Embedding data-driven performance monitoring to drive continuous improvement and accountability.
- III. Investing in our workforce to develop the expertise needed to provide exceptional support and guidance.

8.2.2 By achieving this ambition, we envision a SEND support system where:

- I. Children and young people receive person-centred, high-quality EHCPs that accurately reflect their needs and aspirations.
- II. Families and settings experience more responsive and effective services, tailored to their evolving requirements.
- III. Data-informed decisions lead to timely interventions and improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- IV. A highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce provides expert support, guidance, and care to families.
- V. Children and young people with SEND and their families feel confident in the quality and reliability of the SEND support they receive.

**8.3 Developing excellent provision and services:** Our ambition is to ensure the needs of children and young people are met within their communities

8.3.1 We are committed to:

- I. Reviewing the services we commission and strengthening the focus on impact for young people
- II. Review the specialist education places commissioned to ensure there are sufficient places to meet needs
- III. Strong oversight of High Needs Block funding to make sure that we are achieving the greatest positive impact with the funding available
- IV. Considering different ways of working to achieve stronger outcomes

8.3.2 By achieving this ambition, we envision a SEND support system where:

- I. Families experience high quality services that help them to achieve their aspirations and meet their needs
- II. Children and young people attend education settings that match their needs and preferences

**8.4 Strengthening inclusion in settings:** Our ambition is for families to feel welcomed and supported in mainstream services and schools.

8.4.1 We are committed to:

- I. Support mainstream schools to strengthen inclusion and enable them to meet a wide range of needs
- II. Enable a wide range of family services to provide inclusive environments for children and young people with SEND

8.4.2 By achieving this ambition, we envision a SEND support system where:

- I. Children and young people with SEND thrive in mainstream education settings
- II. Children and young people with SEND are able to participate in activities and support across the borough

## Progress in 2025

### 9. Pillar one: empowering families through collaborative support

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- 9.1. Throughout 2025, there has been considerable progress in how we work in partnership with families to strengthen outcomes for children and young people. As a partnership we know that we still have work to do to ensure that families feel supported and do not feel that they have to battle to get the support they need.
- 9.2. The SEND and Inclusion Service redesign increased capacity for engagement with families through three additional roles. As well as enabling a step change in the level of engagement with families, it has improved the quality of engagement through setting out the key principles for empowering engagement. This approach is aligned with work across the council on participation to ensure that there is consistency in how we are working with families. There are three key areas where we have strengthened how we work with families: how their voice informs decision making; how we reach out to families to provide information and support; and improving our online information offer to families.
- 9.3. **Voice** Additional activity has included a series of focus groups on the key subjects that mattered to parents: communication, EHCP and dispute resolution. Their feedback has been shared across the partnership and resulted in a number of changes, including reviewing language in letters and on Local Offer to improve accessibility. Before each SEND Inclusion Board, there are sessions with parent carers to provide updates on the delivery of strategy progress and to hear any feedback. These are separate from coproduction activities which are set up to support the development of specific pieces of work. Alongside work with parent carers, there has been work to strengthen how the voice of children and young people informs our work. Over the summer holidays, we worked with a group of Young Inspectors to run an investigation into children and young people's voices in Education, Health and Care Plans. The Young Inspectors programme has been running since 2007 with the purpose to empower young people with lived experience of services to inspect how these services are delivered and make recommendations for their improvement and future development. This year's team was made up of seven Young Inspectors aged 16 to 22, including young people with care experience, some with SEN or their own EHC plan or others with experience of siblings with SEN. Over the two-week project, they facilitated focus groups with eight young people and two parent carers, conducted nine interviews with professionals, and gathered feedback through 18 surveys completed by young people and nine surveys from SEND professionals. Their full report can be found [here](#) and the partnership's response to their recommendations is in appendix 3. We are also mapping their recommendations against those from the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee Panel [SEND Provision Panel Report](#).
- 9.4. **Outreach** Work has continued to reach out to a wide range of families, with a particular focus on families who are more likely to miss out on services. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) coordinated a partnership Bengali Marketplace Event, providing information on SEND services and support from across the partnership. This followed

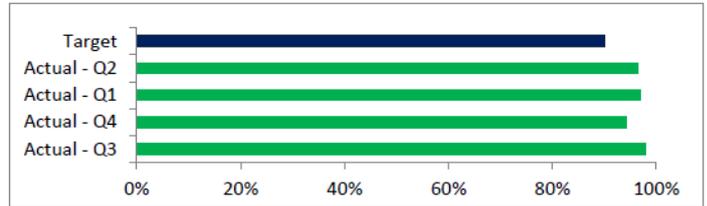
the successful Somali Marketplace Event which was run in 2024 and is in response to feedback about the need for tailored information. The SEND and Inclusion Service have also run outreach sessions for the Somali and Bengali communities in partnership with the Somali Resource Centre and Muslim World League.

- 9.5. In the Autumn Term 2025, the partnership came together to deliver a Local Offer Roadshow, where the community bus visited a number of schools in the borough to provide information on services for children and young people with SEND. The community bus visited six schools, and eight different services were involved in providing information at the sessions. Over 20 parent carers visited the bus and all of them said they knew where to go for further support after their visit. The team have also been attending coffee mornings at schools to meet and engage with parents of children with SEND. This approach of engaging through schools is useful in reaching parents that we may not otherwise reach or engage with, or who may not feel comfortable or confident attending forums or giving feedback.
- 9.6. The partnership also ran a Preparing for Adulthood Event in March to provide young people with information to help them with planning their next steps. Around 60 young people attended the event from local colleges, mainstream schools and special schools, as well as those who are electively home educated or NEET, and they provided positive feedback on the information that they had been able to access.
- 9.7. We have also improved our digital information offer, to support families to access the information they need easily. After the launch of the refreshed Local Offer website in 2024, work has continued to improve the website based on feedback from families and to ensure compliance with statutory requirements. We have worked to increase awareness of the Local Offer as the key hub for information, including through advertising on digital screens across the borough in the summer. These changes include significantly reducing the number of records on the website, changing the navigation of the website, and making text easier to read. The impact of these improvements can be seen through the increase in the number of people using the website with visits nearly doubling across the Autumn Term - increasing from 460 to 1,337 in October, from 525 to 898 in November, and from 380 to 726 in December when comparing 2024 to 2025. The team continue to gather and respond to feedback to enable continuous improvement, including through running two focus groups on the Local Offer in the Autumn Term.
- 9.8. North Central London Integrated Care Board (ICB) launched their new Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) support site, coproduced with young people, parent carers and professionals across the five North London Boroughs. [The site](#) provides tailored guidance and support for children and

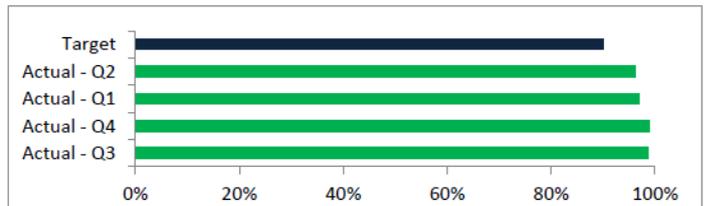
young people, their families, and professionals. It includes a searchable directory of services and a live calendar of local events and training.

Feedback to health services shows a high level of satisfaction with the services:

Percentage of children, young people and parents saying they would recommend the service to a friend or family member



Percentage of parents/carers who say that their confidence and/or knowledge to support their child at home has increased as a result of support from the service



- 9.9. The council have introduced a new parent carer bulletin, sent to all parent carers of a child with an EHCP and parent carers who sign up to receive further information. This has been a helpful way to reach parents who might not otherwise receive information about things that are happening locally and services available in the borough. It is coordinated with the Camden Parent Carer Forum newsletter and we will continue to review content and frequency to make it most useful for parents. Through this new bulletin, various organisations have been able to promote their work in supporting children and families.
- 9.10. SENDIASS and the Camden Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) continue to provide high-quality support for local families. As well as the Bengali Marketplace Event, SENDIASS have provided a high-quality programme of events for families, including setting up a new group to fathers who have been less likely to engage to date. The team continue to provide high-quality training to parents and professionals to build understanding of the SEND system. SENDIASS have also been seeing a significant increase in demand for services, including increases in request for support from families going through the tribunals process. They have changed their referral processes so that referrals must come directly from families rather than professionals and are working with professional partners so that they can answer a larger number of queries themselves.
- 9.11. Camden Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) continues to provide support to parent carers of children with SEND, including through a busy calendar of events where parents can connect with each other and the forum. They also work closely with services in the borough to feed parent voice into decision-making on how services are shaped and developed. They have worked to respond to and support anxiety that some local families are feeling as they await Government reforms. Membership of the forum has grown by 33% from 406 to 540 through 2025, and outreach and growth remain a priority for CPCF. In response to feedback from families and to align with the national network, the forum changed their name from Camden Special Parent Forum to Camden Parent Carer Forum. Although CPCF operates term time only, they decided to organise a summer trip, recognising that the summer holidays can be difficult emotionally and financially. Over twenty families visited London Zoo and the feedback from families was excellent. The capacity of the forum to meet the needs of local families is an ongoing challenge, and

there are ongoing discussions around reviewing the commission to ensure that there is enough capacity.

#### Camden Parent Carer Forum (CPCF)

- 33% increase in membership from 406 to 540
- Focus on outreach with 111 meetings or event with external agencies

## 10. Pillar two: achieving excellence in SEND

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- 10.1. This pillar works towards strengthening the delivery of our SEND services to ensure that we meet needs. It has been underpinned by the redesign of the SEND and Inclusion Service, with the new structure going live at the beginning of 2025 to bring services closer to the communities and families they serve. There has been a large training programme taking place through the year to ensure that the team are equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet the expectations of the service.
- 10.2. Locally and nationally, the SEND system can feel adversarial and too often families feel that they need to fight to get their entitlements. Locally, there has been work to resolve concerns as early as possible to reduce conflict and meet needs early. SEND Surgeries and a Duty Line have been introduced to make it easier for families to get updates on their case and work together to resolve any blockages. In the 2025/26 Autumn term, the SEN Team handled more than 230 enquiries via the Duty Line, with over 70% of calls coming from parents. A follow-up tracker is now in place to ensure that all actions are monitored and completed by the appropriate case officer. SEND surgeries started in 2024 and provided an important space for parents and carers to access direct, face-to-face support and to raise concerns and questions. It demonstrates effective partnership working with parents and carers and has contributed to earlier identification of issues and more timely support. The key themes raised by parent carers included EHC Plan processes, access to mental health support, and clarity of SEND information. This feedback is informing service improvement, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and the training offer to parents and carers. Some parent carers, particularly those from underrepresented families, found that running these sessions in council buildings acted as a barrier to participation. As a result, the surgeries have been run in schools since September 2025, and all attendees who completed feedback forms said that they were very satisfied with the location. An average of 12 parent carers attended each of the surgeries. Feedback from parent carers included: "This is absolutely brilliant, so helpful. Thank you" and "Hopefully the follow up will prove to be as good as the surgery."
- 10.3. SEN Case Officers are visiting schools every term to plan ahead for children with EHCPs or receiving ENG funding and build stronger relationships between schools and the SEN team. These are in addition to visits to schools from the Educational Psychology Service and Early Years Intervention Team (EYIT). In the Autumn Term 2025, SEN Case Officers visited 65% of primary schools, 85% of secondary schools and 95% of post-16 settings, and 100% of visits for all phases are booked in for Spring and Summer Term. The visits for primary schools in the Autumn Term were impacted by staff absence and processes have now been put in place to ensure senior cover when there are absences. SENDCOs have been positive about the impact of these visits valuing the responsiveness and strong follow-up after visits and termly planning meetings are described as "really helpful for planning and updates."

Secondary SENDCOs also report improved communication and quicker response times and have welcomed the increased visibility of officers at Annual Reviews and termly visits, noting that these changes are already showing impact on EHCP updates.

- 10.4. Phase transfer processes have been changed so parent information sessions are run in the summer term in the year before the process starts and annual reviews take place in the autumn term to support schools to be named early and a well-planned transfer. Work has continued to embed a relational practice approach in the work of the service, where professionals are encouraged to build honest, compassionate, trust-based relationships with residents and other professionals. This has underpinned the comprehensive training programme that was delivered through the year for the SEND and Inclusion Service to support all staff to have the skills and knowledge needed. It has also been supported by termly development days for the service to support ongoing CPD. The development day in the Autumn Term focused on the family experience, including a session co-delivered with the Camden Parent Carer Forum to bring the experiences of families into the learning on the day. Attendees completed an exercise mapping out the demands on parent carers at different points in the day and then completed a visual exercise to understand how this might feel for a parent carer. At the end of the day, 88% of attendees were confident in achieving the service vision.
- 10.5. In line with national trends, there has been an increase in the number of appeals to tribunal in Camden. In 2025, there were 60 appeals while maintaining 1,707 plans (3.5%), compared with 56 appeals with 1,605 maintained plans in 2024 (3.4%) and 45 appeals with 1,532 maintained plans in 2023 (2.9%).. The majority of the appeals are in relation to section I (education placement), either in conjunction with other section(s) or only section I. There is ongoing analysis of the cases coming to tribunal to inform the commissioning of specialist provision and ensure that we can offer local education placements that meet needs. In 2025, Camden has prioritised resolving cases before they reach a hearing, increasing early resolutions from 25% in 2023 and 37% in 2024 to 55% in 2025. There is ongoing work to strengthen the local mediation offer and tribunal processes with the aim of resolving concerns as early as possible. The increased number of tribunals is having an impact across the partnership both around providing responses to appeals and in implementing tribunal decisions.
- 10.6. The SEND and Inclusion Service have introduced processes to ensure robust monitoring of the number of complaints, their outcomes and the key themes that they relate to. This is informing ongoing workforce and service development, addressing the issues raised. For example, in response to an emerging theme of complaints around decisions or elements of the statutory process, the service is re-delivering co-production training and identifying additional opportunities for the team to embed co-production approaches throughout casework, recognising that these skills are critical in supporting robust, inclusive and well-evidenced decision-making processes. Poor communication has been a key theme of complaints but there is emerging evidence that these complaints are becoming less frequent due to the efforts to improve communication discussed above with schools and families. Further strengthened monitoring of complaints through a service-performance dashboard will allow more accurate tracking of themes and the impact of changes being made to the service.

10.7. Improving the quality of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) has been a priority throughout the year. Additional resource has been committed to quality assurance, and a monthly multi-agency auditing cycle has been established. This cycle uses a clear ratings framework to support improvement: Gold-rated plans are fully person-centred, legally robust and precisely specified, with clearly defined needs, SMART outcomes and quantified provision;

#### EHC Plan Quality Assurance Improvement

- Monthly multi-agency auditing cycle has been established
- 120% increase in plans rated Silver

Silver-rated plans are compliant and functional but require refinement to improve precision, clarity and consistency; and Bronze-rated plans are unclear or incomplete, often containing vague outcomes, missing or unquantified provision and insufficiently defined needs. The audit programme has highlighted several areas for improvement, and partnership work is continuing to address these. As a result, there are now stronger quality assurance processes in place before plans are signed off. There has been a focus on joint working across the partnership, including a joint workshop with health colleagues, to build understanding of how to improve the quality of plans. The audits have shown that the quality of plans is starting to improve with a 120% increase in the number of plans rated as silver (from 2 to 5 plans). This audit work will continue with targets around increasing all plans auditing to gold or silver.

10.8. In recent years, Camden has had strong compliance on meeting the 20-week deadline to complete Education, Health and Care needs, with 96.6% of assessments completed within the 20-week deadline in 2024. We expect this to fall to around 50% when the statutory SEND Data return (SEN2 data) is published for 2025. This fall is driven primarily by the increase in demand with the number of referrals for EHC needs assessment rising from 246 in 2024 to 428 in 2025 – an increase of 74%. Alongside this, the redesign of the SEND and Inclusion Service meant a large number of vacancies and new starters within the team, and the introduction of strengthened quality assurance processes to sign off plans has also had an impact on their timeliness. There is a robust recovery plan in place to ensure that the service improve the timeliness of plans' delivery, whilst ensuring that the quality of plans is not impacted.

## 11. Pillar three: developing excellent services and provision

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- 11.1. The partnership has continued to develop the service offer for families, including through additional investment in the neurodiversity diagnostic pathway, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Provider Collaborative, reforms to social care, an inclusive Family Hub offer and developing our support for mainstream schools. In 2026, this work will continue with the development of a SEND and AP Commissioning Plan to ensure sufficient local specialist education places in the borough for children with SEND.
- 11.2. Waiting times for autism assessments has been a key area of focus for the partnership, due to feedback from families and recommendations from the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee Panel report. The average number of weeks from referral to ASD assessment completion for children aged 0–5 fell by around 20% between March–May and June–August 2025, decreasing from 91 weeks to 74

weeks. For children aged 5 and over, the average completion time remained broadly consistent across both three-month periods.

- 11.3. Over a number of years, the number of children and young people referred for assessment has continued to increase, putting pressure on diagnostic services. The average monthly number of accepted new referrals for children aged 0–5 decreased over the past three-month period, falling from an average of 17 per month between March–May to 14 per month between June–August. For children aged 5 and over, the average increased across the same periods, rising from 26 to 29 referrals per month. To respond to this growing need, North Central London Integrated Care Board (NCL ICB) introduced a transformation programme, along with additional funding, with the aim of ensuring a standardised neurodevelopmental pathway across the five NCL boroughs delivered by a multi-agency team of highly skilled professionals and significantly reducing waiting times for diagnostic assessment. As part of the transformation work, there has been a significant focus on improving the quality of our data collection to enable close monitoring of referrals and assessment activity.
- 11.4. In Camden, there were two elements to the investment: recurrent funding to increase diagnostic capacity as well as one off funding to work through the backlog of families waiting for assessment. The backlog funding was used to commission an external provider to conduct 140 assessments between March 2025 and November 2025. The additional funding was used to recruit seven new posts, including four Assistant Practitioners to free up clinicians to spend more time doing clinical work. A shorter diagnostic pathway has been introduced for children under five, where there is very strong evidence of autism and the diagnosis is more clear cut. Children on this pathway will be assessed and receive diagnosis in one day. Assessment activity in Camden has shown a steady increase over the last 18 months. NHS data from the Q2 2025/26 Camden Integrated Children Service Performance Report shows there has been a 98% increase in the number of children starting an ASD assessment from March to August 2025 in comparison with the six-month period prior.
- 11.5. However, the number of requests for assessments also continue to increase and waiting times for assessment remain challenging. Camden consistently receive high-quality referrals from our partners, indicating a good understanding of children’s needs. Camden waiting times are high, in line with neighbouring boroughs. NHS data shows that the average weeks from referral to ASD assessment completion for children 0-5 years old from March to August 2025 has been 82 weeks. Over the same period the average waiting time was 99 weeks for children over 5 years old.
- 11.6. The transformation programme continues into 2026, including work to create a stronger pathway for children and young people undertaking dual assessment for ASD and ADHD. In 2025, there have been some issues around retaining roles in the diagnostic team. This is being kept under review with the aim of making changes to job roles if needed, to strengthen retention. The underspend from vacancies in 2025 is being used to commission a provider to complete assessments. More widely, the partnership

#### Improving Autism Assessment Waiting Times

- **Boosted Capacity:** Seven new staff recruited to increase diagnostic throughput
- **Backlog Response:** 140 external assessments commissioned for 2025
- **Faster Pathways:** One-day diagnostic route introduced for under-fives with strong evidence of autism

continues to prioritise a needs-led approach so that children can have their needs met with or without diagnosis. Information is now also being shared between NCL and the council for children waiting for diagnosis, to enable targeted outreach to offer support while waiting for diagnosis.

11.7. The council is continuing work to implement national reforms to social care, which will positively impact children with SEND who are more likely to receive support through social care. We are prototyping a new model for delivering social care in the East neighbourhood of the borough. This prototype is piloting three multi-agency teams in the neighbourhood, including Social Workers, Family Workers, Youth Workers and Domestic Abuse Workers. The team is co-located to support joint working. This work is informed by discovery findings and feedback, including findings around the high prevalence of children with SEND receiving social care support. Our vision is for a community-centred system where family networks are the first line of support, and professionals from social care, health, education and police collaborate seamlessly to protect and empower children. Families with children with SEND tell us that they get frustrated by needing to re-tell their story to multiple different teams, who do not always work together effectively, so this model will help to meet these concerns. As part of this work, the council are reviewing their Early Help offer to ensure that all families can access the right support at the right time. The prototyping approach that is being used for this work allows any issues to be identified and resolved early, so that the model can continue to be adapted and improved through learning from delivery.

11.8. Camden's Family Hubs have continued to develop to provide an inclusive universal service, as well as support targeted to children with SEND. Ensuring the workforce have the right skills and knowledge has been a key part of this and a training needs analysis has been completed. Autism Education Trust (AET) training has been delivered to 65 Family Hub staff and partners. Neurodiversity-affirmative practice training has reached all maintained nursery staff, and SEND stay-and-play sessions have been set up. The professionals' SEND advice line pilot launched successfully. Next steps include embedding AET training into induction and monitoring the impact of neurodiversity training. Inclusive practice audits will also be extended to community partners such as libraries, reflecting on standardising inclusive practices at rhyme times.

11.9. The Family Hubs are also promoting existing parenting programmes including MyChild, ATLAS (Path Towards Peaceful Co-Parenting education program), and AET parent training, and Video Interaction Guidance therapeutic intervention support (VIG). Early Years SEND Coffee mornings and peer support groups have been piloted. Next steps include promoting VIG more widely, embedding coffee mornings into the termly SEND offer, and continuing to advertise training and support through the Local Offer and Family Hub websites. Quiet stay-and-play sessions have launched, sensory support bags have been piloted, and sensory rooms' SEND enhanced offer refined, with structured booking systems and parent guidance. SEND noticeboards will be audited and implemented across hubs. Next steps include promoting sensory resources more effectively, expanding pilots to all hubs, and creating walkthrough

### **Sensory Rooms in Family Hubs**

In 2024/25, 92 children accessed the sensory room at Agar Children's Centre & Family Hub, an increase on previous years. Sensory room access is positioned as a universal, preventative offer, with staff working alongside families to understand each child's individual needs and tailor sessions accordingly. This supports inclusion within stay and play, and wider Family Hub services, while also enabling early identification of children who may benefit from targeted SEND support.

Through this approach, Family Hubs act as a bridge between universal and targeted SEND

videos and social stories to reduce parental anxiety. Additional funding will also be provided to all Family Hubs to develop SEND coordinator roles. We anticipate that these roles will act as a conduit to strengthen connections between families and local services and settings.

11.10. Camden Kids Talk (CKT) project continues to support children, families and staff in Camden in supporting communication and language development for under 5s. Camden Kids Talk (CKT) consists of a multi-agency team with Speech and Language therapists from NHS Whittington and Family Hubs services, including a Specialist Teacher. CKT's mission continues to be to "give all pre-school children living in Camden the opportunity to develop their speech, language and communication skills to support their wellbeing and to reach their potential".

11.11. CKT offers universal training to all workforce teams across Camden that work with children under 5. It also provides enhanced support to 16 primary school-based nursery classes, 1 nursery school and the maintained nurseries. In 2025 it expanded to begin to work with private, voluntary and independent

providers and childminders. Workforce development is focussed around improving the quality of the interactions between children and professionals via ShREC ([The ShREC approach | EEF](#)). Targeted staff workforce groups have had the opportunity to work closely with Speech and Language therapists to develop these skills through reflective coaching sessions.

### Impact of Camden Kids Talk

- Needs identified earlier, with 9% of children identified with a speech and language need aged 1 compared to 1% previously
- Reduction in need from 51% to 35% of children screened as Red after a year at Camden Kids Talk setting

11.12. Early identification for targeted support is another key element of the approach. The WellComm screening tool was introduced as an alternative to the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) which has been found to under identify communication concerns. The team have spent considerable time training the Community Nursery Nurses and there's a plan to work with the Health Visiting leads to further develop practice in this area. Before the introduction of WellComm, less than 1% were identified as having speech and language need at their 1 Year review; this has now increased (October 2025) to 9%. Children that are identified early, via a WellComm screen at 1, as in need of targeted support are encouraged to attend Tiny Talker programme, which is co-delivered by Speech and Language Therapists from the CKT team and Early Childhood Workers from family hub services. They are trying to ensure that the team consider the support for families from the wider offer and trying to establish a clear pathway for children with clear needs into the neurodevelopmental clinic at the Royal Free Hospital. Next steps include looking at a clear referral pathway into the neurodevelopmental clinic and refining data sharing

11.13. The Wellcomm Screening tool has also been introduced to all Early Year settings that are involved in the CKT project. In 2024 -2025 the percentage of children that screened Red (1 year or more below expected levels of communication and language) decreased from 51% to 35%. Thirty-three per cent of children that attended a setting for one academic year made accelerated progress, decreasing the gap between the section they screened green on and expected section in WellComm.

11.14. The CKT pathway outlines the way that children and families are supported through services from birth up to starting school. It provides guidance to professionals and families of how services can support in early identification of communication needs, followed by timely access to early help without the need for

immediate specialist referrals. Information is shared between services to help to identify children who may need broader developmental support.

- 11.15. We have improved data sharing between health, education, and local authority systems. Camden Mosaic, Camden's integrated service for children and young people with disabilities, CDT (Child Development Team), waiting lists are now shared monthly with the LA, and specialist health visitors are working more closely with the Family Hub Inclusion Lead. This supports outreach to families awaiting assessment, particularly targeting children who are not accessing early education. Next steps include finalising an online pathways navigation tool for professionals and ensuring families not yet in education receive targeted SEND information.
- 11.16. We continue to work to make our libraries welcoming and inclusive to children with SEND. All libraries have ear defenders for adults and children to use and a wiki and easy-read welcome guide for the libraries has been created. In 2025, we launched the Imagination Library, funded by the Postcode Lottery and delivered in partnership with the Dollywood Foundation. All families with under 5s can register and receive one free book in the post each month until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Swiss Cottage Library and School continue to work closely together, with pupils working with staff to design the Children's Library there. They are also displaying artwork created by children with autism as part of the development of the Autism Strategy.
- 11.17. In July 2025, the council launched a School Sufficiency Programme which includes a focus on SEND and Alternative Provision (AP). In Spring 2026, the council will provide an update to schools on initial proposals to increase additional SEND & AP places, with the aim of developing more provision locally to meet the needs of children and young people in Camden.

Through the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and local data and insights, it is recognised that there is a need to increase provision for children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and those with autism, by approximately 70 places across both phases of education.

Spend on placements in independent and non-maintained special schools (INMSS) has increased from £2.9m in 2021/22 to a projected £7.5m in 2025/26, in part driven by a shortage of local provision. Our forecasts show that the numbers of children needing specialist provision in coming years is likely to grow and given the broader school context within Camden, this provides an opportunity to maximise provision within the existing school footprint.

The SEND & AP Commissioning Plan is underpinned by the following principles:

- **Right place:** We want to ensure children can access the right provision, in acceptable timeframes, to match their learning needs.
- **Close to home:** We want to ensure that children and young people can attend education in their local area.
- **Sustainable resource:** We want to ensure that our high needs funding is re-invested into Camden schools and settings.

- 11.18. There has been a review of current provision and the school estate to understand where there are opportunities for new provision or expanding current provision. This work will be underpinned by clearer decision-making processes and a review of banding, to ensure that provision is financially sustainable. All decisions about SEND school admissions and resource allocation, including travel assistance, are now made at panel to ensure consistent and transparent allocation of resources. Case Officers are attending resource panels to represent the child that is being discussed. This has helped to ensure that

the child and their needs and ambitions are central to decision-making and shows the value of the Case Officers and the relationships they build with individual children.

- 11.19. There has also been work this year to develop a CAMHS Provider Collaborative across NCL, with a single Lead Provider. This aims to bring together the four NHS trusts to deliver more coordinated, accessible and effective mental health care for children and young people. North London NHS Foundation Trust are the lead provider, responsible for coordinating services and ensuring high-quality, consistent delivery across the region. Work has been undertaken to bring providers together and set up the collaborative, including completing a CAMHS Needs Assessment.
- 11.20. NCL have also started a review of community therapies. A provider was appointed in the summer to undertake a review of how therapies are currently being delivered across the four NCL boroughs and identify opportunities for strengthening delivery to better meet needs.
- 11.21. There has also been work to increase outreach support to mainstream schools. As part of the Change Programme, Camden has received Department for Education funding to set up a Local Inclusion Support Offer (LISO) and Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce (APST). The APST is being delivered in partnership with Heath School, providing outreach support to children in years 8 and 9 in targeted mainstream schools who are at risk of exclusion. The team started working with children in the autumn term 2025 and supported 54 pupils during this term. Attendance improved for the pupils receiving support, but there was not a positive impact on attendance when comparing the autumn term when they were receiving support to the previous summer term.
- 11.22. There will be two different strands to the LISO work: strategic support to schools facing significant SEND challenges and outreach support for targeted schools to support phase transfer from primary to secondary school. Camden Learning have been commissioned to provide the strategic support to schools and are working with 11 schools who were identified through the School Sufficiency Programme. In the autumn term 2025, each of these schools had initial context meetings and have an agreed action plan in place to take forward through spring term 2026. The context meetings took account of data outcomes from 2025, current SEND funding, pupil on-roll numbers, staffing, SEND needs school profile and the school sufficiency scores. The action plans now in place include a school adviser working with activities linked to provision mapping, developing the SEND identification and assessment process, developing adaptive provision for identified pupils, supporting strategic leadership of SEND, reviewing deployment of staffing, and evaluating SEND spend and CPD on inclusive practices.
- 11.23. The second strand focuses on specialist outreach support for mainstream schools. A multidisciplinary team is intended to provide training, advice, and direct support to children and young people—both individually and in groups. The primary emphasis is on strengthening whole setting capacity through training and guidance to staff, rather than delivering ongoing, individual pupil level interventions.
- 11.24. However, this element has faced significant implementation challenges. Although DfE funding for the LISO was approved in September 2025, the programme must be delivered by the end of March 2026, leaving insufficient time to design the full programme of work and recruit the required specialist staff. Recruitment in particular has been a major constraint. As a result, we are currently unable to deliver this component of the LISO as originally planned and are exploring alternative delivery options.
- 11.25. In addition, Camden schools have continued to benefit from the Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) support. PINS is an NHS England / Department for Education pilot focused on improving the experiences and outcomes of neurodiverse children and their parents and carers in mainstream primary schools, starting in 2024. Seven Camden schools were part of the PINS

programme in 2024/25 and five schools took part in 2025/26. Participating schools undertook self-assessments to identify the areas where they would like to receive additional support. Local teams then identify interventions (five days per school) to meet identified needs, including from the PINS menu of support. This support included training on neurodiversity for all staff; how to create inclusive neurodiverse environments; consultations in school with a focus on specific groups of children (for example, ADHD); planning and delivery of the LEAN (Learning About Neurodiversity At School) curriculum; and facilitating discussions with staff and parents at share coffee mornings. The work has included focused work with parent carers, including a survey completed by 177 Camden parents and engagement sessions in schools. Their feedback directly informed the interventions with schools. The NCL Parent Carer Forums worked together to create a 'Supporting your Neurodivergent Child' resource available online for parents.

- 11.26. Camden has a strong alternative provision offer with a high-quality, three-tier offer providing targeted support in mainstream, time-limited placements and transitional placements. The introduction of the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforce has strengthened the outreach support available to mainstream secondary schools, with the aim of reducing exclusions and the need for tiers two and three support. There has been pressure on capacity in the primary sector. Capacity at Robson House has been increased by three places, but delays with capital works mean that it has not been possible to open the additional five places that were planned. Instead, there is ongoing work to establish a test & learn proposal to mitigate the risk of placement breakdowns which will open shortly in the Spring Term. Our Alternative Provision model is being reviewed as part of the SEND and AP Commissioning Plan to identify opportunities to integrate children placed in alternative provision back into mainstream, to improve their outcomes and experiences.
- 11.27. The strong SEND offer in our Youth Justice service has been recognised through attaining a Youth Justice SEND Quality Lead Award with Child First Commendation at the first attempt. This award recognises the strategic intent, investment in provision and the intelligent design of joined-up provision and service teams. The process has validated and rewarded a long-standing strategic commitment to the most vulnerable children and young people in the Borough, as evidenced by systems and processes, policy and practice and an extensive network of co-located professionals, organised under the umbrella of Integrated Youth Services, of which the Youth Offending Service is a key partner. The Youth Justice Service was rated as Outstanding by HM Inspectorate of Probation after inspection in early 2025, but this award particularly recognises the support available for children with SEND.

## **12. Pillar 4: Strengthening inclusion in settings**

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- 12.1. In Camden, we continue to focus on inclusion, particularly within mainstream schools and settings. The proportion of children with EHCPs attending mainstream schools is 51% higher than the regional and national average. Nationally, DfE January 2025 census data confirms that 44% of pupils with EHCPs were being educated in mainstream settings. There are also an additional 349 pupils receiving support through Exceptional Needs Grants (ENG) attending mainstream schools. These children meet the same threshold of needs as children with EHCPs. The way we fund schools supports mainstream inclusion. A higher level of funding is devolved directly to schools to support a school-wide, rather than pupil-level, approach to inclusion and to enable schools to intervene early without the need to apply for additional funding.

- 12.2. To support all local mainstream schools to provide a consistent and evidence-based approach to meeting SEND needs, we have developed a Meeting Predictable Needs Toolkit, which replaces the previous Ordinarily Available Provision resources. This Toolkit represents a significant step forward in our commitment to continue to strengthen inclusive education and will allow for settings to access a wide range of resources, support and best practice to meet the needs of pupils prior to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG). The Toolkit was developed in consultation with a Working Group, comprising of SENDCOs, headteachers, parents, outreach services, health service professionals, the Sensory Team, Camden Learning and SENDIASS. A consultation on the draft toolkit was run in October 2025, which gathered feedback from across the partnership. The final version of the toolkit was published ready for the start of the spring term 2026. Throughout this year, there will be close work with schools to embed the use of the toolkit.
- 12.3. When children do have exceptional needs, schools are able to request an Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment (ECHNA) or apply for an ENG. As the spend on ENGs has increased, oversight of the process has also tightened through Senior Case Officers attending cluster meetings to increase consistency between clusters and EHCP Panels. Funding decisions are made at Cluster Inclusion Forums by SENDCOs for one or two years. These meetings have been consistently well attended by SENDCOs, Early Help and Educational Psychologists. Children who receive funding through ENG are now assigned an SEN Case Officer who will work with schools to plan and review support. In 2026, this oversight will be further strengthened, including through running a moderation exercise to examine any differences in funding decisions between ENG and EHCPs; setting up a Head Teachers Advisory Group; and reviewing outcomes for children receiving ENG compared to EHCPs. The Cluster Inclusion Forums also now provide supervision for SENDCOs. This supports them to be more reflective of their own practice and is used to support development and sharing of best practice between SENDCOs. In early 2026, a headteacher steering group will be established to oversee ENG and Cluster developments.
- 12.4. Camden Learning continues to support mainstream schools on meeting SEND needs. The [Camden Learning Professional Development Brochure for 2025–26](#) offer was positively received by the SENDCOs who attended the summer forums. The learning from the ‘Every Child Reading by 7’ Camden Learning initiative for pupils with SEN has been shared with schools as part of the regular CPD sessions at the British Library and provided the basis for a focused SENDCO Forum session on reading in June. We have also provided unique opportunities for children to be involved in STEAM activities across the borough. In April 2025, 1,800 children and young people from across Camden’s mainstream and special schools took part in the Camden Schools’ Music Festival at The Royal Albert Hall. The livestream of the concert attracted over 10,000 views - 8,500 on the mainstream broadcast and 2,100 on the British Sign Language interpreted stream. In 2026, we are looking forward to the Camden Schools’ Arts Biennale, a weeklong exhibition celebrating art, developed by 53 schools.
- 12.5. There have been a number of specific pieces of work with schools to support inclusion, including:
- 12.6. **SEND Hub** has served as a collaborative professional learning network for SENDCOs and inclusion leads across 20 Camden schools. It is led by Kentish Town School and provides evidence-informed training, peer observation, and shared resources. Through the last academic year, the hub achieved the following outcomes:
- I. **Pupil progress:** Schools reported pupils demonstrated gains in attention, engagement and sensory regulation

- II. **Curriculum implementation:** Schools reported adapting their curriculum as a result of training, using scaffolding and universal design principles
- III. **Network building:** SENDCOs formed a supportive peer network, reducing professional isolation and enabling strategic reflection
- IV. **Staff development:** Staff are making use of the training received through the hub, supporting pupil progression. Inclusion Managers report increased confidence in assessing pupils working below key stages, supported by shared resources and peer advice

12.7. **Building expertise for complex SEND in mainstream classrooms initiative:** Rhyl Community Primary School led a group of five primary schools to strengthen support staff expertise in meeting the needs of pupils with complex SEND. This was in response to growing numbers of pupils with complex SEND and a national shortage of skilled teaching assistants. The initiative involved bringing Teaching and Learning Assistants (TLA) together for a programme of peer observations, planning discussions, school visits, external training, reflective sessions and shared resources. The impacts were:

- I. **Improved TLA expertise:** TLAs gained confidence, refined their practice and became stronger advocates for pupils with SEND. This reduced reliance on SENDCOs and fostered a culture of shared responsibility.
- II. **Improved recruitment and retention:** TLAs felt recognised and valued, boosting morale and motivation, and developed stronger working relationships with SENDCOs.

12.8. Every Camden school now has their own online school report, led by Camden Learning, providing fuller information about local schools, including more about the breadth of the education children experience. The format and content of these reports were drafted by a developer group of 15 schools, discussed with parents and trialled with a small group of schools ahead of full roll out. These were reviewed and updated in autumn 2025, having been publicised through Camden admissions booklets and events. You can see them [here](#).

12.9. **Strengthening Autism-Specialist Practice Through National Peer Networks:** Acland Burghley School, which hosts Camden's autism-specialist Additionally Resourced Provision ('The Base'), is leading engagement within the Department for Education's newly launched national peer networks for SEN units and resourced provisions with an autism specialism. Through this work, the Base team shares expertise, resources, and established provision approaches developed at Acland Burghley, supporting peer settings to strengthen practice and raise standards of ASC-focused inclusion nationwide. This leadership role enables effective practice from Acland Burghley and Camden to inform and influence provision across the wider network of specialist settings, supporting the integration and inclusion of students with SEN within mainstream education.

12.10. We have also run a **Camden Primary Careers Day** for the first time since Covid, attended by 206 children from 22 local primary schools. Children with EHCPs were a priority cohort for this event. It introduced Year 4 pupils to a wide range of career pathways through interactive workshops, employer-led stalls and hands-on activities. The event aimed to spark curiosity, broaden horizons and challenge stereotypes about who can do which jobs. Employers from STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), healthcare, creative industries, construction, public service, and logistics

provided activities tailored to year 4 children aged 8–9 years old, from coding robot dogs to exploring 3D-printed bones. Children left inspired, many saying it was “*the best school day ever*” while employers described it as a “*fun challenge*” and “*a powerful reminder of the importance of outreach at this age.*” The structured yet playful format ensured inclusivity, with SEND pupils also able to participate meaningfully.

- 12.11. The Educational Psychology Service continues to provide high-impact psychological services that champion inclusion and improve outcomes for Camden’s children and young people. They strengthened outcome-focused practice through target setting and review at Early Intervention / SEN Support. Progress was reviewed for 110 cases and 304 targets, with 84% showing positive progress, demonstrating meaningful change at early intervention level across learning, independence, relationships and health-related targets.

### Early Years Intervention Team

The team have been supporting DS since 2023, including through his transition to Reception. DS is a happy, lively, interested child with autism. He requires a high level of supervision as he can get overwhelmed and exhibit behaviours of concern. The EYIT have introduced a number of approaches to support transitions, interactions, focus and regulation. They have also worked with his mother to support through the challenges of the larger school environment and during school holidays. DS now joins group activities with his peers, uses communication boards to make choices and follows a visual timetable. DS’s regulation has improved and he is making steady progress at school. His mother said, “*My child is now more confident, more engaged in learning, and better able to manage the school day. The EYIT’s involvement created consistency, reassurance, and a strong foundation for continued progress.*”

They delivered 30 training programmes across the year, with consistently strong feedback, with average evaluation scores at 4.6 out of 5. Their strategic work continued to strengthen whole-school approaches to wellbeing and inclusion. Trauma-Informed Practice in Camden (TIPiC) engaged 38 schools, with clear evidence of impact on whole-school practice and a planned move into a sustainability year in 2025–26 (universal resources plus refresher training). Additionally, we responded to 10 critical incidents, providing emotional containment and strategic support to leadership teams during their most challenging moments. The service receives positive feedback from children and young people and their families and from schools, with children and young people rating Educational Psychologist (EP) involvement as 4.18 out of 5 on average, and parent carers rating at 4.67 out of 5.

- 12.12. The Early Years Intervention Team (EYIT) continue to promote and support inclusion for all children, especially those with identified SEND and embed inclusive practice in Camden’s nursery settings. The team assists Special Educational Needs & Disability Coordinators (SENDCO’s) and nursery practitioners to establish inclusive practice alongside delivering an enhanced offer of differentiated provision, adapted to meet the needs of children with identified SEND, to support their developmental progress and improve their outcomes. The team also supports transition into reception during the autumn term for children already referred to the EYIT. The team continue to receive positive feedback from SENDCOs about their support, with average ratings of 4.8 out of 5 in their feedback questionnaire. Feedback included: “*The support from the EYIT Inclusion Teacher has been incredibly helpful. Their advice is always practical,*”

*tailored to the child's needs, and easy to implement. They are approachable, knowledgeable, and genuinely committed to helping both staff and children succeed. Their involvement has boosted our confidence in supporting children with additional needs and created a more inclusive environment in our setting.' Parent feedback gave an average score of 4.9 out of 5, including one parent saying that, "[the Inclusion Teacher] has been an invaluable source of support and knowledge for both the nursery staff and me as a parent. Over the years, she has consistently shared evidence-based insights that have not only helped guide my approach to supporting my child at home but have also positively influenced the care and understanding of the nursery staff working with my daughter."*

## **13. Areas we will continue to focus on in 2026**

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### **13.1. Multiagency SEND performance dashboard implemented**

Work is ongoing to find technical solutions to enable the partnership dashboard. In the interim, we are creating manual performance reports to enable the partnership to have sight of performance. Further work is needed to agree the metrics for reporting. This will further assist in shining a light on areas of focus across the partnership.

### **13.2. Embed relational practice into our work with families**

The relational practice framework for the Children and Learning Directorate in the council has now been developed, and the SEND and Inclusion service standards embed this approach. There has been a comprehensive training offer for the SEND and Inclusion service to support putting the service standards into practice. There is close performance monitoring of the service and recovery plans in place to work towards the service standards being met for every family.

### **13.3. Commission specialist education places and alternative provision to meet needs in borough**

There have been delays to the planned expansion of Robson House to take an additional six children, which has meant that it has not been possible to place some children with high needs. Instead, officers are working to set up satellite provision to provide further places, using a test & learn approach. Work on the wider SEND and AP Commissioning Plan is progressing well and there will be an update on this work provided to schools at the end of February.

### **13.4. Develop individual multi-agency action plans for the highest need children currently in mainstream settings**

Through the development of the school sufficiency programme, of which SEND is one of the key three pillars, the work to address support for schools with a high proportion of SEND has evolved. Officers are developing a LISO 'Teams around the school' (delivered by Camden Learning) that can be utilised to support schools with acute challenges. This could be to explore school wide strategies to meeting SEND needs.

Officers have revised proportionality payments so that schools receive 75% of payment upfront in April. SEND Case Officers continue to meet with schools to hear and respond to concerns for children with complex needs, with senior officers where requested. We continue to review proportionality payments to ensure that those with the highest numbers of SEND are adequately resourced.

### **13.5. Strengthen employment support within schools**

The SEND Employment Forum is being reinvigorated as of February 2026 and will be chaired by the Head of Inclusive Economy and co-chaired by Head of SEND and Inclusion and the Employment

Services Delivery Manager. The SEND Employment Forum aims to support better employment outcomes for children and young people with SEND. In line with the DfE's aims, this includes improving preparation for adulthood, strengthening pathways into work and developing stronger links between education, employers and local services. The forum provides a space to share insight, identify and challenge barriers, and work collaboratively on practical solutions.

#### 13.6. **Risks and mitigation:**

Central Government approach to SEND: The Schools White Paper has been pushed back until the new year, having previously been expected in the autumn. The Government's approach to meeting SEND needs and could include significant changes to the current system. We will continue to monitor Government statements on reform, while continuing to implement our own strategic improvements. The reforms being tested through the Change Programme are in line with our strategic plans, giving some confidence that we will be aligned with future central Government changes.

## 14. Conclusion

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- 14.1. Across 2025, Camden's SEND Partnership has taken significant steps forward in strengthening the local system and improving the lived experience of children, young people and families. Guided by the four pillars of our SEND Strategy, partners have worked collectively to redesign services, embed more relational and responsive practice, and ensure that families are better supported at every stage of their journey.
- 14.2. Under Pillar One, we have deepened collaboration with families through expanded engagement roles, clearer principles for empowering participation, targeted outreach and continued improvements to the Local Offer. Children and young people's voices have been elevated through initiatives such as the Young Inspectors programme, ensuring lived experience informs decision-making. However, we know that there is more work to do to ensure children and families voices are at the heart of decision making. In 2026, we will create a partnership dashboard on coproduction activities and impact, build links with hard to reach communities and scope the possibility of setting up a family steering group to inform improvements to the local offer.
- 14.3. Through Pillar Two, we have focused on delivering excellence in SEND, supported by the redesign of the SEND and Inclusion Service and a substantial training programme. Improvements in communication, quality assurance and partnership working with schools are already visible. While rising need has affected timeliness, robust recovery plans and strengthened processes provide a clear path to improvement. In 2026 we will continue to embed high expectations for all staff across the partnership to help ensure that families and key stakeholders feel listened to and have access to high quality services.
- 14.4. Pillar Three saw continued development of local services and provision, including neurodevelopmental pathway transformation, Family Hub expansion, early years initiatives and greater integration across health, education and social care. System level planning, including the SEND and AP Commissioning Plan and the CAMHS Provider Collaborative, is helping ensure support remains sustainable and aligned to future needs.
- 14.5. Under Pillar Four, Camden strengthened inclusion across mainstream settings. Schools continue to support high numbers of children with complex needs, aided by the new Meeting Predictable Needs

Toolkit, targeted outreach, enhanced early years support and strong professional development offers. Collaborative networks and improved oversight of ENGs continue to promote consistent, inclusive practice.

- 14.6. Overall, this progress provides a strong foundation for 2026. While the SEND system continues to face significant pressures, including increased and complexity of need, the partnership has shown sustained resilience, innovation and a collective commitment to inclusion which will support future planned activity.

## 15. Next Steps

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- 15.1. We have an ambitious programme of work for the year ahead and to end of the strategy period, continuing to deliver against the same pillars as in previous years. Our implementation plan for 2026 provides the headline activity and is included in Appendix A in this report. Once the Schools White Paper is published, all Local Authorities will be asked to produce a Local Reform Plan setting out how they will deliver the reforms. We will review our strategy implementation plan at this point in order to ensure that our plans to deliver our local strategy alongside national reforms are aligned.

Some of the highlights of our implementation plan include:

- I. Strengthening how professionals work in partnership with children and young people with SEND and their families to coproduce services that work for them.
- II. Improved quality of EHCPs and support on offer for families, with performance monitoring tracking changes and guiding improvements.
- III. Developing a clear plan for increasing the capacity of our specialist education provision with roughly 70 additional places to meet forecast SEMH and ASD needs.
- IV. Developing outreach support for schools to build capacity and capability to meet SEND needs in mainstream schools.
- V. Strengthen our cluster and ENG model to support early intervention and practice development on a neighborhood level.