

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Camden Women’s Forum Inquiry 2025-6: Camden Women into Work (CS/2026/07)	
REPORT OF Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Cabinet	DATE 25 February 2026
STRATEGIC CONTEXT A key element of achieving the We Make Camden ambition to build a strong, inclusive local economy, where everyone has a secure livelihood, is addressing gender inequality and women’s economic participation in the borough. This report responds directly to evidence from women across Camden who face structural barriers to work, particularly those with caring responsibilities, disabilities, long-term health conditions, and/or experience of poverty and insecure housing. Camden Women’s Forum launched an inquiry in 2025 to look at the reasons behind the high level of economic inactivity among women in the borough. This report outlines the findings of the latest Camden Women’s Forum report and a series of recommendations to address barriers that women face in accessing secure work within Camden. The report is coming to Cabinet for approval. The Camden Women’s Forum inquiry model reflects the approach of The Way We Work, the Council’s response to We Make Camden, by drawing on lived experience, community insight and partnership evidence to shape practical recommendations and drive inclusive outcomes. The proposed actions build on existing strengths within Good Work Camden, the Inclusive Business Network, Adult Community Learning, Early Years services and more, and support a joined-up approach to helping more local women to lead prosperous lives.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report presents the findings and recommendations of the Camden Women’s Forum’s inquiry into women’s economic participation, exploring why women in Camden are less likely to be economically active than women across London and identifying the structural barriers that prevent many women from entering, returning to, or progressing in work. Cabinet approval is requested to note the findings of the inquiry, endorse the recommendations in principle, agree that officers take these forward through existing programmes and partnership work, and approve additional investment subject to resource availability. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information	

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

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That, having considered the evidence presented within the Inquiry report, Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Note the findings of the Camden Women's Forum inquiry into women's economic participation as set out in Appendix 1 of this report.
2. Endorse in principle the Camden Women's Forum Recommendations as summarised in Section 5 of Appendix 1, particularly those relating to Camden Council's role in supporting women into work.
3. Agree that the Forum Recommendations be used to inform and underpin future operational actions and decision-making relating to women's economic participation and that officers progress implementation of these Recommendations through existing Inclusive Growth, employment, skills, childcare and partnership programmes, including Good Work Camden and the Inclusive Business Network.
4. Agree that progress will be reported through existing governance arrangements and link in with the Council's emerging work on Inclusive Economic Growth.

Signed: Osian Jones, Director of Strategy, Design and Insight, Corporate Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Osian Jones', with a horizontal line underneath.

Date: 11 Feb 2026

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Women's economic participation is a critical issue for Camden, with significant implications for household income, child poverty, wellbeing and local economic growth. At 36%, Camden's economic inactivity rate for women is significantly higher than the national figure of 25%, and child poverty rates remain among the highest in the capital.
- 1.2 The Camden Women's Forum is an independent advisory forum established in 2019 to examine issues affecting women and girls in the borough and make recommendations to influence local and national policy. The Forum is chaired by two independent Gender Equality Champions, Helene Reardon Bond CBE and Angela Mason CBE, and operates in a similar way to a Parliamentary Select Committee, gathering evidence from residents and stakeholders and reporting its findings publicly. The outcome of each inquiry is expected to generate practical and tangible actions for Camden Council, public bodies, voluntary and community sector organisations, employers, businesses and residents to consider and work in partnership to implement.
- 1.3 This inquiry revisits the Forum's earlier work on women's economic participation, recognising that persistent inequalities have been compounded by the pandemic, rising living costs and ongoing structural barriers in the labour market.

2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS

- 2.1 The proposal is for Cabinet to formally note and endorse the findings and Recommendations summarised in Section 6 of the Camden Women's Forum report. Cabinet are also asked to agree that officers progress implementation of the Forum Recommendations by using them to inform and underpin future actions and decision making around women's economic participation.
- 2.2 Implementation in 2026 will be supported through an initial £150,000 allocated specifically for Phase 1 test-and-learn activity. This funding is intended to pilot approaches that build on existing activity and to inform the next phase of the Council's service design function, and does not represent the full extent of the Council's ongoing investment in supporting women into work.
- 2.3 The proposed Phase 1 investment of £150,000 is designed to enable targeted testing and learning against a small number of priority recommendations, through Good Work Camden and the Adult Community Learning service. It will build on and complement substantial ongoing Council investment in employment support, childcare, skills and inclusive economic growth. Learning from this phase will shape the next phase of planning within the Council's service design function.
- 2.4 Cabinet's endorsement will provide a clear mandate for officers to align and strengthen existing activity to better support women into secure, flexible and

sustainable employment. The Forum Recommendations build on work already underway and do not propose the creation of wholly new services, but rather a more coordinated approach to delivering services that recognises the impact of gender inequality on Camden residents.

- 2.5 This approach supports Camden's wider priorities on reducing inequality, tackling child poverty and supporting residents into good work. Engagement conducted as part of this inquiry will feed into a future Inclusive Growth Strategy to be developed following the Statement of Intent.

3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

3.1 Option 1: Do nothing

Note the report but take no further action. This option would miss the opportunity to build on strong existing services and partnerships and risks reinforcing existing inequalities in access to work.

3.2 Option 2: Endorse the Women's Forum recommendations within existing resources

This option supports evidence-led, inclusive policy development by embedding the recommendations within existing programmes such as Good Work Camden, Inclusive Growth and Adult Community Learning. It demonstrates Camden's commitment to listening to women's voices and acting on lived experience while managing delivery within current capacity and resources. However, relying solely on existing resources would potentially limit the Council's ability to undertake the dedicated test-and-learn activity needed to trial new approaches, generate insight and inform future service design.

3.3 Option 3: Endorse the recommendations and explore options for investment in services (recommended option)

This option would involve a defined Phase 1 allocation of £150,000 to support further test-and-learn activity against selected recommendations. This funding is not intended to represent the totality of the Council's offer to support women into work, but instead to enable pilots that build on existing programmes and generate insight for the next stage of investment planning. The allocation of this and any proposals for further investment beyond this initial phase would be developed and considered through the Council's standard financial and governance processes.

4. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

- 4.1 There is a risk that the outcomes of the recommendations may not be fully achieved due to capacity constraints of existing services. Incorporating additional work may require multiple services working together to adapt current approaches, which may need a long lead-in time to deliver. This will

be mitigated by embedding delivery within existing programmes and by taking a phased and prioritised approach to implementation. Initial focus will be placed on actions that can be delivered within current capacity or through targeted pilots, testing and learning approaches to inform wider roll-out. Clear governance and ownership across services will support coordination as part of wider Council work on Inclusive Growth. Progress will be kept under review by the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Young People and Culture to ensure delivery remains proportionate, realistic and aligned with available resources.

- 4.2 The inquiry highlights that there are complex interplaying issues contributing to women's economic inactivity and we will need to manage expectations on what can be achieved. Systemic barriers faced by women seeking work can only be fully addressed at a national level and with buy-in from employers. The Council will use all its levers, including our We Make Camden Missions programmes and existing Inclusive Economy partnerships, to influence local businesses to improve inclusive working practices. Camden will also champion at every opportunity the need for national government policies to go further in supporting women, particularly those experiencing multiple disadvantage.
- 4.3 The Council's Inclusive Growth statement may also have an overarching influence on the activities of services involved in the Forum's recommendations. Officers will work together to ensure that the insights of the women engaged with as part of the Camden Women's Forum inquiry are incorporated into any linked emerging work.

5. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1 Extensive engagement underpinned the Forum's report, including focus groups with women from diverse backgrounds and evidence sessions with voluntary sector, education and employer partners.
- 5.2 Evidence was gathered between August and December 2025 through focus groups, evidence sessions and engagement with over 60 women and a wide range of voluntary, community, education and employer partners.
- 5.3 The inquiry itself functioned as a form of participatory engagement and equality-led consultation, ensuring that women most affected by economic exclusion shaped the recommendations.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Cabinet must have due regard to the public sector equality duty when making any decision. In summary these legal obligations require the Council, when exercising its functions, to have 'due regard' to the need to: 1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act; 2 to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; 3. Foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not (which involves tackling prejudice and promoting

understanding). Under the Duty the relevant protected characteristics are Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion, Sex, Sexual orientation. In respect of the first aim only i.e. reducing discrimination, etc the protected characteristic of marriage and civil partnership is also relevant.

6.2 Further legal comments have been incorporated throughout the report.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The initial £150,000 identified for implementation relates specifically to Phase 1 test-and-learn activity designed to build on existing delivery. This sits alongside, and does not replace, the wider and ongoing investment the Council makes in supporting women into work through Good Work Camden, Adult Community Learning, Early Years services, Inclusive Economy partnerships and more. Any additional investment required for subsequent phases will be brought forward through future financial planning cycles.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no expected environmental implications from accepting the Camden Women’s Forum recommendations.

9. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

9.1 Following Cabinet endorsement, officers will incorporate the recommendations into ongoing Inclusive Growth, employment and skills activity during 2026, with progress monitored through existing programme governance.

February 2026	Cabinet approval of the report
March 2026	Launch Camden Women’s Forum report with launch event coinciding with International Women’s Day, with attendees from across local partners in the borough, employers and women who took part in focus group research for the inquiry
Post-May 2026 local elections	Full Council Debate
June – December 2026	Begin work on Phase 1 test-and-learn pilots in response to recommendations using the £150,000 allocation, generating insight and evidence to inform the next phase of service design and potential future investment proposals.

10. APPENDICES

10.1 Appendix 1 – Camden Women’s Forum Inquiry 2025-6: Camden Women into Work

REPORT ENDS