



# Workforce Development Strategy 2025 to 2027

Launching  
in March  
2025

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 Camden

# Foreword by Tim Aldridge – Executive Director, Children and Learning

Our Children and Learning Directorate is responsible for supporting the welfare and education of children and young people to get “the best start in life” regardless of their circumstances or vulnerabilities. This requires a skilled, knowledgeable and experienced workforce that can engage children, young people and parents and work within a multi-agency environment to support children and young people across all areas of their lives.

Our Workforce Development Strategy sets out our plans for recruiting, retaining, developing and supporting the children’s workforce across the Directorate. Our workforce is diverse, coming from a range of backgrounds, with a variety of experiences and embracing a number of different professions, each with their own standards of practice. The strategy acknowledges this diversity and aims to meet the needs of all workers within the Directorate.

This strategy will run from 2025 to 2027 and then be reviewed in light of new challenges we face. We know that Children’s Services are on the cusp of major policy change and innovation with the implementation of the new government’s vision ‘Keeping children safe, helping families thrive’. This will see children’s social care services moving over to a family help model of social care delivery, together with the introduction of the new Early Career Framework for social workers, providing a structured learning and development pathway for the first 5 years of their career. Alongside this, the Law Commission review of the legal framework governing the social care of disabled children and the government’s SEND and AP Improvement Plan, launching the ‘Right Support, Right Place, Right Time’ model are driving major changes in the structure and operation of SEND services. This will directly impact on our SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and Children and Young People’s Disability Service (CYPDS) as we move to implement the new policy and frameworks and respond to the changing landscape of SEND legislation.

As we prepare for these national changes, our own Children and Learning Directorate is committed to supporting and upskilling our workforce. We want to ensure that children and young people remain at the heart of everything we do; to achieve this we aim to foster a passionate, creative workforce that is committed to learning and development as a driver for excellent practice.



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We want  
**Camden** to be a  
borough where  
**every child** has the  
**best start in life**

# Foreword by Nana Bonsu – Director of Relational Practice

- As we launch this Workforce Development Strategy, we know that Children’s Services are undergoing considerable change and facing many new challenges, and these are the main drivers of our changing workforce development priorities. As a Directorate we are embarking on a mission to embed a Relational Practice model of working that emphasises the centrality of relationships and supports the participation and empowerment of family and community networks and collaborative working. This is all the more important as we know that children’s needs are becoming more complex and intersectional. We need to ensure the children’s workforce has the knowledge and skills needed to respond to the following national trends in a holistic manner:

- Worsening mental health and wellbeing and a rise in demand for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).
- An increase in children going missing from education; in Camden, 22% of primary school pupils and 26.3% of secondary school pupils were persistently absent from school in 2023.
- The presence of extra-familial harm and risks from the community such as child exploitation, gangs, serious youth violence and modern slavery.
- New online technologies driving new forms of online child abuse including child on child abuse.
- An increase in the number of requests for EHC (Education, Health and Care) plans and ENGs (Exceptional Needs Grant), with a 16% increase between 2017 and 2022 in Camden.

- More SEND children attending mainstream schools and increasing complexity of children’s needs; over the last 5 years, children and young people receiving SEND support in Camden mainstream schools has increased from 12% to 14.4% compared to 11.4% for London and 12.2% nationally.

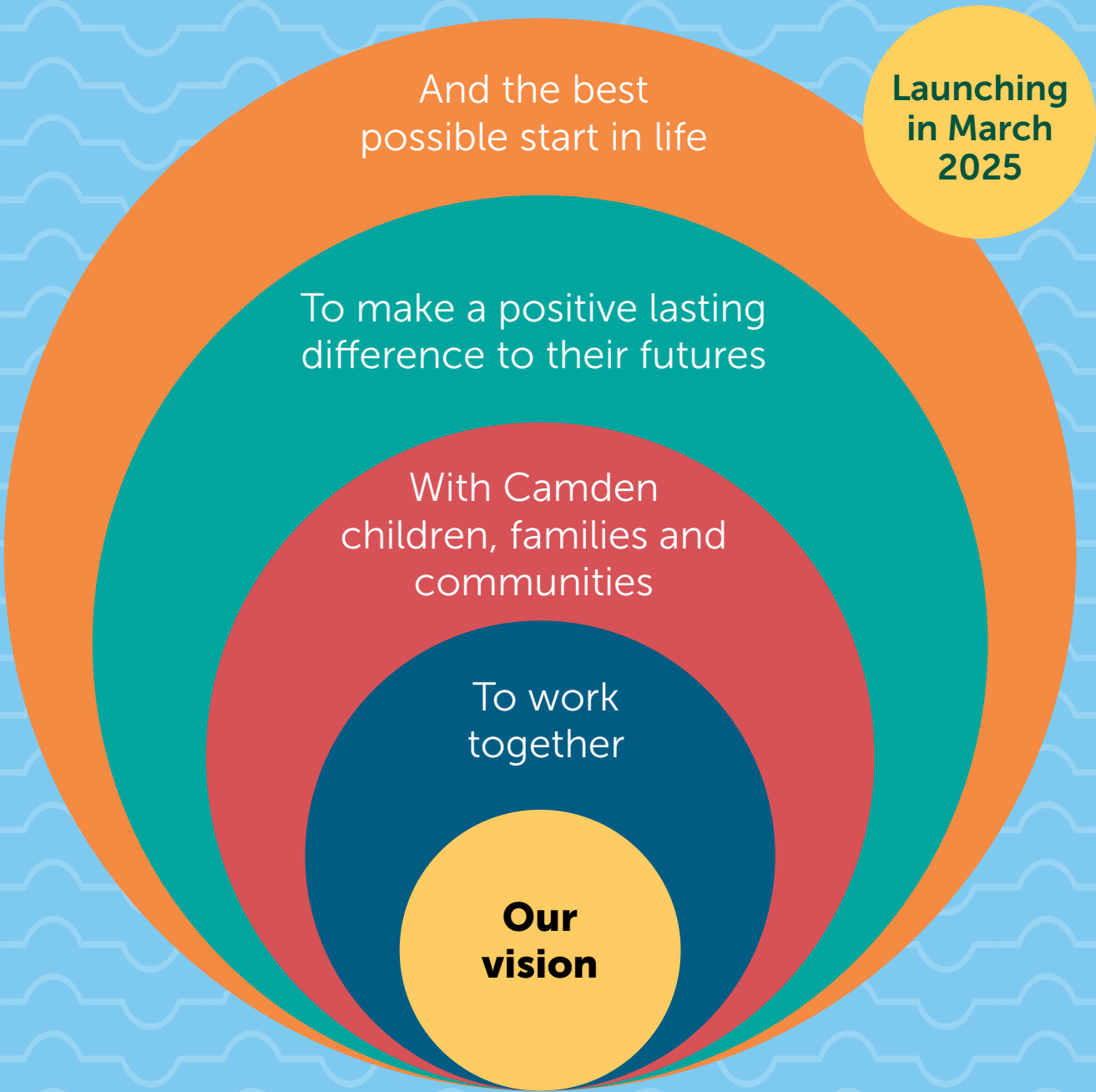
We must also always recognise that Camden is an ethnically diverse borough with 40% of the population from Black, Asian or other ethnic groups. The children’s workforce needs to be culturally competent to ensure inclusive and anti-oppressive work practices, as well as providing positive role models for young people.

This Workforce Strategy is part of Camden’s mission to ensure every child has the best start in life.



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# Our vision



## What we do



### Aims of the Workforce Strategy

The Workforce Strategy has been developed to help us achieve the following:

- Cultivating a stable, flexible and sustainable workforce that is skilled, knowledgeable and responsive to the needs of children and families in Camden.
- Embedding Relational Practice into our work with children and families across all Children's Services.
- Creating an environment that promotes a culture of continuous learning and developing an innovative practice.
- Supporting the career development of workers in all roles and at all levels via a variety of pathways so that individual workers can pursue their chosen path.
- Facilitating a culture of inclusivity and support for the workforce that enables workers to grow and develop throughout their time in Camden.

### Our journey so far

Individual services within the Directorate have already been developing plans to address workforce development. However, going forward, the introduction of the Children and Learning Academy should facilitate co-ordinated actions and a cohesive approach to workforce development.

All services have begun a journey to develop and enhance their own workforce capabilities. The Academy will continue to build on this work and will include the following:

- Broadening the scope of the quarterly Workforce Development Board to have oversight and programme manage the

action plan that will be developed to deliver this workforce development strategy.

- Broadening the scope of the Social Work Academy to sit across the whole directorate.
- Developing new partnerships internally and externally to facilitate new routes into the workforce in support of a "grow your own" approach to recruitment including apprenticeships and care-experienced internships.
- Designing and delivering bespoke staff development programmes with Learning and Development colleagues, who will soon sit within our Learning Academy.
- Delivering opportunities for our Global Majority staff to have career conversations and be given shadowing opportunities with our Senior Leaders.
- Developing Launchpad, the new career progression framework that will span the entire Children and Learning workforce and set out clear pathways for individual workers.
- Reviewing the learning offer for all members of the workforce to ensure it continues to be relevant in the context of changing service priorities and the impact of restructures, changing law and new research.
- Reviewing and improving recruitment and retention practices.
- Improving how we consult with the workforce to ensure a comprehensive knowledge of work pressures and how these impact on staff wellbeing.

# Our key priorities

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## Children's workforce development strategy: Pillars and golden threads

### Tackling inequalities and celebrating diversity

Celebrating our diverse workforce, strengthening safeguards against discrimination, and providing fair pay and recognition to all staff equally.

### Learning, development and progress

Creating a culture of organisational learning focussing on continuous professional development through a comprehensive learning offer that enables workers to progress their careers.

### Recruitment, retention and recognition

Achieving a stable, flexible and valued workforce through effective recruitment practice and ensuring retention through a system of recognition and reward coupled with a clear framework for career development.

### Multi-agency working

Developing a shared understanding, values and standards underpinned by robust systems that enhance partnership working across all domains of a child's life.

### Staff wellbeing

Creating a safe and supportive working environment underpinned by excellent management and supervisory oversight so that workers can develop their practice and feel valued and able to raise issues that affect them.

**Golden threads:** The shared standards, values and common goals of the children's workforce which reflect our principles and underpin our practice model and service ethos.

- **Safeguarding:** a knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding duty and how our practice keeps children safe and allows them to thrive.
- **Participation:** empowering children and families to engage with services so they can get involved in decision-making and get their views heard.
- **Professionalism:** how our practice upholds and reflects all our professional standards.
- **Leadership:** how managers support, guide and inspire workers to develop their learning and how we enable staff to aspire to be future managers.
- **Anti-racist and anti-oppressive practice:** that addresses disproportionality in every aspect of practice and the workforce
- **Relational practice:** our standards for working directly with children and families in order to improve outcomes for children.



# Tackling inequalities and celebrating diversity

## Our ambition for 2025/2027

All staff have an opportunity to be their best self at work and have the same access to opportunities for learning and career progression. All staff are respected and their efforts recognised and rewarded regardless of their role, status or protected characteristics.

### The challenges

- Low numbers of staff from Black, Asian and other ethnic communities progressing to management roles.
- Lack of transparency around how decisions on career progression are made.
- Reward and recognition – perception that there is not a fair and equal distribution across ethnicities.
- Workforce data is incomplete, particularly with disabled staff, making it difficult to monitor the impact of policies and initiatives on specific groups or to make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.
- Discrepancies in pay levels for some roles across the Directorate.

### What we will do

- Adopt and implement our Race Equality Action Plan to tackle racism and discrimination and ensure open discussions on identity, culture and diversity.
- Use the Workforce Race Equality Standard (WRES) annually to explore the experiences of staff from Black, Asian and other ethnic communities.
- Ensure that career progression opportunities are opened up to all, ensuring a transparent system of decision making on appointments to management roles.
- Develop opportunities for staff from global majority to attend DMT meetings, have an opportunity to shadow senior leaders and have career conversations
- Increase leadership diversity by monitoring and transparently reporting on access to management training for staff from Black, Asian and other ethnic communities, and taking action to address inequalities where found.
- Review the reward and recognition framework to look at how it is being applied in Children and Learning, and ensure it is operating fairly for all groups.
- Embed wellbeing passports for disabled staff and unpaid carers to help support conversations around reasonable adjustments
- Improve data recording on staff social attributes to facilitate monitoring and support of staff with protected characteristics.
- Ensure staff have safe spaces for discussion on diversity and inclusion in specialist forums and within existing structures of supervision etc.
- Review pay levels for comparable work across the Directorate.

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# Learning, development and progress

## Our ambition for 2025/2027

The workforce can access a comprehensive learning offer that reflects the skills and knowledge required to deliver high quality services to a diverse population, and which supports their professional development and enables them to progress along a defined career pathway.

The challenges	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Workers not always able to take up learning opportunities or cancelling due to work pressures.</li><li>Ensuring the individual worker's learning needs are understood and effectively met.</li><li>Ensuring the wider learning offer is relevant to the needs of all staff groups within the Directorate.</li><li>Ensuring a Directorate-wide understanding of Relational Practice.</li><li>Finding new ways to deliver learning experiences that compliments the modern workplace and different learning styles.</li><li>More options for experienced workers to progress or develop outside of management structures and across the Directorate.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>For social work, continue to develop the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) programme and social work progression in line with the new Early Career Framework when published.</li><li>Embed the Centre for Relational Practice and incorporate into practice across the whole directorate's workforce.</li><li>Develop new programmes of learning for advanced practitioners to enable them to pursue chosen career paths and specialisation.</li><li>Embedding the principle of using internal expertise where possible to deliver the learning offer and develop training skills.</li><li>Improve management support for staff development including protected time for learning and learning conversations incorporated into supervision and implementation of the 5 protected learning and development days for the workforce</li><li>Review how we record and review learning conversations between managers and staff to ensure personal learning needs are targeted and met.</li><li>Develop and embed a clear programme for aspiring managers and leaders.</li><li>Continue to develop the career progression framework to include all staff groups in the Directorate.</li><li>Develop opportunities to become an associate in the Centre for Relational Practice.</li><li>Embed the Progression Panel funding panel as a means of supporting further learning and development for experienced staff.</li><li>Implement action learning set for Managers regarding leading and managing in a relational and restorative way.</li><li>Signpost corporate offers around mentoring, secondments and apprenticeships to support career development alongside the offer of career development conversations with senior leaders.</li></ul>

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# Recruitment, retention and recognition

## Our ambition for 2025/2027

A stable workforce with a low turnover rate; a workforce that reflects the community it serves; staff who are committed to working for Camden and who receive suitable reward and recognition for their work.

The challenges	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local and national challenges to recruitment across the Directorate with strong competition from agencies and other local authorities in regard to comparable pay rates.</li> <li>Difficulties retaining and recruiting experienced staff.</li> <li>Staff moving to agency/flexible work practices.</li> <li>Lack of clarity around career pathways and the reward and recognition framework.</li> <li>Lack of experience within the workforce due to the number of newly qualified staff being recruited.</li> <li>Under-representation of some groups within the workforce.</li> <li>Lack of information from exit interviews.</li> <li>Ongoing externally imposed changes to entrance requirements for some roles and services as a result of changing central government policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with our People and Inclusion colleagues to review workforce recruitment to ensure inclusivity and equity and streamline the process for applicants.</li> <li>Review and strengthen the process around exit interviews to identify any areas of concern, any emerging patterns and act upon feedback to drive improvements.</li> <li>Consider appointing a dedicated Talent and Retention Advisor to the Academy to ensure the Academy is in a position to provide good oversight of the recruitment and workforce strategy implementation.</li> <li>Develop an annual recruitment plan covering the whole directorate setting out events and activities and focussing on hard to recruit groups.</li> <li>Develop a system of CVs online for people expressing an interest in joining Camden to match with upcoming vacancies.</li> <li>Review the framework of reward and recognition to ensure clarity and fairness.</li> <li>Reduce agency spend by supporting managers to move agency staff to permanent contracts.</li> <li>Develop "grow your own" programmes and explore associate status for specific hard to recruit to roles.</li> <li>Continue to develop our staff awards nominations.</li> <li>Review how we monitor and ensure good practice around induction across the directorate.</li> </ul>

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# Staff wellbeing

## Our ambition for 2025/2027

Managers recognise the emotional impact of the job on the wellbeing of the workforce as well as the impact of heavy workloads, taking positive steps to address pressures and enable staff to access help and support to manage workplace stresses.

The challenges	What we will do
<p><b>Staff surveys have raised the following issues and identified that staff need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe spaces in which to discuss issues and access support.</li> <li>• To feel they are being listened to.</li> <li>• Better communication.</li> <li>• Relational approaches from management.</li> <li>• Systems to enable staff to raise issues and constructively challenge and effect change.</li> <li>• To feel appreciated.</li> <li>• Staff facing service restructures feel anxious.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote Camden’s wellbeing offer and the Employee Assistance Programme.</li> <li>• Extend the use of the Principal Social Worker health check and other staff surveys and consultations to continually “take the pulse” of the workforce.</li> <li>• Undertake a review and audit of supervision practices.</li> <li>• Develop a framework for implementing Relational Practice principles into management and working culture.</li> <li>• Champion flexible working practices to foster a better work/life balance.</li> <li>• Events to celebrate staff achievements.</li> <li>• Use of various approaches such as appreciative enquiry and reflective discussion to improve supervision and case discussion.</li> <li>• Create clear and consistent channels of communication between management and staff.</li> <li>• Ensure staff are aware of the organisation wide mentoring offer.</li> <li>• Further develop the mentoring offer for staff.</li> <li>• Academy to offer regular listening circles and a ‘You Said, We Did’ summary of issues raised and actions taken.</li> <li>• Senior management team to communicate and consult widely on restructures in order to help staff manage change and reduce anxiety.</li> </ul>

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# Multi-agency working

## Our ambition for 2025/2027

As children’s development crosses many dimensions, safeguarding and promoting their welfare and supporting their development requires a multi-agency approach based on shared values and standards of professional practice across various agencies. It is essential that the workforce is able to work collaboratively with colleagues in health, schools, police and within the Directorate in order to recognise children needing extra help and to deliver an integrated response to need.

The challenges	What we will do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the workforce is aware of their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding</li> <li>• Ensuring the workforce is able to work effectively across the directorate.</li> <li>• Ensuring the workforce can recognise and respond to a range of safeguarding issues including emerging issues.</li> <li>• Ensuring the quality of joint working across the Directorate.</li> <li>• Embedding the National reforms across the directorate and Camden Safeguarding Children Partnership (CSCP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and promote a strong vision for Children’s Services and the Directorate based on shared values and agreement on desired outcomes for children.</li> <li>• Work in partnership across Children and Learning and with the CSCP to develop and deliver the multi-agency safeguarding learning offer.</li> <li>• Provide clear messages to partner agencies around the law on information sharing when safeguarding children.</li> <li>• Promote a collaborative approach and develop inter-service communication and working relationships</li> <li>• Ensure there is an understanding of each service’s role in safeguarding children’s welfare and promoting their development.</li> <li>• Develop a cross-Directorate approach to learning and development that supports integrated service delivery.</li> <li>• Develop an integrated quality assurance system and data sharing agreement to support joint working.</li> <li>• Develop a National Reforms Board that will have multi-agency representation which will have oversight of workforce developments as needed to meet the national reform agenda and other central government strategies.</li> </ul>

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