

BACKCHAT



Information, news and views from children and young people involved in Camden services

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Make decisions

Youth Shout Out

GET INVOLVED!

Youth Safety Fund

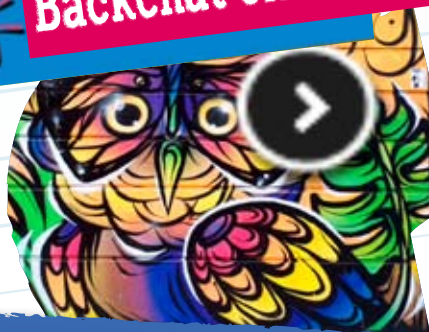
Find out what young people have been involved in since the last issue

Forum for disabled young people

Camden Young Inspectors:
Inspection of services for vulnerable adolescents

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Backchat online recent photos



REAL TALK



Takeover Challenge

Young people help improve language services

Camden makes every effort to ensure children and families receive a high quality service.

The views of children, parents and carers are very important in making changes and improvements to our services. There are many opportunities to give your views and to be involved.

backchatonline.org.uk

What have young people been involved in since the last issue?

The Children in Care Council (CiCC)

The CiCC provides a voice for children and young people in care.



Making decisions – Young people have been involved in making decisions on issues affecting children and young people in care and leaving care. This included: taking part in selection and commissioning of potential providers of Pathways services for care leavers, interviewing candidates for the Council Chief Executive post, developing content and a design of information for a leaflet and an app called “Camden’s local offer for care leavers”.



Speaking at council meetings – Young people attended the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee in November 2018; they presented findings of the Young inspectors’ research and key recommendations for the development of a specialist adolescent-centred approach to support vulnerable teenagers.

Attending Corporate Parenting Board meetings – These are an important opportunity for young people to influence decisions about services. At these meetings, young people talk to councillors, the Director of Children’s Safeguarding and Social Work, Executive Director of Supporting People and senior managers about their experience of the services, what is working well and what needs improving.



These are some of the activities and events young people have been involved in over the past year.

YOUTH SHOUT OUT



Youth safety top priority at young people’s events

Young people shared their views about youth safety and other issues of importance to them with local decision-makers at the annual Camden Youth Shout Out event.

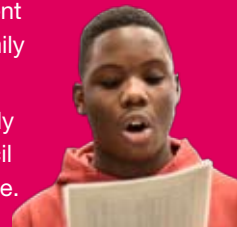
About 100 young people aged 11 to 19 attended Shout Out, where the main theme was ‘What’s happening on our streets?’ It followed the publication of the Camden Youth Safety Taskforce report, which sets out 17 recommendations to promote youth safety.

‘Lives, not knives’ and ‘young people and the police - breaking down barriers’ were two of the workshop topics at Shout Out, which was held at the Crowndale Centre, in Camden, on 22 November 2018.



Two other workshops at the fully-booked event covered mental health and the world of work. Guest speakers included former Downing Street Press Secretary and Camden resident Alistair Campbell, Council Leader Cllr Georgia Gould, and local resident Aydarus Ahmed, who lost three family members to youth violence.

Camden Youth Shout Out was jointly organised by Camden Youth Council and Camden Council’s youth service.



YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE NURTURED AND PROTECTED IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE RESORTING TO VIOLENCE IS NEVER AN OPTION. NOT ONLY THIS, BUT MAKING SURE THE SAFETY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE IS PRIORITISED IS INTERLINKED WITH OTHER PROMINENT ISSUES - MENTAL HEALTH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR POTENTIAL.

By expanding the discussion, both young people and those responsible for the big decisions can reach small but achievable goals that, in turn, will see less knives and protect more lives.

Camden Deputy Youth MP Asma Maloumi

Find out more:

- > See more photos from the event at [flickr.com/photos/camdenccouncil/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/camdenccouncil/albums)
- > Visit camden.gov.uk/youth



What have young people been involved in since the last issue?

Forum for disabled young people

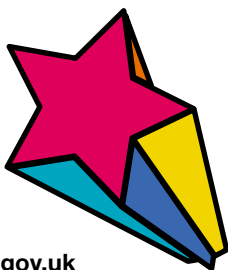
Reactive Forum is a group of disabled young people aged 13 to 18 and living in Camden.



The Forum provides an opportunity for disabled young people to have a say about what they think about services and influence strategic decision-making and service planning that affect disabled young people. The Forum also evaluates and gives views and feedback on service delivery across the Council and Children's Trust partnership.

Types of activities they have been involved in include: focus groups on health services for young people, involvement in commissioning short-break services and designing and delivering disability awareness training to youth workers.

The forum represents the views of disabled young people in Camden and is not a support group, or one-to-one service.



Find out more:
catherine.andrews@camden.gov.uk

YOUNG PEOPLE HELP TO IMPROVE INTERPRETING SERVICE IN CAMDEN

A group of unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) were involved in reviewing the provision of interpreting services for Camden families.

The aim of the consultation was to get feedback from young people and to inform the forthcoming recommissioning of the Corporate Language Service. This is to ensure that it is a high quality and professional service.

A decision was made to create a UASC peer group to support displaced children/young people coming to this country i.e. helping them to adjust, supporting them with developing their life skills and developing their communication skills including their spoken and written English.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S REAL TALK

YOUNG PEOPLE DISCUSSED ISSUES AROUND IDENTITY AT OUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S REAL TALK DEBATE, HELD DURING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH WEEK (4 TO 10 FEBRUARY 2019).

What makes us who we are? Is it our gender, race, sexual orientation, clothes, who our parents are, our income, where we live or our past experiences?

These were just some of the tricky questions tackled during our debate, held in the Council Chamber on 6 February.

Aimed at 16 to 21-year-olds, the debate attracted more than 60 young people from youth centres and schools across the borough, who talked openly about the challenges they face in being themselves.

Professionals from the Brandon Centre, the Hive Camden, the Council and Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust were there to offer advice and guidance and help lead some of the conversations on gender identity and sexuality.



Find out more:
sandra.soteriou@camden.gov.uk



Young people help assess Youth Safety Fund bids

Organisations were invited to apply for funding to support projects aimed at preventing youth violence. The closing date was 31 March 2019.

Camden young people are among those joining the panels to assess applications, which can be made for projects running for one or two years under two categories:

- Under £5,000 per year (£10,000 total)
- £5,000 to £25,000 per year (£50,000 total).

The fund will help us to act on the recommendations of our Youth Safety Taskforce, which called for a whole community approach to tackle youth violence.

"This is the first of two opportunities to apply to the Youth Safety Fund - local groups and organisations will have another chance to put forward their ideas to help reduce youth violence later this year or in early 2020."

Councillor Abdul Hai, Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion

Find out more by emailing or visit
camden.gov.uk/youthsafetytaskforce

DEVELOPING AN ADOLESCENT-CENTRED APPROACH

The project involves young people inspecting local services and recommending ways they could be improved.

Every year, a team of Young Inspectors undertake research into the views of other service users and professionals about the services provided by the Council and partner agencies to safeguard children.

The main focus of the Young Inspectors project in the summer was to ensure that service users and professionals are involved in the development of a specialist adolescent-centred approach to supporting vulnerable young people, aged 14-18, who experience multiple risks and exploitation.

Evaluation of the inspection by Young Inspectors 2018

KYLE

Kyle – Team leader

Children are exposed to a lot of potential risks and it is hard to consider all of them at once. We wanted to make sure our recommendations are universal and helped address the key issues.

HANIFA

Hanifa – Inspector

This project showed me how many people are willing to listen to what I have to say and value my opinion and that of other young people.

GJESIKA

Gjesika – Inspector

Interviewing professionals from police, social work and youth made me realise how many people actually care about teenagers.

ROSIE

Rosie – Inspector

Talking to a friend and support from peers can help to prevent teenagers taking risks or committing crime. It is important to change young people's perception of the police.

KEY THEMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Key themes identified from the consultation responses and from the research are:

- Focus on taking the wider community into consideration
- Building relationships with young people based on positive experiences and achievements
- Working with the impact of trauma experienced by adolescents aged 14-18
- Giving careful consideration to supporting parents and carers to enable them to maintain a good relationship with their children.

Key recommendations for the development of a specialist adolescent-centred approach arising from this inspection, include the following:

- 1 Promote supportive relationships between adolescents, their peers and families
- 2 Support adolescents to develop positive and lasting bonds in the community
- 3 Prioritise good relationships between adolescents and social workers or key workers
- 4 Ensure easy and immediate access to professionals. Make services visible
- 5 Develop a wide range of community-based interventions with families
- 6 Provide training for parents to help them maintain positive relationships with adolescents and to develop techniques to deal with challenging behaviours. NVR (non-violent resistance) received high praise by parents and carers who have benefited from the training
- 7 Provide training for social workers and key workers to recognise the signs of trauma experienced by adolescents and to provide trauma-informed approaches
- 8 Develop strengths-based approaches by professionals
- 9 Ensure good interagency communication and close links with professionals involved in the service
- 10 Strengthen partnerships with young people, families and the community to develop peer mentoring, peer support and co-production of the adolescent-centred approach.



If you would like to be a Young Inspector or would like to know more about the project, please email: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk or contact us via www.backchatonline.org.uk

Takeover Day 2018

The Takeover Challenge – November 2018

Takeover Challenge was originally set up by the Children's Commissioner for England to give children and young people opportunities to learn how professional organisations work, including local councils and national government.

Camden young people have been taking part in the Takeover Challenge programme since 2012.

In November 2018, more than 70 pupils from Camden primary and secondary schools took part in workshops and gave presentations to decision-makers, including the Leader of the Council, Cllr Georgia Gould; the Mayor of Camden, Cllr Jenny Headlam-Wells; the Cabinet Member for Young People and Cohesion, Cllr Abdul Hai; the Executive Director for Supporting People and Deputy Chief Executive, Martin Pratt, and other senior officers.

Young people taking part in the Takeover Challenge made a number of important contributions and came up with new ideas, including:

- Training a group of young people to become STEAM youth champions to help pupils plan their education.
- Identifying the top priorities to be progressed from the Youth Safety Taskforce recommendations.
- Introducing low cost hire bikes with helmets to encourage active travel amongst young people.
- Designing a "Healthy environment, healthy Camden" campaign to reduce air and noise pollution.
- Developing a mental health peer mentor scheme in schools raising awareness of mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people.

Takeover
Challenge

Want to
take part in
2019?

tel: 020 7974 1850 or email:
elzbieta.chandrasena@
camden.gov.uk



Dear Elzbieta,

Thank you for inviting children from Argyle Primary school to the Camden take over event.



I enjoyed doing quizzes and the smoothie maker was an amazing idea because you saved electricity and we got exercise by doing it.

Riyat



It was important to learn about knife crimes because if you keep it inside you and don't report it it leads to bigger trouble.

Jannat



I enjoyed working with the different students from the other schools because it gave me the chance to learn and make new friends with them. I learnt a lot of new information in our STEAM quiz.

Kenza



It has been an honour to contribute. My favourite part was presenting my work to the panel because I was able to build my confidence.

Mohamed.



I learnt a lot about how I can expand to my ideas. My group leader, Rachel, was an amazing teacher and helped me to speak in public. I enjoyed presenting my ideas because I feel like the council will do something about it.

Marufa



Youth Safety Taskforce Report

YOUTH SAFETY TASKFORCE REPORT



The Youth Safety Taskforce was created in response to an increase in youth violence incidents in Camden over the previous year. The aim of the Taskforce was to find out the underlying causes and nature of youth violence in the borough and identify what more could be done to keep Camden's young people safe.

The investigation was requested by Councillor Georgia Gould, Leader of Camden Council and involved key decision-makers from health, police, schools, voluntary organisations and Camden Council.

The Taskforce gathered feedback from young people, parents, Camden residents and professionals. Everybody was asked to give their views about:

- Why some young people carry knives
- What are the main causes of youth violence?
- What can be done to address youth violence in Camden?

Why are we concerned about keeping young people safe?

While a significant proportion of youth violence in Camden is linked to the drugs market, not all young victims of youth violence are linked to gangs.

Young children, mainly male, are being exploited by older criminals linked to the drugs trade.

The Taskforce found growing concern among young people over their personal safety in light of the increased incidents of knife crime. This fear is a key reason why some young people carry knives to protect themselves.

Feedback from young people, parents and professionals on the causes of youth violence

Young people have nothing to do. Young people have asked for out of school activities and youth clubs that match their interests.

School exclusions. School attendance plays a vital role in keeping young people away from gang involvement.

Gangs, grooming and the drugs trade. Some young people feel that groups of youth are being labelled incorrectly as gangs. Young children in Camden are being exploited by older criminals in the drugs trade.

Not enough opportunities for training and employment. Being in education, training or employment is a protective factor which could decrease the vulnerability of young people and their involvement in youth violence.

Trauma and adverse childhood experiences can have an impact on young lives and become a key cause of vulnerability in teenage years. Trauma and adverse childhood experiences include: early childhood trauma such as separation from parents, sexual abuse, physical abuse and parental substance misuse.

Social media, identity and negative role models.

Social media can inflame tensions in communities and can have an impact on the views and behaviours of young people. Gangs can thrive on young people's need to belong to a group and find self-identity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Taskforce report covers a great deal of information including evidence from research and feedback from young people, community members, parents and professionals. It ends by recommending 17 actions to promote youth safety in Camden.

At the Takeover Challenge in November 2018, young people discussed the Taskforce Report and recommendations and have selected the following four recommendations as their priorities to help keep young people safe in Camden:

✓ Provide support for children moving from primary to secondary school to help them develop skills for life to deal with difficult situations and learn about making good choices.

✓ Improve young people's access to and ownership of positive activities in their community. This includes providing centralised and easy to access information about the youth service.

✓ Give additional support to children and young people excluded, at risk of exclusion or who have poor school attendance.

✓ Give additional support to young people aged 18-25 who are at risk of or are affected by youth violence.

“ I wouldn't walk down certain streets at night time as it's too dangerous ”

Young person in a youth club

“ Young people are getting involved in youth violence because they don't have anything else to do ”

Young boy at a youth centre

“ We need help at a young age in terms of learning RIGHT from WRONG ”

Young person working with Camden's Youth Offending Service

“ A lot of kids get attached to trends and groups to fit in and be popular ”

Young person working with Camden's Youth Offending Team

Find out more:

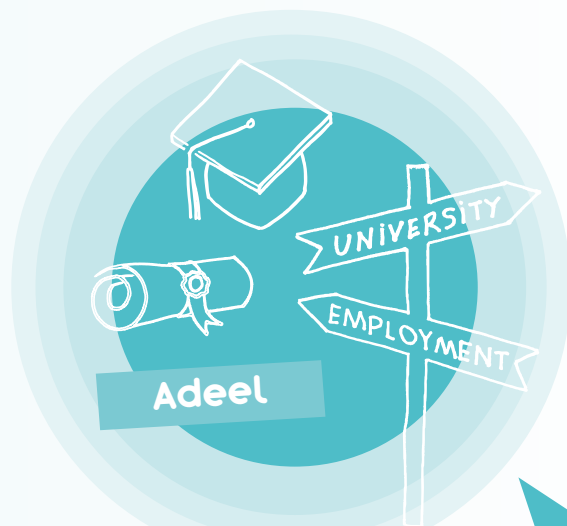
- > Visit camden.gov.uk/youthsafetytaskforce to read the full report
- > To see more photos from the Taskforce launch, visit [flickr.com/photos/camdenccouncil/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/camdenccouncil/albums)



MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE



Children in Care Council



Hi my name is Adeel and I am 22 years old. I graduated from London South Bank University with a degree in sociology.

Before going to university, I was confused about what I wanted to study. I decided to speak to careers advisors at my sixth form and my social worker/personal advisor to get some guidance. However, I still remained unsure what I wanted to study and I received differing opinions. I also did a lot of my own research and asked myself what are the things I am interested in.

There were times when I wanted to quit my studies and get into employment. However, I had a very special history teacher at school who always looked out for me and motivated me to continue studying and go to sixth form. My foster family and my close friends were also very important people who helped me stay motivated and continue with my education.

In my view, it is also important to think about what you want to do in the future, so you can map out the routes you would like to take to get there. I also think it is crucially important to be aware of the people we surround ourselves with, as they can either uplift us or take us on a different path. Like most young people who grow up in care, I had a very difficult time growing up and was very confused. What made it most difficult for me was moving homes, which had a lot of impact on my studies and going to school, as I moved to different

areas. I enjoyed university because I had a lot of freedom but at the same time it came with a lot of distractions and it was difficult to keep myself motivated.

In my dissertation I focused on care leavers and the struggles that young people face when engaging with education, employment and training. This area isn't well-researched about and there was not a lot of literature on the topic. However, I carried out my research to help inform others in society the struggles care leavers face and identify ways we can improve the lives of young people growing up in care.

I joined the Young Inspectors Project through working with the Children in Care Council, which was a great way to find out what was happening in your local borough, meet other young people and gain a lot of experience. I was recently involved in developing an app for care leavers to provide information on important topics, such as employment, education, housing and financial support etc. Having good information for care leavers is important, as often young people are not aware of the support they can get from the Council and other agencies. As a group of care leavers, we wanted to put it into an app that covers those important areas and have information available at every young people's fingertips. We attended meetings with Camden Councillors at the Corporate Parenting Board, which was an eye-opening experience and a great way of networking. It was also a great way of getting involved in making changes for young people in care in Camden and voicing our opinions.

Adeel

GET INVOLVED!

Contact Elzbieta Chandrasena, senior development officer for participation, on: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk tel 020 7974 1850 or talk to your social worker or a youth worker.

Backchat Online photo gallery



See these photos and many more on **Backchat Online**
backchatonline.org.uk/photo_galleries