

ISSUE 15 - 2022/23

BACKCHAT



Information, news and views from children and young people involved in Camden services planning and co-design

Inside: *Young Inspectors*

Children in Care Council
activities and events

**CAMDEN
RISE**

News, blogs, opportunities
and competitions

GET INVOLVED!

POCKETPA
CAMDEN'S LOCAL OFFER
FOR CARE LEAVERS



All you need to know about support
with education, training and employment,
accommodation, money and your health

Takeover
Challenge

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Out**

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Children in Care Council

**10
Today**

**Camden
Youth
Awards '23**

Photo Gallery

BACKCHAT
CATS

The views of children, parents and carers
are very important in making changes
and improvements to our services.

If you would like to find out more or how
to get involved please contact: Elzbieta
Chandrasena, Senior Development Officer
for Participation, elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk,
tel 020 7974 1850
or talk to your social worker.

www.backchatonline.org.uk

Projects and events young people have been involved in over the last year

MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE

CiC

Children in Care Council

Meet Josh, the member of the CiCC and the Backchat guest editor of this issue.

Hi My name is Josh. Over the past 7 years I have met many young people in care and care leavers who have been joining discussions on different topics, activities and events. Being a member of the Children in Care Council has given me unique opportunities such as being part of a Young People's Interview Panel and interviewing candidates for senior posts in Camden Council.

One of my areas of interest is music and being a DJ.

Recently, I have been a DJ at an awards event for children in care at London Zoo in October 2022.

This year, I have completed a DJ course at Creators House. I am proud of my personal achievements.

There is more information about the Children in Care Council projects and conversations in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading and do not forget to see the **Photo Gallery** on the last page!

If you would like to find out more, please contact: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk



Camden Children in Care Council

The Children in Care Council is for young people who have experience of being in care. Young people meet once a month and it is an opportunity to:

- Talk about their experience of support from services
- Make suggestions on how to make services better
- Participate in making decisions and influencing changes and outcomes for children in care and care leavers.

Children in Care Council discussions and activities over the last year have included:

Young People's Pathway Advisory Board meetings

This Advisory Board is a chance to influence commissioning of Pathways service providers, planning development and the review of Camden Pathway service. The Young People's Pathway Advisory Board have contributed to the development of a new Guide to Pathway Services and a new app.

Corporate Parenting Board meetings

These provide 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.

Over the last year, presentations by young people and discussions have included the Young Inspectors' kinship care report (2022), the findings and service recommendations and the life story work, the importance of this area of work and a range of approaches available to social workers and foster carers.

There is more information about the Children in Care Council projects and conversations in this issue. I hope you enjoy reading and do not forget to see the **Photo Gallery** on the last page.



To find out more, please contact:
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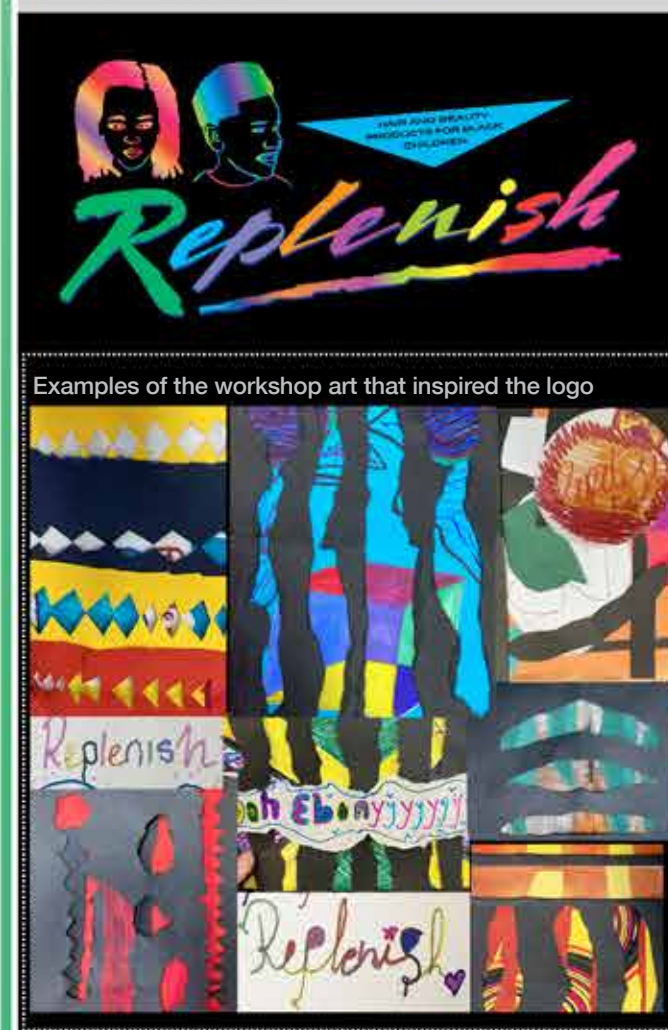
Children in Care Council



Art workshop

Designing artwork and a logo for Replenish gift boxes

Involvement in the development of Replenish information and design for skin and hair products gift boxes for Camden black children in care.



Examples of the workshop art that inspired the logo



To find out more, please contact:
Email: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk

Life story app

Workshops and a meeting with designers of a life story app to provide feedback and to implement the app for Camden children in care.

Young People's Interview Panel

Young People from the Children in Care Council and from the Youth Council have been invited to be involved in interviewing candidates for senior posts in Camden Council: Executive Director for Children and Learning, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion and for the post of Head of Corporate Parenting

My education – training video for social workers

Children in care and care leavers took part in making a training video for social workers where they give feedback and messages on their experience of education, support from the service and things they want to achieve in life. The video and messages were presented to all staff at the Camden Safeguarding and Social Care training day in November 2022.

Virtual school for looked after children events

Co-hosting the Virtual School for Looked After Children celebration event which took place at London Zoo in October 2022.

London-wide Children in Care Council

The London Children in Care Council is sponsored by the Association for London Directors of Children's Services. The key aims of the London Children in Care Council is to:

- Improve the care experience for looked after children and care leavers across London
- To help identify common themes and issues for young people across London
- To enable opportunities for young people to influence policy for all young people in care and care leavers in London
- To improve young people's skills and confidence through participation.

Young People from Camden Children in Care Council have made their contributions to discussions at the London-wide meetings.

Cost of living discussions and support

Young people met with an advisor from the Department of Work and Pensions to discuss their concerns and to get practical advice specific to their individual circumstances.

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November 2022

Takeover Challenge

In 2022 we celebrated the 10th anniversary of Camden Takeover! Camden young people have been taking part in the Takeover Challenge activities since 2012.

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 Youth MPs and members of Camden Youth Council have helped to welcome all guests and to host the event.

At the last event, pupils from Camden primary and secondary schools presented their findings and ideas around five topics to a panel of senior Camden Council representatives. Their topics were:

1. **Estates and Neighbourhoods** – How can our estates and neighbourhoods work better for those who live there?
2. **Air pollution and how to protect children from associated health risks**
3. **Mental health** – What activities can improve mental health, wellbeing, and self-esteem?
4. **Cost of living crisis** – Working together to help families with increased cost of living
5. **Camden Diversity Mission and future leaders.**

Our 2022 panel, who listened to the presentations and put follow-up questions to the pupils, included the Mayor of Camden, Cllr Nasim Ali, Cllr Marcus Boyland – Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children & Families, Cllr Jenny Headlam-Wells – Chair of CSF Scrutiny Committee, Cllr Sabrina Francis – Cabinet Member for Young People & Culture, Martin Pratt - Deputy Chief Exec & Exec Director, Supporting People, Stephen Hall – CEO, Camden Learning, Hanad Mohamed - Director of Equalities and Community Strength, Harold Garner, Head of Sustainability, Air Quality and Energy.

Takeover
Challenge

Shout Out

Shout Out 2023

Camden Youth Council

The Camden Youth Council organise a yearly event called the Shout Out! This event is for any young person that lives, works or goes to school in Camden who wants to have their voice heard. The Shout Out is a completely youth-led event where the adults are there to listen to the concerns, opinions and solutions that young people want to see. The themes of the Shout Out on 2 May 2023 included the **environment, mental health, jobs and careers and youth safety**.

The young people chose workshops based on their interests and discussed the subjects and what changes they wanted to see. They then fed back their comments to key decision makers such as Senior Managers and Councillors.



To find out more, please contact:
Email: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk

Projects and events young people have been involved in over the last year

Camden Youth Awards '23



Camden Youth Awards

The Camden Youth Awards are the annual awards organised by Camden's Integrated Youth Support Service. The awards help celebrate the amazing achievements of Camden's young people and all the positive changes they have made for themselves and others.

The last full in-person awards was in 2019 and since the pandemic we have hosted virtual awards. March 2023 we were able to get all our winners, their families and guests together at the British Museum and present them their awards. You can see a photo gallery from this year's Camden Youth Awards on Camden Rise website - camdenrise.co.uk



Total Respect training

2022

Training for social workers and foster carers

Total Respect

Total Respect is a national, award-winning training resource developed by the Children's Rights Alliance for England. In Camden, the training programme is co-designed and delivered with young people who have experienced the care system.

Training programme

The training programme offers sessions for social workers, foster carers and partner agencies. It is designed to energise and motivate participants to reflect on:

- delivery of child-centred services
- their own own practice of involving children in care planning and what can be changed
- assumptions about children and young people's experiences of being in care and receiving support from social care services.

Young people involved in co-facilitating training sessions are supported to develop confidence, communication and presentation skills.

The perspective of young people on effective listening to children and young people is an integral part of the training programme.



To find out more, please contact:
Email: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk

Projects and events young people have been involved in over the last year

Get active with reactive

Reactive Forum is an activity-based forum for disabled young people aged 13 to 18

Reactive Forum meets at Somers Town Youth Centre once a month on a Friday during school term times from 11am – 2pm.

Young people talk about things that affect you as residents living in Camden and how best to tell the Council your views. The Council asks Reactive about things like getting a job, having a place to live and services for young people and their families.

There's lots going on at Reactive Forum. You can:

- meet new people
- gain new skills for your future
- use computers, play pool and table tennis
- meet decision-makers and guest speakers.

If you want to get involved, your school support worker can contact: Catherine Andrews, Senior Disability Youth Worker on **07827 859417**
Catherine.Andrews@camden.gov.uk

Dates of our next meetings
March 2023 - July 2023

Friday **16th** June

Friday **14th** July



CAMDEN RISE

2023

Camden Rise

Activities, support and opportunities for young people

Camden Rise website is the place for young people to find activities, support and opportunities, as well as ways to get involved in their community.

Visit camdenrise.co.uk to find the latest information about out-of-school and holiday activities - including youth, play, arts and sports, education, training and jobs, mental health and wellbeing support, advice and support to stay safe, volunteering, work placements and opportunities to get involved in local decision-making. There's a news and blogs section, competitions you can enter and videos made by local young people.

camdenrise.co.uk

OPPORTUNITIES

ACTIVITIES

AND SUPPORT



Projects and events young people have been involved in over the last year



2023

Young people's mental health

Camden Youth Council survey

Camden Youth Council ran a borough-wide survey to find out more about the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in Camden, as well as local mental health services and support that young people rely on.

The survey was for young people aged 12 to 19, or aged up to 25 with a special educational need or disability - who live or go to school in Camden. It was anonymous and confidential.

Results

To see the results of the survey, visit Camden Youth Council's Instagram account: [instagram.com/camdenyouthcouncil](https://www.instagram.com/camdenyouthcouncil)

Camden Youth Council will use the results from their survey to campaign and lobby Camden Council, schools and others for any changes in mental health and support that young people in the borough want to see.

The results of the survey were also discussed at Camden Youth Council's annual Shout Out event on 2 May, which was attended by young people from across the borough and Council decision-makers, including senior officers and local politicians.

Find out more about Camden Youth Council at camdenrise.co.uk/get-involved

Mental health support

For information about where to get help and support with mental health, visit the emotional wellbeing section of Camden Rise (camdenrise.co.uk/emotional-wellbeing) as well as the new NCL Waiting Room website at nclwaitingroom.nhs.uk



2023

International Women's Day

Celebration event for girls and young women

Camden's Integrated Youth Support Service hosted an event for girls and young women to celebrate International Women's Day 2023. The event on 4 March 2023 was open to girls and young women aged 11 to 18, and up to 25 with special educational needs or disabilities.

Activities

It took place at Somers Town Youth Centre, 134 Chalton Street, NW1 1RX, with free activities including upcycling (sewing basics and DIY gift boxes), self-defence, female explorer workshops, bicycle maintenance (pictured above), making a wooden trinket or jewellery box, masterclass in bakery, poetry and spoken word, nail art and hair-braiding. Two free bikes were given away to young people by the Your Bike Project (<https://yourbikeproject.org>), as part of a raffle on the day too.

Health and wellbeing

There was also a range of health and wellbeing workshops, inspirational speakers and performances by girls and young women, with the aim of recognising and celebrating female achievements. See a short video montage of pictures from the day: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVS40YFUfCY>

Independent Review of social care by Josh MacAlister.



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

The Young Inspectors are young people aged 16 to 25. The team is involved in designing and conducting each inspection. The strength of the Young Inspectors is that young people can apply their own experiences and knowledge of the service.

This year, the focus of the Young Inspection was the Independent Review of social care by Josh MacAlister.

The 'Independent review of children's social care' by Josh MacAlister (May 2022) sets out steps for local authorities to take into consideration to improve children's social care. The importance of the support

for family networks is given special recognition in chapter four entitled 'Unlocking the potential of family networks'.

The recommendations in the above chapter of MacAlister's report have provided the focus of this Young Inspection with the aim to:

- Find out about the experiences of young people in kinship care in Camden and the experiences of family members providing kinship care and special guardianship arrangements
- Obtain feedback from young people, parents, kinship carers and social workers on the recommendations made in chapter 4 of the report (kinship care)
- Identify main themes based on the feedback obtained from the focus group discussions, from interviewing managers of the service and from questionnaires
- Develop recommendations for the service based on the responses from families and professionals.

The Young Inspectors have made ten recommendations for services which emerged from the analysis of responses to questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews with service managers.

Main RECOMMENDATIONS

The main recommendations which emerged from the analysis of responses to questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews with service managers are as follows:

- 1 To ensure that prior to making any kinship care arrangement, a Family Group Conference always takes place in order to make a Family Network plan to support the child and the parent(s) / carers and provide support to ensure that the plans are carried out by family members.
- 2 To ensure that all children and young people in a kinship care or special guardianship arrangement are provided with age-appropriate information, including what to expect from living with a family member, contact arrangements with parents and what happens at 18.
- 3 To ensure that appropriate support is provided (e.g. direct work, advocates, etc) so that the voice of the child is effectively ascertained and given due weight in kinship care assessments.
- 4 More consideration to be given to providing preparation groups and workshops for applicants wishing to become kinship carers or special guardians.
- 5 To provide access for kinship carers and special guardians to undertake a wide range of training including understanding trauma, non-violent resistance, life story work and managing contact and conflict with family members.
- 6 To set up a regular meeting space for a support group for kinship carers and special guardians and to advertise the support group.
- 7 To provide information to kinship carers and special guardians to clarify what financial support is available from the service and how to apply for additional help.
- 8 To consider specific training for social workers in the permanency team on managing contact, complex family dynamics, understanding and supporting young people living with the effects of trauma.
- 9 To consider the Family Group Conference (FGC) service facilitating meetings to bring birth parents and extended family members together to resolve conflict around contact.
- 10 To consider allocation of specialist staff resources to the Permanence team for areas such as court reports (Viabilities Assessments and Special Guardianship Assessments), co-ordinating complex needs contact and engaging special guardians in support groups.





Young Inspectors 2022



Reflections & EVALUATION

of the project by the Young Inspectors



Young Inspectors 2022



Reflections & EVALUATION

of the project by the Young Inspectors

JENNY

Young Inspectors' team leader

Planning and working on the focus groups was the highlight of the project for me. I also learned that seeing all sides of a situation (young people, professionals and kinship carers) is important for drawing back the curtains and learning how the service works. I was able to make great connections this year with lots of professionals and I am looking forward to many future opportunities.

JOSH

Young Inspector



The Young Inspectors project gave me an opportunity to make new friends and learn new skills such as teamwork, interviewing professionals and having the confidence to express my own views.

Writing notes from interviewing managers was the most challenging thing. What I found helpful was to listen to the voice recordings of the conversations and typing the content after the meeting. Leading an activity in the focus group with young people and kinship carers was a new experience for me. The team was very supportive in helping me to have confidence to take the lead on the activities. It was a very positive experience for me and something I have never done before.

LAMBA

Young Inspector

Thinking about questions for questionnaires was quite challenging as everything has to be almost perfect and professional. Also, we needed to make sure we are asking the right questions. Talking to kinship carers and young people gave me an understanding of how difficult life can be for some people.



You can see the full report on Backchat Online > Young Inspectors Reports

SOPHIE

Young Inspector

I enjoyed all aspects of doing focus groups with adults and with children. We planned icebreakers and activities to involve everyone with the conversations. The project made me aware of the importance of keeping family members together and how the local authority can implement this with help from family members, independent reviewing officers, social workers and Family Group Conferences.



DANIEL

Young Inspector

The project made me realise that I need a routine and something to focus on during the summer holidays. It is important to have a purpose to the day. Also, I now have a better appreciation of the benefits of teamwork, working together and of listening to other people's points of view.

The project helped me to reflect on my skills and the areas I need to improve on. I have decided to catch up on my education and go back to college to do English and maths GCSE.

ADRIAN

Young Inspector

My most valuable lesson from the project has been learning how to interview managers and how to prepare for these interviews. Time management and improving research skills were the areas I have improved on as well as my self-confidence. It is a massive achievement for the group, regardless of individual contributions, as each young person's input has contributed to a good goal of improving an aspect of the service for other people just like us.



Backchat Online photo gallery



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

USEFUL INFORMATION AND HELPFUL LINKS

Free and low-cost sports, arts and other activities:

- [Camden Summer University CSU website](#)
- [Free and low-cost activities – online guide](#)
- [Camden Young Women and Girls Football](#)

If you are feeling down, anxious or worried you can:

- Talk to your GP
- Call Childline.org.uk tel 0800 1111
- Visit Kooth, kooth.com – free, safe and anonymous online mental health and wellbeing support for young people aged 11 to 18.

Mental health and wellbeing:

Here is a link to videos you can watch about mental health and wellbeing www.youtube.com/user/tavistockandportman/playlists

These are available to watch in English, Oromo, Tigrinya, Dari and Arabic.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Camden

Young people aged 14 to 24 who are interested in starting (or restarting) their award can contact the Camden Duke of Edinburgh's Award Manager, Autumn Elbourn, by emailing autumn.elbourn@camden.gov.uk or calling 07970 908 975. You can also find @CamdenDofE on Instagram.

GET INVOLVED!

For information and to get involved, please contact Elzbieta Chandrasena, senior development officer for participation: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk tel 020 7974 1850 or talk to your social worker or a youth worker.

