

ISSUE 14 - 2021/22

BACKCHAT

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

Inside:

GET INVOLVED!

Children in
Care Council
conversations
and activities

Takeover
Challenge

Young
Inspectors



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

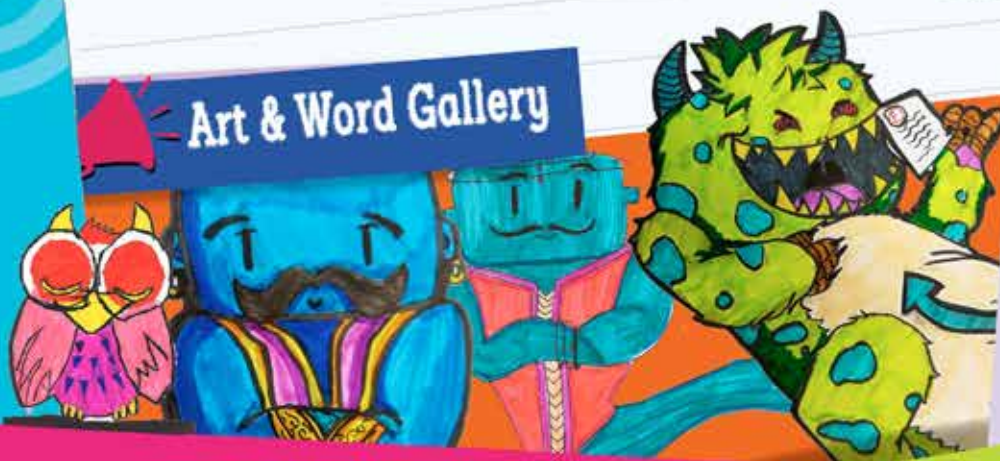


2022
COMPETITION
YOUTH SAFETY
MULTI-MEDIA



What Young Inspectors say about their inspection of Camden Pathway service

Art & Word Gallery



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

Young People meet Ofsted Inspectors

Hi I am Jenny, one of the Camden Young Inspectors. I have been involved in the Young Inspectors project over the last few years. In April 2022, Camden children's services were inspected by Ofsted. Over the two weeks of the inspection, there were several meetings set up for young people, parents and carers to meet Ofsted Inspectors and tell them about services and support we receive from Camden children's services.

I have been one of the young people invited to meet Ofsted Inspectors and tell them about Camden Young Inspectors project, how we do our inspections and what happens to the feedback we give senior managers and how the feedback influences decision makers.

I was also invited to the final meeting with Ofsted inspectors and the Camden senior leadership team, on the last day of the inspection, to hear the provisional feedback from the inspectors on their assessment of Camden children's services.

It felt very important that my views and views of young people were respected and considered at the highest level.

The opportunity to be a Young Inspector and to be invited to speak to senior leadership of the council is a unique experience and it has helped me to become more confident in public speaking.



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



The Children in Care Council provides a voice for children and young people in care and care leavers.

Making decisions and influencing outcomes for children and young people

Young people have been involved in making decisions on issues affecting children and young people in care and leaving care. These included:

- Producing 'New to care' – a training film for social workers and foster carers with imaginative characters reflecting experiences of children and young people's first experience of coming into care (April 2022)
- Meeting with Keir Starmer, local MP and Leader of the Labour Party (July 2021). The agenda and the content of the meeting was developed by care leavers
- Planning workshops and co-hosting Camden Takeover Challenge event in November 2021
- Planning and co-hosting Virtual School celebration event in December 2021
- Setting up Young People's Pathway Advisory Board to influence commissioning of Pathway service providers, planning development and review of Camden Pathway service
- Celebration event in December 2020.

Attending Corporate Parenting Board

These are important opportunities 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.

Young people presented findings of the Young Inspectors' research about the Pathway service and key recommendations for the service. They also described outcomes of the young inspections carried out in the last 5 years, from 2017-2022.

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

MEET THE MEMBERS OF THE
CiCC
Children in Care Council

Children in Care Council (CiCC) conversations, events and activities

Coming out of lockdown – worries and top tips

Return to old routines or doing things that young people have not done for a while can cause anxiety and stress.


Just as it took a while for everyone to adapt to living during lockdown, it may take some time to adapt to changes of routine again. The conversation time was for young people to talk about:

- Adjustments young people need to make to get back to routines after lockdown
- Worries about negative effect of lockdown on emotional wellbeing
- Top tips on how to feel better and to cope with new routines and going back to school and college.



Mindfulness introductory sessions

The sessions provided an introduction to mindfulness, principles and exercises. To understand what mindfulness is, it is best to try it!


“UNDERSTANDING
MINDFULNESS WITHOUT
EXPERIENCING IT
YOURSELF IS LIKE GOING
TO A RESTAURANT TO
READ THE MENU, WITHOUT
TASTING ANY OF
THE FOOD.”



Mindfulness to improve mental health:
www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/how-i-practise-mindfulness-to-improve-my-mental-health/

Children in Care Council art workshops

In February and April 2022 half term, the art therapist together with the children and young people (ages 8 to 16) explored topics such as: ‘Precious things to us’ and ‘Worries and magic wishes’.

These workshops included fun activities such as drawing characters based on the session topics.

See the artwork produced by children in the Backchat Art Gallery.



Mindfulness to improve mental health:
Email: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk



Consultation with CiCC – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy Development

Camden Council are currently working on refreshing their Local Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy for children and young people aged 0 to 25.

In February and March 2022, officers from Camden met with 59 children and young people, aged six to 21, to understand their experiences, what’s important to them and hear their ideas. This included visiting primary, secondary and special schools and speaking to young people in youth projects and from the Children in Care Council. The top three themes that came out of the sessions were the importance of friendships, feeling comfortable in class and having extra teaching support. The Council also met with parents and teachers for their views.

The information from these discussions will feed into the first draft of the strategy which will be shared in July. This will be another opportunity for children, young people, families and other interested people to provide their comments and feedback. The final draft will be published in September 2022 Consultation with the public and professionals will run for 12 weeks, from 1 July to 22 September 2022. Visit camden.gov.uk/sendstrategy to find out more.



Junior CiCC drama activities

Junior CiCC worked with the creative team from London Bubble Theatre to explore children’s experiences of being in care.

Drama activities provided opportunities for children to express their thoughts, wishes and feelings by creating a story of an imaginary child coming into care. They helped to record the story to make a training video for social workers.

The video was presented to social workers during their practice week in April 2021.

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



November 2021

Takeover Challenge

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.

Young people from the Children in Care Council and the Youth MP helped to welcome all guests and to host the event.

Pupils from Camden primary and secondary schools presented their findings and ideas around key topics to a panel of senior Camden Council representatives as part of the annual Takeover Challenge.

The children, ranging from Year 5 to Year 9, put forward their views on education and making the curriculum more diverse; being safe and staying safe; mental health; equalities and disproportionality; youth activities and opportunities. Eight schools took part, with seven presenting in-person in the Council Chamber and one school via video link.

Pupils also made recommendations for action by the Council and Camden Learning to help improve the lives of children and young people in Camden. The annual event was held online last year so we were pleased to be able to host an in-person event this year, with a range of COVID-19 safety measures in place.

This year's panel, who listened to the presentations and put follow-up questions to the pupils, included the Mayor of Camden, **Cllr Sabrina Francis**; Cabinet Member for Best Start for Children and Families, **Cllr Angela Mason**; Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director, Supporting People, **Martin Pratt** and the Director of Children's Safeguarding and Social Work, **Rashida Baig**.

March 2022

Girls Succeed – Girls and young women

More than 40 girls and young women aged 11 to 18 (up to 25 with special educational needs and disabilities) came along to Somers Town Youth Centre on Saturday 12 March for a free day of inspiring activities to mark **International Women's Day**.

Among the activities at the Camden youth event at the youth centre in Chalton Street were:

- Master baking session with **Flour Baby Bakery**
- Creative workshop, including singing, with **Tanya Lacey of The Voice UK** (pictured below, far left).

There were lots more exciting free taster activities, including parkour, gym, beauty and wellness, workshops and discussions.

The Mayor of Camden, **Cllr Sabrina Francis** (pictured below, far right), attended.



The theme for this year's International Women's Day on 8 March 2022 was **#BreaktheBias** - focusing on **breaking down barriers, challenging discrimination and stereotypes** as well as **celebrating girls' and women's achievements**.



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



2022

COMPETITION YOUTH SAFETY MULTI-MEDIA

Camden's next 'Youth Safety Fortnight' will be held this summer. Children and young people have been invited to get involved by entering our 2022 Youth Safety Multi-Media Competition. The focus this year will be on:

- **The Safety of Young Women and Girls:**

This includes staying and feeling safe in the home, in the community, and whilst travelling. It is important to consider the views and perspectives of all young people, regardless of gender identity, to widen conversations and understanding

- **Youth Exploitation:** What keeps young people safe from exploitation? How can young people steer away from crime and get involved in positive activities? What are the consequences of getting involved in crime and youth violence?

The competition has been designed to encourage young people to come together and think about their concerns, aspirations and hopes for the future.

The overall winner will receive a **main prize of £500** for their school, youth or play organisation, plus vouchers for the young people participating. There will be **two smaller prizes of £150** for schools, youth or play organisations who come second and third, plus vouchers for the young people participating.

Find out more at camdenrise.co.uk/tackling-knife-crime or, if you have any questions, please email: youthsafety@camden.gov.uk.



For more information, please email: youthsafety@camden.gov.uk

Total Respect

Training for social workers and foster carers online

This year the Total Respect training was online and was delivered to social workers, foster carers and partner agencies. The training is co-facilitated by young people.

“**THE PERSPECTIVE OF YOUNG PEOPLE ON EFFECTIVE LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE TRAINING PROGRAMME.**”

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



For more information, please email: elzbieta.chandrasena@camden.gov.uk



Pathway Report on support services

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 on Camden Pathway services for care leavers. The main aim of the young inspection was:

- To find out about the experience care leavers have had of the service
- To develop ideas for improvements, based on suggestions from young people and Children's Safeguarding and Social Work and Pathway staff
- To inform the commissioning strategy to ensure that Pathway services continue to meet the needs of Camden's young people
- To set up a Young People's Pathway Board as an advisory group to review and plan the development of Pathway services, to inform commissioning and to be part of the procurement process.

JENNY

Young Inspectors' team leader

"Each year, this project teaches me something new but this year really went above and beyond with teaching me how the social service system works behind the scenes of everything. It was important for me to see that, because as someone who is still in the care system, it's important to know what opportunities are out there for me. I learnt that I need to go out and get what's out there."

KIERAN

Young Inspector

"I feel that the project has supported me in being able to step outside my comfort zone and try something that I have never done before. It gave me the opportunity to work with a great team of other young people and learn some interesting things that I can take forward as I endeavour to continue to become an aspiring entrepreneur."

PRINCESS

Young Inspector

"The project gave me the opportunity to learn about the Pathway service for care leavers, the history behind the scheme and how management works behind the scenes to bring the operation to life in a way that is sufficient for each and every young person."

It was a good experience to speak to other young people who also live in Pathway about their accommodation. Also speaking to management of Pathway has highlighted the importance of communication between young people and management."

KIANA

Young Inspector

"This project has made me realise how much I care about the care system and how much can be done to make other young people's lives as good as they can be. I enjoyed finding out what goes on in the system and understanding why and when decisions are made for young people. One of the suggestions we discussed was creating an opportunity for young people to be involved in designing the service, by having a Young People's Pathway Advisory Board. In my view, it is a very good way of involving care leavers and getting them to help to shape the service."

You can see the full report

on Backchat Online >

Young Inspectors Reports



Emerging themes

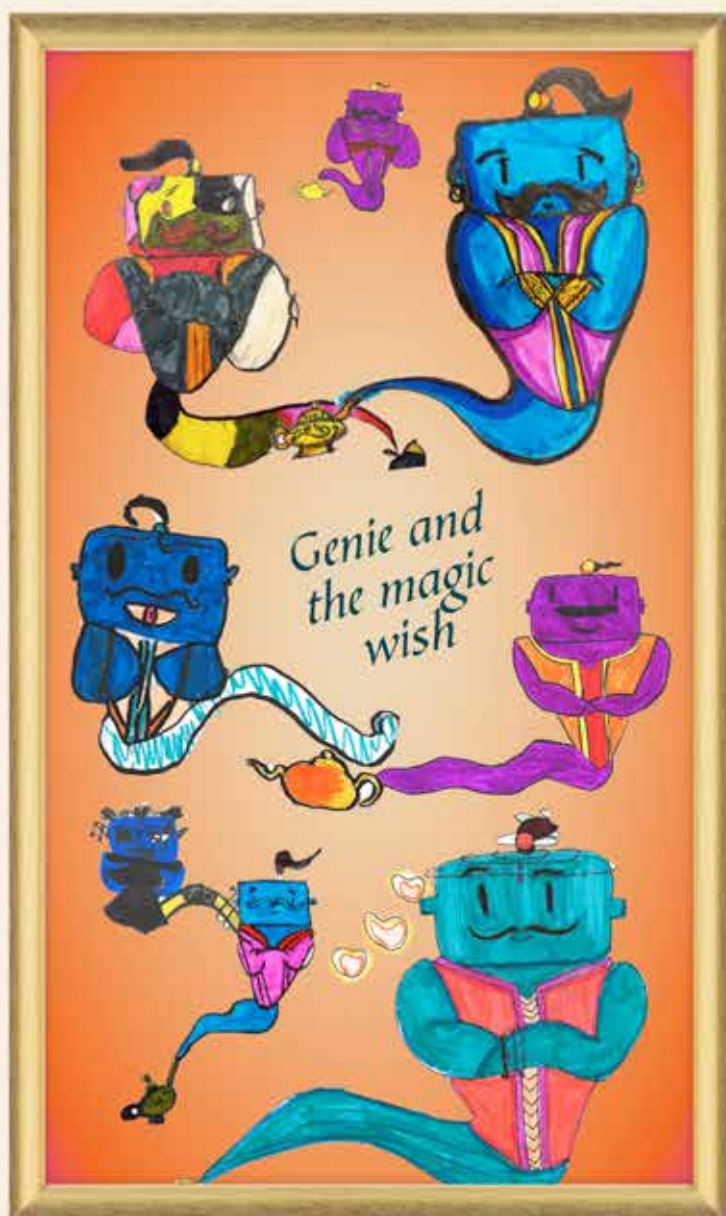
The Young Inspectors team identified the following emerging themes:

- The content of the information for care leavers about the Pathway services varies, depending on the provider of the Pathway service
- Mental health support at Pathway (on site) has received very positive feedback and a recommendation has been made by young people to continue this support for care leavers
- Accessing information about education, training and employment varies and young inspectors are making a recommendation to **develop a direct system of communication** such as Google Classroom
- Highlight the importance of the accommodation being of a good standard and providing a **homely atmosphere**, with a good level of cleanliness and hygiene in shared areas
- The importance of having opportunities and information to join recreational activities, outings and trips abroad offered by Pathway and partner agencies
- Having a good relationship and support from the personal advisor or key worker
- **Feeling safe and protected** at Pathway accommodation is very important to young people
- The importance of having support to **develop skills for independence and confidence** to try new things
- The importance of young people having a clear understanding of the Pathway assessment process, AQAs and moving towards independence
- Staff and young people agree that young people should have **more opportunities to influence decisions** about planning the service and developing the programme of activities
- Pathway staff value the strong partnership with Camden services, including Camden Safeguarding and Social Work (CSSW).

Key recommendations for support services post-lockdown arising from this inspection are:

- 1 To set up a Young People's Pathway Advisory Board and develop a programme of involving young people in influencing the commissioning of Pathway providers, planning, development and review of Camden's Pathway service.
- 2 To provide a consistent **information / welcome pack** for young people explaining the process of moving through the Pathway, available support and the process of moving towards independence.
- 3 To develop a **direct system of communication** between the Virtual School and young people in order to help young people across the Pathway to have access to up-to-date information about education, training and employment opportunities.
- 4 To provide **easy and flexible access to mental health support** on site for young people in the Pathway up to the age of 25.
- 5 Pathway providers to offer 'golden time' activities which are enriching and offer special experiences for young people.
- 6 To provide support for staff to enable them to build **relationships of trust and understanding**.
- 7 To provide **training to staff** working in the Pathway services on understanding trauma, in particular in relation to unaccompanied asylum seeking children.





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

USEFUL INFORMATION AND HELP LINKS

If you are worried about emotional wellbeing and mental health, below are some of the organisations you can contact:

Childline:

www.childline.org.uk tel 0800 1111

Kooth: an online mental health support for young people

www.kooth.com

Anna Freud: Self-Care and Coping Strategies

www.annafreud.org/selfcare

Camden Rise:

camdenrise.co.uk/emotional-wellbeing



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.