



Camden 2025

what we
have learned
and where
we go next

Introduction

We hold a vision for and with our borough – which is Camden 2025. We are proud of Camden 2025, both as an articulation of our values and our communities' priorities, and as the driving force behind significant achievements. However, we have learned a lot in the last year about inequality and poverty in Camden, the costs of an unequal society, and our role as a Council.

This is the beginning of the process to look again at Camden 2025. This document is a reflection on what we have learned and a signal of our intention to translate those lessons into the ways we work for and with our communities in the future. It speaks for the Council but signals an ambition for our borough.



Camden 2025

Our Camden 2025 vision was written together with our residents, businesses and communities. It was a call to action to our borough to bring about real social change together and it reflects the priorities of the borough that wrote it.

The priorities are:

- In 2025 everyone in Camden should have a place they call home;
- In 2025 growth in Camden should be strong and inclusive – everyone should be able to access the work that is right for them;
- In 2025 Camden should be safe, strong and open and everyone should be able to contribute to their community;
- In 2025, Camden should be a clean, vibrant and sustainable place.
- In 2025, everyone in Camden should be able to live a healthy, independent life.

Camden 2025 also included a shared way of dealing with the challenges Camden faces, built on conversations with citizens and citizens' understanding of those challenges. This signaled a new approach to working in a spirit of shared endeavor with partners and citizens. As such, Camden has shaped how we work as a Council and how we work with residents, businesses, community groups and other stakeholders.

We are proud to have made significant achievements and progress against our Camden 2025 ambitions.

These include:

- Building the first new council homes in Camden for a generation, building new school buildings and community facilities.
- Building 1,051 new homes in Camden through our Community Investment Programme and HS2 replacement homes, including 602 Council homes (with 169 HS2 replacement homes), 78 intermediate affordable homes and 371 homes for sale. We are prioritising the building of new family sized council homes - there are over 450 children living in new genuinely affordable homes built by CIP.
- Providing good quality, below market rental homes to over 100 tenants through our Camden Living programme. 63% of our Camden Living tenants are public sector 'key workers' and a quarter are children of social housing tenants in Camden, supporting our

determination to protect Camden's mixed communities.

- Supporting 500 people to find and stay in good work, through our Good Work Camden programme in the last year. Nearly 100 clients have secured successful employment, 31 have been supported to start their own business; 52 have gone onto further education or training and the team have helped many more to develop personal action plans.
- Acting on the recommendations of the Camden Youth Safety Taskforce to prevent serious violence and build a better borough for young people in partnership with our communities
- Investing over £165m in our school estate through our Community Investment Programme (CIP) as well as £2m every year in Camden Learning, which supports all of Camden's schools and their students. Over 17,000 Camden pupils are learning in improved educational environments as a result of CIP investment and all Camden schools have continued to be rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.
- Supporting parents and children across the borough through Camden Sure Start, from the moment parents know they are expecting a baby, until the child is 5 years old. We have five children's centre hubs to make sure that parents and children get the support they need wherever they live in Camden.



- Receiving an 'outstanding' rating for our Youth Offending Service, which is committed to providing opportunity and support to vulnerable young people in Camden.
- Opening a Centre for Independent Living at the Greenwood Centre in Kentish Town. It is a purpose-built facility designed with and for people with disabilities and is an accessible and welcoming community space for everyone to learn, socialize and receive advice.
- Holding a Health and Care Citizens' Assembly, which brought together a representative cross-section of local residents to set goals and expectations for the future of local health and care services.
- Holding the first Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change to be run by a local authority in the UK, responding to the recommendations with a Climate Action Plan for the borough, the first of two plans to 2030.
- Doubling the length of Camden's segregated cycle network and reducing Camden's CO2 emissions to 40% below 2005 levels.
- Leading by example on carbon reduction by creating Somers Town Energy, a low carbon district energy project connecting 550 homes to low carbon energy and reducing their bills.
- Working with Camden Community Law Centre, Citizens Advice Camden, Age UK Camden, and the Mary Ward Legal Centre to offer free support for the tens of thousands of residents who were required to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme
- Establishing the basis for over 4000 new homes in the borough through the adoption of the Kentish Town Framework, consultation on the draft Camley Street and West Hampstead frameworks and progress with our Site Allocations. Meanwhile we have used our Short Term Lets Action Plan and planning interventions to protect residents from the worst impacts of the deregulation of the planning system.
- Maximising social value from new developments in the borough to deliver Camden 2025 priorities. Since 2015 we have secured £28m of Strategic Community Infrastructure Levy, £10m of Local Community Infrastructure Levy for ward level priorities, as well as £10m every year from developments to support our affordable housing, transport, inclusive growth and environmental projects.

What has changed?

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed Camden residents' lives, devastated communities, and transformed how the Council and our partners work for local people. Over 250 Camden residents have lost their lives. The pandemic has exposed the extent of poverty in our society and highlighted the insecurity and marginalisation that comes with not being able to afford life's essentials, while also swelling the numbers of Camden residents living in these circumstances by reducing the number of opportunities for residents to move into good work. In the last year, every form of inequality in our society has widened, from health inequalities to economic inequalities, gender inequalities, and environmental inequalities.

Covid-19 has been a tragedy, but one that our communities have responded to with extraordinary compassion. The active citizenship exhibited by Camden residents who have taken responsibility for the welfare of their neighbours has been crucial in supporting our most vulnerable through this most challenging time. It is important now, and it will continue to be important as we recover and look to the future.



Camden is a proudly diverse and inclusive borough, but as with many other local areas Covid-19 has had a more severe impact on the health, wellbeing, and economic security of Camden's Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority communities. While the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement in the last year has highlighted the extent of inequality in British society, the pandemic has deepened those inequalities. In response, we worked together with our partners and communities to gather evidence and develop actions that will help to tackle racial inequalities in Camden. Our report, **Building Equal Foundations**, presents our findings and sets out our commitment to equality and a plan of action for making Camden a more equal and inclusive borough. Camden is a place where everyone of any ethnicity or background should belong, and so we will place our commitment to equality at the heart of a refreshed Camden 2025.

In 2019, Camden declared a climate and ecological emergency and held the UK's first **Citizens' Assembly** on the climate crisis. The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the role of local government in rising to the major challenges of our time and has demonstrated that we can do so by working alongside our communities. Our commitments to act on the climate crisis, transitioning to a green economy, and create sustainable neighbourhoods remain

as strong as ever. We have tasked our **Renewal Commission** with developing practical solutions to some of the social and economic challenges we face, with a focus on helping achieve an inclusive and sustainable economy. The missions the Commission has helped to develop provide a clear basis for taking forward the community challenge approach developed through Camden 2025, helping the Council, partners and citizens to work together in a different way that can achieve greater impact.

At the beginning of 2020, we went through a **Peer Review** with the Local Government Association, to identify what we do well and what we can improve. The peer review team recommended that we carry on being ambitious, innovative, and authentically Camden, but also identified room for improvement in how we plan and prioritise our work and recommended new ways of working with partners. We will embed what we learned from this process in how we work to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic, deliver our plan for a more equal Camden, and revisit Camden 2025 to ensure our vision remains right for the future.





What have we learned already?

Camden 2025 is a call to action which has inspired new ways of working with our borough, where we come together to work differently and develop new solutions. In this spirit we have been trialling new approaches, whether that's through our citizens' assemblies, co-designing social care services with our residents, or work with our citizen scientists on what a good life looks like in Euston. We said we would not be afraid to take risks or experiment and doing so has meant we have developed a wealth of knowledge that we can use to refresh Camden 2025.

Our 'to love is to act' journey with parents who have experienced a child being taken into care has shown us how sharing power and learning directly from residents' experiences can help us develop better ways to work for them in the future. Through this journey, our social workers have created safe spaces for parents to provide constructive challenge, have difficult conversations and help us to learn from their experiences. Ultimately this has put us in a better position to deliver for children and families, letting go of old hierarchies and structures and focusing on the people in front of us.

We want to extend this approach to our economy, developing a human-centred, community driven approach to supporting people into work and navigating the welfare system. Good Work Camden has taken a test and learn approach, understanding user need and supporting reflection by frontline workers, and then adapting the model of the service in response to what we found out.

Our Think & Do participation space began as a pop-up space to support community action on climate change. It was supported by the Council but led by the ideas of residents in the community. The approach has empowered the community to act itself but with the involvement of Council teams to support or co-ordinate where needed. The Think & Do has evolved and risen to the challenges of the community, even pivoting to work as a hub for food distribution during the past year.

At the start of the pandemic, the Council committed to protecting people from the worst social and economic impacts. This included commitments that no one would be evicted from Council housing, that no one would go hungry as a result of Covid-19, and that all children would be able to access learning.

This year has tested us in ways we did not expect, deepened the poverty divide in our borough, and made us all reflect on what we need in order to live a happy and healthy life. Some of the actions we are proud to have taken include:

- Mobilising a Covid-19 Community Response team and a Covid-19 telephone line to support vulnerable citizens with food support, financial help, and guidance on staying safe
- Delivering direct support to hundreds of citizens who were required to shield from Covid-19
- Dispatching over 2.35m items of PPE including gloves, glasses, aprons and visors to support staff and care providers in the borough
- Rapidly mobilising a lateral flow testing service in the community for residents without symptoms
- Preventing avoidable disruption to children's education by working with partners to provide digital devices and supporting re-opening of schools with testing capacity
- Delivering 12,000 food hampers to children eligible for free school meals during the first lockdown, representing in each instance 10 days' supply of healthy lunches. Subsequently issuing food vouchers to 17,000 children at Christmas and February

half term, in addition to 13,000 supported during the October half term

- Supporting 542 rough sleepers into accommodation, including securing a 107 bed Covid protect facility with wrap around support for people with additional support needs
- Moving swiftly to support businesses during the pandemic by making over 22,300 grant payments at a value of almost £150m and providing guidance and advice on how to operate safely
- Mobilising a Local Contact Tracing service, in partnership with the National NHS Contact Tracing Service, which has proven effective in reaching Camden residents that the national service has been unable to contact
- Coordinating local activity to ensure that the vaccination programme reaches all citizens in Camden
- Supporting the rollout of the vaccination programme with a wide-ranging communications campaign, including targeted community engagement, creative use of Council assets, and events with our Bangladeshi and Somali communities
- Redeploying over 150 staff to support critical work to contain the virus, including mass testing in the community and in schools, our Frontline Presence Team, and the vaccination programme

- Supporting residents coming forward to volunteer to be placed into community groups through our Council Time to Spare platform

We can see already that there are pressing priorities for the year ahead. Covid-19 has primarily been a health crisis, and so to recover we will need to take action to reduce health inequalities, support residents' mental health and wellbeing, and ensure local services work well together to meet the needs of residents. A new Joint Health and Wellbeing strategy will build on the recommendations of the **Camden Health and Care Citizens' Assembly**, which launched in February 2020 and worked for six months to set out citizens' expectations for local health and care services.

We have seen that health is closely tied to wealth and the ability to afford life's essentials such as nutritious food and good quality housing. The experience of lockdown highlighted that a good home with enough space is fundamental to health and wellbeing, adding impetus to the need to speed up construction of new affordable homes in Camden. This means looking at ways to accelerate Council delivery through the Community Investment Programme (CIP), encourage developers to build more affordable homes through the planning process and working with like-minded partners to build new homes. **We will build on the Council's track record of delivering 602 new council homes through CIP and HS2 replacement homes, and**

65 Camden Living homes that have helped key workers and the children of council tenants to stay in the borough.

Meanwhile, the pandemic has caused a recession of historic proportions that has made securing good work more challenging and forced more Camden residents into poverty. This economic shock presents a major risk to residents' health and wellbeing. While we, as a Council, do not have all the powers we would need to reverse this, we are not powerless. **At the heart of our borough's renewal will be our commitment to economic recovery and inclusive growth in our local economy**, making sure that local people feel the benefits of the economic recovery through opportunities to access skills, training, and good work, are able to afford a good standard of living, and have a place to call home.

Using our levers as a Council to support Camden's culture will be important, and this is why **we will support a cultural programme over the summer**. It will also be important for us to support development of jobs in the knowledge quarter and new jobs in the growing health and social care sector.



We are committed to supporting our neighbourhoods through a period of physical change, as the ways in which people across London relate to their local areas and move around them change. Pilot projects **promoting low traffic neighbourhoods, reimagining how we use our high streets and developing the idea of 15-minute cities** have already given us some great insight into how we can help create a more sustainable borough. We know that high streets have faced enormous pressures in recent years, which have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and are likely to change in the near future. **We want to harness the energy and ideas of citizens, local businesses, and organisations** to help bring about positive changes to our borough that maintain Camden's distinct identity and diverse culture.

We have been working with our diverse communities to make Camden a safer place for everybody by mobilising local residents, building on their skills, networks, and relationships, and **designing solutions together to make neighbourhoods safer**. The Safer Camden Network was a two year project working with the Camden-wide Somali community and in the neighbourhood of Gospel Oak. It has developed a blue print for closer neighbourhood working, from the Working Better Together pilot in Gospel Oak to a community led mentoring project for young Somali people. We are evaluating the project and this will help to shape how we work in future.

Tackling the disproportionality in the youth justice system is central to the work to create a safer, fairer Camden, with better opportunities for young people. The approaches we have developed mean that we now know more about what works and what doesn't, the pace at which we can move, and how to bring together our services and our citizens to make progress. This is learning that we can take into a refreshed Camden 2025. **Our local communities and institutions have a huge collective capacity to shape their own places and their future local economy**. We need to design opportunities around the places that people live and spend time, such as our estates and our high streets. A place-based approach will be key to promoting inclusive and accessible opportunities and investing in our communities' capabilities.

Supporting Camden's young people to achieve their potential despite the pandemic's impact on their education, mental health, and employment prospects will also be a priority. **Camden's new Education Strategy, Coming Back Stronger**, will play a crucial role in ensuring that we achieve this ambition by equipping all children in Camden's schools to be happy, successful, engaged, and inquiring citizens of the future. The Council is also leading by example, recruiting 36 young people to Kickstart paid work experience placements within the Council and acting as a gateway organisation for other employers, with a commitment to facilitate a minimum of 200 more quality placements in the borough for Camden's young people.



Looking Forward

This year, the Renewal Commission will outline a pathway for the Council, our partners, and local institutions to follow, so that **everyone who lives in Camden can have a stake in the wealth and opportunity on their doorstep, and every young person in Camden has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure.** The Commission's guiding principles are drawn from the core values in Camden 2025 and what we have learned through our whole borough response to the pandemic.

No one organisation will be able to come up with all the answers on its own. By **working with our citizens, anchor institutions and businesses** we will be able to bring together the experience, knowledge, and energy we need to secure a positive future for Camden.

This is the start of a conversation with communities about how the last year has changed our vision of 2025, and how we can work together to achieve the best for Camden.





Our commitment to you

The Council committed at the outset of the pandemic to protect people from harm as much as we could, and now that the vaccination programme is making progress, we are committing to help our communities recover from the economic and social harm of the last year. In order to do so, we will need to reflect on what we have learned, hear from our communities about living through the pandemic, and refresh Camden 2025 to focus on recovery and renewal.

This document articulates some of what we have learned as a Council, and through our Renewal Commission we are starting to look at what this moment means for our ambitions to achieve opportunity and equality in Camden. Here, we are committing to working with our partners, communities, and residents over the coming months, to build a fuller picture of our borough's experiences of the last year, and to agree priorities for Camden as we build back and go further over the next four.

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