



YOUTH SAFETY

TASKFORCE EVALUATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY '22





The Youth Safety Taskforce was established in December 2018 in response to increased concerns around youth safety due to several serious incidents.

The Youth Safety Taskforce Report set out an ambitious plan, building on the good work already taking place, to further embed a public health approach to youth safety through 17 comprehensive recommendations falling under five strands: Prevent, Identify, Support, Disrupt, and Enforce. The council resourced 12 local groups and organisations to help progress some of the recommendations through a £500,000 fund.

Since the Taskforce report, the national and local picture has shifted. COVID-19 has had serious consequences on young people's wellbeing, educational outcomes and employment opportunities. The disruption to education and social life had a disproportional impact on the poorest and most disadvantaged groups in our communities.

Yet despite the recent challenges, the borough's strong record on youth safety continues to improve. The lockdown periods mean that the Metropolitan Police do not make year on year comparisons for 2019 to 2021. However, between 2017 and 2020, there was a 20% reduction in weapons offences, and the Central North Basic Command Unit has reported a 30% reduction in knife crime with injury involving under 25s between February 2018 and February 2022. Comparing the three months before lockdown with August to October 2021, there has been a 36% reduction in knife offences. The data suggests that the downward trend in youth violence within Camden seen before the lockdown has continued during the post lockdown period.

Many young people participating in the evaluation expressed that Camden was getting safer. However, the recent survey conducted for the Youth Review showed that many young people still do not feel safe, and it is essential youth safety remains a key priority for the council.

In total, 62 young people, 13 parents and residents and 28 staff members working locally in Camden took part in this evaluation. This included representatives from youth organisations, the police and the local authority. Throughout, there was a sense of partnership, urgency and a growing shared understanding of the direction of travel needed to keep young people safe. For young people, the picture was mixed. For some, safety concerns were something they were aware of but not necessarily something they felt affected them directly. This group seemed relatively free to move around the borough. For others, their own safety was more of a concern, with many linking their anxiety to who they 'hung around with' or what they did to make money. For this group, keeping safe was something they needed to take steps to achieve daily. This included predominately staying local and avoiding certain areas, only attending activities they know are safe and always being on alert. Unfortunately, many young people still regard carrying a knife as one of the most practical ways to keep themselves safe.

Nevertheless, there has been significant progress in embedding a public health approach locally. This was reflected in the actions taken as a result of the Taskforce Report and in the approaches outlined in the council's wider strategies: Education Strategy to 2030 'Building Back Stronger'; Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-30; Holiday Activities and Food Programme Plan; Youth Review, and plans to address resident debt and financial



insecurity. These have all been developed, in part, to mitigate the long-term impacts of the pandemic. This places the council in a far better position to support young people than two years ago.

Considering the implementation of the Taskforce recommendations specifically, substantial progress has been made. Trauma informed practice training is being mainstreamed, with more organisations aware of the impact of adverse childhood experiences on offending behaviour. Two parent champion groups have emerged, supported by the Violence Reduction Unit funded Parental Empowerment Project and the two local Somali community organisations. These groups are helping to train parents on topics designed to help them understand how to help their children stay safe.

Camden has robust structures to identify those at risk and provide effective support services for those needing early help. However, most referrals still come from statutory services despite voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and family members often being better placed to identify those at increased risk.

School exclusions are decreasing, and schools are developing trauma informed approaches to supporting young people. There has been increased support for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those with additional needs to transition from primary to secondary school. This includes the Vulnerability Matrix, developed by William Ellis School and Camden Learning, to ensure that a consistent approach is taken across all schools in the borough. This allows schools to create bespoke pastoral support packages for pupils progressing through their school life based on information on the matrix. Inclusive education is a key component of the

council's new Education Strategy, which will complement the refresh of the council's Local Area SEND Strategy. Despite this progress, there is still evidence that support needs are not always picked up early enough, leading to unwarranted exclusions.

However, more services are available, such as the Camden Reintegration Base (CRiB), for those struggling with mainstream schooling. There is also clear evidence of a greater sense of partnership between schools and VCS organisations, which has resulted in more formal and informal interventions supporting those at risk of exclusion.

Since 2018, more interventions have targeted 18-25 year olds, especially around access to employment and engaging wider support services. However, these are currently short-term projects, leaving this age group with very little help if projects are not continued or replaced.

The council has engaged in constructive dialogues with the police, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Home Office on the issue of youth vulnerability and exploitation. The Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) panel has also helped ensure a coordinated response for those at risk of criminal exploitation.

Stop and search remains problematic in the eyes of young people, with many explaining that the way stop and search was carried out left them feeling equally as worried about the police as they were about the actions of their peers.

Although Camden has become safer over the period of this evaluation, the implementation of the Taskforce recommendations and further embedding of a public health approach will have a greater impact on youth safety over the medium to long-term. Therefore, it is essential that the council continues to build on the good progress made and see this as an ongoing issue. The local authority should build on the gains already made by establishing and resourcing a long-term approach. Therefore, the two-year period of Taskforce recommendation implementation needs to be supported with a longer-term cross cutting strategy that embeds youth safety into every aspect of council strategy going forward. To support this process, the following recommendations are suggested:

Evaluation Recommendation 1: The council should consider how it promotes organic resident leadership, which enhances the role of young people, parents, residents and other underrepresented voices in efforts to keep young people safe.

Evaluation Recommendation 2: Schools and the local authority should ensure that those with SEND and additional needs are supported effectively, particularly through the transition from primary to secondary school. This should include a commitment that assessments are made as early as possible, and parents and children are supported to understand the process.

Evaluation Recommendation 3: The council should work with local partners to review post 16 support. It should work collaboratively to ensure a greater level of support and opportunities are available to the most vulnerable when they leave school and enter young adulthood.

Evaluation Recommendation 4: The council should consider how it can use its influence to support organisations in gaining the long-term funding needed to establish supportive relationships with young people and families.

Evaluation Recommendation 5: The council should consider developing a systematic information sharing process between the council and voluntary sector - including exploring how to involve VCS organisations in multi-agency arrangements, and encouraging more information sharing between VCS organisations.

Evaluation Recommendation 6: Interventions such as mental health first aid training, domestic violence awareness and training, trauma informed approach training, and bereavement support in schools should be embedded in a long-term public health strategy that ensures they are made accessible for all.

Evaluation Recommendation 7: The council should explore how to use their position and partnerships with trusted organisations and neighbouring boroughs to both provide supported routes into careers and vocational training and support businesses to foster ongoing supportive partnerships with youth organisations/young people.

Evaluation Recommendation 8: Additional support should be targeted at those who have an increased risk of being groomed, particularly those in care, care leavers and those who have been rehoused.

Evaluation Recommendation 9: Any future strategy around youth safety should ensure there isn't a sole focus on gang activity. It must be taken into consideration that incidents of youth violence are not just fuelled by gang involvement.

Evaluation Recommendation 10: Increased and continued effort should be made to ensure stop and searches are carried out within a trauma informed framework, which minimises the impact on those being stopped and searched.

Evaluation Recommendation 11: The work started on embedding a public health approach and trauma informed practices, should form part of a longer-term strategy that focuses on sustained change and securing ongoing long-term resources rather than short-term funding.

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