



The Way We Work

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Foreword

The past few years have been a time like no other in Camden and across local government. Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic shone a light on the very best of our organisation and our dedication to our residents.

From teams rapidly pivoting to delivering food to our most vulnerable residents or setting up COVID-19 testing sites, to supporting businesses to be able to continue to operate safely, we stepped into new and unprecedented spaces and demonstrated what we can achieve when we combine our passion and energy with that of everyone across Camden.

We Make Camden, our renewed vision for our borough, captures all of these learnings and our renewed ambitions for the future.

The Way We Work is our renewed vision for how we as an organisation will respond to the ambitions set out in We Make Camden as we face new challenges in the years to come.

Whilst the pandemic demonstrated our dedication to our residents and communities, I have also seen it extend deep into individuals, teams and services across our organisation.

I have also been struck by your commitment to supporting us on our journey to being truly anti-racist and I am proud that as an organisation, we have opened ourselves up to having difficult and uncomfortable conversations. These conversations have accelerated our efforts to becoming a

genuinely anti-racist organisation and would not have been possible without those of you who have taken on roles in addition to your day-to-day work to help design safe spaces, lead our catalyst groups or deliver anti-racism training sessions. We want to build on this leadership and commitment as we move into thinking about our refreshed ways of working.

The Way We Work starts this conversation and is a call to action for each of us to come together and explore complex issues in an open and safe way. I know that it will be your ideas and experiences that will help us translate them into action. We have seen the success of coming together in this way not only in our approach to becoming an anti-racist organisation but also in our relationship-based practice in social work as well as through our participation-led work with our communities. All of these approaches have shown us the value of shared leadership, ensuring everyone's voice can be heard and allowing people to feel safe to test and learn with confidence, knowing that they will be supported every step of the way.

Over the next year there will be plenty of opportunities for you to share more on the great work that is happening already, what we could do better and what ideas you have for how we work. I invite you all to get involved and I look forward to us shaping this conversation together.

Jenny Rowlands
Chief Executive,
Camden Council



From Camden 2025 to We Make Camden – renewing our vision for the borough

In Camden, we have a rich history of coming together to tackle inequality and take action together as a community. We call this our “rebellious spirit”. This spirit and the way we pull together in times of crisis or to make positive change happen, are the things that make our borough unique.

As we look to the future, We Make Camden provides a framework for what we want to achieve for the borough, the change we want to see and how everyone in Camden has a role to play.

We Make Camden builds on the five ambitions of Camden 2025. We’ve changed the way these are described to better reflect what Camden says is important now and to acknowledge what has changed, and we’ve added one more.



Our We Make Camden ambitions are:

Camden is a borough where every child has the best start in life

Camden’s local economy should be strong, sustainable, and inclusive – everyone should have a secure livelihood to support them to live a prosperous life

Camden actively tackles injustice and inequality, creating safe, strong and open communities where everyone can contribute

Camden communities support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well, and age well

Everyone in Camden should have a place they call home

Camden should be a green, clean, vibrant, accessible, and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency

Our changed title, We Make Camden, better reflects the way we need to continue to work together and how the people and institutions of Camden make it the special place that it is. We want to work with people and organisations with first-hand knowledge of problems, with the council taking a partnership role but responding to new information and ideas from our communities.

In addition to the six ambitions, Camden has identified ten big issues facing the borough, which we plan to tackle together to make a real difference. These include four Camden Missions and six Camden Challenges.

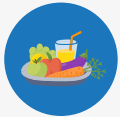
Camden Missions



Diversity: By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as our community – and the next generation is ready to follow



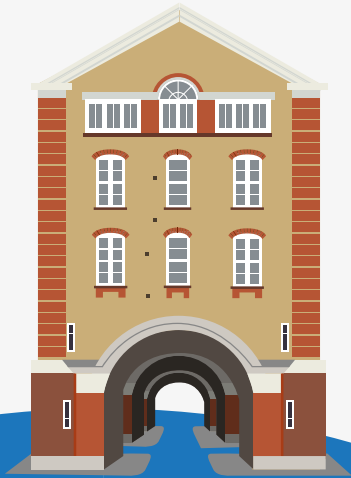
Young people: By 2025, every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure



Food: By 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food



Estates and neighbourhoods: By 2030, Camden's estates and their neighbourhoods are healthy, sustainable and unlock creativity



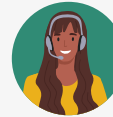
The Camden Missions evolved from the work of Camden's Renewal Commission. While the Renewal Commission came to an end in 2021, we embraced its recommendations to progress these missions so they remain at the heart of our work as we look to the future. They are long term goals which help to break down and tackle big, complex issues across Camden.

Camden Challenges

Following continued conversations and collaborations across Camden since the pandemic began, we have developed six Camden Challenges to set out other areas where we want to achieve real change. These are at an earlier stage of development and they are:



Safety: Everyone is safe at home and safe in our communities



Debt: Everyone can get the support they need to avoid debt and be financially secure



Digital: Everyone in Camden can access and be part of a digital society



Loneliness: No one in Camden is socially isolated without the means to connect to their community



Housing: Camden has enough decent, safe, warm and family-friendly housing to support our communities



Climate emergency: Camden's local economy tackles the climate emergency

From Our Camden Plan to The Way We Work – renewing our vision for the organisation

In 2018, Our Camden Plan was published alongside Camden 2025, and set out what we as a council needed to do to deliver on our communities' vision for the future of our borough. As we renew our purpose and focus for the borough through We Make Camden, we also need to be clear about how we respond to that vision as an organisation.

We are publishing The Way We Work to start to have a conversation about how we could build on the way we work now and consider how we could work differently to deliver on Camden's ambitions for the future.

We have given it this title because the way we work really does matter as it can impact and influence the daily lives of thousands of people. We are often in the background of peoples' lives providing vital services that so many of our residents rely on. We may also play more of a central role – including through our social workers, caretakers, repairs team, Contact Camden staff, our neighbourhood housing officers and many more who speak to and build relationships with our residents on a daily basis. From our children's centres and schools, our libraries and leisure centres, our parks and open spaces, and all of our frontline services, we have the potential to transform residents' lives and help them reach their potential.



In short, the way we use our resources as a council, the people we employ and the decisions we make and how we make them will all shape Camden – now and in the future.

Our ambition with The Way We Work is to develop a practical framework that supports all of us to deliver on the priorities set out in We Make Camden. We want it to include practical advice and ideas that we can all test out – whether that be individually, in teams, at a service level, or working together across the organisation or with our communities.

The Way We Work will act as that response to We Make Camden, but it is not a traditional organisational strategy. Instead, it helps to build a movement within our organisation to bring together the ambition of the people who live in Camden, with the passion and energy of

those that work alongside residents every day. It will help us imagine a different future and develop our organisation, so that we can continue to deliver for generations to come in collaboration with residents, businesses, institutions and other partners across Camden.

Our organisation can and should mirror the ambition and energy of the people who live, study and work in Camden. Together, we all make Camden.

What we have learnt and the challenges we face

Since the start of the pandemic, we have come together to test out new ways of working within our teams, across the organisation and with others in our community – including through new and existing partnerships with other organisations.

For example, we looked at risk differently, at what happens if we did not take bold action, and this helped us to innovate throughout the crisis. We were able to move resources around quickly in response to need, pausing and stopping things where we needed to. We formed new types of teams, which brought together different skills from across our organisation to deliver new services quickly. We used data differently, bringing together the information we needed to make decisions rapidly, and drawing on the lived experience of citizens where the hard data didn't fully match what we were hearing on the ground.

As a result, we are already responding to new challenges and a renewed sense of purpose, which you can read more about in We Make Camden. We saw many of these new challenges emerge during our emergency response phase of the pandemic, and in our plans to tackle the longer term impacts of COVID-19 on so many people's lives and livelihoods.

We have learnt how having a clear purpose enables us to do more than we thought possible and work in different ways across our organisation and across our partnerships.

Now is the right time to set out how we think we need to work to deliver our We Make Camden ambitions and learn from these experiences – including what worked well and what didn't, and how we might want to work differently in the future.

Our short-term challenge is how we will make progress on Camden's vision for the future, at a time when we are continuing to support our communities through the pandemic and with the rising cost of living.

We are a council with a strong track record of managing finances and consistently delivering our core services well – focusing on prevention, early intervention and providing stability for our communities to thrive. But due to the combination of over a decade of cuts from central Government, a lack of long-term funding and more people turning to us for support, we are facing a significant financial challenge and we will need to make difficult decisions. However, we also need to focus on how we will develop our organisation so that it is in a position to respond in the long term.



How We Work

We want to continue to connect with our communities on a human level, listening deeply during every conversation and responding creatively to what we are seeing and hearing. We need to continue to support our workforce to ensure that everyone has the tools and permission they need to make this possible, and that they feel empowered to do so.

The pandemic has reinforced how important our core services are to our local communities – and we consistently deliver them to a high standard. This helps us to work deeply with our communities and to develop and build strong relationships with them.

We also have a history of innovating to improve our core services, which we want to keep doing to make sure that we can continue to meet residents' needs and expectations now and in the future. The

Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review in 2020 described Camden as a special organisation, with brilliant quality staff, who strive for social justice and are dedicated to succeeding and delivering for residents.

We will also make sure that while we continue to work within the legal duties, structures and constraints that we must follow as a local authority, that they do not prevent us doing the best we can for our residents. This means working beyond service silos and being creative.

We can adapt and become more open and human-centred. We can safely share data and resources more effectively while always ensuring that we respect the privacy of those who have trusted us to keep their information safe. We can share power and support social action in a way that historically has been hard for us while recognising and respecting our democratic mandate and our Members who exercise that mandate.

But we know that we don't have all the answers. We can only make progress by learning and adapting. And we need to work together, knowing that no person in our organisation has all the answers.



The Way We Work case study: 'To Love is to Act' approach to social work

Camden has been on a journey of letting go of old structures and hierarchies, seeing people as whole people, and supporting and empowering residents to change their own lives.

Teams working with families have been navigating the power we have as a local authority when choosing whether to take children into care because of the risk they face at home.

Camden social workers have chosen to share power, asking parents and carers who have been through this experience to provide constructive challenge and help us do the best we can for children and families. This has meant creating safe spaces for children and families to have hard conversations, learn and ultimately, forgive and change. Now these parents and carers use their lived experience to work with other parents in the same position, meeting with council workers as part of our 'to love is to act' work.

This approach has influenced other areas of our work, including Good Work Camden, where our Inclusive Economy team have taken this human-centred approach to supporting people into work and navigating the welfare system.



The Way We Work case study: Good Work Camden

Camden is at the heart of London's economy but our residents don't always benefit from it, with too many people experiencing in-work poverty or locked out of employment altogether.

Through Good Work Camden, we are working together with businesses, partners and residents to explore how residents can be better supported into, and thrive within, good work. This approach to employment support puts relationships first, with advisors based in a network of neighbourhood job hubs. The hubs were co-designed with local communities with the offer of support to develop them as the advisors learn more about what works for residents. The offer is universal and nobody is turned away, but provision is based in poorer areas or where people are either unemployed or in low-paid or unstable jobs. Support to residents is complemented by interventions we are making to support businesses to create a supply of 'good work'. We are doing this by providing direct support to employers to change the way they design jobs to make them more accessible, enable career progression and create flexibility in roles to support caring commitments.



The Way We Work case study: Working Better Together

We are developing new ideas for services that are faster and more responsive. We want to make it easier for frontline staff to resolve issues that matter to residents quickly. The Working Better Together pilot brought together a team of frontline staff and managers from different council departments. Focusing on estates and public spaces in Gospel Oak, we tackled some of the practical issues that residents told us needed sorting out. We developed and tested new ideas and new ways of working.

Frontline staff often know what needs to get done at a neighbourhood level, but sometimes don't feel empowered to deal with it. We found that good relationships and honest and open conversations are just as important as having good systems and processes. We are using the learning from this six month project to inform our emerging work around a neighbourhoods model.



The Way We Work case study: Creating an Inclusive Workforce

We want our organisation to be a place where everyone feels able to be themselves at work regardless of their background and/or cultural identity, and we want to enable all staff to understand what racism means, the impact it has and what it means to be truly anti-racist.

In May 2021, we launched our anti-racism learning offer to equip staff with the knowledge and skills to identify and actively challenge racism in all its forms. To date, 3,200 staff (77%), have completed this essential training to help drive and support the positive move towards greater race equality and being a truly anti-racist organisation. The learning offer complements the existing anti-racism work that has been taking place across teams and services by creating a shared organisation-wide understanding of what it means to be anti-racist in Camden.

This work has been challenging, opening up sometimes uncomfortable conversations for staff, and moving us to action without necessarily knowing exactly where this will lead.



The Way We Work

The Way We Work doesn't set out a programme plan for us to follow as an organisation. It acts as a call to action and creates a way that we can explore complex issues together so we can move to action. Sometimes those actions will be small changes that an individual or a team can make quickly, and sometimes they will require bigger changes and need the whole organisation to take part.

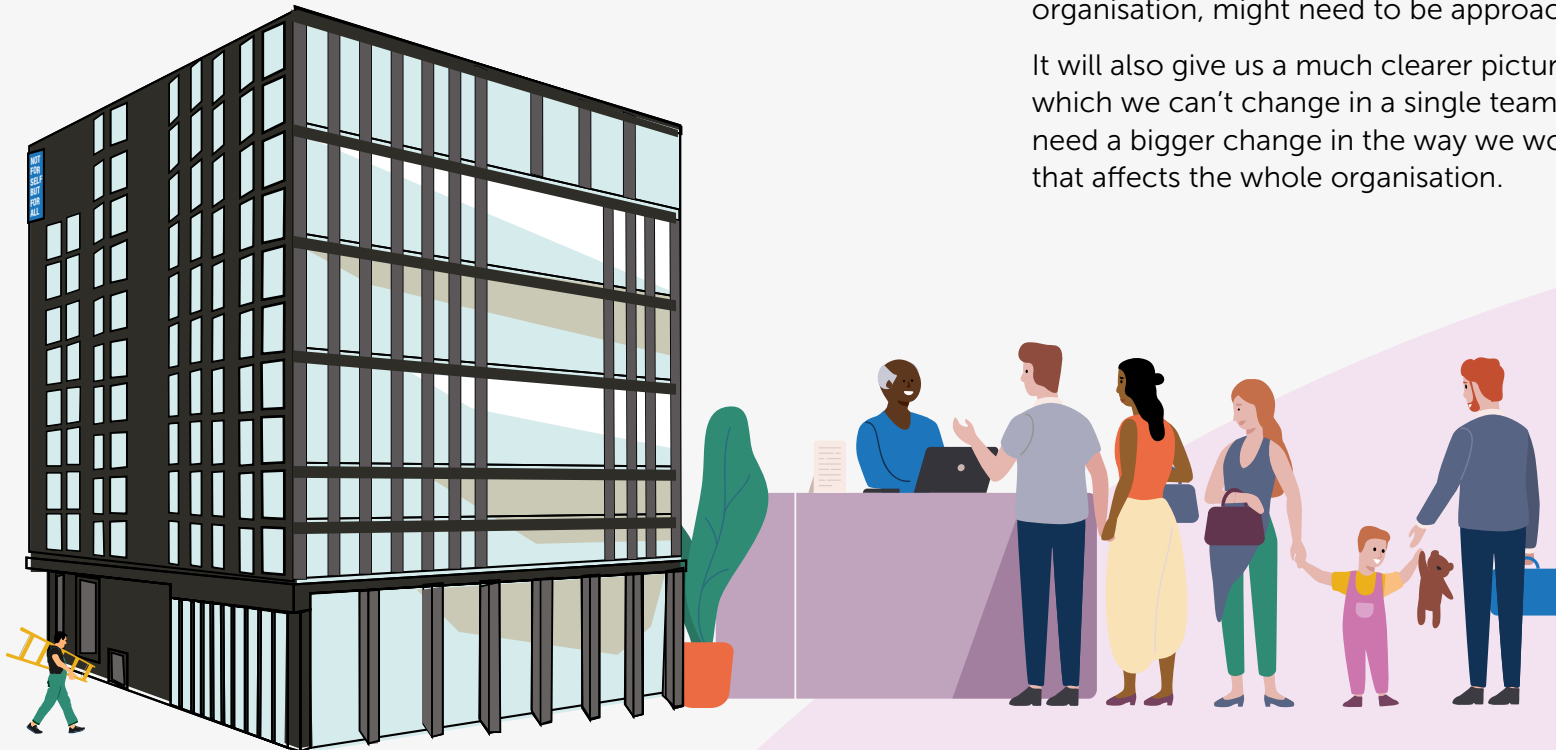
Over the next year, we will have conversations across our organisation to explore a set of questions. These are questions that speak to our values and point to examples of great work that is already happening, but where we want to push ourselves to do more.



Having open discussion will help share and spread great things that are going on, and deepen and extend these ideas so that everyone in our organisation can shape them.

It will help us understand how to apply these ways of working in different areas, recognising that what works in one area of our diverse organisation, might need to be approached differently in another.

It will also give us a much clearer picture of the barriers we have which we can't change in a single team or service, and where we need a bigger change in the way we work, like a change in policy, that affects the whole organisation.



Conversation questions across our organisation



Community Focus

- How might we become a more open organisation - sharing power, data, and resources with our communities to bolster and support our power and authority as a local council?
- How might we ensure we remain connected to the borough, with teams embedded in the communities we serve and close to the issues that matter most to them?
- How can we ensure our organisation is more representative of the communities we serve?

Staff focus

- How might we enable all staff to develop strong, inclusive relationships with our citizens and be empowered to act on them?
- How might we create space for staff to experiment and learn at pace?
- How might we enable staff to work beyond organisational boundaries, recognising that to achieve our ambitions we need to collaborate deeply with those outside our organisation?

Changing our organisation

- How can we respond to possibilities as well as to risk?
- How might we use digital technology and culture to support a more human-centred approach, where staff spend more of their time working with citizens?
- How might we understand the impact we are having and what progress we are making towards We Make Camden so that we can stop, pause or go faster where we need to?
- How can we create the conditions across our organisation to enable core services to continue to consistently deliver for residents?





The Way We Work

