We Make Camden Missions:

Our Youth Mission







Our Youth Mission

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



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| Why is this a Mission?

Camden is a borough of significant opportunity, supported by strong public services, a dynamic business ecosystem, and a robust network of community organisations. However, deep-rooted disparities continue to prevent equitable access to these opportunities for all young people. Camden's Youth Mission was established to address this inequity, in recognition of the pandemic's profound impact on young people's education and concern about how this would limit their future economic opportunities.

Since 2021, we've worked within the context of continued pandemic aftershocks, the cost-of-living crisis, and over a decade of national decisions that have reduced funding for local authority education systems and youth services. Addressing these complex challenges demands a long-term, mission-driven approach that unites stakeholders across sectors - public services, businesses, and communities - in a strategic, coordinated effort to deliver sustained and meaningful change.

We recognised the urgency of this mission, not just as a response to current challenges but as a generational commitment. That's why we set an interim deadline of 2025 to drive measurable impact and progress, alongside our broader ambition of achieving the Mission's goals by 2030.

What are the youth mission's key aims?

Camden is striving to be a place where every young person, regardless of background, can access opportunities that promote their safety, security, and long-term success. At the heart of this is a partnership built on the belief that meaningful change requires collective action. This approach goes beyond collaboration—it's about co-production, where young people, businesses, educational institutions, public services, and voluntary sector organisations work together as equal partners across three broad Mission outcomes:

- Camden should be a place where young people can easily find good jobs and training opportunities.
- Young people should have a say in creating opportunities in the borough.
- Camden should have welcoming spaces where young people can get support, find information, or feel inspired.

We recognise there is no 'one size fits all' approach. Beyond our universal offer, we need to take a more targeted approach that focuses on young people who, for a range of reasons, are furthest away from the job market. Learning from our work so far has pointed us toward five priority groups with more complex barriers to training, skills and employment:

- Care-experienced young people
- Young people in the Youth Justice System
- Young people with an Educational Health Care Plan
- School non-attenders
- Disabled young people

We face much uncertainty, such as a changing labour market, changes in government policies and funding allocations, and the evolving expectations and ambitions of young people. To address this the mission will remain flexible and responsive, testing and learning through interventions designed to support these priority cohorts to find long-term solutions.

Good Life Camden – measuring progress

The table below sets out the mission's current thinking about relevant outcome measures to track progress in achieving the mission over the longer term. These reflect both where data is already available and our ambition to develop new measures to better understand mission progress.

We have aligned the outcome measures to our Good Life Camden wellbeing framework. Good Life Camden sets out a range of themes and signals to enable us to understand what it means to live a good life in the borough.

This data will help us understand change at a system level, but we recognise that Camden is only one actor within this system. The change we hope to see – and which the mission can contribute to – will be dependent on national policy, private and third sector partners, economic circumstances, and more.

These outcomes cannot tell the whole story and will need to be complemented with qualitative data and project level learning over the life of the mission.

Outcome	Indicator	GLC Theme
Young people's talents and ambitions translate	Youth Employment Rate (16-24 years) Office for National	Education and Lifelong Learning
into secure work or entrepreneurialism. Camden	Statistics (ONS) – Annual Population Survey	
is a place with a range of good work and	NEET Rate (16-24 years) – Not in Education, Employment,	Education and Lifelong Learning
training opportunities which young people can	or Training, Department for Education (DfE) – NEET and	
access easily	Participation Statistics	
	Business start-ups by Young People (16-24)	Income and Affordability
	Number of young people securing apprenticeships,	Empowered
	traineeships, or supported internships.	Citizenship
Young people exercise their agency to shape opportunities in the borough	Young people feel their voice is heard.	Empowered Citizenship
	Young people take part in civic engagement.	Empowered Citizenship
Camden is a place where there are welcoming	Young people's perception of safety and accessibility	Safety
spaces for young to access support and	public spaces.	
information or simply be inspired	Access to informal learning opportunities and creative	Education and Lifelong Learning
	spaces for youth.	

Our Universal Offer

In Camden, we believe every young person deserves access to the support, skills, and opportunities they need to thrive no matter their background or starting point. That's why our Universal Offer connects young people across the borough to a rich network of experiences, services, and pathways into education, employment, and beyond.

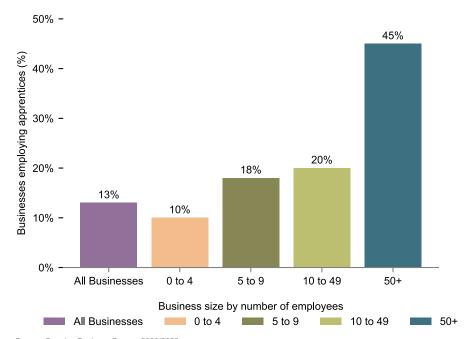
From guaranteed work experience and personalised careers guidance through the Camden Young Talent Guarantee to hands-on industry placements and mentoring via Camden STEAM, we are investing in the future of our young people. Initiatives like the Google London Al Campus and our partnership with over 60 employers open doors to fast-growing sectors, while services like Connexions ensure tailored, one-to-one support is always available. Together, these opportunities are designed to build skills, confidence, and resilience to help Camden's young people shape their futures and succeed on their own terms.

The **Camden Young Talent Guarantee** is our innovative investment to connect every 16- to 24-year-old in Camden with meaningful employment opportunities. This initiative ensures that young people have access to the support, skills, and experiences they need to achieve long-term success:

- Every young person is offered work experience during post-16 education to build real-world skills and industry insights. In 2023/24, this support helped 100 young people secure work, training, or selfemployment.
- One-to-one careers guidance is available through local advisors, providing tailored advice and guidance on navigating long-term employment options.
- So far in 2024/25, 132 young people have started apprenticeships, including four care-experienced young people and three who reported a disability. Data from the 2022 business survey carried out

- by Camden Council showed that only 13% of businesses employ apprentices, with a higher percentage of larger businesses (with more than 50 employees) doing so.
- 75 young people are currently undergoing construction training at the Euston Skills Centre, equipping them for careers in the growing infrastructure sector.
- Young people can access benefits, mental health services, housing advice, and financial support when needed.

Figure 9.1: Percentage of Camden businesses employing apprentices, by overall number of employees



Source: Camden Business Survey, 2022/2023

One recommendation from Camden Community Researchers is to embed apprenticeships more widely into the economic fabric of Camden. Camden Giving & Brap (2024) noted:

As part of the planning permission granted by Camden Council, businesses should need to set themselves quotas for numbers of local people taking part in paid internships and they will publish how well they do on these quotas."

Camden STEAM collaborates with over 65 employers across science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) to provide meaningful opportunities for young people. During the STEAM Work Experience Week in 2024, 443 students in Camden undertook work experience with 32 employers, gaining hands-on insights into potential career pathways. In the 2023/24 academic year, 6,883 young people participated in STEAM-brokered employer activities, further expanding their horizons and future opportunities. In the 2024/25 academic year so far, the STEAM Partnership has brokered 11,461 student encounters – demonstrating our commitment to growing our impact and reaching every child, every year. This includes 33 students recruited to undertake T-Level industry placements within 17 companies.

From the experience of Camden STEAM Work Experience week, we understand that the early exposure to work experience promotes leadership skills and confidence among young people, as reported by 83% and 77% of participating students respectively. One student noted the impact that the STEAM program had on them:

I gained a plethora of skills and knowledge. My favourite would be learning all the different journeys everyone goes through, whether it's an investor or a founder. Hearing the ups and downs and how journeys are never smooth and perfect inspires me and shows that resilient people have so much potential to do more than they think."

- Student participant, Camden STEAM programme

Additionally, 200 ambassadors—employee volunteers—have been recruited to engage with and mentor Camden's young people. Our STEAM partners include industry giants like Google, Lendlease, the Francis Crick Institute, UCL, and Central Saint Martins, alongside a range of small and medium-sized businesses and start-ups.

The **Connexions** service plays a vital role in supporting Camden's young people to navigate education, training, and employment pathways. Through personalised guidance and targeted outreach, the service ensures that young people can access the opportunities they need to succeed.

In 2024, the Connexions community team worked with **545 young people**, providing **2,834 individual contacts**, while the schools team supported approximately **1,100 young people** across the borough. Through this targeted, person-centred approach, the Connexions Service continues to empower Camden's young people, ensuring they can confidently pursue their aspirations and contribute to a thriving community:

- The **September Guarantee**—which ensures that every 16- and 17-year-old has an offer of education, training, or employment—stood at **98.7%** in 2024, up from **98.4%** in 2023.
- In 2024, 3,161 young people aged 16-17 in Camden (96.9%) were in education, employment, or training (EET), outperforming the London average (96.6%) and England average (94.6%). Just 1.9% were not in education, employment or training, with 1.2% recorded as unknown.

Google, Camden Council, and Camden Learning have partnered to launch the *London Al Campus*, a pioneering initiative equipping Camden's young people with essential digital skills for the future. Located in Somers Town, the Campus delivers a two-year education pilot, offering sixth-form students access to cutting-edge Al resources, real-world projects, and mentorship from Google DeepMind. The initial cohort of **32 students**, reflecting Camden's diverse post-16

student body. From mid-2025, the Campus will expand its reach as an *Opportunity Centre*, providing out-of-school learning, digital skills workshops, and foundational AI education for the wider student community.

Through the *Experience AI* programme, co-developed by the Raspberry Pi Foundation and Google DeepMind, the Campus is also upskilling teachers to deliver AI education. With £865,000 in new funding from Google.org, this initiative will reach over 250,000 additional students across the UK by 2026 ensuring equitable access to the opportunities AI presents.

Figure 9.2: Sir Keir Starmer, Member of Parliament for Holborn and St Pancras and Prime Minister at the launch of the Google Al Campus with a group of students



Access to youth provision is an important part of many young people's development. Youth provision, such as community centres, provide young people with a sense of community and safety, and can help develop the skills needed to rise to leadership positions Many young people surveyed at Camden's youth assembly cited youth centres as places that made them feel safe and part of the community. One youth assembly attendee stated,

Places I feel safe are my community centre."

- 13, Female, Youth Assembly, 2024

Another Camden resident stated.

[We need] youth development, investing in youth programs: support programs and activities that provide opportunities for youth development, education and mentorship."

According to Camden Giving & Brap (2024),

Kilburn needs to see investment from the local authority and funders to address the lack of youth provisions...across Camden, youth provisions should be accessible, appealing and safe spaces for young people to prosper, thrive and engage in meaningful activities."

Care experienced young people

Care experienced young people are young people who have experience of being in the care of the local authority (sometimes referred to as care leavers). There are 331 young people in Camden who are care experienced. We know from historic data and national research that this cohort have poorer outcomes in adult life. Our own work with young people in Camden has helped us understand that issues with how the benefits system works, the quality of advice and skills training available, and having secure accommodation are key issues that we can aim to address through the mission for this cohort.

In 2024, as part of the Youth Mission, Camden agreed that care experience would be considered a protected characteristic for the Council – as part of this Camden announced that all Camden young people leaving care will receive support to access free Wi-Fi until the age of 25 recognising the importance of internet access for training, skills and employment.

We are educating staff across the council on their corporate parenting responsibilities which will increase awareness of care experience as they discharge their corporate duties. For example, we have now included care experienced as a protected characteristic within our equality impact assessments to ensure that service delivery does not disadvantage this community.

Camden offers a care-leaver internship programme which provides care experienced young people with 18-month placements, career support, and training. The first cohort finishes in March 2025. So far two interns have secured permanent positions, and others are actively applying for roles. The second cohort of 8 starts in April 2025, offering a £1,500 living cost top-up, a travel card, and optional apprenticeships. Candidates are supported by the Drive Forward Foundation with applications and workplace skills training. To enhance career progression, suitable apprenticeship roles are now ring-fenced for graduating interns.

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'In May 2024, I successfully completed my apprenticeship and earned a Level 2 Business Administration qualification something I never imagined achieving. More importantly, I secured a permanent role. One of the most rewarding moments since completing my apprenticeship was being asked to sit on the interview panel to help select a new apprentice. Not long ago, I was on the other side of that process, and now I had the chance to help someone else start their journey. It felt amazing to support and guide someone who, like me, was taking their first steps into a new career.'

Care experienced intern

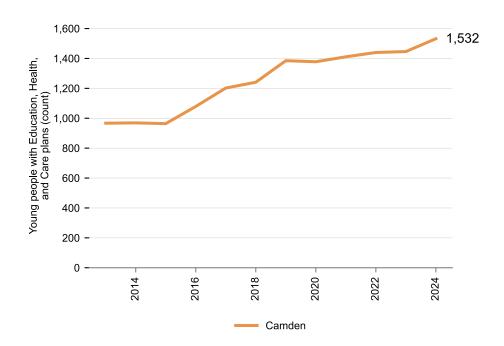
"

Young people with Education, Health and Care Plans

In line with national trends, Camden has seen an increase in the number of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Between January 2024 and January 2025, the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) rose from 1,532 to 1,609, while those receiving Exceptional Needs Grants (ENG) increased from 200 to 288. These additional needs put growing pressure on services and schools.

Camden has a long-standing commitment to proactive planning and collaboration with schools and settings to promote inclusion. The ENG pathway, developed in partnership with settings, provides an alternative to the EHCP route—ensuring that funding reaches mainstream settings more quickly and delivering 'the right provision at the right time', reducing reliance on statutory services.

Figure 9.3: Growth in the prevalence of EHCPS in Camden from January 2019-2024, Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2024



Supported Internship

Supported internships provide young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) the opportunity to gain workplace experience and develop employability skills in a structured, supportive environment. These programs play a vital role in ensuring young people can transition successfully into sustained employment and play a key part in Camden's strategy to create inclusive, high-quality employment pathways for young people with SEND.

In 2024/2025 academic year Camden has seen a 31% increase in supported internship enrolment, with 21 young people participating in these structured programs. This marks a steady growth from previous

years, with 19 young people enrolled in 2022/2023, 16 in 2023/2024. This positive trend highlights the increasing accessibility and uptake of supported internships within the borough.

Before the internship, X was isolated at home, he didn't leave his room, socialise with others, and couldn't travel without support. Since joining the programme, his confidence has grown tenfold. He travels to work every day independently, speaks to patients from all different backgrounds, and loves his job. It's just amazing! I recommend this programme and Ambitious College to anyone!"

 Parent feedback from an Ambitious About Autism Supported Internship

School non-attenders

There are around 4,000 persistently absent school children in Camden, approximately 22% of primary and 26% of secondary school children, and 57% of special school children. In line with national trends, the size of this cohort has doubled since the pandemic. It is well established that low school attendance is related to poor educational attainment outcomes.

Conversations with schools and families, along with data analysis, show that mental health challenges, changing parental attitudes, financial hardship, and temporary accommodation are making regular attendance more difficult. Quality pastoral care in secondary schools plays a crucial role in addressing this, but we must continue exploring a range of interventions through the mission.

Using school census and other data sources we conducted a multivariate analysis examining the different factors influencing attendance, supplementing this with a policy analysis of relevant statutory policy to better understand Camden's requirements related

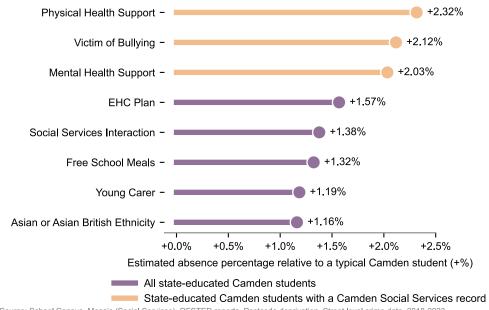
to school attendance. To understand how to enable better system collaboration we ran a workshop with services across Camden to identify where service provision could be connected to better support priority children and young people. The data analysis and research activities identified seven main priority cohorts of children and young people who currently have high rates of persistent absence alongside potential secondary cohorts.

Through this exercise, seven main priority cohorts of children and young people (CYP) have been identified. They are:

- Children in the school census with an Educational Health Care Plan
- Children that known to social care, have a record on MOSAIC,
- Children that are eligible for free school meals as a proxy for deprivation
- Children that provide support as young carers
- · Children suffering from bullying
- Children with physical health or mental health issues
- Children from Asian communities

Following this, two tests and learn pilots are being developed relating to targeted text message in parents/carers and the development of a Team Around the School model relating to locality-based family support.

Figure 9.4: Factors predicting overall absence in the school census.



Source: School Census, Mosaic (Social Services), OFSTED reports, Postcode deprivation, Street level crime data, 2018-2023

Fitzrovia Youth In Action – School Attendance Peer Mentoring Project

The Fitzrovia Youth in Action (FYA) School Attendance Peer Mentoring programme was designed to address school nonattendance by engaging young people in a peer-mentoring initiative, which aimed to:

- Foster a sense of belonging and support among students struggling with attendance
- Empower young people to take an active role in encouraging school engagement
- Strengthen partnerships with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) organisations, bringing them closer to Youth Mission delivery

Key Learning

- Reaching students who were persistently absent required targeted outreach and collaboration with schools.
- By training young mentors, the project established sustainable peer support networks that continued to reinforce the positive impact of school attendance beyond its duration.
- Collaboration between schools, community groups, and the local authority proved essential in addressing school non-attendance holistically.

There was a risk that the programme would be a one-off intervention. To mitigate this, Camden Council and FYA worked closely with Camden Learning to embed findings into ongoing school attendance work and to share best practice with schools and partners. Moving forward, expanding the peer mentoring programme, strengthening integration within schools, and creating sustainable pathways for youth leadership will be key priorities.

Disabled Young People

Young people with disabilities often face greater barriers to securing meaningful employment. To address this, Mencap, Camden Council, and the Swiss Cottage School, Development and Research Centre have collaborated to create a sustainable partnership model for supported internships and paid employment. This initiative will extend opportunities to pupils with complex needs in mainstream education.

The Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPDS) supports 550 disabled children and young people (aged 0-25).

- From age 14, all young people in CYPDS receive a Preparing for Adulthood assessment to plan for their future care, support, and employment needs.
- CYPDS works closely with Camden's social care services and community partners to ensure that young people with moderate disabilities can access social care support through Camden's universal and targeted services.

Alongside this, Camden's Disability Job Hub provides one-to-one support for disabled residents, helping them find employment, training, and workplace skills development. The hub also works with employers to improve disability awareness and inclusive hiring practices. Since April 2023:

- 75+ residents have been onboarded into the hub
- 8 residents have been supported into paid employment
- 7 residents have secured paid work experience placements
- 10 residents have been supported into education & training

Rebuilding Bridges

The Rebuilding Bridges Project, funded through the DfE Short Breaks Innovation Fund since June 2022 and now in the third and final year of project delivery, tests innovative approaches to integrated delivery of short breaks to improve health, education and well-being outcomes. The overarching aim of the project is to enable CYP needs to be met more effectively in mainstream education and universal services, and to reduce the risk of placement breakdown or moves to costly out-of-borough provision for those already in specialist settings. The outcomes from the Year 2 evaluation include:

- 50% of CYP who were persistently absent at referral showed improved school attendance.
- 84% achieved positive outcomes in relation to personalised goals
- 90% had reduced behaviours of concern.
- 58% of service users reported improved emotional wellbeing
- 48% of parents reported being better equipped to meet their child's needs
- 41% stepped down CP threshold categories

The project's three strands—intensive therapeutic and mentoring support, personalised access to youth provision, and independent living skills development—have provided holistic, impactful interventions. As funding concludes in March 2025, efforts now focus on embedding these successful approaches into long-term service delivery.

We have seen a positive change (school attendance, well-being and improvements in academic attainment) in some of the students who are receiving PACE/RBB mentoring. One of our EBSA (Emotional School Based Avoidance) students who has less than 20% attendance in Y7 is now at 55%. This has been achieved by the support of Rebuilding Bridges."

- Secondary School Education Welfare Officer, survey, 2024

Young People in the Youth Justice System

Camden's Youth Justice Service (YJS) works to prevent offending and reoffending among children by providing targeted support, early intervention, and opportunities for positive development. The service takes a child-first approach, prioritising rehabilitation, education, and inclusion. Through strong partnerships with schools, community organisations, and support services, Camden YJS helps children build brighter futures while ensuring their voices shape the services that support them.

Youth Pathways Finder

The Youth Pathways Finder project provides learning, enterprise and employment opportunities for young people aged 19-25 who are involved in the criminal justice system or at risk of becoming so. The project funds paid work placement opportunities with a range of employers designed around the individual's strengths and aspirations. In the current cohort, 24 young people known to the criminal justice system have been supported by the programme. Camden Council has provided some of these paid opportunities, but we have also worked with a range of external employers including Camden People's Theatre, Fitzrovia Youth in Action, Green and Fortune and Phoenix Arts Club, to name just a few.

The project has also supported candidates into training and education. Those in work placements are encouraged to gain as much training and experience as they can while there which has also been supported by the project. Over the last 3 years we have supported 43 with IAG (information guidance and advice).

Honest Grind Coffee (HGC)

Honest Grind Coffee (HGC) is a programme offering children and young people aged 16–18 a pathway to employment through coffee production, sales, and service. Launched in March 2023, the programme provides structured, paid training that equips participants with valuable vocational and soft skills, helping them build brighter futures. Training takes place at two locations in Camden where one is a customer-facing site where low-risk participants gain hands-on barista experience alongside a programme manager, working towards industry qualifications. The second site is a supportive, non-customer-facing environment for those who need additional safeguarding. Here, participants focus on training, production, and online order processing.

The programme has seen success, with zero participants reoffending while engaged with HGC. Since March 2024, 22 industry-standard qualifications in barista skills, food hygiene, and customer service have been awarded, with five more participants currently progressing towards certification. With continued support, HGC will not only help more children and young people gain skills and confidence but also strengthen community safety by providing legitimate career pathways for vulnerable children and young people.

Learning from: Khadys Dream, a We Make Camden Kit grantee

"When we did our 1st ever workshop, we asked 40 young people, aged between 13 to 21 "Would you go to prison for 2 years or more for a thousand pounds?" 37 of them said, yes.", shared Kevin. This was shocking for Kevin despite his lived experiences. We Make Camden Kit provided the seed funding to start Khadys Dream – registering as a CIC and delivering first workshops. It is now creating an impact beyond just Camden.

Khadys Dream is an initiative focused on providing an ecosystem of support services to young people at risk of offending, aiming to address the root causes of youth crime through education, empowerment, and community collaboration. It aims to address the gap in understanding about justice system and the ripple effects in other aspects of life such as mental health and builds on that to introduce young people to alternative pathways.

They have devised a program of workshops for young people across the age range of 11 to 25, delivered in collaboration with a range of community organisations. The reported success rate for workshop attendees is 85% i.e. every young person that goes through the program is 85% less likely to re-offend. The change in life pathway contributes to good life for them and their loved ones and leads to a safer community. As Kevin puts it, "Khadys Dreams were made by the community for the community."

Now in its 3rd year, Khadys Dream is gathering immense learnings to improve outcomes for our young people and avoid entering the youth justice system altogether.

- "Something that both parents and young people need" Like most work centred around young people, Khadys Dream was started with the aim of working directly with young people. However, parents have expressed unpredictable interest in being a participant too!
- "It's never too late, It's never too young." While Khadys Dream starts with young people at the age of 11/12, the feedback from parents has been to start awareness building at a younger age to minimize crime as an option altogether.
- "They didn't quite understand what education and the criminal justice system connected." The approach of building an ecosystem around young people has meant sensitizing schools, youth clubs and community organisations on the potential of education and awareness to change attitudes.

Our priorities for the coming year

The Youth Mission is committed to expanding opportunities for young people through targeted initiatives, partnerships, and innovative projects. The focus over the coming year will be on continuous learning, monitoring progress, and adapting strategies to ensure the council drives meaningful change for Camden's young people, and that young people remain central to influencing change in the borough.

Key priorities include:

- The Community Wealth Fund launched in 2024 with an initial £1 million investment, the fund will begin trialling youth-led investment decisions in 2025. A Youth Panel of 15 young people (aged 16–25, or up to 30 for priority groups) will co-design and decide how the funding is invested in local businesses dedicated to creating inclusive economic opportunities for young people traditionally locked out of investment and employment pathways.
- Strengthening universal offer of programmes such as Good Work Camden and STEAM to connect more young people to meaningful employment and career pathways.
- Using evidence and data to identify the barriers faced by priority cohorts and design interventions that meet their specific needs.
- Championing internships for all with a focus on the priority cohorts through anchor institutions and council-led initiatives.
- Testing innovative approaches, such as the Team Around the School pilot on school attendance and multidisciplinary school teams, to improve attendance and engagement.
- The Euston Skills Centre and AI Campus opening in 2025 to create new out-of-school opportunities for skills development and futurefocused learning.

- Partnering with Autonomy to explore the potential of a basic income pilot for care-experienced young people.
- Launching a Primary Careers Fair in 2025 to connect younger children with relatable role models, directly responding to youth feedback.
- Developing key relationships with mission ambassadors to expand opportunities for young people.
- Delivering the government's Youth Trailblazer Guarantee programme, which in central London will focus on care experienced young people.

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