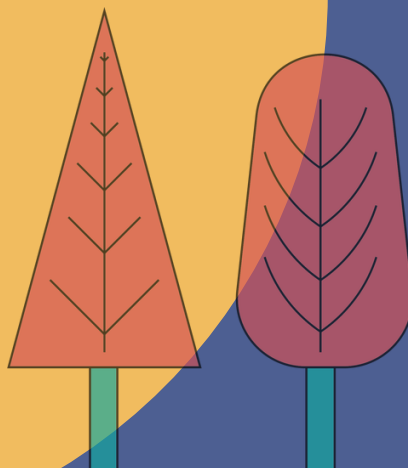
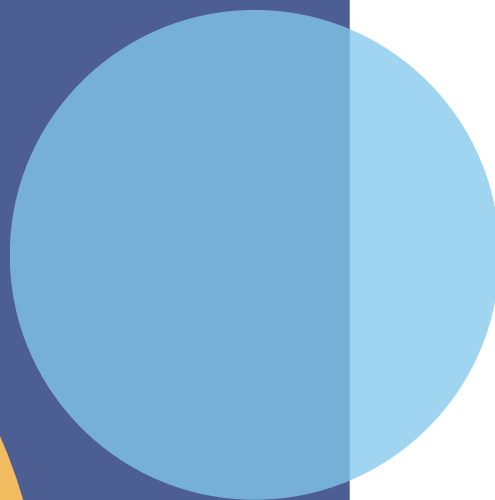
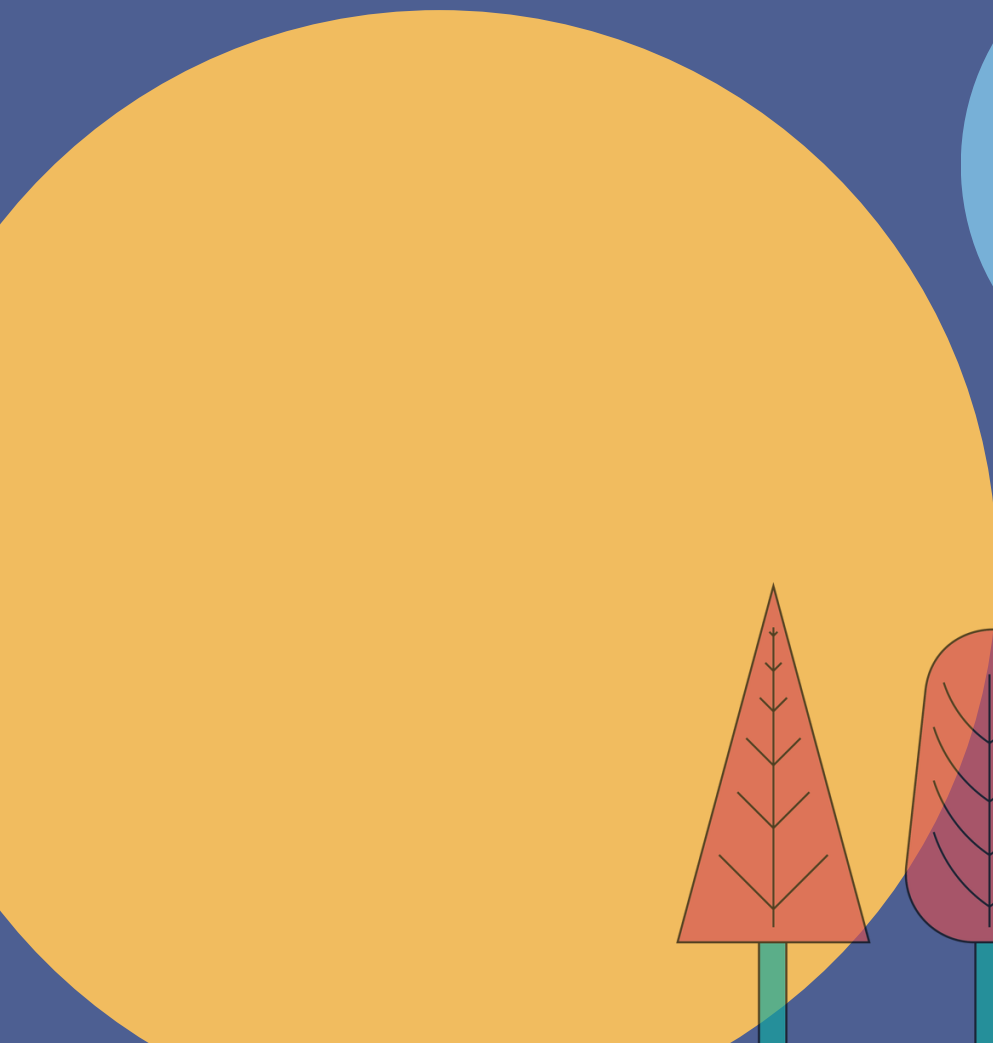




OUR FIRST YEAR

IMPACT REPORT

APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026



A WORD FROM OUR DIRECTOR

I'm delighted to introduce our first annual report for the Camden Centre for Relational Practice. From the beginning, our purpose has been clear: to reimagine how public services are designed and delivered by placing relational capability at the centre. At a time when organisations are navigating complexity, rising demand, risk, and uncertainty, relational practice is essential. It creates the conditions where hope can take root, where courage and curiosity shape daily work, and where connection quietly holds people and systems together. These are the foundations that enable organisations to adapt and thrive in a shifting landscape.

This report reflects a year of meaningful progress. We have partnered with colleagues across the country who share a commitment to cultural transformation, approaching each collaboration with care, curiosity, and respect for local context. Our learning programmes are tailored, agile, and grounded in real practice. We are proud of the expertise we bring, and equally committed to remaining humble, reflective, and open as we learn alongside others.

Our commitment to antiracist practice and social justice remains central to who we are. As we look ahead, we are energised by new partnerships, opportunities, and the continued development of our curriculum and accreditation journey.

Nana Bonsu
Director of Relational Practice, Camden Council



ABOUT US

Public services are built on relationships. Every decision, every interaction, every outcome depends on the quality of connection between people. Yet the pressures on public service organisations – complexity, workforce strain, squeezed funding, growing resident needs – make it harder than ever to work in ways that feel human, compassionate, and grounded in trust.

The Camden Centre for Relational Practice, established by Camden Council in 2024, was created in response to this reality. It is a space built **by the public sector, for the public sector**, shaped by people who understand the demands of front-facing work, the challenges of public sector leadership, and the complexity of systems that hold everything together. This is not an external consultancy looking in. It is a sector-rooted centre **designed by practitioners who know the work because they live it**.

The Centre exists to help public sector organisations strengthen the relationships that sit at the heart of good public services. We believe relational practice is not an add-on or a “nice to have”. It is a **core capability for modern public services** – improving resident trust, reducing conflict, supporting staff wellbeing, enabling better decisions, and contributing to a stronger society. Small relational shifts can create meaningful change, and our role is to help organisations make those shifts.

At its heart, the Centre is about connection. Connection between people, between organisations, and between the values we hold and the way we work. Connection with each other and with the people we serve. **We want to help public services bring out the best in humans.**

We provide support with:

- Relational leadership
- Relational practice
- Relational infrastructure and service design
- Participation and codesign
- Children’s services improvement

And we offer:

- training and workforce development
- facilitation and codesign
- peer-to-peer learning programmes and workshops



WHAT RELATIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES MEANS TO US

The Centre is part of a collective of organisations, projects and institutions trying to help public services to feel more human. The definition of relational public services to us is:

“

SERVICES PROVIDED BY
GOVERNMENTS FOR THE
PUBLIC GOOD, THAT
PRIORITISE STRONG
RELATIONSHIPS WITH AND
BETWEEN PEOPLE,
ON WHICH EVERYTHING ELSE
IS BUILT

”

This is not a new idea. It has been around for over 150 years with scattered roots across a multitude of practices and systems. In 2025, the Centre co-authored an article about the history of relationalism in public services and why it matters today, published by University College London. You can [read the article here](#).

OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

8

Intro to
Relational Practice
taster sessions for
Camden Homes and
Communities

4

local authority
peer learning
programmes

79%

quite a lot or a great deal of
knowledge gained from our
training

94

people trained

5

relational practice
3-day training programme
cohorts for Camden
Children and Learning

80%

quite a lot of a great deal of
practical application to
working lives

28

Camden staff
trained as
associate
trainers

79

people trained

76

attendees at our
launch event

100%

quality of our
training facilitation rated as
good or excellent

72

external local
authority participants
in our relational
leadership course

83

frontline staff and
Camden residents
participating in
Centre codesign
projects

93%

quality of our training content
and materials rated as
good or excellent

407

attendees across our
national webinar series
“Building Relational
Cultures in
Public Services”

6

open access
webinars

54

sector led
improvement sessions
run across
4 local authorities

IMPACT OF OUR TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A big feature of the Centre's work this year has been support to workforces both inside and outside Camden. We design and deliver training to help build workforce capabilities and confidence in relational ways of working.

We started the year with the codesign of a relational practice framework for the Camden Children and Learning Directorate. Through engagement with the Directorate leaders and staff, we designed an integrative framework drawing on five foundational theories. The framework uses systemic thinking as its central approach augmented with methods and techniques to support systemic thinking - mentalisation, antiracism, restorative and rights based participation.

We developed the framework into a curriculum and undertook a test and learn training course with a small group of staff, including a formative evaluation through the University of Northampton.

The design was iterated into a 3-day programme which we rolled out across the Children and Learning workforce. We have successfully delivered to five cohorts with exceptionally positive participant feedback about knowledge gained and applicability to their working lives. We have a further seven fully booked cohorts to deliver this academic year. We've also taken an innovative approach to trainers. 28 staff from across the Council are now trained to deliver the programme, making sure the ideas can flow between services, not stay stuck in one place.

The Centre has delivered a wide array of other training and workshops this year, including Relational Practice taster sessions for Camden's Homes and Communities Directorate, workshops for social work students at Royal Holloway University London and BTEC Health and Social Care students at Kimberley College, and 2-day relational leadership courses for Wokingham Council.

"Really inspiring and thought provoking, excellent delivery and engagement"

"I have done this training in another borough however the approach shown by this trainer was better than any I had experienced previously. She was engaging and knowledgeable about the type of work we do and made the training aptly apply"

"Loved the pacing and translation of systemic ideas into every day language"

"Very enjoyable training. I feel like I am gaining a lot"

"The delivery was fantastic. It was accessible, reflective and challenging"



CASE STUDY: WOKINGHAM RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Centre has collaborated on a children's services sector-led improvement programme with Wokingham Council for 16 months. Wokingham invited the Centre to help take their relational ideas into the heart of their leadership and management culture.

We worked alongside practice leads from Wokingham to take their 2-day systemic practice course for frontline staff and adapt it for the management and leadership context, bringing in ideas from Camden's unique approach to relational practice. This included curriculum design and instruction design to ensure Wokingham could 'train their trainers' and sustain the work themselves into the future.

The Centre delivered four 2-day courses at the Bradbury community centre in the heart of Wokingham. 72 managers and leaders from across Children and Education took part, including the Directorate's Senior Leadership Team.

From 102 pieces of feedback, 82% said they gained quite a lot or a great deal of knowledge and 87% said the course had quite a lot or a great deal of practical application to their working lives. 100% said facilitation was good or excellent.

"A huge thanks for delivering the training to our managers and leaders. It has been so lovely to hear how much they enjoyed it. They really valued your knowledge and skills in facilitating and I get a real sense of rejuvenation amongst them in applying systemic and relational principles in the way they lead."

Jennie Oatham,
Principal Social Worker
Wokingham Council



IMPACT OF OUR FACILITATION AND CODESIGN

This year saw the launch of the Centre's flagship codesign programme. The programme uses an 10-session model to bring together public servants and residents to design a relational service, policy or practice framework. The model uses a design approach that is rooted in our relational values:

- based on dialogue and collaboration
- uses methods that are systemic, trauma sensitive and non-extractive
- draws on design justice principles

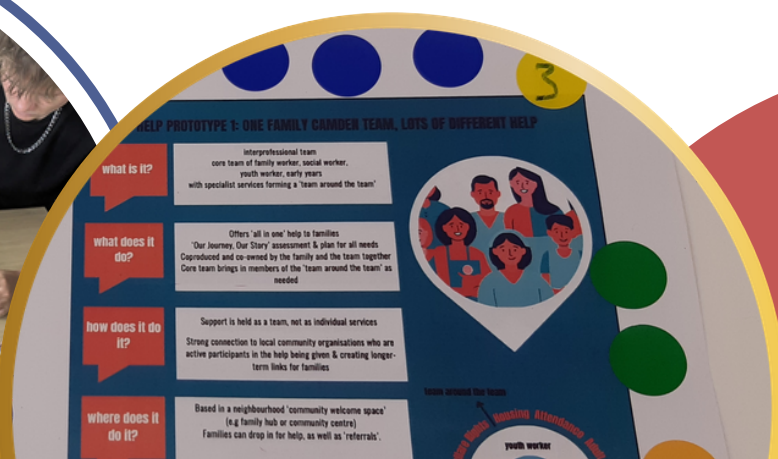
The model was successfully tested with Camden's Children and Learning Directorate as part of their work on national reforms of children's social care. The Centre brought together 24 frontline staff with 13 Camden residents, all with lived experience of children's services in a range of ways, to design an approach to Family Help. The project concluded with staff and residents facilitating a workshop for the Directorate's senior leaders to explore their design ideas. All three ideas codesigned by the staff and residents are now being implemented.

The Centre is now using the model to support Camden's Homes and Communities Directorate to bring together 25 staff and 19 residents with experience of being a social housing tenant, to design a relational practice framework for the Directorate's 1300 staff.

Two of our favourite codesign projects this year were the Rights in Action project and Relational Practice Deconstructed Project with Camden young people. Both projects were delivered in collaboration with VCS organisation Fitzrovia Youth in Action and Camden's Integrated Youth Support Service.

The Relational Practice Deconstructed project worked with Camden young people to convert our relational practice framework into a simplified version that young people could deliver themselves. The project was initiated by members of Camden's Youth Assembly. The group's work now forms the basis of our Intro to Relational Practice taster sessions.

Rights in Action brought together 12 young people to design a framework for rights-based participation. After exploring children's rights and participation approaches, the young people came up with the Yungi Model - a rights-led approach to participation tailored to Camden's context. The model was so well received that it has been embedded into Camden's Children and Learning practice training so that all children's services staff can learn it and use it.



CASE STUDY: CAMDEN HOMES & COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE

In 2025, Camden Homes and Communities Directorate set out on a journey to make relationships the heart of their service - and we went with them.

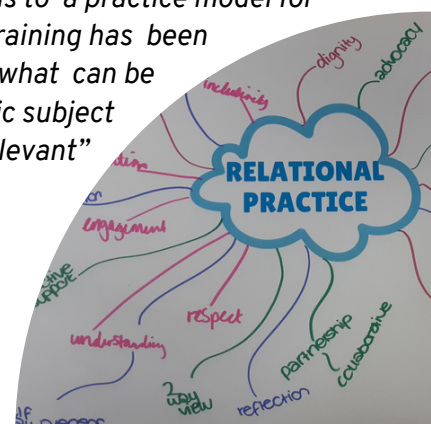
In collaboration with their senior leadership team and transformation leads, we designed a programme to help build a relational culture across Homes and Communities and complement the Directorate's wider transformation agenda.

Phase 1 started with a Centre favourite technique - listening circles. Staff from across the Directorate came together to reflect on what felt strong in working life relationships and what could be better. This was followed by a series of relational practice 'taster' sessions to help build awareness of the language of relational work and, most importantly, for Homes and Communities staff to make meaning of relational practice in their own words, on their own terms.

Phase 2 started in early 2026. The Directorate employed a systemic therapist to boost in-house capacity to work relationally and support system capability. In March, we started one of our flagship codesign programmes, bringing Homes and Communities staff and residents together to design their own practice framework, built for the housing context.

"Drawing on the Centre's experience of collaborative work with our communities has meant we are in a better position at the start to understand what is important in designing the process to take us to a practice model for Housing. The Centre's taster training has been really well received and made what can be in the wrong hands an academic subject immediately accessible and relevant"

Elly Shepherd
Head of Housing Strategy
Camden Council



IMPACT OF OUR PEER-TO-PEER LEARNING PROGRAMMES

A cornerstone of the Centre's work this year has been our support to other local authorities. We are a Department for Education partner in the sector-led improvement programme (SLIP). SLIP is a support system where high-performing local authorities provide peer support, mentoring and challenge to other authorities to improve children's services. It focuses on fostering improvement through sector expertise, rather than central government intervention.

The Centre takes a unique approach to peer support. We do not offer a 'cut and paste' model. Instead every peer learning programme is focussed on strengths, reciprocity and a principle of 'something to teach something to learn'. Our sector-led improvement work is imbued with our values of compassion, collaboration and empowerment, and our programmes are all bespoke designed and flexible to help a local authority get where it wants to be, building on what's strong and putting relationships first.

Our SLIP work this year has taken us across the country. We undertook an 18 month programme with North East Lincolnshire Council, which began with support on child exploitation and has expanded to youth offers, care leavers, relational practice implementation, participation and support to children with disabilities.

We also supported Wokingham Borough Council throughout the year, initially on early help and intervention and developing into areas including relational culture building, community-led support and family led practice. Both local authorities requested additional work from the Centre based on the impact of their first programmes.

Further afield, we have welcomed visitors from the Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Executive and from the Cayman Islands Governors Office on developing systems in children's social care with relationships at the centre,

All programmes have encompassed knowledge exchange days, listening circles, community-based visits, roundtables, dialogue and Camden's story-sharing model Friday Story Live, bringing stories of strength from both partners to the surface.



CASE STUDY: NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

One of our proudest moments of 2025 came in September when North East Lincolnshire Council received their inspection result from the children's services inspectorate Ofsted.

North East Lincolnshire had been rated as inadequate by Ofsted since 2021. Our peer learning collaboration with them began in 2024 and a year later North East Lincolnshire received a rating of Good with Outstanding Leadership - one of the fastest positive changes in the history of local authority Children's Services across the country.

The credit for this is with all the staff in Team NEL, and Camden was honoured to have played a small part in that journey. The peer learning was from reciprocal from beginning to end. Camden was enriched by the experience of being alongside our North East Lincolnshire colleagues, with a long-term friendship now firmly in place.

"What a partnership North East Lincolnshire and Camden have. Bound by shared values, love and care, and quite simply a desire to help and support children and families. Sector-led improvement with love and care at the centre.

You have been so professionally generous and supportive of our improvement journey for children in North East Lincolnshire. The support you have offered has hugely contributed to the pace of change and outcomes we are now seeing".

Ann-Marie Matson
Director of Children's Services
North East Lincolnshire Council



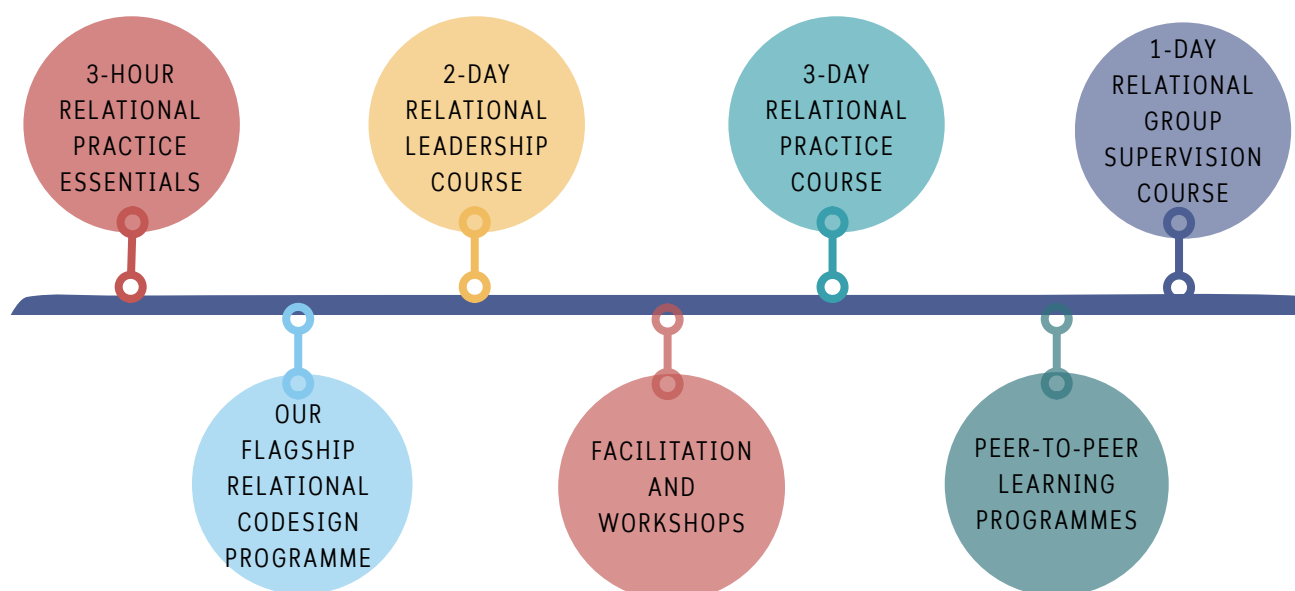
THE YEAR AHEAD

We're excited for the year to come. The Centre is a long-term, deep rooted project to help make relational cultures in public services a common practice. We will keep gradually and intentionally building our offer, our experience, and our credibility with the public sector. Feedback is central to our philosophy, to help us learn and grow. We also want to get smarter with our evaluation, to make sure what's learned in the training room makes a difference in the real world. In 2026, we'll be introducing ripple effects mapping to our projects and training to understand this better.

High notes for 2026 will include:

- A training test and learn with the UK Civil Service, to take relational practice into the heart of government
- Phase 3 of our 18 month project with Camden's Homes and Communities Directorate, converting their practice framework into a curriculum and rolling out training for their workforce
- Expanding our portfolio of offers for the public sector (in the circle menu below)
- Work with Camden Digital to develop our online offer
- Work with OCN London to accredit our training programmes
- Peer to peer learning programmes for up to 2 local authorities, on any combination of our culture-building themes: relational leadership, relational practice, relational infrastructure and service design, participation, and children's services improvement

We are open to new partnerships. If our offer sounds like it's for you, or if you're interested in collaborating on research or new ideas, please do get in touch or see our prospectus on our [website on this link](#)



contact us

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**The
Camden
Centre**
For Relational Practice