Annual Report 2026

Central London Forward













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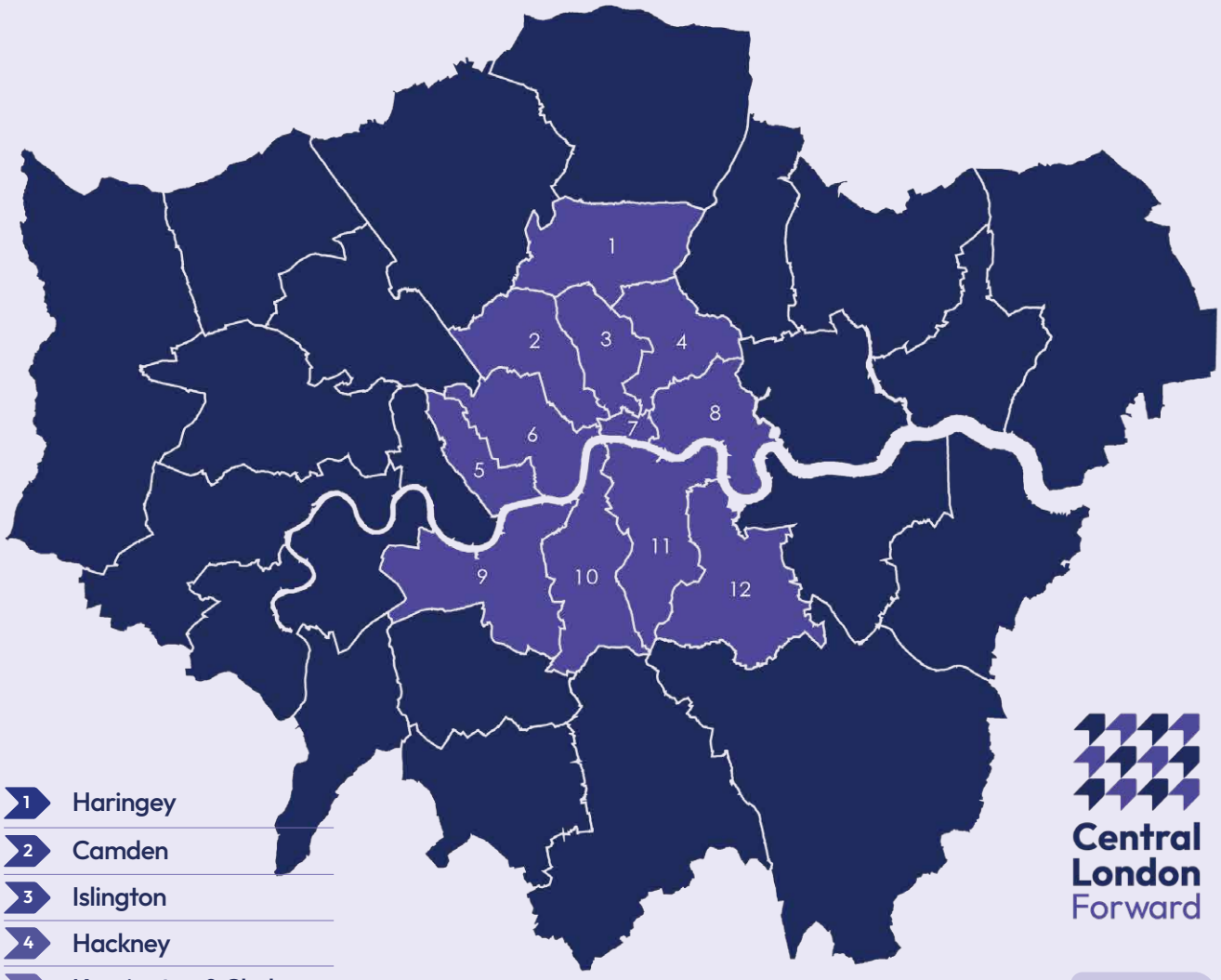
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Who we are

Central London Forward (CLF) is a partnership of the 12 central London local authorities: Camden, the City of London, Hackney, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster.

We work together with our member authorities and with other organisations – public sector, private and charities – to support inclusive and sustainable growth in central London; so that our economy thrives, and our residents benefit from the opportunities this creates.



1. Haringey
2. Camden
3. Islington
4. Hackney
5. Kensington & Chelsea
6. Westminster
7. City of London
8. Tower Hamlets
9. Wandsworth
10. Lambeth
11. Southwark
12. Lewisham

Central London Forward

Chair's Foreword



Central London is where the country's economic engine meets its biggest challenges. It is a global centre of culture, finance and innovation, but also home to some of the deepest inequality in the UK.

In Southwark where I am Leader, under the shadow of the Shard, people rely on foodbanks, children grow up in overcrowded homes, and families are priced out of the borough they were born in. Central London Forward exists to make sure that our economic strengths, prosperity and opportunities are felt by every resident. This is difficult, but difficult is not the same as impossible.

I took over as Chair of Central London Forward following the May 2026 local elections, and I am proud to be its first Green Chair. The elections transformed the politics of central London, with new leaders, new administrations and new energy around the table. I am excited to get stuck in, and to work with colleagues from every borough to deliver for the 2.4 million people we represent.

I inherit an organisation in strong shape. Over the past year CLF has become the largest driver of the government's 'Connect to Work' programme, with a £73 million contract to support more than 17,000 residents with health conditions and disabilities into work over five years, and over 4,590 people already supported. Our Full Potential Trailblazer has helped more than 900 young people who are care-experienced, have SEND, are homeless or have been through the youth justice system, towards education, employment or training. Our Integration Hub has brought together refugees, disabled people and young people not in education, employment or training, including three job fairs attended by more than 3,857 residents. Our digital connectivity work has brought full fibre to 14 previously underserved sites.

CLF has also been a strong voice in the policy debates that matter. We have made the case for the Bakerloo Line Extension, which could support 107,000 new homes. Our research has shown that an overnight visitor levy could raise more than £350 million a year, and we have argued that boroughs should keep at least half of it to manage the impact of tourism. We have pressed for devolution of employment and skills, and shaped the Inclusive Talent Strategy on behalf of our boroughs.

I want to thank Cllr Adam Hug for his work as Chair. He led CLF with generosity and a real commitment to partnership, and I am grateful for the strong foundations he leaves.

Looking ahead, my ambition for CLF is simple: to be a confident, united voice for central London. That means working together to get things done, making the positive case for investment in our boroughs, and it also means holding the government to account where its decisions fall unfairly on our residents. The Fair Funding Review is a clear example. Its proposed formula would have hit the most deprived urban neighbourhoods hardest and undermined central London's ability to power the national economy. We will keep challenging decisions like this, and keep standing up for our member councils and the communities they serve.

Together, we can build a central London that is fairer, greener and more prosperous for everyone who lives and works here.

Cllr James McAsh

Chair, Central London Forward

Director's Introduction



I was delighted to join Central London Forward in January this year as the new director. Since coming into post I've been bowled over by the dedication and commitment of our team, our borough and external partners in tackling some of the biggest challenges facing central London, our 12 local authorities, residents, businesses and visitors. Together our area covers 2.4 million Londoners and represents 14% of the country's GDP.

In the past year we've launched the Full Potential Youth Trailblazer programme which supports care experienced young people into education, employment or training, so far we've supported over 900 young people. We've also mobilised the Connect to Work programme which will support 17,000 residents with mental and physical health barriers to support them into work, to date we've supported over 4,590 people on the programme. Our work coordinating activity between youth providers, disability groups and refugees continues to drive closer collaboration.

Our policy work has focused on making the positive case for investment in central London to support our residents and businesses and unlock growth in support of the government's agenda. Working closely with our boroughs, London Councils and the Greater London Authority we are making the case for investment in projects like the Bakerloo Line Extension. We have also worked to push the Overnight Visitor Levy up the political agenda and make the case for the boroughs retaining at least 50% of the income to help them manage the impact of tourism and support further growth.

We are working with our new board to develop our next strategy which will guide our work – central London has huge opportunities and plays a critical role in the nation's economy – driving growth and generating over £37 billion in income tax to the whole country's public services. We look forward to working with all our partners and boroughs to continue making the positive case for investment into central London, support our residents into work, and for our businesses to thrive.

Mark Williams

Director of Central London Forward

Our policy priorities

1. A Thriving Economy
2. An Inclusive Economy
3. Housing, Infrastructure & Net Zero
4. Digital Connectivity
5. Workforce and Skills
6. Sustainable Local Government

Central London Forward

1. A Thriving Economy

Central London Forward is committed to sustainable and inclusive growth that benefits every community in central London and helps to narrow inequality.

Championing investment in central London

CLF attended last year's major investment forums to make the case for central London growth and to convene partners around shared priorities. The London Real Estate Forum (LREF) 2025 was held at Guildhall under the theme of 'partnership'. CLF hosted a networking session that was opened by Chair Cllr Adam Hug, who reflected on the importance of partnership in building a fairer, more inclusive central London. CLF also co-hosted a panel with Southwark and Lewisham on the Bakerloo Line Upgrade and Extension (BLUE). Speakers from the boroughs, TfL and Deloitte set out the progress made, the benefits the scheme would bring, including support for around 107,000 new homes and tens of thousands of jobs, and how it could be funded. The panel marked the launch of a Deloitte report, commissioned by Southwark, Lewisham, CLF and TfL, which showed how London could meet 40–60% of the cost through local funding sources, with full delivery still needing Government support.

In May 2026, CLF led a roundtable on inclusive growth at the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum (UKREiiF) in Leeds. It brought together central London boroughs, the GLA and partners from across the property and investment sector to examine where inclusive growth is being delivered in practice, which levers matter most, and what risks lie ahead.

A sustainable visitor economy

CLF has long argued that London should be able to introduce an overnight visitor levy, as many comparable global cities already do. Tourism brings substantial benefit to the capital, but it also places real demands on local services. CLF boroughs, which host 71% of London's hotel rooms and 67% of its short-term lets, absorb much of that cost. CLF commissioned independent research, undertaken by PRD, showing that a levy could raise more than £350 million a year across London, and setting out how it might best be designed, including 50% of the revenue to be retained by local authorities and a higher rate on short-term lets than hotels. The research attracted significant national coverage, first reported as an exclusive by MyLondon and picked up by outlets including BBC News and the Evening Standard.

CLF submitted a response to the Government's consultation and wrote to the Treasury setting out its proposals, focusing on the key ask of 50% revenue retention for local authorities. We continue to work with London Councils and other partners to make the case for the levy and for the 'keep it local' campaign.

Inclusive pathways into growth sectors

The London Growth Plan's ambitions for inclusive growth are being taken forward through the Inclusive Talent Strategy, launched jointly by the GLA and London Councils in October 2025. The Strategy aims to build a more integrated, employer-led skills and employment system for the capital. CLF played a key role in shaping the strategy, ensuring a focus on job quality and inclusivity, as well as including provision for the foundational economy, adding central London's voice on behalf of our boroughs.

CLF will continue to help Londoners into good, secure roles in growth sectors and is now a key part of the delivery of the Inclusive Talent Strategy, seeking to create a unified, collaborative and seamless skills system for central London.

Continue to help Londoners into good, secure roles in growth sectors.



2. An Inclusive Economy

Making the case for devolution

Supporting Londoners into work is at the heart of CLF's work. This year, we have helped thousands of residents access secure work, assisting them with every step along the way. While this is an example of devolution in action, there is still some way to go before we see full devolution of employment and skills provision. The UK is the most centralised economy in Western Europe, and as a result, not enough decisions are made by local representatives.

CLF has been at the forefront of pushing for further devolution of employment and skills policy to regions, sub-regions and local authorities. We wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions when he was first appointed, then met with the Minister for Employment in her Westminster office to make the case for devolution. Following this meeting, the Minister visited an employment programme in central London. We will keep pushing over the next year to ensure devolution is front and centre of government thinking.

Improving the quality of work

Following the publication of CLF's 'Employment Rights Abuse in central London' report in 2024, we have been following up on the recommendations made in the report and working with partners to improve the quality of work in central London. This has included meeting regularly with the TUC, working with the GLA to relaunch the Good Work Standard and pushing for more of a focus on job quality in the GLA's Inclusive Talent Strategy. Additionally, we have sought to integrate job quality and trade union awareness into the delivery of our employment programmes, ensuring we are helping Londoners into good jobs.

Helping hard-to-reach communities into work

CLF's employment programmes are influential and successful, but some communities can be harder to reach and as a result, underrepresented. This includes central London's care-experienced young people, who have some of the highest levels of unemployment among our residents. As a result, last year CLF launched the Full Potential Trailblazer programme, specifically targeting support for care-experience young people to access work and training. The innovative programme included having low caseloads for personal advisers to provide more personalised support, employer-led pathways into growth sectors and practical support such as travel costs and clothes for interviews. The first year of the programme has been a huge success with public mentions by prominent figures such as Alan Milburn and Deputy Mayor Howard Dawber.



3. Housing, Infrastructure & Net Zero

Central London is at the epicentre of the housing crisis. In our 24-26 strategy, CLF committed to working with boroughs to deliver the homes and infrastructure Londoners need, whilst supporting the transition to net zero.

Influencing the planning system

CLF continues to work closely with senior planning officers across the sub-region, as well as cabinet leads for planning and housing.

We have coordinated and supported cross-borough collaboration in planning, responding as a subregion to GLA and central government consultations, on Planning Committee Reform, the National Planning Policy Framework and the London Emergency Housing Package. These responses advocated for policy that is key for central London, such as achievable affordable housing goals, fully funded planning authorities, retaining strong building standards to prevent overheating in homes, and retaining the ability to collect carbon offset funds from developers.

Key recommendations from our submission to the London Emergency Housing Consultation were reflected in the final regulatory package. For example, the proposed timeline for considering Community Infrastructure Levy relief has been extended; developers must now demonstrate that a scheme would be unviable without this relief; and student accommodation and co-living schemes are excluded.

Tackling the housing crisis

Our 2025 report into the Short Term lets market in central London showed the adverse impact this poorly regulated sector has on London's housing availability and affordability. We have continued to advocate for national government to create legislation that will allow for a short term lets register, making it easier for local authorities to enforce the 90-night maximum stay on short term accommodation.

The transport infrastructure we need

In partnership with Southwark, Lewisham and Brent councils, CLF continues to promote the Back the Bakerloo campaign for an upgrade and extension to the line which would support the delivery of 107,000 homes and tens of thousands of jobs, whilst boosting GVA by £1.5bn annually. At the UK's Real Estate Investment and Infrastructure Forum in May 2026, we ran a successful roundtable on the Bakerloo Line Extension with key stakeholders, which pressed how it will lead to 'good growth'.

The energy transition and Climate Change

CLF has been working with the GLA to undertake research into the green economy, helping London to quantify the size, nature and growth patterns of the sector. This research was published in June 2026, and analyses down to a borough level where the growth in jobs are across a variety of areas in the Green Economy. This helps our boroughs to understand where their investment in skills should go and proves the economic worth of these growing sectors to London's residents.

We continue to co-ordinate a group of climate officers, whose work focuses on a range of topics including retrofit, emissions reduction, heat network development and climate action plans. This allows for lessons and case study sharing, and facilitates working together on cross-borough projects. In June 2026 we published a report on climate adaptation in our boroughs, and what blockages prevent CLF local authorities fully adapting to the impacts of climate change. This was then reported on by the BBC, ITV and MyLondon outlets. This is important work that must sit alongside the transition to net-zero and can also aid emissions reduction through initiatives like improving green spaces.



4. Digital Connectivity

As reliance on digital services continues to grow, maintaining and enhancing digital connectivity remains essential to ensuring central London retains its position as a leading global city. The Central London Forward (CLF) Digital Connectivity Programme works closely with telecommunications providers, government partners and member boroughs to attract investment in digital infrastructure and support the delivery of high-quality broadband and mobile connectivity across the sub-region.

During the year, the programme delivered significant progress in expanding digital infrastructure and improving connectivity for residents, businesses and visitors.

Project Gigabit

In March 2025, Government funding was made available through Building Digital UK (BDUK), part of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, to address urban fibre broadband not-spots through the Project Gigabit programme. Central London has been the most successful London sub-region in securing this funding, enabling fibre broadband connections to be delivered to 14 previously underserved sites.

These locations include complex properties such as council housing within listed buildings, where installation costs and technical challenges have historically made commercial deployment unviable. By bridging the funding gap, the programme has enabled residents and businesses in these locations to access faster, more reliable fibre broadband services, reducing digital exclusion and supporting economic growth.

Mobile Connectivity

Demand for mobile connectivity continues to increase across central London, particularly in high-footfall areas. However, network operators face growing challenges in securing suitable locations for telecommunications equipment due to planning constraints and pressures arising from new development.

To address these challenges, CLF's Digital Lead has worked closely with borough planning teams to support improvements in the planning process for telecommunications infrastructure. The programme has also facilitated a cross-borough working group for street lighting teams to explore opportunities for deploying small cell infrastructure on existing street assets. This collaborative approach is helping to increase mobile network capacity and improve user experience in some of central London's busiest destinations.

Fibre Broadband Expansion

The programme continues to work collaboratively with all CLF boroughs and telecommunications providers to facilitate the ongoing rollout of full-fibre broadband infrastructure across the sub-region. Through coordinated engagement, the programme supports the identification and resolution of barriers to deployment, helping to accelerate coverage and ensure that residents and businesses can benefit from improved digital connectivity.

By bringing together local authorities, industry partners and government stakeholders, the Digital Connectivity Programme is helping to create a more connected, resilient and future-ready central London.



5. Workforce and Skills

Inclusive skills pathways

Central London is a core driver of the UK economy, characterised by a high concentration of knowledge intensive industries, global connectivity, and a diverse labour market with countless opportunities. In order to ensure these opportunities are available to everyone, CLF is working with boroughs to develop and promote inclusive pathways into growth sectors. CLF and its boroughs are committed to providing pathways into sustainable employment that are accessible to all regardless of background. This year we have once again written a central London Annex for the London Local Skills Improvement Plan. This annex details the challenges faced in our key sectors (Hospitality, Financial and Professional, Construction, and Life Sciences), including the lack of inclusive pathways and diversity within the sectors. CLF will be using the LSIP and Sub Regional Hub to work with employers, training providers, and boroughs to create inclusive pathways into these key sectors.

Skilled workers to tackle the housing crisis

The CLF policy team ran a construction skills workshop at the Centre for London Housing Summit. The session focused on the skills pipeline needed to support London's housing and construction sector. London is expected to deliver 440,000 of the Government's 1.5 million homes target by 2030, but the UK construction sector is facing its most acute and prolonged skills shortage in nearly 25 years. The workshop included informative contributions from important players in London's housing sector, allowing CLF to build out key actionable activities on how to improve skills pathways into the sector, making the sector attractive to young people, and creating a system to tackle skills shortages.

Green skills in Central London

The London Low Carbon, Green and Adaptive Markets report was part funded by CLF boroughs launched in July 2026, looking at where green skills and jobs are most prevalent. The updated report broadens the definition of London's green economy to include climate tech, the circular economy, green and blue infrastructure, and climate adaptation, reflecting stakeholder feedback and a growing understanding of the sector. The data in the report will be useful for CLF boroughs to identify where to provide targeted support and which sectors to prioritise. Partners also called for more flexible green skills training and stronger alignment between training provision and employer needs through initiatives such as the London LSIP and Inclusive Talent Strategy.

Central London is a core driver of the UK economy.



6. Sustainable Local Government

Fair Funding Review 2.0 campaign

While central London local authorities are supportive of reform of local government finance in principle, the proposed changes in the Fair Funding Review 2.0 document would have disproportionately impacted already-deprived urban neighbourhoods. In central London, the proposed formula would make it much more difficult for local authorities to deliver services for vulnerable residents and would decrease the ability of central London to act as the growth engine for the UK economy.

CLF led the central London campaign against the changes, engaging with borough leaders, London Councils, the Mayor of London and our central London MPs to build the case. We wrote to various Secretaries of State and Ministers, as well as securing coverage for our campaign in The Times, Labour List and the BBC. Our work secured some concessions in the formula set out to reform government grants to councils. However, the overall impact has seen a significant deterioration in many of our boroughs' financial position. We continue to call on the government to provide a fair settlement for central London and will continue supporting our boroughs to make this case to government.

Fiscal Devolution

As the engine of the UK economy, central London distributes far more in tax revenue than it receives in government funding. This makes it harder for our sub-region to fund major infrastructure projects, as well as local authorities continuing to provide core public services. Earlier this year, the former Chancellor suggested that she was looking into devolving more fiscal powers to regions across England, providing Mayors and local authorities with more powers to raise money and use it to the benefit of their residents. This direction of travel has been strengthened by the appointment of the new Prime Minister who has repeatedly called for more devolution to regions and cities, especially fiscal devolution.

CLF has been working with partners across London to make the case for fiscal devolution for some time and will continue to do so, as the Government's thinking on this develops. While the introduction of an Overnight Visitor Levy is a welcome step, it must be the first step in a roadmap to true devolution for London.

Shared approach to social value

The 2024-2026 Central London Forward Strategy also laid out plans to develop a joint approach to social value in procurement, working with boroughs to explore the potential of a shared social value framework. As part of this work, CLF has convened Camden, Islington and the City of London to undertake a pilot into apprenticeship-sharing across borough boundaries. This programme is intended to provide more stability and security for apprentices, local authorities and businesses, rather than needing to find new apprentices when working on a project in a different borough.

This pilot is ongoing and CLF will analyse the results before deciding on whether to encourage roll out further across central London.

Provide more stability and security for apprentices.





Our Work: Supporting central Londoners into good work

1. Connect to Work
2. Full Potential
3. Central London Integration Hub

Central London Forward

1. Connect to Work

Launched as part of the Government's Get Britain Working strategy, the programme has been allocated £1.3 billion to support approximately 300,000 individuals between 2025 and 2029. The programme is being delivered throughout England and Wales via grants to 47 Accountable Bodies (ABs) and is based on extensive trialling and international evidence on what works. Year 1 was managed by DWP and from year 2, as part of the Integrated settlement plan, Central London Forward will be managed under a Grant Funding Agreement by Greater London Authority (GLA).

Central London Forward is the largest Accountable Body with a contract value of £73m, and we are working closely with our member Boroughs and Seetec to deliver support to more than 17,000 residents over 5 years.

Connect to Work is a voluntary, locally-led Supported Employment programme designed to help people get into, and stay in, work. It aims to help economically inactive individuals (or those at risk of becoming so) with health conditions, disabled residents/ jobseekers/participants and other complex barriers to find sustainable employment. Designed in line with the evidence based Individual Placement and Support (IPS) and Supported Employment Quality Framework (SEQF) the programme takes a 'work first' approach to enable anyone with a desire to work to get the help they need.

In Connect to Work, out of work participants will have intensive employment support for up to 12 months while those in work but at risk of losing their job due to their health or complex barriers will be provided with up to 4 months' support.

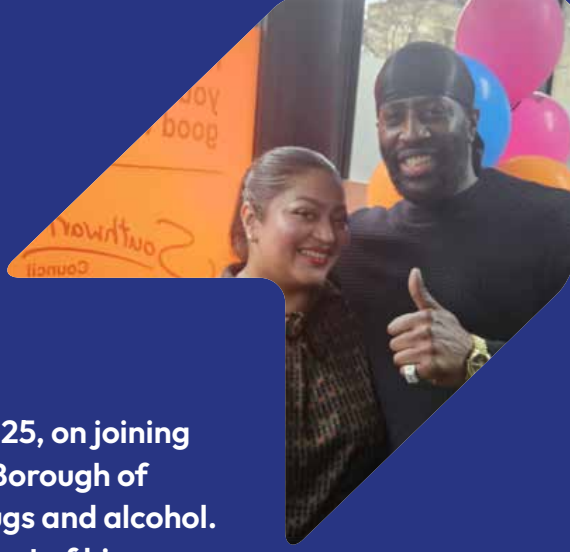
Delivering support to more than 17,000 residents over 5 years.

Participants work with a dedicated advisor who will identify suitable jobs, support applications and stay alongside to smooth the path into work and help resolve any problems. The advisor will also help access support for managing health conditions and benefits advice. Caseloads are kept small in order to ensure time for individualised support tailored to specific needs.

Our delivery went live in July 2025, and together, our Boroughs and their delivery providers supported 4590 residents to the end of September 2026, with 1064 progressing into work. 732 in-work residents are being supported to retain employment.



1. Connect to Work
Good News Story



Byron joined our Connect to Work programme in October 2025, on joining the programme Byron was homeless and sofa surfing in the Borough of Southwark, he was an ex-offender and had been abusing drugs and alcohol. Byron wanted to access the support of Connect to Work as part of his recovery journey and his key aim was to enter employment.

Byron felt that employment was the one thing that could keep him focused and progress, he heard about Connect to Work and decided to refer himself after speaking to his work coach and wanting to improve his health.

On joining the programme Byron was supported by his employment specialist Mohima Khanom and she started his journey with a vocational profile. This was to look at Byron's passions, hobbies and barriers to employment. During these initial meetings Byron disclosed his multiple obstacles that led up to him accessing support from Connect to Work including homelessness, bereavement and multiple events that had led to mental health barriers and misuse of drugs and alcohol. Bryon was homeless and sofa surfing where he could and wanted to turn his life around. Byron was passionate about his music career and becoming a personal trainer. Initially Byron just wanted any employment to help him turn his life around; to start this journey he worked with his employment specialist to complete a better off calculation, and she signposted him for support for his housing issue and arranged a food bank voucher for him as he had disclosed, he had not eaten for a few days.

Byron was thrilled when he was offered accommodation and was adamant, he was ready to start a paid role straight away. His employment specialist set about approaching employers that would not hold his previous conviction against him and tried to find roles that complemented Byron's friendly nature, it was clear from his Vocational Profile that one of Byron's strengths and interests was talking to people, he was keen to start a podcast and agreed with his employment specialist that a customer service role would complement his strengths. This was a short-term employment goal, but Byron wanted to get back into the routine of working and earning an income. His employment specialist approached Chris Hall a Store Manager for Card Factory and told him about Byron and Connect to Work, Chris was impressed by the programme and agreed to give Byron an interview after Byron and his employment specialist applied for a role of interest. His employment specialist prepped him for interview ensuring he had smart clothing, they prepared a journey planner, completed a new better off calculation based on the role, salary and expenses to travel to and from work and completed a mock interview to ensure he was fully prepared.

Byron arrived an hour early on the day of his interview and Chris was very impressed and offered him a role on the spot, Byron could not wait to start working and was supported by his employment specialist to complete the onboarding stage as Byron felt his digital skills were a barrier. Byron has since impressed his employer and has received a £50 bonus for arriving half an hour early to work for his shifts and has been trusted to look after the store in the Manager's absence.

Byron was still supported by his employment specialist and although in work still wanted to pursue a career as a personal trainer, he has a qualification but needed to pay for insurance to be offered a role. His specialist put a business case together for her manager and this was approved, Byron was delighted when he heard the news and approached the gym he attends, the gym have offered Byron a full-time personal trainer role pending his insurance and Byron could not be happier. Byron has said "My life has changed because of Mohima, my mum and my sister are proud of me and I would recommend Connect to Work to my friends and family because they do what they say and Connect you to Work."

Chris Hall, Manager at Card Factory says, "Working with Connect to Work has been a game-changer; their professionalism, dedication, and commitment to finding the perfect match made the entire process seamless and stress-free."

For Byron he is still with Card Factory but now wants to focus on his career as a Personal Trainer, he has started his podcast and feels he is in a great place, Byron would still like to pursue a music career and this is something he and his employment specialist will continue to look at while working together and as part of the in-work support offered by Connect to Work

Pictured above: Byron Mason (Resident) & Mohima Khanom (Employment Specialist).

2. Trailblazer – Full Potential

The Full Potential Programme, delivered by Central London Forward as part of the Youth Guarantee Trailblazer, represents a bold and collaborative effort to transform outcomes for care -experienced young people aged 17–25 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) across central London.

Rooted in the ambition that every young person deserves access to meaningful opportunity, the programme brings together boroughs, employers, training providers, and community organisations to test new approaches that better connect young people to sustainable employment, education, and progression pathways.

A Partnership-Led Approach

The programme is underpinned by strong partnership working across central London boroughs, aligning local expertise with strategic oversight. This collective model enables a more responsive and locally tailored offer, while benefiting from shared learning, consistent standards, and economies of scale.

Targeted and Inclusive Support

Full Potential focuses on engaging young people who face multiple and complex barriers to work, including those furthest from the labour market. The programme prioritises personalised, holistic support—recognising that employability is shaped by a wide range of factors, including wellbeing, confidence, skills, and access to networks.

Through intensive support with an assigned Personal Adviser, participants receive tailored guidance, mentoring, and access to opportunities that reflect their aspirations and circumstances.

Innovation and System Change

As a Trailblazer, the programme is not only delivering outcomes but also testing new ways of working. This includes:

- Strengthening integration between employment, skills, and wider support services
- Piloting employer-led pathways into growth sectors
- Developing more flexible and person-centred commissioning models
- Embedding youth voice in service design and delivery

Insights from this work are informing future policy and contributing to the development of a more coherent, long-term Youth Guarantee.

Employer Engagement and Opportunity Creation

A key pillar of the programme is its work with employers to create inclusive pathways into work. By working closely with businesses across central London, the programme is helping to shape opportunities that are accessible, supportive, and aligned with labour market demand.

This includes work placements, apprenticeships, sector-based work academies, and direct employment opportunities.

Impact and Reach

The programme aims to support hundreds of young people across central London to move into sustained employment, education, or training. Early outcomes demonstrate the value of intensive, relationship-based support and highlight the importance of coordinated local systems in reaching those most in need.

Looking Ahead

The Full Potential Programme is laying the foundations for a more ambitious and inclusive Youth Guarantee—one that ensures no young person is left behind. As the programme continues, its learning will be critical in shaping future investment, policy development, and service design at both regional and national levels. Year two will continue to support care-experienced young people, but will also support those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), young people who are homeless and those engaged with the Youth Justice Service

2. Trailblazer - Full Potential
Good News Story

Lilly is a 22-year old Camden care leaver living in supported accommodation. She initially started an apprenticeship in childcare but found this was not her passion. This left her uncertain about future employment or training pathways. Alongside this, her living situation and financial pressures caused significant stress and made it difficult for her to plan ahead.

What support did the programme provide?

The Delivery Partner supported Lilly by:

- Supporting her to complete a successful Greater Change application, resulting in her £3,500 rent arrears being cleared
- Referring her to welfare benefits advice to understand her entitlements in work
- Supporting her to create a comfortable home working environment, purchasing a chest of drawers to use as a stand, enabling her to free up her shared living room table for work and therapy sessions
- Employment support with CVs and Interview skills advice and guidance
- Helping her identify administrative roles that aligned with her interests
- Facilitating access to the collaborative MACE Insight Day
- Coaching around proactive engagement with potential employers

The practical, emotional and financial support was crucial in enabling Lilly to feel stable and ready for employment.

Progress Made & Impact on Lilly's Life

Lilly has made substantial progress through the Full Potential programme:

- Her rent arrears have been fully cleared, removing the main barrier to independent living
- She is now actively bidding for her own council flat
- She has successfully secured a paid administrative role with MACE, which she started in January 2026
- She has created a remote home working and therapy space, improving her wellbeing and focus
- Her confidence has grown significantly, enabling her to take more control over her career and future

Lilly's statement about the Full Potential programme:

"As a care leaver, the service has been incredibly important in helping me feel supported and more independent. The programme has helped me start clearing my rent arrears, which has taken a lot of stress off me and helped me feel more secure in my home and able to start work. I was also supported in getting a chest of drawers, which has made it much easier for me to create a comfortable space to work from home and attend therapy sessions. The support has been understanding, practical and consistent, and it has made me feel listened to and encouraged while navigating adult life after care."

Employment & Training Officer:

"Lilly showed real initiative at the MACE insight day. She pushed herself, engaged professionally and took control of her journey. Her progress over the past few months has been remarkable."

MACE Team Member:

"Lilly stood out because of her enthusiasm and willingness to learn. We're pleased to welcome her to the team."

Lilly hopes to secure her own council tenancy and continue to build stability and independence. She is keen to grow within MACE, exploring further training and progression. Long-term, she aims to develop a sustainable career in a structured environment where she can continue building confidence and skills.

3. Central London Integration Hub

The employment and skills system is highly complex – as demonstrated by the fact that even within central London, we are often running multiple, overlapping programmes. Londoners therefore often struggle to find the support that would best meet their needs, and services don't work together as well as they could. As part of the London-wide 'No Wrong Door' programme, the central London Integration Hub has brought together services supporting refugees, disabled residents and young people not in education, employment or training.

The Central London Integration Hub focuses on three cohorts who face significant labour market disadvantage: refugees, disabled central Londoners and NEET young people 17-24. Funded by the GLA, the Central London Integration Hub was launched in 2022.

In 2025/26, the Hub has:

- Launched Central London Youth Integration Network;
- Offered paid work placements to 2 cohorts of NEET young people at Central London Forward;
- Held three job fairs in partnership with key integration partners, attended by over 3,857 residents;
- Developed referral guides and mapped provision to support boroughs and other stakeholders understand what support is available for our priority cohorts;
- Commissioned Mime to produce data dashboard of NEET young people aged 18 to 24;
- Brought together organisations working with refugees, disabled people and NEET young people (17-24) to support partnership working through our integration networks.

In 2026/27, the Hub will:

- ESOL Research Project: deliver a research project to explore the ESOL provision in central London, focusing on identifying solutions to key challenges.
- Youth Advisory Board (YAB): launch a Youth Advisory Board to capture the views and experiences of young people aged 18-24, helping to inform the delivery of Youth Integration Network and other youth related activity.



Future Plans:

As we look ahead, we recognise that the policy and funding landscape continues to evolve. In response, we are working closely with our newly appointed Board to develop a refreshed strategy for Central London Forward that will set out our shared vision, priorities and ambitions for the years ahead. We expect to publish this strategy in early 2027.

Alongside this work, we are continuing to work collaboratively with our member boroughs, Government departments and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to ensure that central London's interests are represented as proposals relating to devolution and public service reform develop. Through this engagement, we will seek to maximise opportunities for our boroughs, residents and businesses, while supporting effective partnership working across London and beyond.

We are developing our strategy for 2027 and beyond which we will publish early in the new year. Since our last strategy was adopted we have seen some significant changes: the economy continues to struggle, our boroughs' financial position has worsened, pressures on spend continue to increase, house-building in London has collapsed, and the jobs market is incredibly tough – especially for entry level roles. We have also seen significant political change, the local elections in London in May 2026 have resulted in changes to control of our 12 member boroughs. Our board is comprised of our member local authorities' leaders and elected mayors or their nominated deputies. Following the elections we welcomed 9 new board members and at our June meeting elected our new chair – Cllr James McAsh (LB Southwark), and deputy chair – Cllr Emma Will (RB Kensington & Chelsea).

We are working with our new and returning board members to set our refreshed priorities for 2027 and beyond. This includes engaging with our borough officer groups and partners across our area and beyond to inform our work. We are also reflecting on the opportunities presented by Re-Wiring the State and the government's commitment to further devolution to support growth in every postcode. As set out in this annual report central London has some of the highest areas of deprivation in the country once housing costs are taken into account, our boroughs' financial position is incredibly challenging because it refers to multiple CLF boroughs following the Fairer Funding 2.0 review, and we look forward to engaging with the government and Greater London Authority on how devolution in London can work for all of our residents and businesses.

Board Members



Cllr James McAsh (Chair)
Southwark Council



Cllr Elizabeth Campbell
Rep: Cllr Emma Will (Deputy Chair)
Kensington and Chelsea



Cllr Paul Swaddle
Westminster City Council



Mayor Liam Shrivastava
Lewisham Council



Cllr Una O'Halloran
Islington Council



Cllr Martin Abrams
Lambeth Council



Chris Hayward (Policy Chairman)
Rep: Deputy James Thomson
City of London



Cllr Robert Morritt
Wandsworth Council

TBC
Camden Council



Mayor Lutfur Rahman
Tower Hamlets



Cllr Rachel Nkiessu-Guifo
Rep for: Mayor Zoë Garbett
Hackney Council



Cllr Mark Blake
Haringey Council

Budget

	2025/26 £000s	2026/27 £000s
Borough contributions	480	480
GLA	368	23,690
DWP	11,599	525
TOTAL	**12,447**	**24,695**







Following the local elections earlier this year, publication of the Annual Report was rescheduled. The FY 2025/26 performance data presented reflects the latest available information up to September 2026.



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