



London Borough of Hackney
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2018/19
Date of Meeting Monday, 27th January, 2020

Minutes of the proceedings of the
Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission held at
Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street,
London E8 1EA

Chair	Councillor Sophie Conway
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ajay Chauhan, Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Clare Joseph, Cllr Clare Potter and Cllr Caroline Woodley
Apologies:	Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr Sharon Patrick and Cllr James Peters
Co-optees	Justine McDonald, Luisa Dornela, Shabnum Hassan, Jo Macleod, Ernell Watson, Shuja Shaikh, Michael Lobenstein and Raivene Walters
In Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care• Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play• Anne Canning, Group Director, Children, Adults and Community Health• Sarah Wright, Director of Children and Families Service• Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education• Andrew Lee, Assistant Director, Hackney Learning Trust• Jim Gamble, Independent Chair, City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership• Rory McCallum, Senior Professional Adviser, City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership• Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding and Learning Partnership• Shaba Dachi, Contextual Safeguarding Service Manager
Members of the Public	2
Officer Contact:	Martin Bradford  020 8356 3315  martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

- Cllr Sharon Patrick
- Cllr Sade Etti
- Cllr James Peters
- Cllr Katie Hansen
- Graham Hunter

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from

- Cllr Margaret Gordon
- Cllr Clare Potter

2 Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as scheduled.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:

- Cllr Chauhan was a teacher at secondary school in another London borough and a member of the NEU;
- Justine McDonald, was a Headteacher at local secondary school;
- Jo McLeod was a Governor at a local school in Hackney.

4 Children & Families Service - Ofsted Inspection Outcome (19.05)

4.1 In November 2019, Hackney Children's Services was inspected under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework. The outcomes of this inspection were published in December 2019. The overall judgement for this inspection was that Hackney Children's Social Care 'Requires Improvement'. The service was previously judged as 'good' in 2016.

4.2 The Ofsted inspection report made 6 recommendations for improvement:

1. Quality of information sharing by partners and decision making within strategy discussions.
2. The assessment of the impact for children of living in neglectful environments to inform authoritative and child-centred practice;
3. The quality of assessments and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements;
4. Timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings work, including the quality of contingency planning;
5. The welfare of children who are missing education or who are home educated is safeguarded;
6. The effectiveness of management oversight by leaders and managers at all levels including the effectiveness of oversight from child protection chairs.

4.3 A response from the Cabinet member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care was presented to the Commission which highlighted key points below:

- Children and Families Service staff had been working hard to improve services since the outcome of the focused visit by Ofsted in February 2019, thus the results of this full inspection were disappointing;

Monday, 27th January, 2020

- Local children and families should be reassured that the council was committed to improving Children and Families Service over the next two years, where there was an aim that the it would be assessed as 'good' in 12 months and 'outstanding' within 2 years;
- Both Officer (Leadership & Development Board) and Member Oversight Board's would be established to oversee and drive improvement across children's social care and would be chaired by the Mayor (with the Cabinet Member) and Chief Executive (with Group Director) respectively;
- Children and Families Service had already begun to reassess those areas of practice highlighted for improvement by Ofsted (as in 4.2) and changes had been implemented. A more detailed action plan was being developed in response to the inspection outcomes which would need to be agreed with Ofsted;
- It was recognised that the improvement required would be challenging given the level and complexity of needs locally, but the Council would work both corporately and with other local agencies to improve provision.
- In developing the corporate response, members would be given the opportunity to have an induction to Children Families Service to help improve awareness of the services it provides and the challenges it faces. To bring greater insight into local practice, there would also be an opportunity for members to 'walk the floor' and for CYP Scrutiny Commission members to observe some practice scenarios.

4.4 The Group Director for Children, Adults and Community Health presented to the Commission and highlighted the following key issues.

- The Children and Families Service acknowledge that the Ofsted inspection demonstrated that some areas of the service were not as good as should be expected, but that there was a service-wide commitment to improve provision for local children and young people. Given the complexity of ensuring that young people are effectively safeguarded, there would be no simple solution to the service improvements required.
- It was noted that work had already begun to improve local systems and practice which was building on the development work from the Ofsted focused visit, and that an action plan was in development which would be shared with the Commission when available.
- Whilst not wanting to distract from those services areas that required improvement, the inspection also highlighted a number of areas of good practice which included support to care leavers and services for children in need.
- It was reiterated that there would be a corporate response to the Ofsted inspection which would acknowledge the council-wide commitment to developing an outstanding children's social care service.
- The council had engaged an external partner who had worked with a number of large local authorities to provide challenge and scrutiny to service development and improvement. This external partner would also be able to provide reassurance to members, Chief Executive and the wider Child Safeguarding Partnership on progress being made within the service.
- Other external challenge would be provided through work with other children and families services across London, where sub-regional groups were working collaboratively to improve quality assurance such as modelling care thresholds and case decisions.

Questions from the Commission

4.5 The Commission noted that information sharing between partner agencies was an area identified for improvement. What barriers were there to multi-disciplinary working to support local children and young people?

- The main partners for Children and Families Service were Health and the Police, both of which have faced a number of organisational pressures. Local police command has been merged with another neighbouring borough to create one central command. The safeguarding service now runs across both boroughs and has taken a while to bed-in.

- Ofsted had highlighted that in one case, disclosure of police information at an earlier stage might have brought a speedier and more decisive intervention from Children and Families Service. Whilst police were present at the initial case discussion, they may not always have all the information necessary to support a holistic assessment at that time, thus new checks were being put into the system to escalate information requests where these were not available. The key issue for effective safeguarding, is not necessarily about partner presence but the quality and level of information they are able to provide into the assessment.

- Whilst the Children and Families Service, Health and Police partners do not share IT systems, key officers are co-located to facilitate information sharing. But as information is held across all three IT systems, it was acknowledged that it can take time to bring this information together for effective case management. As a safeguarding partnership, there has to be clear guidance and standards for the provision of information provision, and effective processes to escalating information requests where these fall short.

4.6 A lack of management oversight and internal challenge was highlighted as a key area for improvement. What management changes would be made to improve oversight of case management and how would this be cascaded through the service?

- This was an area which the Children and Families Service has been working to improve, and whilst there had been progress there were still inconsistencies in practice which had been identified by Ofsted. It was recognised that there was a need to assess why internal quality assurance systems had not picked up inconsistent practice, and that measures to rectify this would form part of the action plan. The service had to be confident that managers had sufficient resources and confidence to offer clear and effective oversight of cases whilst ensuring that practitioners were professionally accountable.

- There has been a lot of work to improve quality assurance (QA) systems for oversight of case management. The most significant improvement is that managers now had better access to quantitative data which is provided in a dashboard. Performance data was also now routinely reported back to practitioners.

- Management at all levels were expected to be responsible for practice oversight and QA. A Consultant Social Worker heads up the basic social work unit to provide oversight of a small team of social workers and front-line practitioners. There were a number of checkpoints built into case management processes to ensure timely assessment and interventions, with additional checks for high risk cases. The Children and Families Service triangulates data from a number of sources that contribute to improved QA processes which included complaints data, audits and feedback from children and families and partners.

4.7 How did the service go from a 'good' rated service to 'requires improvement'?

- This is a complex area of work and it was difficult to identify any one thing that has led to this and resulted in a lower rating for the children and Families

Service. Whilst it was acknowledged that there were increased society wide pressures on children and families which is causing them to present with ever more complex needs, there was an acceptance that the service needed to improve service standards to better support local children and families. There was also a need for a more detailed understanding of the support that front-line practitioners required to deliver services to these standards, knowing the challenging circumstances in which they work.

4.8 The report highlighted inconsistency in practice, does the unit model of social work in operation in Hackney allow sufficient opportunities for reflection and exchange of good practice?

- The Children and Families Service operates a unit model in which a team of 2-3 social workers is headed up by a (practicing) Consultant Social Worker. It was acknowledged that some units were larger (5-6 social workers) though work was in train to reduce the number of these. Units meet weekly to discuss case management issues, and managers attend these meetings monthly to observe practice. Other members of the senior leadership team will also attend these unit meetings periodically. Consultant Social Workers have also started to work together to audit cases across units which provides insight into each units practice

4.9 Are there any plans to review the management and leadership structure in light of Ofsted inspection assessment? Ambitious targets have been set for the service to be judged as 'outstanding' within two years, does the Council have the right management team to do this?

- The Chief Executive will look at the resources needed to support the Children and Families Service in the improvement required, and will also review management support at this time.
- Senior officers had confidence in their colleagues in the Children and Families Service and that they were committed to developing and improving services. Additional external scrutiny would be provided through the external partner to provide additional assurance of service improvement to the Executive. This would provide an assurance that appropriate priorities and actions were identified by Children and Families Service.

4.10 Will the external partner report to Overview & Scrutiny and to newly established Oversight Boards?

- There will be an expectation that the external partner will be reporting to both the Chief Executive and Member Oversight Board. There is a new governance structure being developed to oversee improvement, which will of course include the role of CYP Scrutiny Commission within that.

4.11 One of the criticisms of the Ofsted inspection was that practice was too often parent or family focused rather than child focused. What work is planned to ensure that the views of children are systematically captured and that practice is more focused on the lived experience of young people? What are the barriers for children to participate in their care planning and care reviews?

- There is a commitment in the action plan to improve the voice of the child in care planning and ensure that there was authentic engagement of children and young people in wider processes. Whilst there were examples of good practice, it was clear that this was not consistent.

Monday, 27th January, 2020

- The Children in Care Council had been reinvigorated and provided with additional support via the Virtual School. It was accepted that such improvement should have taken place earlier but that progress had been made.
- Young people's involvement in Child Protection Conferences was very sensitive as this process often involved assessments about the parenting that they have received. In other aspects of the Children and Families Service, practitioners have been very creative in the way that they engage young people - it was noted that that Looked After Child case reviews are planned and led by young people and their carers. An additional Children's Rights Officer had also recently been appointed to engage and represent the views of children.

4.12 Getting the Children and Families Service to move to an 'outstanding' rating in the next 24 months will require a significant investment by the Council. Has future funding been secured for this ambition?

- The resources needed to support this ambition for the Children & Families Service is still being worked through, but both the Mayor and the Chief Executive have made clear that keeping children safe is one of the most important jobs of the council.

4.13 In its work with unregistered settings and exclusions, the Commission has highlighted lack of oversight of children missing education, particularly those in Elective Home Education (EHE). This was also identified as an area for improvement in the Ofsted inspection, how does the Children and Families service plan to respond?

- There is a specific situation in Hackney where a large number of children are supposedly in EHE but are in fact receiving education in an unregistered setting. This is a nationally acknowledged issue. When a child is moved to EHE, the school notifies the local authority who seeks assurance from the parents that this child will be in receipt of an appropriate education. Numbers entering EHE locally have risen sharply in the past 12 months due to the closure of a local educational establishment, and there is some work taking place to ensure that we do have the resources to go through these cases in a timely way. It was noted that the identification and oversight of some children was problematic, given that families were sometimes reluctant to engage with the authority.

4.14 Whilst the Children and Families Service had developed innovative practice in a number of areas (e.g. contextual safeguarding), has this distracted the service from the day-to-day service delivery of children's social care?

- In an ideal world, there has to be innovation to ensure that practice is constantly refreshed and updated. After the focused visit, the Children and Families Service reviewed and discontinued some service initiatives. Some initiatives such as the Safe and Together project for improving work with families affected by domestic violence, were too important and critical to social work practice for them to be discontinued. The way forward was to achieve a balance between innovation and commitment to quality general social work practice.

4.15 The Ofsted inspection noted that there had been a deterioration in the Disabled Children's Service (DCS), with delays to assessments identified which had impacted on children's ability to access education. Can the services explain how the service has fallen back and what is planned to remedy this?

- There has been a significant focus on this service in the past year, in particular, to develop the social work element of that service. The DCS had been

disaggregated from the SEND team and moved to the Children and Families Service in April 2019 where there was greater oversight of safeguarding practice.

- It was acknowledged that there had been a backlog of assessments in the DCS which with additional staff input, was now being reduced. Support assessments were also being reviewed to make sure that disabled children were in receipt of the correct package of care.

4.16 How is the Children and Families Service supported by the Housing Needs service, particularly for those young people requiring care placements aged over 16 years. Are children in care prioritised within Housing Needs?

- The Children's Leadership and Development Board which will be established to oversee improvement in the Children and Families Service is a corporate board, therefore officers from the Housing Needs team will be present. There are a number of tenancies which are ringfenced for care leavers each year (18 per annum). In addition, there was also a commitment to support foster carers who may need to move into larger accommodation to support additional looked after children (4 per annum). This being said, the commitments were small given the wider pressures on housing stock in the borough.

4.17 When will the action plan be ready for publication and what role do you envisage that CYP Scrutiny Commission will play in monitoring that plan?

- Whilst the exact arrangements were for discussion between the Cabinet member and this Commission, it was envisaged that the Member Oversight Group will report back to CYP Scrutiny Commission. There will be a forward plan for the Members Oversight Group which will inform the Commission of further areas of scrutiny it may wish to undertake. Updates and progress on the action plan can be brought back to this Commission.
- Whilst a draft action plan had been developed, Children and Families staff have not been fully consulted on the proposals and the service would be reluctant to share this until these proposals have been verified and agreed by them. It was very important that staff feel actively consulted and involved in this process. A fully agreed action plan needed to be with Ofsted by the end of March 2020, and although a full draft would not be ready for the 24th February (next meeting of CYP Scrutiny Commission), a completed draft would be shared with the Commission in March for comments.

Agreed: That the action plan in response to the Ofsted Inspection would be shared with the Commission in with the comments of the Commission to be submitted to the Children and Families Service before the submission deadline.

The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to members of the Commission.

5 City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report 2018/19 (19.45)

5.1 The annual report of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) is presented each year to the Commission as part of its oversight role. The Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Partnership presented the 2018/19 Annual Report to the Commission, highlighting key points as set out below:

Monday, 27th January, 2020

- The strategic alliance of local safeguarding partners (health, criminal justice and children's social care) remained strong, despite ongoing austerity and service reorganisations.
- The criminal justice systems have been subject to multiple reorganisations, including the separation and subsequent re-merging of the National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Team. This had impacted on the ability of this service to invest in frontline personnel, particularly when services were spread over a larger geographic area.
- The Clinical Commissioning Group, in particular the role of the Designated Doctor and Designated Nurse, had continued to play a critical role in the local safeguarding partnership.
- There had also been structural changes to local policing (introduction of dual borough command) which had impacted on the continuity of police representation at meetings at both strategic and operational level. This had inhibited the level of information sharing that was required and the CHSCP had provided challenge to this.
- There had been lessons learnt from assessing how the CHSCP sought to quality assure how the safeguarding partnership supported each other, thus whilst it was clear that police had attended meetings of the safeguarding partnership, the granularity of the information provided (detail and the timeliness) was not always consistent.
- As the Ofsted inspection had identified, the early help and prevention work of the authority is exemplary as demonstrated by the work of local Children's Centres, Multi-Agency Teams and the Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (WAMHS). More work was needed to understand the nature of young people's vulnerability however, particularly how this intersects with key determinants (for example poverty, geography) to better enable services to identify children at risk earlier and provide them with support that they might need.
- New safeguarding arrangements were introduced in Hackney in September 2019. As part of this reorganisation the Independent Chair was now the Independent Safeguarding Commissioner with a 'right to roam' and was able to bring an enhanced level of scrutiny to the safeguarding partnership, and to ensure that partners were adhering to the lessons learnt and action plans that resulted from quality assurance and investigative work.
- The health and wellbeing of staff remained a key local priority, in particular their ability to deliver an effective safeguarding service under pressure. In this context, it is important to understand the workload pressures of front-line staff and how they are supported. The Hackney social work model is somewhat different to other authorities, and at times it was difficult to penetrate what level of support was provided.
- There was good application of local thresholds for social care support, where children in immediate need of care were given help in a timely fashion.
- There had been increased reporting to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to whom local concerns about those working with children are reported, which would suggest better awareness of these issues and improved local reporting systems.
- Under new safeguarding regulations, the local safeguarding partnership would be identifying all those out of school settings (e.g. sports clubs, youth clubs, arts and social clubs) which are 'relevant agencies' which would require them to adhere to statutory safeguarding principles and practice (e.g. safeguarding self-assessments and audits).

- Finally, the safeguarding partnership was always reflecting on how it can improve the voice of the child in developing improved safeguarding arrangements and was testing out new methods to reach and engage different communities of young people, particularly those who had been in contact with care and support services.

Questions

5.2 Are there any themes in the Serious Case Reviews or Multi Agency Reviews which you think should be brought to the attention of this Commission? Are there new or emerging areas of concern which present a safeguarding risk to young people in Hackney?

- The safeguarding partnership will shortly be publishing Serious Case Reviews which will deal with two young people who took their own life. In addition, the partnership is also currently undertaking two serious case reviews on serious youth violence and one in relation to neglect. A further case review is assessing a very complex case of gang affiliation and criminal exploitation of a young man. - Analysis of these cases had revealed some interesting influences and patterns in the use of digital technology. It was apparent that digital technology was being used to coerce and control young people into criminal exploitation such as county lines. It was also clear that there were similarities of the digital footprint of young people at risk of self-harm, which may inform future interventions by partners.

5.3 As the wellbeing of staff is a key priority, are Hackney children's social worker caseloads sustainable and are they different to other boroughs?

- It is difficult draw comparisons on local caseload data because the Hackney Unit Model of social work was substantively different to other boroughs. This was in part due to the role of the Consultant Social worker (who leads up the unit) and the degree to which they were an active practitioner as this would affect the average caseloads of social workers in that unit.

5.4 How effective were early help teams – Multi Agency Teams in identifying and supporting children in need?

- There is much good work taking place to provide early help to young people. There was however, always more that could be done to help early identification of vulnerable young people. One area of interest locally was how to facilitate further insight into safeguarding processes from local housing services. Whilst the incorporation of housing representatives on to the local safeguarding partnership board had been beneficial, a more systemic engagement across housing services was required and this was a work in progress.

5.5 Given the concerns highlighted around neglect in the recent Ofsted assessment, how can children be more visible and heard in local safeguarding processes?

- The partnership was looking at what tools or models can be used to develop more authoritative practice to challenge 'Start Again Syndrome' (an ongoing cycle of where an improvement in the child's situation is followed by reduced agency oversight but yet followed by further deterioration in the care of the child). More importantly however, was the need to develop awareness of the wider partnerships understanding of what child neglect looked like and to improve such referrals into children's social care. In this context, a local conference had been held on neglect to help engage and improve understanding of this issue in the safeguarding partnership agencies.

5.6 Whilst there have been many plaudits of early help provision in the authority, why is it that many of the young people entering local care systems are adolescents?

- Whilst it is apparent that some children that have received early help do not go on to need social care later in adolescence, it should be recognised that some children are subject to very complex influences which may impact on their vulnerability as they grow older. Children can also be influenced by issues outside the family, such as gangs which can to young people seem to offer friendship, a sense of belonging and association. To a young person this may outweigh the negative impacts of gang membership.
- Early help will not prevent every child from slipping through the net because part of the process of growing up means being influenced by adults who are not their parents. This is something that that Contextual Safeguarding Project is looking at. Analysis of local early help services such as the MAT and Young Hackney revealed that this does lead to improved outcomes for young people. If services did not exist, then there would probably be more young people emerging in the care system with more complex needs.

5.7 How will the local safeguarding partnership support the Children and Families Service in responding to the outcomes of the Ofsted Inspection?

- The safeguarding partnership has a good relationship with the Children and Families Service which is robust where and when it needs to be. This will continue where the partnership will not only continue to be curious and challenging to Children and Families Service, but will also identify how other agencies in that partnership can contribute to this improvement.

5.8 Is there any association between those young people who have been integrated into the UK from countries of conflict and youth violence? What support is available to help young people deal with the trauma that they may have experienced and to adjust to new surrounds?

- There are a number of issues that the locality is assessing at the moment in relation to gang culture, because when violence becomes normal and when people come from an environment where violence is normal, violence can become the default position. It was acknowledged that more work was needed to investigate the context of serious youth violence and the appropriate support for young people.

The Chair thanked the Independent Commissioner and officer for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

6 Unregistered Educational Settings - Review Update (20.30)

6.1 The Commission undertook an in-depth review into unregistered educational settings in Hackney in 2017/18 and an Executive response received in September 2018. At the last meeting when this issue was considered (April 2019), the Commission noted that there had been some progress in developing safeguarding systems for improve assurance for safeguarding in unregistered settings, but the Commission agreed to continue to monitor this item to ensure that the Council continues to prioritise and make progress in this important piece of work

6.2 Officers reported that this continued to be a priority for the Council and Hackney Learning Trust (HLT) in particular. It was noted that HLT continues to inform the Department for Education of those educational settings which are operating illegally, whereupon Ofsted will inspect these establishments to determine if they were a school or not. If settings were identified as a school by Ofsted they would be required to register as Independent School and subject to regulation within that sector or close.

6.3 The Commission's report of 2 years ago made 10 recommendations for the Council, including the need to develop a local strategy on how it will work with unregistered settings and to lobby government for improvement in the enforcement framework for unregistered schools. There is still no effective legal enforcement of unregistered settings and the council and safeguarding partnership continues to lobby central government to bring unregistered settings in to tighter regulatory control. Whilst there had been progress for some recommendations, progress against other recommendations had been more challenging.

6.4 Officers highlighted that the lack of legal definition as to what constitutes a school was hindering enforcement, and that no agency had the authority to close any setting down which was not a school. In the local context, Yeshiva in the Orthodox Jewish Community were not considered to be a school but an out of school setting which both local and national enforcement partners little authority to close. It was estimated that there are about 23 such settings locally, though it was not clear if these were unregistered settings, Yeshiva, or satellites of Yeshiva.

6.5 The local authority had safeguarding responsibilities as well as a duty to ensure children were in receipt of an appropriate education. Whilst there may be some acceptance of the need for improved safeguarding arrangements, there was a level of anxiety within the community that this might encroach on the teaching and curriculum in Yeshiva. As a consequence, some parents and settings were mistrustful of the local authority and would not cooperate.

6.6 In line with the recommendations of the Commission's report, officers indicated that further confidence building measures would be needed with the Orthodox Jewish Community to bring further improvement in safeguarding measures. A number of developments have been made in this respect:

- In recognition that there was a movement of young people between local registered independent schools and unregistered settings, HLT was working with local independent schools (many of which were Orthodox Jewish faith schools) to help build contact and identify ways in which they could be supported;
- Interlink had been engaged to help bridge the gap with the community and to set up a Headteacher Leadership Forum for local Independent Schools;
- Establishment of SENCO provision for local boys' and girls' schools in the independent sector.

6.7 All schools irrespective of setting, had a duty to inform the local authority as children move off-roll or who enrol on the school's register. HLT has an On/Off-rolling officer who liaised with schools so that there was a better understanding of which children were off-rolling and their destination afterward.

6.8 HLT notified the Commission on the work it was undertaking in Out of School Settings, which included sports clubs, social clubs and faith groups. Out of School Settings has been audited to ensure that there were adequate safeguarding policies and practices in place and that they were compliant with safeguarding processes. Interlink had been commissioned to engage with local Yeshiva to help develop and improve systems to improve safeguarding of children in these establishments (e.g. audits).

6.9 Aside from HLT, Ofsted and DfE, a number of partners were also involved in the regulation of unregistered educational settings including planning, housing, fire authority and police. In this context, it was important to develop a coordinated and consistent approach to ensure that enforcement work was joined up and that there was effective sharing of information and intelligence across this partnership.

Questions

6.10 The co-opted member representing the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations noted that there were two perceived problems, the lack of safeguarding in Yeshiva and the narrowness of the curriculum taught in in these settings. Whilst the UOHC did not represent synagogues or schools, it had been given reassurance that there were appropriate safeguarding systems within Yeshiva (they were HSE compliant and that staff were DBS checked). There were genuine fears that the authorities were trying to influence the nature of the curriculum in Yeshiva, which was not acceptable to the community. The Co-opted member requested that the Independent Commissioner of the Safeguarding Partnership lobby central government to allow Yeshiva to follow their own curricula.

- The Independent Commissioner of the Safeguarding Partnership indicated that whilst he respected the UOHC, he did not share its confidence that all staff at Yeshiva were DBS checked and that there were safer recruitment practices. This was because the Safeguarding Partnership did not have line of sight with the Yeshiva or children that attended, so it was therefore impossible to gain assurance of any safeguarding processes that may or may not be taking place.

- It was previously understood that there had been an agreement between the Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Orthodox Jewish Community to separate off the two issues of safeguarding and the curriculum in Yeshiva and that there was an agreement to establish a committee with community representatives to develop mutually agreed safeguarding arrangements. The Orthodox Jewish community had stepped back from this agreement however, when it was realised that this not a 'quid-pro-quo' arrangement where agreement on improved safeguarding at local Yeshiva would remove expectations around the curriculum. It was stated that safeguarding was not negotiable, and the renewed effort would be applied to help bring a resolution to this issue. Under the Children and Social Work Act, all such settings will be designated as relevant agencies and therefore be expected to act as a statutory body and comply with safeguarding regulations. Given that this was an ongoing problem over many years it was reiterated that there must be progress to effectively safeguard children in these settings.

6.11 Aside from Yeshiva, the Commission enquired whether was sufficient regulatory oversight at other out of school settings to have some confidence or assurance in safeguarding arrangements?

- HLT reported that there is now additional capacity to work with out of school settings such as Cubs, Brownies and Sports Clubs to ensure that they had appropriate safeguarding systems in place.
- The Safeguarding Partnership reported that all out of school settings were designated as 'relevant agencies' and therefore had a duty to cooperate and comply with local safeguarding requirements. These agencies are provided with support help compliance. This is a new requirement however, so naturally there is a concern as to how well such out of school settings will respond.

6.12 To what extent is Hackney working with other local authorities to lobby central government for legislative change?

- Pre-election, the Government had made a commitment to introduce legislation. The Safeguarding Partnership would continue to press for change on this issue however, to ensure that this remained a priority for the new Government. A national conference had been held by the Local Government Association at which representatives from Hackney were significant contributors. The conference had helped to share good practice and to identify an agreed path forward to lobby central government.

6.13 How was the safeguarding partnership working with other partners to improve the visibility of young people attending unregistered settings?

- This local authority had taken a lead in this nationally and had developed local partnerships with other agencies to raise awareness of their role in identifying and regulating unregistered settings. Local agencies, such as the police, fire service and planning authority were effectively sharing information and working together effectively.

Agreed: A further update on unregistered settings would be provided within the 2020/21 Commission work programme.

The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

7 Contextual Safeguarding (20.50)

7.1 The London Borough of Hackney and the University of Bedfordshire have worked in partnership to jointly develop and implement a whole system approach to Contextual Safeguarding since 2017. The Commission has requested an update on this project, to understand more about the concept of this work and how this will influence and improve safeguarding practice across Hackney.

7.2 Officers presented a summary of the Contextual Safeguarding (CS) Project which was being introduced to improve safeguarding for young people who experience harm outside the family home in Hackney.

- The Children and Families Service were provided with innovation funding to implement the theory of contextual safeguarding into practice and to develop tools and processes which can be used by other local authorities that wished to adopt this approach to improve safeguarding.
- Contextual safeguarding expands upon traditional notions of safeguarding where identified risks to the child are centred around the family, to acknowledge that as the child grows into adolescence there are a growing number of external influences which impact on safeguarding (for example at school, in their local neighbourhood, on-line and among their peer groups).

Whilst in many cases these are all very positive influences, there are on occasions where these present a safeguarding risk.

- After investigating, developing and testing the contextual safeguarding approach, it is now being embedded in local practice. The CS project had developed guidance for implementation of contextual safeguarding principles and a toolkit had also been developed for use by other local authorities to use this approach.

Questions

7.3 What advice would you give to members trying to engage young people in a local ward forum to support their understanding of some of the local issues that young people face?

- Hopefully there would be some existing youth provision in the locality, and the first step would be to involve these organisations who have the skills to engage young people in the community. This organisation would most likely have existing knowledge of and relationships with local young people. In addition, local youth services would also work with other partner agencies supporting young people which could extend the reach and potential involvement of young people.

7.4 How do you ensure that the voice of the child is heard in the contextual safeguarding approach?

- It was important to recognise the context in which you are engaging young people and to adapt strategies accordingly. The contextual safeguarding project has undertaken focus groups, surveys and peer-led engagement to facilitate the voice of the child. In secondary schools, surveys have not only been undertaken with young people, but have also been used to consult teachers and parents not only to corroborate issues emerging from young people, but also to obtain further insight into young people's experiences.

7.5 A number of local schools have been greatly impacted by knife crime and in particular robberies, how is contextual safeguarding being used to support these children?

- To use an example from similar work that had taken place on a local estate where there had been problems with local robberies among young people, a number of strategies had been deployed to improve safeguarding of young people:

- Improved data collection and intelligence to understand the nature of the problem and young people's concerns;
- Engagement with local stakeholders and community representatives to build trust and relationships;
- Planned training and development opportunities to help young people manage and respond to risks.

7.6 As the project is just 8 weeks away from completion, the Commission enquired how the outcomes and learning were being embedded across social work practice to ensure that there was a legacy from this work? Also, was there sufficient finance to support the further roll-out of this initiative?

- At the end of March 2020, external funding will cease and the project team will come to an end. There has been a systems transformation group which has led implementation of the safeguarding approach. The management group within the Children and Families Service had taken ownership of the practice tools, approaches and thinking for contextual safeguarding. A number of contextual

Monday, 27th January, 2020

safeguarding champions had also been developed to upskill other social workers and youth workers in this approach. A number of workshops had also been set up to improve awareness and understanding of partner agencies. All the project tools and guidance were available online for staff use across Hackney and in other local authorities.

- A safeguarding Vulnerable Adolescents Unit was being set up to offer specialist and intensive support to young people and their practitioners, particularly in those circumstances where young people find it difficult to engage and to lead in aspects of contextual safeguarding work.

- There was a small amount of underspend which would be used to further embed this work into local practice.

7.7 Are there any plans for an independent assessment of the Contextual Safeguarding Project?

- The University of Sussex has been appointed by DfE to evaluate contextual safeguarding. Additional funding is being sought to enable the university to undertake a longitudinal follow up survey.

Agreed: that a further update from the Contextual Safeguarding project would be taken in the next CYP Scrutiny Commission work programme in 6 months' time (to be taken as part of the Children's and Families Social Care Annual Report)

The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

8 Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission - 2019/20 Work Programme (21.20)

8.1 There are a number of changes in respect of the planned work programme for 2019/20:

- The April 28th meeting has been rescheduled to May 12th 2020.

8.2 Members were reminded to submit questions for Cabinet member for Families, SEND and Play in readiness for the 11th March meeting 2020 by January 29th 2020.

8.3 Whilst the Commission has yet to decide on the review topic for 2019/20 it was agreed that this would take place on Thursday 30th April. The Commission were of the view that it would like to focus the planned in-depth review within children's social care as this may assist the council in its response to the Ofsted inspection outcomes. There were a number of areas which the Commission were considering:

- The context of the neglectful environment and how decisions are made;
- Why so many adolescents were entering the care system and what could be done to prevent this?

8.4 It was agreed that the nature of the review would require further refinement which could then be discussed with the Group Director of Children Adults and Community Health and the Director of Children and Families Service.

9 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (21.30)

Monday, 27th January, 2020

9.1 Minutes of the 15th January (Making Hackney a Child Friendly Borough) were not ready for distribution within this agenda. They will be included within the next agenda.

10 Any Other Business

10.1 There was not other business. Date of the next meeting was 24th February 2020

End 9.55pm

Duration of the meeting: Times Not Specified