



London Borough of Hackney  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2018/19  
Date of Meeting Monday, 24th February, 2020

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

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<b>Chair</b>	<b>Councillor Sophie Conway</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance</b>	<b>Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Ajay Chauhan, Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr James Peters, Cllr Clare Potter and Cllr Caroline Woodley</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Justine McDonald</b>
<b>Co-optees</b>	<b>Graham Hunter, Luisa Dornela, Shabnum Hassan, Jo Macleod, Ernell Watson, Aleigha Reeves and Raivene Walters</b>
<b>In Attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care</li><li>• Cllr Christopher Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play</li><li>• Anne Canning, Group Director, Children, Adults and Community Health</li><li>• Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education</li><li>• Dr Sandra Husbands, Director of Public Health</li><li>• Ciara Emmerson, Headteacher, Haggerston Secondary School</li><li>• Jo Riley, Headteacher, Randal Cremer Primary School</li><li>• Pauline Adams, Head of Service, Young Hackney</li><li>• David Wright, Health &amp; Wellbeing Team Leader, Young Hackney</li><li>• Peter Bachev, Health &amp; Wellbeing Outreach Worker, Young Hackney</li></ul>
<b>Members of the Public</b>	<b>3</b>
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**Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair**

## 1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

- Justine McDonald (Co-opted member)

1.2 Apologies for lateness were received from

- Cllr Margaret Gordon
- Cllr Clare Potter
- Cllr Ajay Chauhan
- Annie Gammon, Director Education
- Shuja Shaik

## 2 Declarations of Interest

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

- Cllr Peters was a governor at a local special school;
- Graham Hunter was a governor a Primary Advantage Federation
- Jo McLeod was a Governor at a local school in Hackney.

## 3 Urgent Items / Order of Business

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

## 4 New Relationship and Sex Education (SRE) guidelines for schools (19.05)

4.1 The Department for Education has introduced compulsory Relationships Education for primary pupils and Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) for secondary pupils from September 2020. It will also be compulsory for all schools to teach Health Education from September 2020. The purpose of this item was to develop assurance on the preparedness of local schools ahead of the introduction of the new RSE guidelines and to assess if further support is needed to meet these requirements ahead of September. Hackney Learning Trust (HLT)

4.2 As with all such statutory changes in schools there has been wide ranging consultation and engagement about the changes, which has enabled both local authorities and schools time to prepare for the changes in the RSE curriculum. It was suggested that the levels of awareness among local schools was high as RSE curriculum changes had been discussed at local school engagement forums including those with Head Teachers Group, Deputy Head Teachers Group and School Governors.

4.3 In the last 18 months more detailed development work had been undertaken within both primary and secondary PSHE Forums, which had focused on creating new programmes of study and sharing good practice and learning. Schools were also directed to the PSHE Association (recognised experts in this area) to help them plan and develop the RSE curriculum and for the provision of specialist training.

4.4 Additional support has been provided to primary sector as often the PSHE coordinator role is shared with other school responsibilities. A virtual network was set up among primary schools to help them share documents, and HLT invited the PSHE Association to provide a training session which was well attended. The PSHE Association also provided a training session for local SENCO coordinators to support the development of the RSE curriculum to children with special educational needs or disability (SEND).

4.5 It was noted that all schools had been contacted in 2019 to identify if further help or support was needed ahead of the introduction of RSE guidelines in September 2020. It was understood that given that the new guidelines did not represent a significant change, many schools were already delivering aspects of the new PSHE curriculum, and HLT were confident that schools were prepared for the changes ahead.

#### Young Hackney – Health & Wellbeing Team

4.6 Young Hackney Health and Wellbeing Team deliver supplementary Relationship and Sex Education, Relationship Education and Health Education to primary, secondary and special schools across Hackney. This programme of training has been available for 3 years, and the service has worked with most schools across the borough. Excluding sessions in Young Hackney hubs and in alternative education providers settings the number of sessions delivered in schools has risen substantially over the past 3 years:

- 2017/18 - 716
- 2018/19 – 1,042
- 2019/20 – 1,200.

4.7 The HB Service offers training on a wide range of topics, which include:

- Consent and the Law
- Gender & Sexuality
- Pornography
- On-line Safety
- Teenage pregnancy.

4.8 Whilst the HWB service provides direct training support to local schools and educational settings, training was also provided to local teachers and other education support staff to support their delivery of the PSHE curriculum in schools. It was noted however, that take up of teacher training was low with just 4 sessions being delivered in the current year (2019/20). The service was aware however, that local teachers had taken up training offered by PSHE Association via HLT.

4.9 Parental engagement was an important part of the work of the HWB team to ensure that parents and carers understood the teaching aims and objectives of PSHE topics. A total of 24 training sessions had been held for parents at which 466 parents of children in primary, secondary and other educational settings had attended.

4.10 Schools have an important role in helping children navigate the increasing complexity of the world in which they live, both on-line and off-line. The HWB service aims to complement schools teaching in which schools can request a programme of PHSE support or teaching on specific topics. All services are provided free of charge to schools as the service is commissioned by the Public Health Service in Hackney.

#### Haggerston Secondary School

4.11 Changes to the PSHE curriculum were discussed at Hackney Headteachers Conference some time ago, and a member of the teaching team was assigned a leadership role in implementing the new requirements with the Headteacher. The school had drawn extensively on the resources available through the PSHE

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Association to update curricula content and teaching, and the teaching of PSHE was expanded from 2 to 6 drop down days across each year group. Dedicated PSHE sessions were supplemented with occasional school wide teaching (assemblies).

4.12 The new curriculum has been trialled in the current year (2019/20), to identify if there are any resource issues and to ensure the right balance between in-house and external resources, so that any adjustments can be made in preparation for September 2020. These sessions have been evaluated with teaching staff and students so the programme can be refined for this coming year.

4.13 There has been more parental engagement in setting up this new PSHE programme with more detailed information provided to parents on what their children are being taught in the new curriculum. The feedback from parents is that this had been reassuring and no issues had arisen this year.

#### Randal Cremer Primary School

4.14 Relationship education is not taught separately as a more naturalistic approach is preferred by the school, and was therefore taught across the curriculum alongside other PSHE topics. Sex education was provided in a dedicated week of teaching, though parents were able to withdraw their child from these sessions if they so wished. This would also be the case in the new PSHE guidance.

4.15 Parental engagement was critical to successful delivery of RSE teaching as it helped parents to understand the nature of the curriculum and what their children would be taught. It also allowed an opportunity for the school and teaching staff to dispel any myths about RSE, and encourage parents to look at the wide range of families in which children were supported. The approach of the school was to emphasise that relationship education was fundamentally about being kind and looking after each other.

4.16 As awareness of the new PSHE curriculum increased however, some challenge from parents was expected. On the whole, Primary Schools have good relationships with parents, where communication with parents was strong and that there were genuine trusting relationships between the school and parents. The school was particularly mindful to improve awareness of parents who had English as an additional language, consequently the PSHE curriculum had been produced in a number of community languages to improve accessibility and understanding of what was being taught.

#### Questions

4.17 What proportion of parents opted their children out of the sex education teaching at Randal Cremer? What conversations were had with parents that chose to exclude their children?

- When the sex education component was taught, approximately 4-5 children were withdrawn from each class (of about 30 children). The school required parents to put the request to withdraw from the sex education class in writing. The school were accepted parental choice in this respect as sex education was not a compulsory part of the PSHE curriculum in primary schools.

4.18 How helpful was the guidance in resolving any tensions between equality strands in the teaching of Sex and Relationship Education?

- The secondary school responded, that whilst it would always be helpful to have more definitive guidance, the approach of the school to teaching PSHE topics was perhaps more important than the level of detailed guidance. It was noted that the school chose to deliver RSE through dedicated drop-down character days as this allowed a more holistic and sensitive way to deliver personal and complex teaching to children. Character days enabled children to be taught in smaller classes and sometimes in same sex groups which enabled teachers to explore subjects sensitively and which helped facilitate pupil discussion.
- It was also important to remember that SRE and PSHE teaching does not take place in isolation, and that there is a wider complementary range of support and interest groups which are available to young people available through the school.
- The HWB of Young Hackney also offered regular drop-in sessions at every secondary school across the borough, which provides children additional opportunities to discuss and explore topics discussed in SRE and wider PSHE curriculum.
- HLT noted that whilst there were limitations to the guidance, it should be noted that the guidance was statutory which provided a much clearer direction to schools than existed before. Overall, it was felt that this was a positive contribution which could assist schools in this complex area of teaching.

4.19 How confident are we in Hackney that schools are prepared for the new SRE guidance ahead of 2020?

- The Cabinet member responded that HLT was confident that schools had engaged with the new guidance for SRE positively and had undertaken a lot of preparatory work ahead of September 2020. It was noted that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had written to all schools in Hackney reassuring them of the support of the Council and to encourage them to be bold in their planning and approach to this important area of the curriculum. Whilst parents may withdraw their child from sex education parts of the RSE curriculum, the relationships component is compulsory for all students and this was an important step forward.

4.20 What knowledge or understanding does HLT have of the approach that local schools have taken to delivering SRE to pupils across both primary and secondary?

- HLT indicated that there was much greater awareness around the delivery model for SRE in secondary schools than in primary schools, but there is some detail on the approach taken in every school. It was understood that schools were generally utilising a range of in-house specialist teachers with input from external agencies (e.g. Young Hackney) to deliver SRE programmes.

4.21 Whilst it was really encouraging to note the backing for schools provided in a letter from the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, what preparations have been made to respond to concerns made by parents or groups of parents who might object to the new guidelines? Has there been any preparations to support schools in any such eventuality?

- The Cabinet member noted that there had one isolated incident at one local school which resulted from a comment made on Twitter. Officers from HLT had supported the school in responding and this case had been resolved. All schools should be aware that there is corporate support for schools to help them respond to such issues as they arise.

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- HLT noted that whilst there was no definitive plan, given the preparatory work undertaken it was confident that the relationship that schools had with local school improvement partner networks will help them to respond to issues should they arise. It was also confident that there were mechanisms for reporting issues back to the council should a more corporate response be needed.
- The HWB team noted that within the new guidance, LGBT relationships were not to be taught as a one-off item, but integrated across the curriculum and taught alongside other forms of relationship.
- The Group Director indicated that the council was experienced in dealing with challenging issues and would be able to set up an effective support plan for schools at short notice. It was also emphasised that HLT had good relationships with local schools and that schools clearly understood the Council's and members position on this subject.

4.22 Do parents have an opportunity to observe SRE teaching in local schools?

- The primary school responded that whilst parents were not invited to observe actual SRE lessons, they were informed about the programme of study, including what issues were covered in each lesson. Parents would have the opportunity to talk to the school about any issues of concern and would have the right to opt out of sex education.
- The secondary school also noted that it shared SRE resources and materials with parents ahead of any teaching sessions, and reminded parents when this session would be taken in the curriculum. A lot of information is put on the school website for ease of access. Given that elements of RSE are taken cross curricula in secondary schools (e.g. science), parents are generally more aware of the scope of issues taught and are more relaxed.
- The HWB Team deliver dedicated training and awareness sessions on PSHE issues for parents (coffee mornings and parents' evenings), at which over 450 parents had attended.

4.23 Has the HWB service involved local faith schools?

- The data suggested that there had been an even uptake of their services among primary schools across Hackney, including dedicated faith schools with a strong religious ethos. It was noted that, as a whole, there were very few subjects in their teaching offer which could be considered contentious from a religious perspective. Where there have been objections this could be attributed to miscommunications in what parents perceive to be part of the RSE programme of study rather than actual content.
- HLT noted that the guidance allows for variation as to how schools of a religious character can teach RSE, in that they could provide a distinctive faith perspective on relationships. A teaching and learning consultant for religious education is employed by HLT, who can provide dedicated support to faith-based schools on this issue.

4.24 Although not compulsory until September 2020, what proportion of schools have already started to teach SRE in accordance with the new guidelines? Have any barriers been identified for those that haven't started? Are there any differences in the way that free schools, mainstream schools or independent schools have approached this?

- On the evidence of its work with local schools, HLT reported that most schools across all sectors (maintained, free schools and academies) were already providing RSE in accordance with the guidance in this current year (2019/20). It

was suggested that many schools would reflect on these courses and refine them in preparation for the new academic year in September 2020.

- Whilst not under the jurisdiction of the local authority, HLT had established a number of local forums for headteachers at local independent schools to provide additional support in relation to a number of issues, including PSHE and SEND.

4.25 What preparations are being made to help young people with SEND to engage with this aspect of the curriculum?

- HLT reported that all three local special schools were engaged with PSHE networks and forums. In addition, the annual conference for local SENCO's conference in March 2020 would focus on the delivery of PSHE to children with SEND in maintained schools and academies. It is hoped that the SNECO (with local PSHE leads) will adapt teaching materials which are suitable to children and young people with SEND.

- The HWB team also noted that dedicated training and support was available for teaching SRE to children with SEND.

4.26 If up to five children were being removed from the components of RSE teaching at local schools, this would mean up to 20% of local children may be missing important aspects to their personal education. Are there any plans to investigate this issue further to assess which young people may be missing out, and if any further engagement and support work is needed with parents?

- The secondary school head teacher noted that the drop out rate was much lower, with about 5 students across the whole school withdrawn from RSE classes, as parents in secondary schools are much more relaxed about this issue than in primary. It was noted that there would be some value to understand which students were being withdrawn and to share this more widely, to assess if further work was needed locally. This picture would become clearer as the year progressed.

4.27 Is there any understanding as to how Alternative Education Providers are adapting to the new RSE guidance, and if there was any dedicated support for this sector? Have all AP's been engaged?

- HLT reported that local AP's were engaged in local PSHE networks and that New Regents College, Hackney City Farm, BSix and the Boxing Academy were active contributors. Other out of borough AP settings were not necessarily in the direct sight of local PSHE work as this would most likely be supported by host local authorities. As the commissioner of alternative provision, New Regents College would have oversight of such provision.

4.28 The HWB service of Young Hackney is Commissioned by Hackney Public Health Service deliver SRE. Are there any planned changes to the Commissioning of this service given the level of demand from local schools and educational settings?

- The Director of Public Health reported that whilst the HWB service would continue to be commissioned locally, this would be undertaken through a wider commissioning process and offer to children and young people through the Integrated Commissioning Board. This would be effective from September 2021 and with the same amount of resources that were currently being provided by PH.

4.29 HLT in its submission noted that a guide was in preparation for parents, had this been progressed?

- This would be prepared in readiness for distribution in the summer term of 2020 ahead of the new guidance in September 2020.

4.30 Questioning local schools, the Commission sought to understand if there was any further help or support needed to help them prepare to implement the new RSE guidance ahead of September 2020?

- The headteacher of the primary school reiterated that given the long lead-in to this policy, schools had a long time to prepare and adjust, and most were already teaching in accordance to the new guidance. It was reported that HLT had been supportive and if issues did arise, felt that that was support available from HLT.

The Chair thanked headteachers and officers for attending and responding to members of the Commission on this issue.

## **5 Young Black Men's Project (19.50)**

5.1 The Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men Programme (YBM) aims to tackle inequalities for black boys and young black men in Hackney. This is a partnership programme which involved agencies across statutory and community sectors and had been in operation since 2015. The Commission requested an update and progress report on this project.

5.2 Head of Policy and Strategic Delivery presented an update of the work of the YBM and a summary of the key points are presented below:

- When the project commenced in 2015 work centred on building an evidence base to what was the lived experience of young black men and boys and to develop a shared approach and understanding in reducing local inequalities;
- The Theory of Change approach has been central to the approach of the YBM programme in which different interventions are tried and tested in the local service framework;
- Since 2018, there have been 3 key areas of work; education, mental health and reducing harm. There have also been two cross-cutting themes, culture and identity, and employment and enterprise;
- The project was about to launch new governance arrangements to place young people (through Youth Leadership) at the heart of this programme.

5.3 The lead officer for the YBM programme described to the Commission the work of Youth Leaders, which had subdivided its work into 3 teams:

- Organisers – offering youth training, conducting research and delivering workshops to young people;
- Ambassadors – providing representation and advocacy at meetings with senior leaders across services
- Messengers – undertaking community engagement.

5.4 Education was one of the key strands of work, and the YBM programme was working with a number of primary and secondary schools which focused on leadership and culture, personal development and behaviour, curriculum participation and parental engagement. Work was shifting to more targeted and co-produced interventions in local schools. The YBM ran a conference for school governors looking at young people who 'feel left out and left behind' and at risk of exclusion.



5.5 The Commission understood that there were two strands in keeping young people safe, the Children and Families Service-wide YBM workstream and the Reducing Harm workstream. The CFS has held a number of workshops and training sessions for staff which have looked at identity, diversity, black masculinity and fatherhood.

5.6 A number of challenges were identified in tackling disproportionalities among young black men and boys, these included:

- An absence of community voice – where community members were disengaged or disillusioned in processes or institutions which should help reduce inequalities;
- Ongoing difficulties in talking about race – at the institutional level, there was a discomfort in discussing race, racial inequalities and how this manifests itself in local services and impact on local people;
- Challenges of transformational change – the difficulties of working across agencies and across sectors and in ensuring strategies lead to changes in practice which improve outcomes for young black men and boys;
- Responsibility and capacity – problematisation of young black men still persists, and there are resource constraints across the partnership.

5.7 In response to these challenges, the YBM programme had developed a number of initiatives including new governance arrangements to ensure that it is more accountable to community members, and that young people can play a more active role in programme leadership. In addition, a new Community Accountability Board will be developed which will work in tandem with the Strategic Partnership Group.

### Questions

5.8 The Commission sought to clarify whether the targets cited for the YBM programme were achievable, for example, the ambition that there is no gap in attainment or exclusions between young black men and their peers by 2025.

- Whilst it was agreed that these were ambitious targets and that there were significant externalities working against these, it was felt that retention of these targets was important as they provided a focus and a sense of priority for local work to narrow gaps between YBM and their peers. Equality should of course underpin these ambitions and the YBM programme did not want to move away from this principle.

- The Cabinet member noted that the performance of local schools had improved significantly and now figured high in national rankings. It was clear however, that not all children had shared in this advancement. Nonetheless, the authority should have equally high aspirations for young black men and boys to help reduce local inequalities.

5.9 What data will be used to evaluate the success of this project?

- This is going to be revisited in the coming months. A recent data review had taken place across Hackney which has looked at the different outcomes for young black men and boys and this would inform the review. It is hoped that this process will result in a dashboard of data from which it will be easier to determine the impact and effectiveness of interventions and the YBM programme as a whole. This will help build credibility in helping partners to understand the current and future direction of the programme.

5.10 Has the approach of the YBM programme in Hackney been informed by similar work in other authorities? Or has the YBM programme supported other similar initiatives elsewhere?

- Whilst other areas may run similar initiatives, none were as comprehensive as the YBM programme here in Hackney. YBM programme had worked collaboratively with a number of areas and shared learning, but had also given presentations of its work to London Councils and the Local Government Association. Lambeth and Haringey have similar approaches, whilst the former focused on education and the latter mental health. It was noted that council wide diversity initiatives, such as the Inclusive Leadership Programme were as a direct result of the YBM programme. Indeed, the YBM has helped to the council to develop a more corporate approach to workforce diversity. The work of the YBM has given confidence to the organisation to undertake self-assessments in relation to race and diversity and has resulted in significant corporate benefits.

- HLT reported that there had been a meeting at the Mayor of London's office at which Brent, Haringey, Hackney, Lambeth and other London boroughs had all taken part to help share good practice across London.

5.11 Is the YBM working with the Young Futures Commission in engaging and involving young people in different local settings?

- Officers from YBM are attached to the Reference Group of the Young Futures Commission to ensure that there is shared insight and seamless working across both these projects. With shared leadership, it hoped that these projects will co-produce solutions to local issues, and provide a singular response where this is needed.

5.12 Recognising that inequalities in the achievement of young black men is perpetuated at college and University settings, has the YBM programme made any connections with this sector to share learning?

- Whilst there have been conversations with this sector, these have been on a more operational and evaluative level rather than focused on organisational changes in these settings. In acknowledging the disparities that exist for young black men on leaving higher education, the YBM programme has worked with corporates across East London through the Parity Project. This project aims to address inequalities that young black men experience in gaining access to graduate jobs.

5.13 What resources are available to the YBM Programme?

- There was a seed budget for the YBM programme which was primarily used for evaluation, this equated to about £400k in the first 3 years of the project. If the focus is to create a lasting legacy, then the issue is not about resources per se, but about the investment that individuals make to adapt personal practices or the cultural changes that that are brought to local organisations or services. Resources were needed however, to support continued engagement work with young people and to support community representatives.

5.14 Are there any plans to develop more mentoring within the YBM programme?

- Whilst it is clear that young black men require positive role models, previous experience has suggested that coaching can provide more positive and directional support. The overall focus the project has been on youth leadership and to empower local young people to actively shape and influence the support that they may need.

5.15 What steps have been taken to overcome any misconceptions in the community as to the aims and objectives of the YBM project?

- It was suggested that the focus of the project was now to scale-up, to ensure that there was sufficient reach into local communities to improve awareness and understanding. This work is being co-led by the Youth Leaders.

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

## **6 Children's Social Care Mid-Year Report April 2019 -September 2019 (20.35)**

6.1 A report on the performance of the Children and Families Service (CFS) is a standing item on the work programme of the Commission and is presented bi-annually (full-year and in-year). The report provides details of how the service is currently performing in relation to key aspects of children's social care provision (e.g. number of referrals, assessments and children entering care).

6.2 The Chair highlighted that this report was for the period April 2019 to September 2019 which meant that the report will reflect any changes in the systems and processes for children's social care which have been implemented as a result of the focused visit by Ofsted which took place in February 2019.

6.3 The Cabinet member introduced the report and highlighted the following:

- Whilst the Ofsted inspection outcome in November 2019 downgraded their assessment of Children's Social Care in Hackney, the Council was committed to an ambitious plan to improve services.
- The Ofsted inspection had highlighted service areas which needed to improve and the CFS was developing a plan in response. The inspection also noted those areas of provision which were very good, and the CFS would build on these further.
- There would be a corporate response to support the CFS to improve and a Member Oversight Board had been developed to assist in this process.

6.4 The Group Director for Children, Adults and Community Health raised a number of issues from the report.

- CFS was required to provide an annual self-assessment for Ofsted and this report would form the basis of the report to be shared with the Commission. Responses to the recommendations of the recent Ofsted inspection would also be detailed in the report.
- Data within the report showed a 43% increase in children being placed on a child protection plan to September 2019. The Group Director noted that recently (2017-2019) the local rate of children on protection plans had fallen, and that these latest figures represented a return to 2017 levels.

6.5 The Head of Safeguarding and Learning highlighted other key features of the report:

- The number of children entering care continued to rise, this was mostly due to an increase in older children (aged 14+) who were entering the care system for the first time. This was a regional trend and other London boroughs were experiencing similar increases in their cohort of looked after children.
- The key priorities for the CFS in light of the Ofsted inspection outcomes included:
  - Improved information sharing among partners for more informed decision making;
  - Ensuring that practice is authoritative and child centred;
  - Improved assessment and planning of private fostering arrangements;
  - Improvement in timeliness and effectiveness of pre-proceedings work;
  - New procedures to improve effectiveness of management oversight of cases;

- Developing the voice of young people in care planning and organisational development.
- Further embedding Safer Together to further develop the service response to those families affected by domestic violence or abuse.
- In relation to YBM programme, ensure that issues relating to race, diversity, inequality and discrimination are considered and addressed in all aspects of the CFS work.

### Questions

6.5 The number of children who go missing from care is significant, as too is the number who refuse a follow up interview after returning to home? What work is being undertaken to reduce the number of children who go missing, and what safeguarding assessments are made for those who have gone missing?

- There was concern at both the number of children that go missing and the number of episodes that children go missing. Data from the Children's Rights Officer would suggest that children go missing for many reasons including family breakdown and arguments. Once a child is identified as missing, the relevant social work team and police are informed who then work to strict protocols to identify the whereabouts of the child. As well as support through the Children's Rights Officers and Young Hackney, the Rescue and Response team funded through MOPAC offer more dedicated support where the child has vulnerabilities or safeguarding issues.

6.6 Why is it that there were very few adoptions of children taking place in Hackney in 2019? Is there any work being undertaken locally to understand if there are any racial or cultural disproportionalities for those children entering care and maybe seeking permanent homes?

- There has been a shift from borough specific adoption programmes to more regional programmes. Hackney was a member of the North London Adoption & Fostering Consortium and is now a member of North London Adopt, a new Regional Adoption Agency, and most adoptions are now undertaken through this agency. In reality, there are now few younger children that are put forward for adoption which prospective adoptive parents may prefer.

- It was confirmed that there were disproportionalities in the profile of children receiving local children's social care provision including those that are children in need, those on child protection plans and those children who end up in care. There are processes in place to provide internal challenge to decision making to ensure that disproportionalities are not perpetuated.

6.7 What support would be available to families supported through the Troubled Families Programme should funding be ceased nationally? Are local contingencies in place?

- There has been much uncertainty about the future funding for this service which has been a concern for local authorities as this funding underpins some of the early help work that takes place with families. With no certainty of future funding, it will reduce the amount of families that can be supported through this programme in the future and limit the step-down support to families currently being helped by the programme. There has been no clear directive from central government as to the future direction and funding for this service.

6.8 What financial modelling has been undertaken to assess the related cost pressures of increasing numbers of older children with more complex needs being taken into care by the authority? How are we trying to prevent these high cost outcomes?

- CFS routinely undertakes financial modelling for services to help test and challenge financial assumptions to improve budgeting. It has become more difficult however, to predict financial costs of cohorts of young people with particularly complex needs who are entering the care system.

- Population data is taken from Public Health to help model future demands for services and the likely financial impact that this will have for CFS. There is also a lot of in-house

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modelling of needs of children who are already in receipt of social care and pattern of future care needs. It should be recognised however, that projected costs and budgets can be distorted by just a small number of high cost placements for young people with complex needs.

- The service is acutely aware that the social and economic context in which children and families are living is more challenging which is likely to result in further demands on this service. In terms of the impact on the child and family and of course financially for the council, early intervention is the preferred approach.

6.9 Given the organisational pressures that have resulted from the Ofsted inspection, how can the CFS ensure that it does not become reactionary?

-The Ofsted inspection noted that staff were motivated and that generally, morale across the service was high and that they felt supported by their managers. The CFS was not complacent however, and would continue to ensure that there were appropriate support mechanisms for staff and that there were opportunities where they can reflect and learn about their practice. The CFS was also keen to not institute any reactionary changes to local practices, and that staff would be active contributors in the process of change. A number of independent focus groups were being held with staff to facilitate more objective feedback. The CFS would retain the core values which underpin its approach to working with children and families.

6.10 What proportion of fostering arrangements are private and is there separate statutory guidance covering these?

- Private fostering is when a parent makes an arrangement for another responsible adult to look after their child who is not a close family member (such as a grandparent or sister). Usually this arrangement is with an extended family member such as an aunt or cousin. The duty of the CFS in this context is to assess the arrangement and to make sure that this is safe for the child and that the fostering adult can meet the needs of the child.

- When Ofsted inspected there were 12 such arrangements in Hackney. All such cases were reassessed after the inspection. Families are required to notify CFS if their children have been looked after by another adult for more than 30 days. Whilst it was acknowledged that there was significant underreporting, the service works with partner agencies to help identify private fostering arrangements.

6.11 The Chair thanked officers for attending. The Chair requested that it would be helpful if budget information for CFS could be provided alongside this report to assist the Commission in its budget monitoring role.

**Agreed:** That budget reports for CFS would accompany the Children's Social Care Annual report from 2020/21 onwards in the work programme.

## **7 Work Programme 2019/20 (21.20)**

7.1 A number of updates have been agreed within this programme:

- March 11th – Post 16 SEND: this item will focus on the education and training pathways for this cohort of children. A number of stakeholders have been invited to contribute, with the focus of the meeting being to contribute to a refresh of the Hackney Post 16 SEND Strategy. A number of focus groups with parents and young people will take place ahead of the meeting to support the Commission's discussion.
- March 11th - Cabinet Member Q & A with Cllr Kennedy: further to consultation with the Commission, the Chair has agreed the following areas for questioning:
  - Childhood poverty/ food poverty;
  - Troubled families programme;

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- Children's centres.
- March 11th – Action Plan for Ofsted: Officers have noted that the action plan will not be ready for this meeting, but it will be circulated direct to members of the Commission for comment and input when available. The Chair and Vice Chair will meet the Group Director for Children, Adults and Community Health and Director of Children & Families to report back collated comments from the Commission. The finalised action plan will be published on the next agenda (May 12th 2020) together with the comments submitted by the Commission.

## **8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

8.1 Minutes for the last two meetings on January 15<sup>th</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup> were unavailable at the time of this agenda being published and will be published in the next agenda (11<sup>th</sup> March).

## **9 Any Other Business**

9.1 There were no other items.

9.2 The date of the next meeting would be March 11<sup>th</sup> 2020.

**The meeting closed at 9.30pm**

Duration of the meeting: Times Not Specified