

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

All Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows

Wednesday 6 October 2021

7.00 pm

Until further notice, all Council meetings will be held remotely

Contact:

Martin Bradford

☎ 020 8356 3315

✉ martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Tim Shields

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair), Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair),
Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr James Peters,
Cllr Anna Lynch, Troughton, Young, Sizer and Cllr Caroline Selman

Co-optees: Shabnum Hassan, Jo Macleod, Ernell Watson, Michael Lobenstein, Steven Olalere and Richard Brown

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- | | | |
|----------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Agenda & Papers | (Pages 5 - 100) |
| 2 | Minutes of 6th October | (Pages 101 - 116) |

Access and Information

Getting to the Town Hall

For a map of how to find the Town Hall, please visit the council's website <http://www.hackney.gov.uk/contact-us.htm> or contact the Overview and Scrutiny Officer using the details provided on the front cover of this agenda.

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Further Information about the Commission

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<http://www.hackney.gov.uk/individual-scrutiny-commissions-children-and-young-people.htm>



Public Involvement and Recording

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Rights of Press and Public to Report on Meetings

Where a meeting of the Council and its committees are open to the public, the press and public are welcome to report on meetings of the Council and its committees, through any audio, visual or written methods and may use digital and social media providing they do not disturb the conduct of the meeting and providing that the person reporting or providing the commentary is present at the meeting.

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If a meeting passes a motion to exclude the press and public then in order to consider confidential or exempt information, all recording must cease and all recording equipment must be removed from the meeting room. The press and public are not permitted to use any means which might enable them to see or hear the proceedings whilst they are excluded from a meeting and confidential or exempt information is under consideration.

Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

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Overview & Scrutiny

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission London Borough of Hackney

All Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission are requested to attend the meeting of the Commission to be held as follows.

Date: Wednesday October 6th 2021 at 7.00pm

**Venue: Committee Room 2, Hackney Town Hall,
Mare Street, London. E8 1EA**

The press and public are welcome to join this meeting remotely via the live link below:

<https://youtu.be/koDnjvqoyKA>

If you would like to attend in person you will need to give notice (to the clerk) and note the Covid-19 guidance provided below.

Clerk: Martin Bradford, Overview & Scrutiny Officer
0208 356 3315/0775 9090040
martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Ian Williams

Acting Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Council Members:	Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair)	Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice Chair)
	Cllr Humaira Garasia	Cllr Katie Hanson
	Cllr Anna Lynch	Cllr James Peters
	Cllr Caroline Selman	Cllr Anya Sizer
	Cllr Lynne Troughton	Cllr Sara Young

VACANT 1 Labour, 1 Opposition

Co-opted Members: Richard Brown, Justine McDonald, Shabnum Hassan, Steven Olalere, Jo Macleod, Salmah Kansara, Ernell Watson and Michael Lobenstein.

**5 Young People from Hackney Youth Parliament /
Hackney Tomorrow**

Publication Date: September 28th 2021

Overview & Scrutiny

Agenda

1.	Apologies for Absence
2.	Urgent Items / Order of Business
3.	Declarations of Interest
4.	<p>Ofsted Focused Visit (July 2021) Update (19.05) To discuss the report on the outcome of the focused visit of children's social care services undertaken by Ofsted in July 2021.</p> <p>Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(25m)</p>
5.	<p>HMI Probation Youth Justice Inspection July 2021 (19.30) To discuss the report of the outcome of the HMI Probation Inspection of youth justice services in July 2021.</p> <p>Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Early Help and Prevention Brendan Finegan, Youth Justice Service Manager</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(45m)</p>
6.	<p>Early Years Strategy - Reconfiguration of Children's Centres (20.15) Following confirmation of the Early Years Strategy at Cabinet, a consultation on the reconfiguration of Children's Centre was launched (15/9/21). The Commission is being consulted as part of that consultation (close 16/11/21)).</p> <p>Annie Gammon, Director of Education Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(45m)</p>
7.	<p>CYP Work Programme 2021/22 (21.00) To receive an update on the Commission's work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.</p>
8.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting (21.25) To note and agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 12th July 2021.</p>
9.	Any other business (21.25)
	Meeting Close 21.25

Access and Information

Covid 19 - Public Guidance for attendance

This guidance is intended to support members of the public who wish to attend meetings of the Council do so in a Covid-safe way.

Introduction

All of the Council's buildings have been adapted to ensure that, so far as possible, they are a Covid-safe environment. However it is also important that individuals are taking appropriate action based on their personal circumstances and needs.

Attending a meeting can also increase the risk to yourself and others. You must think whether it is essential for you to attend. You should consider:

- Whether you can watch the meeting online - all Council meetings are being live-streamed.
- Whether you have specific health-related concerns that would put you at risk.

You can use the guidance below to assist you. You can also contact governanceservices@hackney.gov.uk if there are any specific questions you have after reading it.

Public Attendance

The Town Hall is not presently open to the general public, and there is limited capacity within the meeting rooms. However, the High Court has ruled that where meetings are required to be 'open to the public' or 'held in public' then members of the public are entitled to have access by way of physical attendance at the meeting.

The Council will ensure that access by the public is in line with any Covid-19 restrictions that may be in force from time to time and also in line with public health advice.

Those members of the public who wish to observe a meeting are still encouraged to make use of the live-stream facility in the first instance. You can find the link on the agenda front sheet.

Members of the public who would ordinarily attend a meeting to ask a question, make a deputation or present a petition will be able to attend if they wish. They may also let the relevant committee support officer know that they would like the Chair of the meeting to ask the question, make the deputation or present the petition on their behalf (in line with current Constitutional arrangements).

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In the case of the Planning Sub-Committee, those wishing to make representations at the meeting should attend in person where possible.

Regardless of why you want to attend a meeting, you will need to advise the relevant committee support officer of your intention in advance of the meeting date in order to support track and trace. You can find contact details for the committee support officer on the agenda front page.

The committee support officer will be able to confirm whether the proposed attendance can be accommodated with the room capacities that exist to ensure that the meeting is covid-secure.

As there will be a maximum capacity in each meeting room, priority will be given to those who are attending to participate in a meeting rather than observe.

Members of the public who are attending a meeting for a specific purpose, rather than general observation, are encouraged to leave the meeting at the end of the item for which they are present. This is particularly important in the case of the Planning Sub-Committee, as it may have a number of items on the agenda involving public representation.

Before attending the meeting

Please review the information below as this is important in minimising the risk for everyone.

If you are experiencing covid symptoms, you should follow government guidance. Under no circumstances should you attend a meeting if you are experiencing covid symptoms.

Anyone experiencing symptoms of Coronavirus is eligible to book a swab test to find out if they have the virus. You can register for a test after checking your symptoms [through the NHS website](#). If you do not have access to the internet, or have difficulty with the digital portals, you are able to call the 119 service to book a test.

If you are an essential worker and you are experiencing Coronavirus symptoms, you can apply for priority testing through GOV.UK by following the [guidance for essential workers](#). You can also get tested through this route if you have symptoms of coronavirus and live with an essential worker.

Availability of home testing in the case of people with symptoms is limited, so please use testing centres where you can.

Even if you are not experiencing covid symptoms, you are requested to take an asymptomatic test (lateral flow test) in the 24 hours before attending the meeting.

You can take a test by visiting a lateral flow test centre; [ordering a lateral flow kit to be sent to your home](#); or picking up a kit from designated collection points. You can find details of the rapid testing sites in Hackney [here](#). You can find your nearest collection point [here](#).

You must not attend a lateral flow test site if you have Coronavirus symptoms; rather you must book a test appointment at your nearest walk-through or drive-through centre.

Lateral flow tests take around 30 minutes to deliver a result, so please factor the time it will take to administer the test and then wait for the result when deciding when to take the test.

If your lateral flow test returns a positive result then you must follow Government guidance; self-isolate and make arrangements for a PCR test. Under no circumstances should you attend the meeting.

Attending the Town Hall for meetings

To make our buildings Covid-safe, it is very important that you observe the rules and guidance on social distancing, one-way systems, hand washing, and the wearing of masks (unless you are exempt from doing so). You must follow all the signage and measures that have been put in place. They are there to keep you and others safe.

To minimise risk, we ask that you arrive at the Town Hall no more than ten minutes before the meeting is scheduled to commence. You will be invited into the meeting room five minutes before the meeting starts.

You should enter the Town Hall via the front entrance. You will be required to sign in and have your temperature checked as you enter the building. Security will direct you to the Council Chamber or Committee Room as appropriate.

Seats will be allocated, and you must remain in the seat that has been allocated to you.

It is recommended that you bring a bottle of water with you.

If you are attending the meeting for a specific item on the agenda then we ask that you leave the meeting and the building once that item has been concluded.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission 6th October 2021 Item 4 - Update from Ofsted Focused Visit	Item No 4
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OUTLINE

A focused visit assessing support for Children in Need and those children on a Child Protection Plan was undertaken by Ofsted in July 2021. The outcomes of this focused visit were published by Ofsted on September 7th, 2021.

Members of the Commission are invited to review the outcomes of the focused visit and the subsequent response of the Children and Families Service.

Reports

Ofsted Focused Visit Report
Children and Families Service Response

Attendees

Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education
Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

ACTION

Members are asked to consider the report and ask questions of officers present.

7 September 2021

Jacque Burke
Group Director, Children and Education
London Borough of Hackney
1 Reading Lane
London
E8 1GQ

Dear Jacque

Focused visit to London Borough of Hackney local authority children's services

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic.

This letter summarises the findings of a focused visit to the London Borough of Hackney local authority children's services on 28 and 29 July 2021. Her Majesty's Inspectors for this visit were Louise Hocking and John Roughton.

Inspectors looked at the local authority's arrangements for children in need or subject to a child protection plan.

This visit was carried out in line with the inspection of local authority children's services (ILACS) framework. However, the delivery model was adapted to reflect the COVID-19 context. The lead inspector and the interim director of children's services agreed arrangements to deliver this visit effectively while working within national and local guidelines for responding to COVID-19. This visit was carried out partly by remote means. Both inspectors were on site and used either video calls or face-to-face meetings for discussions with local authority staff, managers and leaders.

Headline findings

Dedicated scrutiny by senior leaders and strengthened management oversight mean that children in Hackney are benefiting from improving social work practice when they are in need or on a child protection plan. Risk to children is understood and responded to appropriately. Clear planning and decision-making provide direction and clarity to the work to be undertaken to improve children's circumstances. Strong multi-agency working and comprehensive support packages are contributing to safer outcomes for children.

What needs to improve in this area of social work practice

- The quality of written records, to provide a clear understanding of a child's history.
- The case recording system and tools, to support practitioners to complete their social work tasks.
- The inclusion of the voice of the child, their wishes and feelings and daily lived experience, in all case records and reports.

Main findings

There has been a relatively high rate of COVID-19 infection in Hackney and this has had a significant impact on families and staff. The local authority, together with partner agencies, has planned a well-coordinated response that has continued to strengthen over time and has led to sustained improvements across the service. Education partners in the council have worked closely with all colleagues to ensure that vulnerable children have been monitored and supported. This work has led to an education representative being permanently based in the new multi-agency safeguarding hub at the front door of services, ensuring that children's educational needs are identified at an early stage.

In addition to the significant impact of COVID-19, Hackney Council was the victim of a serious cyber attack in October 2020. This resulted initially in the loss of all children's records and it has had a devastating impact on the whole council. Despite the best efforts of the council to retrieve data and written records, practitioners continue to work with a case recording system that does not fully meet practice needs. Some historic information is not available for many children and, as a result, residual risks for children remain.

Practitioners have faced these additional and unique challenges with resilience and resourcefulness. Many social workers in the child in need, child protection and disabled children's services have long-standing relationships with families and know and understand their histories. Partner agencies have been supportive and cooperative in sharing historic information and records continue to be restored.

Current practice shows that thresholds are understood and broadly accurate, meaning that most children are on a child in need or child protection plan when this is needed. This includes disabled children. Decisions to step cases up or down are mostly appropriate in response to changes in risk. Social workers complete comprehensive assessments ahead of child protection conferences. Well-attended multi-agency core groups and conferences assist decision-making and responses to risk for children. Independent reviewing officers maintain effective oversight that includes a helpful mid-point review.

For some children, the time on a child protection plan is brief, three months or less; this indicates some risk-averse practice. For some of these children, the threshold is

too low, meaning that they are having a higher level of statutory intervention in their lives than is necessary. Senior leaders are aware of this and are providing appropriate oversight of this issue.

For children involved in the Public Law Outline (PLO) and pre-proceedings work, decision-making is usually prompt and consistent. A timely response and effective tracking by managers help families to engage in this process and ensure that delay is avoided. When children's circumstances are not improving through child protection planning, the PLO and pre-proceedings work are applied effectively to reduce risk, averting the need for proceedings in some cases. For a small number of children, earlier application of the PLO could have been considered.

Practitioners understand the principles of planning well for children and the purpose of their involvement in children's lives. Comprehensive written care plans provide a structure to this work and are mostly of a strong quality. In a minority of cases, plans are overly complex and detailed and are hard for parents to understand.

Direct work is undertaken to support children and practitioners are skilful in engaging with children, including disabled children, and their families. Practitioners know their children well and speak about them with considerable understanding and care. They focus attention on the individual detail of who children are and what is important to them. Children are seen regularly and alone. The diversity and culture of individual children are understood well. However, this strong practice is not yet consistently captured in all case records and reports for each child to access in the future.

Hackney is at a point of transition, experiencing changes in leadership at a senior level, including chief executive, group director (statutory director of children's services) and the director of children's social care. Effective interim leadership arrangements have ensured that practice continues to improve. Leaders have an accurate understanding of practice in Hackney, with a committed anti-racist focus and attention to well-being for both children and staff. They are particularly well supported by a committed and active lead member for children who ensures that she is fully aware of what is happening for children and oversees improvements effectively.

A review of the social work unit model in Hackney in April 2021 resulted in some realignment of structures and roles. Priority was given to minimising any impact on children, to avoid unnecessary changes of social worker. Some staff have moved teams and/or had a change of manager. There is no unallocated work and management grip has been strengthened. A refocusing of the clinical offer is ensuring that children receive a strong therapeutic service.

A key priority for senior managers has been embedding a culture of increased individual accountability and frontline decision-making, and management oversight. They have adopted a 'back to basics' approach which has included new monthly individual supervision, individual case allocation and the preparation of case summaries. Although these changes are recent, inspectors saw the positive impact

they are having, particularly in management oversight and records of decision-making about children's lives. Clear actions are set and agreed in supervision. The current interim recording systems need some refinement to support staff in completing what is expected of them. They are cumbersome for staff, take additional time to complete and are hard to navigate easily.

Managers and leaders are well informed through an audit process that provides a targeted focus on specific areas of practice that have needed development, such as multi-agency strategy discussions and fuller 'live learning' audits. The audit process does not include a consistent moderation process or detailed follow-up. Managers are aware that this needs to be strengthened and it is part of a new quality assurance process being implemented.

The cyber attack has had a significant impact on the availability of performance and management information. However, senior leaders and operational managers have sufficient systems in place to understand what is happening for children. Some of these systems are labour intensive and do not yet offer the same level of data that was held previously by Hackney. Although children are seen alone, this has not yet been captured in overarching data. Leaders are acutely aware that this requires ongoing work and it is one of the council's highest priorities.

Many staff are very happy working in Hackney and feel well supported through a unique and complex set of challenges. For some staff, the pace of change has been too quick and they have not felt as well informed as they would have liked. The skilled workforce recognises the benefits of the changes and understands that some resetting of baseline expectations was necessary. Senior leaders understand that, having laid solid foundations, there is more work to do to support staff during the ongoing changes.

Ofsted will take the findings from this focused visit into account when planning your next inspection or visit.

Yours sincerely

Louise Hocking
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report Title:	CFS Ofsted Focused Visit Update
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
Date:	6th October 2021
Produced by:	Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding and Learning
Authorised by:	Jacque Burke, Group Director of Children and Education

Report Summary

This report is an update to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission for the 6th October 2021 meeting. The contents of this report should be reviewed by the Commission.

This report is 7 pages long and provides an update on the recent Ofsted Focused Visit to the Children and Families Service during July 2021. Key information included in the report:

- The context of the Ofsted Focused Visit
- An overview of the Focused Visit and the findings by the inspectors
- Key actions for the Children and Families Service following the Focused Visit
- Next steps for the Children and Families Service

Children and Families Service - Update following Ofsted Focused Visit July 2021

1. Introduction

Hackney Children's Services was inspected under the Ofsted Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services (ILACS) framework in November 2019. The inspection report was published in December 2019 and the outcome of the inspection was as follows:

Judgement Grade	Grade
The impact of leaders on social work practice with children and families	Requires improvement
The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection	Requires improvement
The experiences and progress of children in care and care leavers	Good
Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement

As part of the ILACS inspection framework Ofsted undertook a focused visit to look at the arrangements for children in need or subject to a child protection plan in July this year, with inspectors on site over the 28th and 29th July 2021. The Ofsted letter detailing the findings from their visit was published on 7th September 2021. Ofsted does not provide graded judgements for focused visits, however the letter details what we do well in Hackney in relation to children in need or subject to a child protection plan and the identified areas for improvement or continued focus.

Ofsted and the Interim Director of Children's Services agreed arrangements to deliver this visit effectively while working within national and local guidelines for responding to COVID-19. The visit was carried out partly by remote means. Ofsted were on site and used either video calls or face-to face meetings for discussions with practitioners, managers and leaders.

2. Overview of Ofsted Visit

The headline findings acknowledged that dedicated scrutiny by senior leaders and strengthened management oversight mean that children in Hackney are benefiting from improving social work practice when they are in need or on a child protection plan. Risk to children is understood and responded to appropriately. Clear planning and decision-making provide direction and clarity to the work to be undertaken to improve children's circumstances. Strong multi-agency working and comprehensive support packages are contributing to safer outcomes for children.

Overall, the inspectors expressed that they were impressed with the practitioners they spoke to, and commented on their passion, tenacity and that practitioners across the service knew their children well.

The inspectors were sensitive to the challenges presented to the Children and Families Service and Hackney Council in terms of the cyberattack and pandemic. They felt that we are on a positive journey of improvement and most importantly that children are safe and we are doing everything we can to make them safe in our processes.

Ofsted Inspectors acknowledged a range of evidence of what the Service is doing well, including:

- that practitioners know Hackney children really well, and they speak with passion and care and attention to the individual detail of children’s lives
- thresholds are broadly accurate, and children are stepping up and down when they should
- clear and helpful evidence of the Independent Chair footprint on children’s cases
- the PLO (Public Law Outline)¹ process works well
- our commitment to anti racist practice so every child has the best possible experience in life
- strong direct work and understanding of individual children’s needs
- children are benefiting from improved partnership working, particularly with education during the pandemic.

Ofsted identified three areas for improvement in the focused visit letter:

- The quality of written records, to provide a clear understanding of a child’s history.
- The case recording system and tools, to support practitioners to complete their social work tasks.
- The inclusion of the voice of the child, their wishes and feelings and daily lived experience, in all case records and reports.

A full copy of the letter can be accessed here: <https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50168713>.

3. Key Improvement Actions Following the Focused Visit

Key actions that the service has undertaken, or are in the process of undertaking since the Focused Visit include:

Area identified by Ofsted	Children and Families Service Actions & Progress
Written quality of records, to provide a clear understanding of the child’s history	A new Children and Young People’s Case Summary template was introduced in May 2021 with an expectation to capture a summary of the child’s history and significant milestones on a 3 monthly basis. This template has been

¹ The Public Law Outline (PLO) sets out the duties local authorities have when thinking about taking a case to court to ask for a Care Order to take a child into care or for a Supervision Order to be made. This is often described as initiating public law care proceedings.

	revised and re-circulated in September 2021.
The case recording system and tools, to support practitioners to complete their social work tasks	ICT has gone live with recording case notes and visits directly within the Hackney interim recording system. This includes allowing for recording whether the child(ren) have been seen / seen alone. Recording of 'case status' within the system also due to go live in the next couple of weeks.
The inclusion of the voice of the child, their wishes and feelings and daily lived experience, in all case records and reports	Guidance for practitioners on including children's views within meetings was developed and disseminated in Spring 2021. Workshops for Consultant Social Workers and Practice Development Managers have been timetabled to follow the mandatory Supervision and Curious and Constructive Challenge training for staff. This started in July 2021 with the initial rounds due to be completed in September 2021. From hereon, a detailed plan of embedding and auditing is in the process of being developed as part of our updated Children and Families Action Plan
For some children, the time on a child protection plan is brief, three months or less; this indicates some risk-averse practice. For some of these children, the threshold is too low, meaning that they are having a higher level of statutory intervention in their lives than is necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding and Reviewing Team are now attending Strategy Discussions where threshold for Initial Child Protection Conference decisions are to be made • Safeguarding and Reviewing Team duty Independent Chairs to robustly scrutinise threshold at point of referral for an Initial Child Protection Conference • Dip-samples of children subject to Child Protection Plans to review if thresholds are being applied appropriately - to be completed by November Monthly Children and Families Service Performance Board • New requirement for Head of Service scrutiny and approval for any Child Protection Plan proposed to end at 3 months prior to the Review Child Protection Conference to ensure robust action and sufficient change achieved where threshold was initially met
For a small number of children, earlier application of the PLO could have been considered	Review of Legal Planning Meetings (LPM) and Public Law Outline (PLO) are being applied appropriately via our quality assurance process by 01/11/21. At the next Children's Resource Panel, a six-week thematic review and the Legal Tracker will be presented.

	Dip Sample of Service Managers' reviews of Child Protection Plans at 9 months - to be evaluated if application of thresholds is appropriate.
In a minority of cases, plans are overly complex and detailed and are hard for parents to understand	<p>Building upon the success of our approach in writing to children as part of their Looked After Reviews, we are scoping out plans to write to parents as part of Child and Family Assessments, reports to Child Protection Conferences and Child Protection Conference minutes to ensure that the language used is engaging, personable, and by virtue of this uses plain English and avoids jargon and uses Language that Cares.</p> <p>This strong (recording) practice is not yet consistently captured in all case records and reports for each child to access in the future.</p>
The current interim recording systems (supervision) need some refinement to support staff in completing what is expected of them. They are cumbersome for staff, take additional time to complete and are hard to navigate easily.	The Children and Young People's Case Summary and Supervision record templates are being refined in response to feedback from practitioners - the revision of the Children and Young People's Case Summary template is complete and the revised Supervision Record template will be finalised by 10th October 2021.
The audit process does not include a consistent moderation process or detailed follow-up.	<p>A proposal to ensure effective moderation & quality assurance of audits is currently with the Director for approval. In addition to a forward plan to routinely measure the impact of the audit programme upon outcomes for children. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full 'Live Learning' Audits (completed by Service Managers and Heads of Service) to continue to be quality assured and moderated by auditor's line manager • Brief audits to be peer moderated by a second auditor. • All audits scoring 'Inadequate' to be escalated to the Service Manager and Head of Service to ensure timely action to meet the child's needs are undertaken with management oversight on at least a fortnightly basis to measure progress of change for the child. 2 Dip Sample audits to be undertaken by the Service Manager in respect of other children supported by the case holding practitioner. • All audits scoring 'Inadequate' or 'Requires

	<p>Improvement' to have a repeat audit in 3 months</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 monthly review-auditing to measure the impact of the audit programme upon children's outcomes • Child level actions arising from individual audits to be tracked by each line manager in Supervision with oversight of this from senior line manager • Service level actions to be tracked monthly in the Service Manager Audit Meeting • Learning from quality assurance and audit programme to be shared and scrutinised at the monthly Driving Quality, Improvement and Performance (DQIP) forum
Although children are seen alone, this has not yet been captured in overarching data.	In August 2021, ICT went live with recording case notes and visits directly within the Hackney interim recording system. This includes allowing for recording whether the child(ren) have been seen / seen alone.
Senior leaders understand that, having laid solid foundations, there is more work to do to support staff during the ongoing changes.	<p>Leading up to the Focused Visit a number of critical changes took place to strengthen accountability of practice, to improve and strengthen management oversight and ensure that the progress of children's plans is effectively captured for children. These changes include introduction of individual case allocation, introduction of individual accountable supervision framework, realignment in Family Intervention and Support Service and Corporate Parenting in respect of line management responsibility, and introduction of 3 monthly Children's Case Summary. These changes have been key to improving practice as identified in the Ofsted Focused visit and have taken place at pace.</p> <p>The Children's Senior Leadership Team (CSLT), comprising the Director of Children's Social Care and Heads of Service, recognises that the pace of change presented challenges in ensuring all staff were able to engage with the rationale for and the impact of this and this is reflected in our recent Research in Practice (RiP) staff survey undertaken in July 2021. Now that these key changes have taken place we are focusing on supporting staff to embed the changes made and responding to feedback.</p>
Building on Anti-Racist activity to improve workforce understanding and	An immense amount of work is underway, and planned to improve the the workforce's understanding and our application anti-racist practice, including:

Anti-Racist practice across the service.

- Re-launch of Promoting Racial Equality Leadership Group (PRELG) to be inclusive of staff and leaders at all levels from Black and Global Majority backgrounds
- Recommendations in respect of our Children and Families Service Recruitment Protocol which will be embedded in October 2021
- Developed Anti-racist Practice Standards and Anti-Racist Corporate Parenting Guidance which will be launched in October 2021
- A 3 year programme of anti-racist conversations through Action Learning Sets will conclude first round of sessions and initial evaluation in November/ December 2021
- Varied communications, this includes Anti-racist Google Currents, blogs and Show and Shares across the service
- Lets Talk Anti Racist Podcast Series - with additional Live roundtable event as the finale to this series in October 2021
- Racialised trauma peer support groups pilot launched in partnership with the Corporate Strategy and Policy team
- 6 month cycle - anti-racist and Black History calendar focusing on key topics (teachings, recordings, podcasts and historical topics) to be launched as part of Black History Season
- Diversity in Recruitment Champion Training due to be initiated Autumn 2021
- Children and Families Service Anti Racist Practice Conference which will be mandatory for all staff will focus upon Racial Trauma is being planned in Spring 2022

The initial findings from the Ofsted visit were shared with staff in the Children and Families Service at a drop in session with the new Director of Children's Social Care the day after Ofsted inspectors left (Friday 30th July), as well as in a further session on Tuesday 3rd August. Almost 200 staff joined the first feedback session and more staff also joined the second session, showing there was strong interest from practitioners in hearing the findings from Ofsted. Staff were

pleased that Ofsted recognised the improvements in the service and the hard work that they have carried out over the last year to get to this position. Morale in the Family Intervention and Support Service has improved following the positive feedback from Ofsted and staff have reported that they are pleased to see the changes to the Children and Young People's Summary form following the Ofsted focused visit. The Children and Families Service Staff Reference Group, with representatives from across the service, is next scheduled to meet on 6th October 2021 and a discussion on feedback from the focused visit is included on the agenda for this meeting.

4. Next steps for Children and Families Service

The findings in the Ofsted letter will be discussed at the Children's Leadership and Development Board, which is chaired by the acting Chief Executive, and the Children's Member Oversight Board, co-chaired by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Following the feedback from the Ofsted focused visit, the Children and Families Service is in the process of revising our Service Improvement Action Plan to incorporate the additional areas for improvement identified by Ofsted as well as combining additional activities developed as part of the 'Hackney Model Review'. A series of meetings are taking place across the service with the CFS Director, Heads of Service and Service Managers with each individual service area, to review their existing action plan activities and to agree updates to be incorporated into the new Children's Action Plan.

The intention is for the service to have a fully consolidated Children's Action Plan that clearly sets out the journey from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good' and a second stage setting out what will be required to develop the service from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission 6th October 2021 Item 5 - Youth Justice Service	Item No 5
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OUTLINE

In July 2021, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) undertook a themed inspection across 9 different Youth Justice Services, including Hackney. This item is an opportunity for the Commission to consider the outcomes of this inspection and how local services intend to respond.

As the report is due to be published on 4/10/21, the Youth Justice Service has provided a short briefing for members in advance of the meeting which provides useful contextual information about the service. The HMIP inspection report will be circulated once published.

Reports

Youth Justice Service Update

HMIP Inspection Report - **TO FOLLOW** (published by HMIP on 4/10/21)

Attendees

Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education

Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care

Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Early Help and Prevention

Brendan Finegan, Youth Justice Service Manager

ACTION

Members are asked to consider the reports and ask questions of officers present.

Report Title:	Youth Justice update
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
Date:	6th October 2021
Produced by:	Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Early Help
Authorised by:	Jacque Burke, Group Director of Children and Education

Report Summary

This report is an update to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission for the 6th October 2021 meeting. The contents of this report should be reviewed by the Commission.

This report is 6 pages long and provides an update on the Youth Justice Service to support the Commission in their background understanding of the service in anticipation of the publication of the HMIP thematic inspection report on 4th October 2021. The inspection report will be shared with the CYP Scrutiny Commission as soon as it is published by HMIP.

Key information included in the report:

- The local context of the Youth Justice Service in Hackney
- The local approach to Youth Justice
- Key data about the service
- The strategic context for the Youth Justice Service and future plans

Youth Justice update for CYP Scrutiny Commission 6th October 2021

In Hackney, the statutory multi-agency Youth Offending Team (YOT) is incorporated within a Youth Justice Service under a wider directorate encompassing Children and Families and Education Services. The Group Director of Children and Education has acted as Chair of the Safer Young Hackney Board since October 2019. The new Group Director, Jacquie Burke, will assume responsibility for chairing the meetings from November 2021.

The Safer Young Hackney (SYH) partnership, comprising of police, probation, health, education and children's social care representatives, has continued to work collaboratively to make progress against its strategic priorities – preventing youth crime, reducing re-offending, safeguarding young people from harm and protecting the public from harm – despite funding pressures across the public sector. These strategic priorities directly link to the key indicators used by the Government to monitor the overall effectiveness of the youth justice service:

- Reducing First-time Entrants (FTE's) to the Youth Justice System
- Reducing the use of custody
- Reducing Re-offending

Hackney's youth justice service also monitors against the following measures:

- Increasing the proportion of young people who offend who are engaged in full-time education, training and employment
- The relative rate of racial inequality across the youth justice system from entering the system, to re-offending outcomes.

In Hackney, we developed a borough-wide knife crime strategy and action plan which has since been incorporated into a wider focus on reducing serious violence (2020). Reducing serious violence and knife crime violence is both a corporate and borough priority that is underpinned by collaboration across Council teams, across partner agencies, and across borough boundaries where it is helpful to do so.

The Council and its partners have adopted a Public Health approach to dealing with knife crime and serious violence. This approach essentially treats violence as a preventable public health issue; using data and analysis to identify causes and to examine what works and to co-produce solutions. Our aim is to preserve life and reduce harm, and to focus on primary prevention and early intervention through multi-agency systemic approaches.

We must learn and understand the context of knife crime and other serious violence and our local landscape. By understanding the reasons behind the decision to carry a knife or to engage in violence, we will be better able to respond to concerns raised by young people, families and members of the community. We will intervene early and follow a life course approach to developing the personal resilience and emotional intelligence of children and young people; safeguarding children and vulnerable persons who are at risk of harm and

exploitation, and identifying and taking law enforcement opportunities to maximize reductions in offending.

It is important that as a partnership we see the issues through the lens of other agencies and our communities to address harm, vulnerability and exploitation. This necessitates a shared understanding of the impact of adverse childhood experiences on the prevalence of crime, and the importance of a trauma-informed approach for the development of safe and healthy children who in turn may become safe and healthy adults. Developing the emotional empathy of staff working across agencies will give greater scope for joint working, and will enable us to consider safeguarding concerns that are outside of the family.

In Hackney, Youth Justice Services sits in Children and Families Service (CFS). The teams responsible for statutory, post-court disposals are described as Hackney Youth Offending Team (YOT). The management and delivery of informal and out-of-court disposals (OoCD), reparation and victim services are separate but co-located within the Early Help service area of CFS. They are described locally as the Prevention and Diversion Team (P&D).

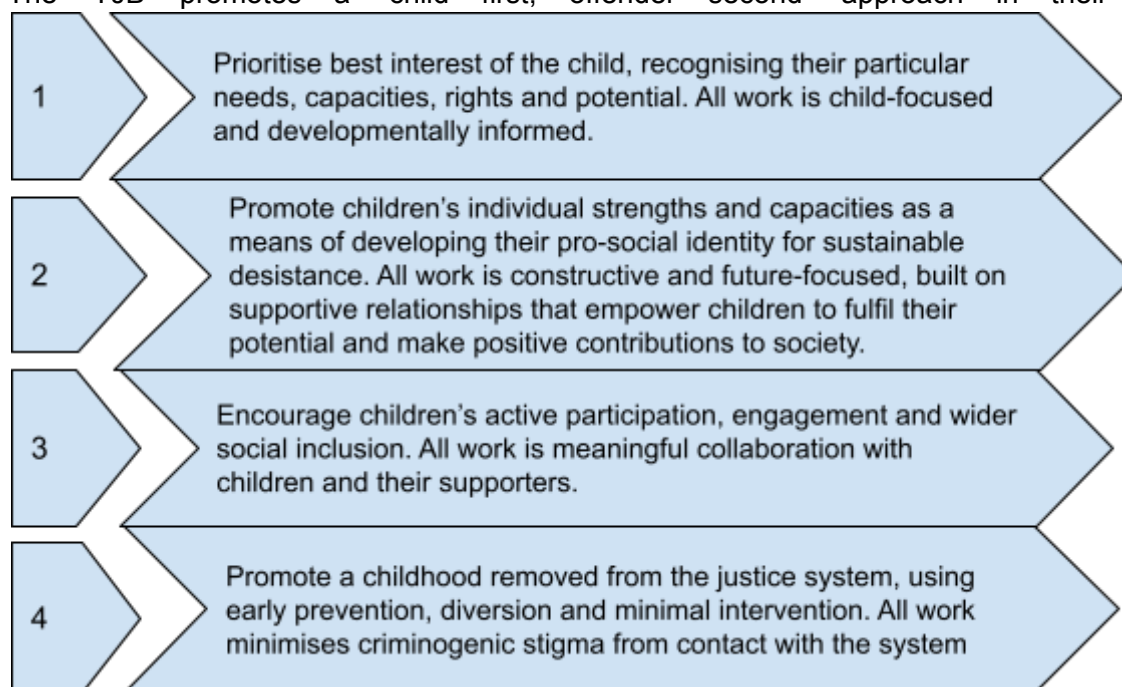
The vision for early help in Hackney is that the early help services delivered across the partnership secure improvements in both the immediate situations of the children, young people and families that access services (helping to avert crises where problems are already significant) and for their long term outcomes and life chances. The early help we provide plays a central role in reducing rates of school exclusion, rates of youth crime and demand for statutory children's services while increasing the resilience and independence of families and improving educational attainment.

The location of the Youth Justice Service within the Children and Families directorate and integration with Early Help and Prevention services (Young Hackney, Family Support and Domestic Abuse Intervention Team) means that support can be delivered at the earliest prevention stages, or equally, sustained beyond the young person's Court Order, with the overarching aim to support young people to achieve their potential and to prepare them to make a successful transition to adult and working life. The integration also sustains a wide support offer and the ability to generate new interventions that address the impact of trauma and adolescent risk.

The three Youth Justice Teams have been operational in their current format since 2015 with the only change in the structure being the creation of two Senior Youth Justice Practitioner posts within the YOT units to increase quality assurance capacity. The Governance arrangements have remained unchanged with Safer Young Hackney Board managing the performance of youth justice services in Hackney.

Our Local Approach

The YJB promotes a 'child first, offender second' approach in their work:



At Hackney YOT we pride ourselves on being child-centred; we see children first and offenders second. We make every effort to champion the needs of children wherever they are in the youth justice system and ensure we give them a voice. We strongly believe that children can, and should be given every opportunity to make positive changes.

The young person and their welfare is always at the centre of our practice. The way we work with young people and their families is underpinned by five key approaches:

1. The Good Lives model
2. Desistance Theory
3. Restorative Justice
4. Trauma-Informed Practices
5. Contextual Safeguarding

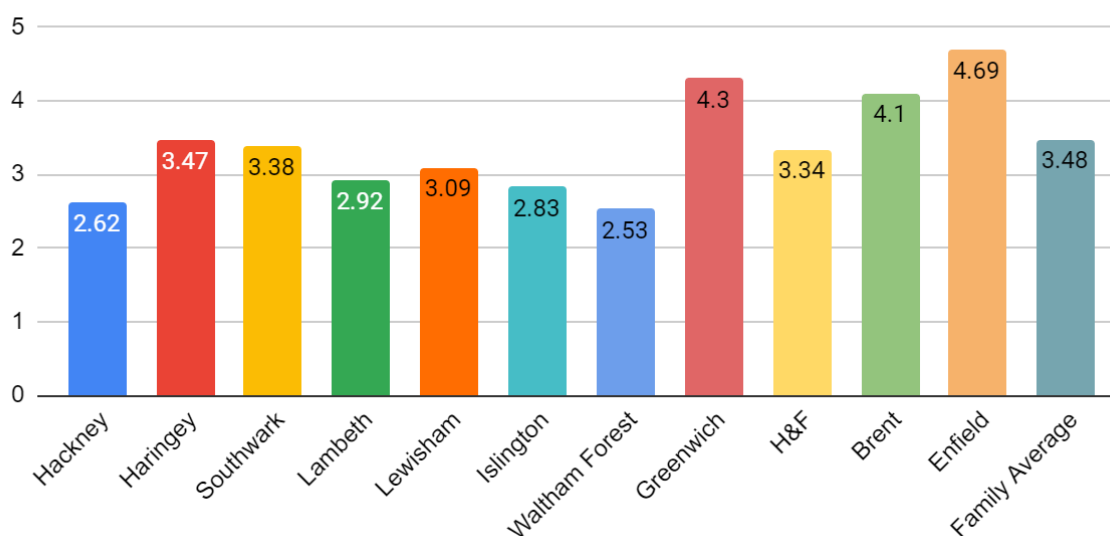
Context setting

Numbers of first-time entrants to the youth justice system in Hackney.

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Q1 - 1 April - 30 June	19	35	17	29	9
Q2 - 1 July - 30 September	32	26	28	26	31
Q3 - 1 October - 31 December	34	20	20	19	24
Q4 - 1 January - 31 March	30	30	17	14	15
Year Total:	115	111	82	88	79

The most recent national reoffending figures for Hackney relate to October 2018 to September 2019. The Covid-19 pandemic had impacted the Youth Justice Board's (YJB) ability to access the Police National Database. The indicator used by the YJB averages the number of re-offences committed by each child who re-offends in the cohort. The table below shows the average number of re-offences per child who re-offends across the 'YOT Family', a grouping which the YJB places Hackney within alongside statistically similar authorities. The average number of re-offences per child who re-offends for England and Wales is 3.8.

Reoffences per reoffender - 12-month cohorts



We assess this comparatively strong performance as being related to the strategic, management and practice approaches taken across Hackney by the local authority and its partners.

In the last full year (2018/19) we have data for, 18% of children engaged by our informal Triage Diversion programme went on to become a First Time Entrant within 12 months. This is a success rate of 82%.

The number of individual children engaged within the formal YJS was 115. Around 99.4% of Hackney's children, therefore, are not engaged in formal youth justice interventions at any one time.

Hackney's Strategic Context

- **Low numbers of children engaged in informal and formal youth justice interventions.**
- **Low numbers of children identified as actively engaged with 'gangs' or serious offending.**
- **A continued commitment by the local authority to maintaining a funded Early Years and Young Hackney offer across universal, early help and targeted support for children and families.**

- **An approach that acknowledges that children involved in a crime can be both perpetrators and victims at the same time.**

Hackney has low numbers of its children engaged in the informal and formal youth justice system each year. This is despite high levels of concerns within the adult population and from children about safety and crime, and negative views of policing. These concerns however are real irrespective of what data may suggest (ref: Hackney Young Futures Commission report).

The widespread acknowledgement of the presence of a number of 'gangs' across the London Borough of Hackney and their consequent impact on community safety and perceptions of safety is a factor in the current 'Hackney narrative'. The local and national (county lines) 'drug economy' and the inherent and related crime, exploitation and anti-social behaviour that it generates shapes the narrative for children in the borough. It also shapes the narrative and perceptions of justice, community safety and child protection agencies within the borough too. However, whilst children are at risk of grooming and exploitation from adults seeking to draw them into criminality, the Hackney Matrix (owned by Hackney Police) has no more than 150 active individuals within it. Of these, the proportion who are children is around 10%-15% depending on the size of the whole Matrix cohort at any one time. Whilst some children are at risk of being drawn into crime, the local context is that far fewer than imagined are actively embedded and living a 'gang' affiliated lifestyle.

There are other national surveys (cf Children's Commissioner for England) that suggest that larger numbers of children are involved in or exposed to gang engagement. This may suggest that activity to increase the cost to adults who seek to groom and exploit children for their financial and criminal gains should increase. Adult exploiters (who it is recognised may also have been recent victims of grooming and exploitation) should be targeted more actively and identified as child exploiters and groomers, providing a disincentive to the adult exploiters in their targeting and use of Hackney children in their criminal activities.

An important element in the context of Hackney's low re-offending is the continued commitment of the local authority to maintaining an actively funded Early Years and Young Hackney offer across universal, early help and targeted support. These investments alongside the transformation of the local educational offer and the engagement and attainment for the vast majority of Hackney students must be seen as an investment in factors that research shows are highly effective in preventing a child's engagement in crime. That is not to say that exclusions from education nor the active engagement in a relevant curriculum are not issues that need further attention.

Hackney as a partnership is developing an active approach that acknowledges that children involved in crimes can be both perpetrators and victims at the same time. The development and piloting, within Hackney's CFS and elsewhere, of the University of Bedfordshire's Contextual Safeguarding approach is also part of the wider context that begins to explain the results achieved in Hackney. The development of this approach in the last 36 months, especially the Extra Familial Risk Panel, suggests that the approach is taken across the YJS Partnership that children in trouble with the law are regarded as 'children first and offenders second' will continue to play a part in the successful impacts we have seen around the reductions in re-offending.

Summary and the Voice of the Child.

The evidential link between any system or aspect of work around a child that impacts and reduces re-offending is notoriously difficult to identify and quantify. Many YOTs have the same committed, well trained, and dedicated staff and leadership that exists in Hackney. Without these, the evidenced-based approaches, models or resources that are described above, are unlikely to be effective. The context of Hackney with its political and corporate focus on improving educational opportunities, combatting structural inequalities, continued support of early help and targeted support for children and families as well as the strength of the partnership around a child and within the statutory partnership to reduce youth offending, provides the overarching support and context that informs this narrative. It suggests that a complex blend of co-operation and co-production may explain much if not all of the recent successes seen in reducing re-offending.

At present what needs to be improved is the active engagement of the voice of the child as a user of the service. Historically, the YJS has engaged in some forms of user feedback (Viewpoint, HMIP Annual Surveys, YH surveys). The YJB accredited assessment tool, Asset+ collects user and parent/guardian feedback on entry and exit from contact with the YOT. Elements of the service in particular Prevention and Diversion and SaLT services do currently and routinely gather user feedback. The current YJ Plan identifies this as an area to deliver improvements. There are plans in place to engage service users, past and present, as trained peer reviewers and shadow board members/advisors. These developments are expected to deliver further service delivery improvements and continue the encouraging outcomes Hackney YJS has shown to date.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission 6th October 2021 Item 6 - Early Years Strategy - Reconfiguration of Children's Centres	Item No 6
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OUTLINE

Following confirmation of the Early Years Strategy at Cabinet, a consultation on the reconfiguration of Children's Centres was launched on 15th September 2021. The Commission is being consulted as part of that consultation which closes on 16th November 2021.

There are a number of supporting documents for the Commission to consider:

- Early Years Strategy (Cabinet Report, 14th September)
- Early Years Strategy (Summary)
- Children's Centre Reconfiguration Consultation Strategy
- Children's Center Reconfiguration Consultation Survey

There is also a [consultation webpage](#) with further information on the consultation.

In attendance:

Annie Gammon, Director of Education

Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being

ACTION

Members are asked to review the attached reports, ask questions of officers present and consider how it may wish to respond to the consultation.

Early Years Strategy 2021 - 2026 KEY DECISION NO. CACH S022	
CABINET MEETING DATE 13 September 2021	CLASSIFICATION: Open
WARD(S) AFFECTED All	
CABINET MEMBER Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play	
KEY DECISION Yes REASON Affects two or more wards	
GROUP DIRECTOR Jacquie Burke, Group Director Children and Education	

1. CABINET MEMBER'S INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Every child has the right to be as happy, healthy and ready to learn as they can possibly be – no matter what their individual circumstances or needs. In Hackney we want to help each child grow in confidence, and to share easily accessible resources, advice and support with their families and carers. We know how important it is to give children the best start in life and we want our young people to carry a great sense of pride in growing up in our borough.
- 1.2 This strategy sets out our vision for Early Years, our priorities, our principles and what we want to achieve. The challenge for families in a densely-populated borough like ours should not be underestimated – too many of our children are born in poverty, but with effective early years services we can help every parent and carer prepare to raise their child with confidence and every child to reach

their potential. Working together with parents and families, our information services can help to secure the right support from pregnancy through immunisations to choosing a playgroup, nursery or childminder. Where children have additional needs we can do more to help families and carers to understand and support their child's development, build resilience and promote wellbeing. For some, dropping into stay and play sessions can make all the difference. For others, the opportunity lies in engaging in local activities, training and employment skills.

- 1.3 For our children, it's important to let them know from the very start that their voices will be heard, that we understand their behaviour and can help them to understand it too. With access to early education, children will find help with their communication, with language and discovering the joy of reading. In broadening the role of our children's centres into children and family hubs we recognise the importance of child and parent attachment and encourage the development of supportive peer networks. In further integrating our Early Years and Health Visiting service we can ensure we have collaborative and holistic support in place right from the start.
- 1.4 In Hackney, we take great pride in building an inclusive culture. If we can get it right in Early Years, our children will grow in self-esteem and inspire us all with their creativity, curiosity and desire to learn.

2. GROUP DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 98% Hackney and 97% national registered settings, and 98% Hackney, 95% national registered childminders are judged good or better by Ofsted. The Early Years Service continues to provide focused support for those settings that are not yet judged to be good.
- 2.2. The most recent (2019) Early Years Foundation Stage profile results measured at the end of reception at 5 years, showed 77% of children in Hackney maintained schools (70% of all children inclusive of those in independent schools, 72% national and 74% London) achieved a good level of development. We want Hackney to remain above, or in line with national and London average, with a focus on children at risk of underachievement.
- 2.3. 64% (2020) eligible 2 years olds in low income households accessed their free 15 hours early years entitlement at a setting. The most recent comparison data in 2019, showed 60% take up the 15 hours entitlement compared to 61% national. Disadvantaged 2 year olds remain a focus.
- 2.4. Changes across the borough include a wider divide between children living in higher income households and those in lower income households. Pupils eligible for free school meals increased to 32% in 2020. The previous three years from 26% to 30%, compared to 13% to 17% nationally. Children in the Charedi community in the north of the borough makeup over 20% of Hackney's child population.

- 2.5. Covid-19 has presented a number of challenges for children and their families which is likely to impact on school readiness. Lockdown in particular has had an impact on children's communication and language, physical, social and emotional development. Supporting families and settings remains a priority of this strategy.
- 2.6. This strategy presents opportunities to build on the strength of parenting support from children's centres, and the close working relationships children's centres have forged with parents and partners, in order to further develop children's centres into children and family hubs to support parenting across early years, primary and secondary phases.
- 2.7. The 0-25 commissioning arrangements from Public Health England to support the Healthy Child Programme. Offers an opportunity to begin the lengthy process of working towards designing a new early years and health visiting service to work better together to support children's outcomes in the first 1,001 days.

3. RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 Cabinet is recommended:

To approve the Early Years Strategy, the underpinning principles and the proposed direction of travel.

4. REASONS FOR DECISION

- 4.1 Hackney Council is required to fulfil the Statutory Duties for Early Years. The Council is required:
 - 4.1.1 To improve outcomes so that young children achieve a good level of development in the 3 prime areas of learning set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework - language and communication, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development.
 - 4.1.2 To shape effective quality early years settings, evidenced to be a key element in improving outcomes and life chances for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
 - 4.1.3 To provide advice, information and guidance to parents and carers, settings and agencies through the Parenting & Family Information Service.
 - 4.1.4 To ensure sufficient early education & childcare provision, and a coordinated approach to services for pregnant women and preschool children. Working through children's centres, to promote integrated health, education and parenting support, training and employment skills.

4.1.5 To support eligible 2 year olds, and all 3 and 4 year olds to take up their 15 or 30 hours free early years entitlement.

5. DETAILS OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not applicable

6. BACKGROUND

6.1 Evidence of the impact and need to intervene early

6.1.1 The best start for young Londoners: Strengthening London's early years education offer following the Covid-19 pandemic (February 2021), identifies the impact of the pandemic on children's outcomes. The report says that the pandemic has the potential to reverse the achievement gains in recent time, and widen firmly established disadvantage. It goes on to say that *"Any gaps in access to early years provision and reduction of take up, especially in areas with higher levels of deprivation, can be damaging to children's life chances, holding back their attainment at school and beyond"*.

6.1.2 The Best Start for Life; A vision for the first 1,001 critical days (The Early Years Healthy Development Review Report, 2021). Sets out a vision for joined up services to transform how families are supported to ensure every baby gets the best start in life. The report draws on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on babies' ability to socialise due to social distancing, and restricted access to services.

6.1.3 The Best Start for Life report, builds on the cross party 1001 Days Manifesto (2014) which cites the early years of life as a crucial period of change; alongside adolescence this is a key moment for brain development. As our understanding of the science of development improves, it becomes clearer how the events that happen to children and babies lead to structural changes that have life-long ramifications. Science is helping us to understand how secure attachment - love and nurture by caring adults is hard wired into the brains of children'.

6.1.4 The review into poverty and life chances; The Foundation Years Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults, found that children's life chances and outcomes are grounded in their development in the first five years of life. Parental education and opportunities for learning in those important years have a greater impact on later outcomes than income (Frank Fields, 2010). What parents do is more significant than who they are.

6.1.5 Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) showed the association between high quality early years settings and children's educational, cognitive, behavioural and social development in both the short and long term (Barnes and Melhuish, 2016).

6.1.6 Multi-disciplinary teams working virtual or co-located, highlighted the importance and quality of the dialogue between stakeholders from different sectors in the safeguarding process (Systematic Review, Luckock, 2015).

6.2 Priorities for the Early Years Service

6.2.1 High quality early education & childcare to support children to achieve a good level of development at the end of the foundation years, managing disproportionality.

6.2.2 Maintain minimum 90% settings and childminders judged good or better by Ofsted.

6.2.3 80% eligible 2 year olds, and 90% 3 and 4 year olds take up their free 15 or 30 hours early years entitlement.

6.2.4 Currently 77% of children in Hackney maintained schools (70% inclusive of those in independent Hackney schools) (71% national and 74% London) achieve a good level of development in Early Years Foundation Stage profile results at the end of reception. We want Hackney to remain above, or in line with the national and London average.

6.2.5 Ensure parents, carers and their family network have access to the information they need to support their parenting and increase their confidence and resilience.

6.2.6 Integrated health and education development reviews at 2 years, physical health and nutrition.

6.2.7 Ensure children's centres are focused on improving outcomes for children and their families, with a specific focus on the most disadvantaged children, in order to reduce inequalities in child development, and school readiness.

6.3 Principles to underpin the strategy

6.3.1. Partnership with parents and carers to promote home learning; and child and parent attachment.

6.3.2. Ensure that parents and carers have all the information they need at the right time in order to access services and opportunities.

6.3.3. Partnership with settings, (including independent settings), agencies and organisations, to forge strong relationships that deliver integrated, seamless and broad-ranging services to children and families, which are inclusive and accessible.

6.3.4. Inclusive practice that promotes a healthy start - physical activity, health, and nutrition.

- 6.3.5 Deliver excellent universal and targeted services which supports early identification of need and early help, underpinned by an assessment of need. With support to children with special educational needs or disability.
- 6.3.6 Deliver family support that respects, values and thinks about the whole needs of the family, informed by an understanding of trauma and secure attachment, and a suite of evidence informed interventions that build resilience and promote wellbeing.
- 6.3.7 Support children to understand their own feelings and those of others, and to regulate their own behaviour, and develop early language, communication, personal, social and emotional skills, central to supporting their outcomes.
- 6.3.8 Explore opportunities to broaden the role of the 6 multi-agency children's centres into children and family hubs, to provide family support across all phases - early years, primary and secondary, where it makes sense to do.
- 6.3.9 This strategy compliments other local strategies which enhance the life chances of children and families, with particular attention to health outcomes, meeting the needs of children with additional needs, and supporting parents' economic outcomes.
- 6.3.10. Develop greater synergy, through integrated leadership and planning between Early Years and Health Visiting, to achieve greater efficiency in intelligence and the deployment of resources to support babies in the first 1001 days.

6.4 What we want to achieve

- 6.4.1 A seamless service for young children and their families through a new model of integrated funding, leadership and planning for Hackney Early Years and Health Visiting Service. These services are entwined, serving the same children. The cessation of the current Health Visiting contract, along with the new public health 0-25 commissioning arrangements, offers an opportunity to start the lengthy design journey to achieve a new contractual model where the Council retains greater autonomy. A joint service will improve pathways for parents, communication, and information sharing, to achieve early intervention.
- 6.4.2 Work with partners to broaden the role of the 6 multi-agency children's centres into children and family hubs with particular attention to:
- vulnerable and disadvantaged children from conception to 5yrs
 - universal services such as stay and play activities to support children's development
 - targeted multidisciplinary family support to support parenting across all phases - pre-birth to 19 years linked to the early help review.

6.4.3 Review and reconfigure the children's centres portfolio in accordance with our childcare sufficiency assessment, corporate priorities and deliver savings towards the Councils budget gap through this process.

- Scrutiny Panel completed a review of the arrangements for Hackney's children's centres in 2019. As part of the review, an engagement programme took place over a 6 week period May to July 2019. 1,400 responses were received. 87% were existing users or had previously used children's centres. 97% of respondents were positive about the children's centres they used. 35% parents cited that Stay and Play activities were by far the most valuable and helpful service, above family and parenting support indicated by 20% parents.
- Hackney Early Years launched a parent survey in May 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. The objective of the survey was to establish the impact of the pandemic on families with young children. The survey was completed over a 4 week period April to May 2020. 316 responses were received. 57% of the responses were from parents who use children's centre nurseries, 34% from stay and play families, and 9% were families who used health or other services at children's centres. 70% cited enjoying elements of lockdown, with some challenges. 20% were completely enjoying lockdown and 10% expressed difficulties. 60% accessed the children's centre online resources and requested more resources. 10% parents wanted support to access food, and 20% required support with their mental health. The survey informed the children's centres response to families during the pandemic.
- A parent survey on the universal birth to five resource will be published in September.
- In addition to children's centre-led engagement, users of children's centres multi-agency early help system, completed the early help user survey in January 2019. Parents were very positive about the support they received from children's centres.

6.4.4 Robust leadership and governance to reduce inequalities in outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable children, and children with additional needs.

6.4.5 Embed a system of outreach to enable marginalised communities to access services, information and opportunities.

6.4.6 A programme of support, training, information and guidance to early years settings and childminders, to maintain effective quality provision.

6.4.7 A programme of multi-disciplinary workforce development to underpin and shape practice.

6.4.8 Synergy between the 6 children's centre planning areas and 8 primary care network neighbourhoods. To establish links between children's and adult services in order to achieve holistic child and family intervention.

7 POLICY CONTEXT

7.1 This strategy also aims to fulfill the aims for first class schools and high quality services.

7.2 This strategy aims to help the Council fulfil its Early Years Vision '**happy, healthy and ready to learn**'; we want:

- Every child in Hackney to have the best possible start in life so that they can grow and develop to fulfil their potential, regardless of where they started.
- To improve the life chances and wellbeing of every child, especially children from disadvantaged backgrounds, so they develop as confident, capable and ambitious learners.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 The strategy seeks to improve the life chances and wellbeing of the most disadvantaged children, and narrow the gap between children likely to experience health and education inequalities, and their peers.

8.2 The 2020 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, showed that 23% private, voluntary and independent settings had vacancies, 13% maintained nurseries in schools, and 57% childminders. More recently the Spring term census (January 2021), reported a 7.5% decrease in the number of children accessing provision compared to Spring 2020. The childcare sector post Covid is changing significantly. This trend, if continued, may impact childcare sustainability.

8.3 We aim that all children's centres reflect their diverse communities with an equitable mix of children and families. Any changes in the number of children's centres may impact services. Any planned reduction in children's centres capacity in accordance with the childcare sufficiency assessment and budget envelope, will impact on working families who currently benefit from subsidised childcare places, particularly lower income families. Vulnerable children on a child in need, child protection, early help or education, health and care plan, may also be adversely affected by changes.

8.4 However, these changes will be mitigated by access to the Early Years Inclusion Fund which will continue to support children on a child protection, child in need, early help or education, health and care plan to access childcare at alternative children's centres, settings or childminders.

8.5 The Childcare Act 2006 section 6 places a duty on the Council to ensure that there are sufficient childcare places for working families, and for eligible children to access their free 15 and 30 hours nursery education. However, there is no requirement on the Council to provide such provision themselves. Children's Centre Nurseries are used by working families including Council

staff, and children in receipt of free nursery education. Families will continue to access subsidised childcare at Children's Centres, with the greatest subsidy to families earning less than £70,000. There remains a commitment to support all current nursery children and staff, affected by service reforms, to secure appropriate provision at an alternative children's centre or setting, where there are currently surplus places across the borough.

9. SUSTAINABILITY

- 9.1 The proposed strategy to integrate health and early years, and to review the configuration of children's centres in line with the childcare sufficiency assessment and budget savings will facilitate future sustainability.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The strategy was consulted on with internal colleagues and stakeholders such as the Children & Education Senior Management Team and Hackney Education Senior Leadership Team and with officers in April 2021.
- 10.2 The draft strategy was presented to the Children, Young, People, Maternity & Families 0-5 Workshop in April 2021.
- 10.3 The strategy was presented to the Early Help Members Oversight Group in May 2021.
- 10.4 Formal consultation on the refreshed early years strategy and proposed changes will commence in September. The consultation will be open for six weeks, to give residents and stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the new early years strategy and service reforms, which will keep the most vulnerable children central to decisions.

11. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 11.1 The Council would be at risk of not fulfilling its Early Years Statutory Duty if it does not have a strategy for the service and children and their families in the borough.

12. COMMENTS OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND CORPORATE RESOURCES

- 12.1 The recommendation of this report is to approve the Early Years Strategy. The proposed strategy will seek to integrate health and early years, and to review the configuration of children's centres in accordance with the childcare sufficiency assessment and the Council's wider financial context to ensure future sustainability of the model.
- 12.2 There are no direct financial implications emerging from the Early Years Strategy, however plans will need to be developed in the context of the

significant financial challenges facing the Council. All services will be in scope to deliver efficiencies to mitigate the Council's budget gap in 2022/23 and 2023/24. Any subsequent proposals from the strategy will be appraised and considered separately, as necessary.

12.2 VAT Implications on Land & Property Transactions

Not applicable

13. COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE SERVICES

- 13.1 Cabinet is asked to consider and approve the Early Years Strategy. The aims of the strategy incorporate the various statutory duties imposed on the Council, including the duties under section 1 of the Childcare Act 2016, the duty to secure 30 hours of free childcare for working parents, and various duties under the Childcare Act 2006. The statutory duties require the Council to improve the outcomes of all children under 5 and reduce inequalities, to secure sufficient childcare, to secure free early years provision of the prescribed description for each young child in the Hackney under compulsory school age, to assist others to provide childcare (including free early years provision), including giving financial assistance, for the Council to provide childcare if no other provider is willing to, or it is appropriate for the Council to provide it, to provide information, advice and assistance to parents about childcare in the area, and to secure the provision of information, advice and training to childcare providers and childcare workers.
- 13.2 Section 149(1) Equality Act 2010 imposes a Public Sector Equality Duty(PSED) on the Council. The PSED requires the Council to have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010, the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. Compliance with the PSED duty is usually demonstrated through undertaking an Equality Impact Assessment, which is referred to elsewhere in this report.
- 13.3 With regards to any future consultations, the Council must ensure that such consultations are undertaken in accordance with relevant law and guidance and that it takes into account any representations that it receives during the consultation period prior to making any final decision.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Draft Early Years Strategy

The draft early years strategy will be finalised following feedback from stakeholders in early September. It sets out the vision for early years, key principles and objectives ahead of the launch of the public engagement mid-September. The strategy can be found here:-

[HDS14383 - Early Years Strategy V5 spd.pdf](#)

EXEMPT

Not applicable

CONFIDENTIAL

Not applicable

BACKGROUND PAPERS

In accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) England Regulations 2012 publication of Background Papers used in the preparation of reports is required

None

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Happy, Healthy and Ready to Learn



Early Years Strategy

2021-26

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Introduction from Cllr Caroline Woodley

Every child has the right to be as happy, healthy and ready to learn as they can possibly be – no matter what their individual circumstances or needs.

In Hackney we want to help each child grow in confidence, and to share easily accessible resources, advice and support with their families and carers.

We know how important it is to give children the best start in life and we want our young people to carry a great sense of pride in growing up in our borough.

This strategy sets out our vision for Early Years, our priorities, our principles and what we want to achieve. The challenge for families in a densely-populated borough like ours should not be underestimated – too many of our children are born in poverty, but with effective early years services we can help every parent prepare to raise their child with confidence and every child to reach their potential.

Working together with parents and carers, our information services can help to secure the right support from pregnancy through immunisations to choosing a playgroup, nursery or childminder.

Where children have additional needs we can do more to help families and carers to understand and support their child's development, build resilience and promote wellbeing. For some, dropping into stay and play sessions can make all the difference. For others, the opportunity lies in engaging in local activities, training and employment skills.

For our children, it's important to let them know from the very start that their voices will be heard, that we understand their behaviour and can help them to understand it too. With access to early education, children will find help with their communication, with language and discovering the joy of reading.

In broadening the role of our children's centres into children and family hubs we recognise the importance of child and parent attachment and encourage the development of supportive peer networks. In further integrating our Early Years and Health Visiting service we can ensure we have collaborative and holistic support in place right from the start.

In Hackney, we take great pride in building an inclusive culture. If we can get it right in Early Years, our children will grow in self-esteem and inspire us all with their creativity, curiosity and desire to learn.



Early Years

An overview

Early education, childcare, play opportunities and support is at the core of what we offer to families during this critical time of development and foundation in a child's life, which we call the 'early years'.

We are really proud of these services that support children, young people and families, which were recognised by Ofsted as being 'well-developed and effective'.

In order to build on these successes and so we can continue to improve outcomes for our children, we have developed a new Early Years Strategy. This sets out our vision, priorities and principles that underpin all the work we do and all the services we provide for young children and their families.

We have also been looking at how we can support families who need extra help to overcome challenges they face, whatever their children's age.

Over the past two years, we listened to hundreds of residents - parents, carers, those who would like to become mothers and fathers in the future as well as other professionals who work with families - to ensure this strategy reflects what is most important to them.

They told us the services we provide are invaluable to them; and they are positive about the support they receive from us. Parents with younger children said nurseries; 'stay and play' activities and family support are what they care about most; and parents with older children and young people said they really value being able to access a range of different opportunities that work for them. Our Early Years Strategy protects those services into the future.

We also know that families appreciated some of the digital resources we developed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, when settings remained open for key workers and vulnerable children, and play activities moved online, and we will be looking at how we can make improvements and innovations to ensure we cater for more of Hackney's communities in an increasingly digital world.

Happy, healthy, ready to learn. Those are Hackney Council's ambitions for every child in our borough, whatever their background or start in life, as they grow and learn from birth to five.

The Council is committed to Rebuilding a Better Hackney out of the pandemic. That includes better supporting our communities who need extra help, and embracing the opportunity to find long-term solutions to systemic problems, such as poverty and inequality. That's why this strategy focuses on ensuring we provide more holistic help to families by working more closely with partner organisations, including health teams; and broadening the services we deliver to children and families on the ground. At the same time, there is also an opportunity to ensure the services we provide remain fit for the future, both operationally and financially.

When we talked to residents to find out how we could better support children and families in a way that is both most beneficial to them, and also sustainable into the future, we looked at how we could better use our current children's centres, of which we have 20.

Our children's centres are a trusted mainstay of our communities, and we know that residents who use these centres value them immensely: 97 per cent of people we talked to were positive about the centres they used.

We want to build on that accomplishment. To do that, we have been developing plans to turn some children's centres into new 'children and family hubs'. These will bring together support across early years,

primary and secondary ages.

However, the strategy is also a means to properly confront some difficult decisions and meet some of the challenges ahead of us. The Council must make many millions of pounds of savings over the coming months and years in order to meet our severe budget deficit - a legacy of more than a decade of sustained core Government cuts combined with the more recent impact of the Covid pandemic.

We want to reassure residents that, despite the financial pressures we face as a Council, we will always ensure our most vulnerable families have access to the services and childcare and respite they need.



The case for intervening early

The Cross Party 1001 Days Manifesto (2014), cited the 'early years of life are a crucial period of change; alongside adolescence this is a key moment for brain development. As our understanding of the science of development improves, it becomes clearer and clearer how the events that happen to children and babies lead to structural changes that have life-long ramifications. Science is helping us to understand how love and nurture by caring adults is hard wired into the brains of children'.

London Councils - The best start for Londoners (2021) notes the impact of Covid-19 on reversing the gains achieved in closing the attainment gap. Covid has had an impact on children's language, communication, physical, social and emotional development. Early Years will therefore play an important role in children's recovery.

The review into poverty and life chances: The Foundation Years Preventing Poor Children Becoming Poor Adults, found that children's life chances and outcomes are grounded on their development in their first five years of life. Parental education and opportunities for learning in those important years, have a greater impact on later outcomes than income (Frank Fields, 2010). What parents do is more significant than who they are.

The Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), showed the association between high quality early years settings and children's educational, cognitive, behavioural and social development in both the short and long term (Barnes and Melhuish, 2016).



Early years statutory duties

- To improve outcomes for children at age 5 years, particularly in early language and communication, to increase school readiness, and reduce inequalities in outcomes for children at risk of not fulfilling their potential.
- Provision of effective quality early years services, evidenced to be a key element of early help, leading to improved outcomes (school readiness and lifetime outcomes).
- Provide advice, information and guidance to parents and carers, settings and agencies through the Parenting & Family Information Service.
- Ensure sufficient nursery provision, and a coordinated approach to services for preschool children, working through children's centres, to promote integrated health, childcare and parenting support, training and employment skills.
- Support eligible 2, 3 & 4 year olds to take up their free 15 or 30 hours early years entitlement.



Principles

1

Partnership working with parents and carers to promote home-learning; and child and parent attachment.

2

Ensure parents and carers, have all the the information they need at the right time in order to access services and opportunities.

3

Partnership with settings, (including independent settings) agencies and organisations to forge strong relationships that deliver integrated, seamless and broad-ranging services to children and families, which are inclusive and accessible.

5

Commitment to inclusive services that supports children with special educational needs or a disability.

4

Deliver **excellent universal and targeted services** which supports early identification of need and early help to address that need, including promoting healthy start, physical activity, and nutrition.

6

Support children to **understand their own feelings and those of others**, and to regulate their own behaviour; and develop early language, communication, physical, social and emotional skills, central to supporting their outcomes.

7

Explore opportunities to broaden the role of children's centres into **children and family hubs** in order to support parenting across all phases: early years, primary and secondary, where it makes sense to.

8

This strategy **complements other local strategies** which enhance the life chances of children and families, with particular attention to health outcomes, meeting the needs of children with additional needs, and supporting parents' economic outcomes.

9

Develop greater interaction and cooperation, through **integrated leadership and planning, between early years and health visiting services**, to achieve better knowledge gathering and sharing to better support young children - particularly babies in their first 1001 days.

10

Deliver **family support that respects, values** and thinks about the whole need of the family, informed by an understanding of trauma and secure attachments.

What we want to achieve

- A holistic service for young children and their families through a new model of joined-up health visiting and early years, on the basis that these services are entwined, serving the same children.

One service provides an opportunity to:

- Improve pathways and information for families
- Strengthen collaboration, knowledge, skills and communication
- plan together to reduce duplication and make best use of resources.

- Work with partners to broaden the role of the 6 multi-agency children's centres into children and family hubs, with particular attention to;

- Vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and children with SEND, from conception to 5yrs
- Universal services such as stay and play activities to support language, communication, physical, emotional and social development
- Early help to support families pre-birth to 19 years.





- Review and reconfigure the children’s centres in accordance with our childcare sufficiency duty, corporate priorities and budget savings.
- Robust learning and governance to reduce inequalities in outcomes for disadvantaged children. So that children achieve a good level of development at the end of reception, in the profile results currently 77 %
- Embed a system of outreach to enable marginalised communities to access services, information and opportunities.

- A programme of support, training, information and guidance to early years settings and childminders, to maintain effective quality provision.
- 90% settings and childminders judged good or better by Ofsted.
- With the SEND service, develop an early years hub in the north and south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan.

CHILDREN & FAMILY HUB



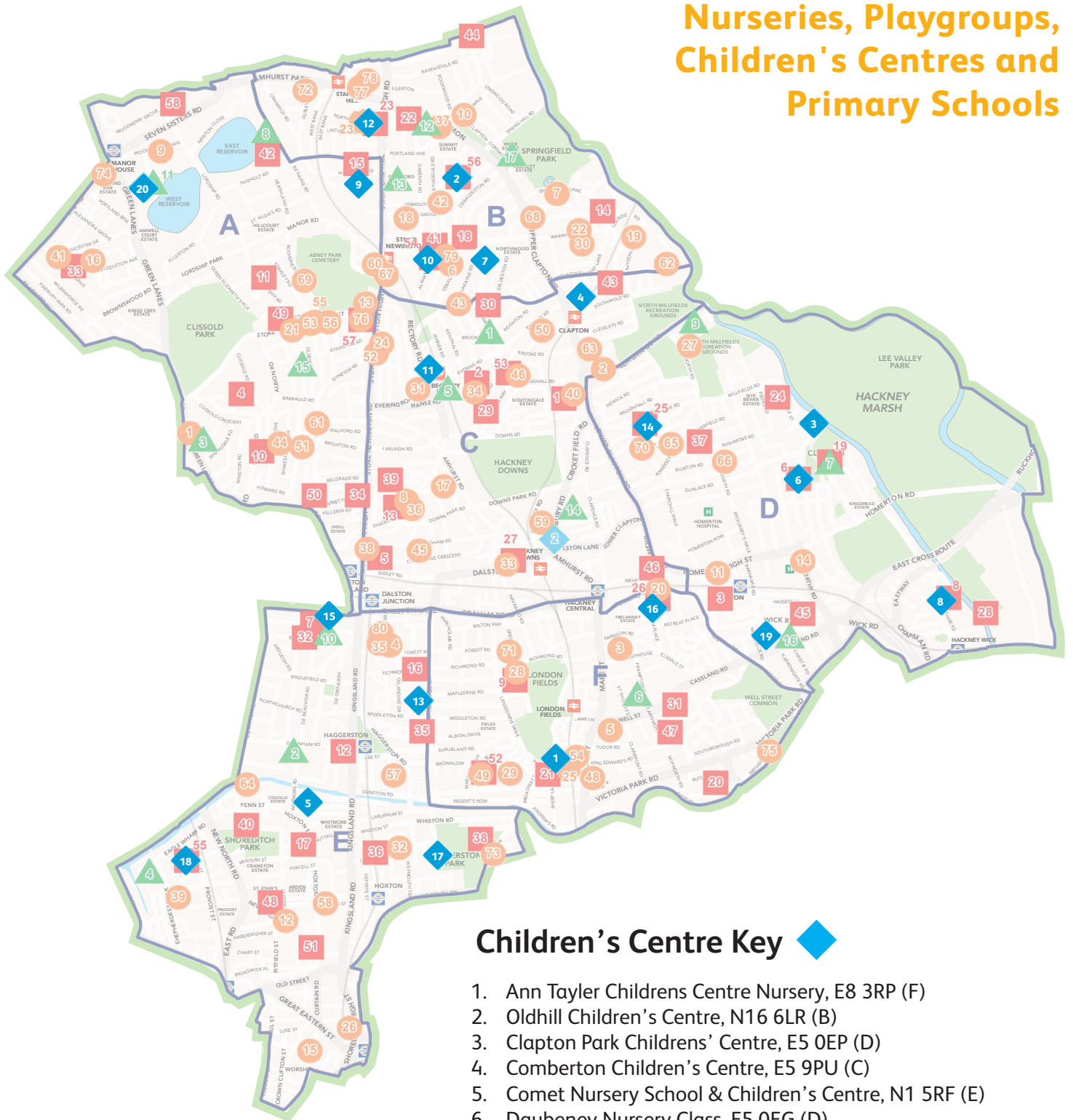
What we are currently doing:

Work with partners to broaden the role of children's centres into children and family hubs with particular attention to;

- Developing a family support model that brings together family support approach across early years, family units and Young Hackney - pre birth to 19 years.
- Develop links between children and adult services through the development of the emerging primary care networks.

- Reviewing the configuration of children's centres in accordance with budget savings for 2022.
- Maintaining a focus on:
 - Vulnerable and disadvantaged children from conception to 5yrs
 - Universal services such as stay and play activities to support language, cognitive, physical, and social development
 - Attachment aware and trauma informed settings and practitioners.

Nurseries, Playgroups, Children's Centres and Primary Schools

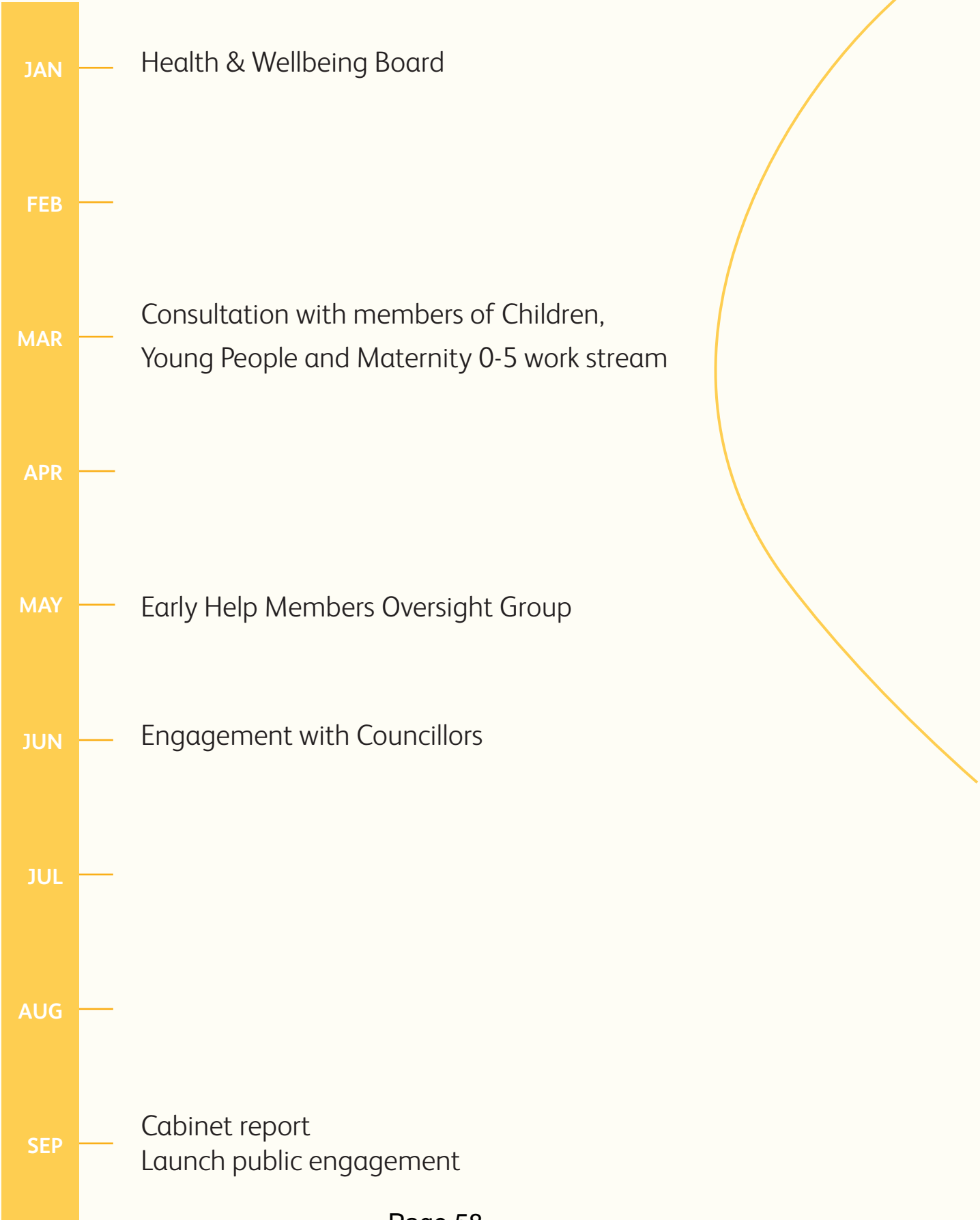


Children's Centre Key

1. Ann Tayler Childrens Centre Nursery, E8 3RP (F)
2. Oldhill Children's Centre, N16 6LR (B)
3. Clapton Park Childrens' Centre, E5 0EP (D)
4. Comberton Children's Centre, E5 9PU (C)
5. Comet Nursery School & Children's Centre, N1 5RF (E)
6. Daubeney Nursery Class, E5 0EG (D)
7. Fernbank Children's Centre, N16 7EA (B)
8. Gainsborough Children's Centre, E9 5ND (D)
9. Hillside Children's Centre, N16 5QR (A)
10. Ihsan Children's Centre, (B)
11. Linden Children's Centre N16 7SH (C)
12. Lubavitch Children's Centre, N16 5RL (B)
13. Mapledene Children's Centre, E8 3LE (F)
14. Millfields Children's Centre, E5 0SQ (D)
15. Minik Kardes Children's Centre and Community, N1 4BW (E)
16. Morningside Children's Centre, E9 6LL (F)
17. Sebright Childrens Centre, E2 8NP (E)
18. Thomas Fairchild Children's Centre, N1 7HX (E)
19. Wentworth Nursery School & Children's Centre, E9 5BN (D)
20. Wesley Down Children's Centre, N4 2NP (A)

- Day Nursery Key
- ▲ Playgroup Key
- Primary School Key

Engagement Timeline 2021

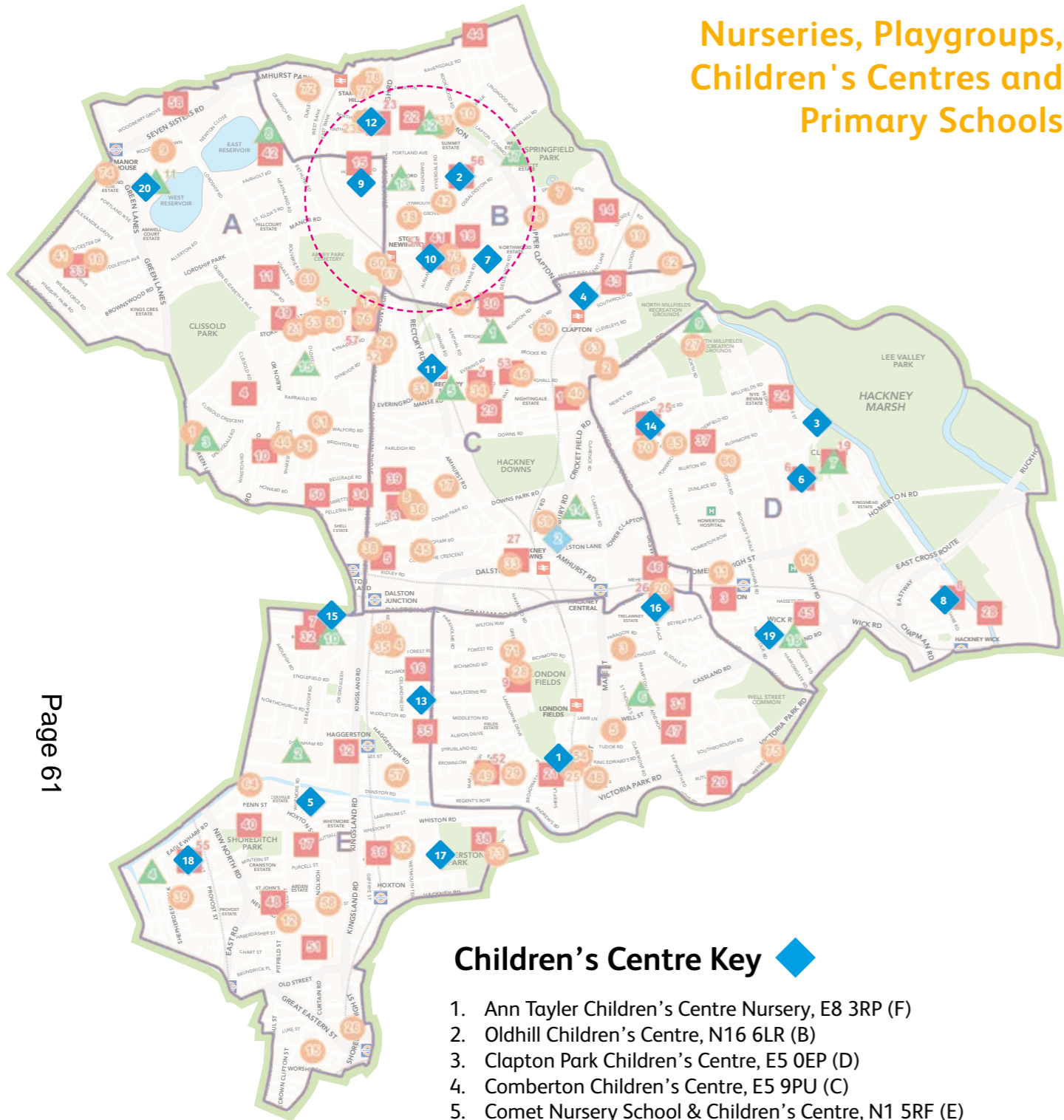


The early years strategy and activity compliments other local strategies which enhance the life chances of children and families, with particular attention to health outcomes, children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and supporting parents and carers economic outcomes.

To find out more:

 hackney.gov.uk/early-years-strategy

Nurseries, Playgroups, Children's Centres and Primary Schools



Children's Centre Key

1. Ann Tayler Children's Centre Nursery, E8 3RP (F)
2. Oldhill Children's Centre, N16 6LR (B)
3. Clapton Park Children's Centre, E5 0EP (D)
4. Comberton Children's Centre, E5 9PU (C)
5. Comet Nursery School & Children's Centre, N1 5RF (E)
6. Daubeney Children's Centre, E5 0EG (D)
7. Fernbank Children's Centre, N16 7EA (B)
8. Gainsborough Children's Centre, E9 5ND (D)
9. Hillside Children's Centre, N16 5QR (A)
10. Ihsan Children's Centre, N16 6AA (B)
11. Linden Children's Centre, N16 7SH (C)
12. Lubavitch Children's Centre, N16 5RL (B)
13. Mapledene & Queensbridge Children's Centre, E8 3LE (F)
14. Millfields Children's Centre, E5 0SQ (D)
15. Minik Kardes Community Nursery & Children's Centre, N1 4BW (E)
16. Morningside Children's Centre, E9 6LL (F)
17. Sebright Children's Centre, E2 8NP (E)
18. Comet at Thomas Fairchild, N1 7HX (E)
19. Wentworth Nursery School & Children's Centre, E9 5BN (D)
20. Woodberry Down Children's Centre, N4 2NP (A)

--- Five Children's Centres
within walking distance

● Day Nursery Key

▲ Playgroup Key

■ Primary School Key

Consultation on the Early Years Strategy and proposed changes to Hackney's Children's Centres

We would like your feedback on the Council's new Early Years Strategy, which sets out the Council's vision, priorities and principles that underpin all the services it provides for young children and their families, and outlines how it will protect those services into the future. This strategy has been developed following engagement with parents, carers and professionals.

The new strategy includes proposed changes to how we deliver children's centre services across the borough. Please tell us what you think about the proposals and how you think they'll affect you and your families. Please read the information provided summarising our proposals before providing your feedback **by 16 November 2021**.

Background and Context:

Happy, healthy and ready to learn. Those are Hackney Council's ambitions for every child in our borough, whatever their background or start in life, as they grow and learn from birth to five years.

Early education, childcare, play opportunities and support for families is at the core of what we offer during this critical time of development and foundation in a child's life, which we call the 'early years'. We are proud that 94% of our Early Years settings and childminders are judged good or better by Ofsted; that 77% of reception pupils in Hackney schools are achieving a good level of development by the end of their first school year; and that our services that support children, young people and families were recognised by Ofsted as being 'well-developed and effective'.

In order to build on these successes and so we can continue to improve outcomes for our children, we have developed a new Early Years Strategy. This sets out our vision, priorities and principles that underpin all the work we do and all the services we provide for young children and their families.

Over the past two years, we've listened to hundreds of residents – parents, carers, those who would like to become mothers and fathers in the future, as well as other professionals who work with families – to ensure this strategy reflects what is most important to them.

They told us the services we provide are invaluable to them, and they are positive about the support they receive from us. Parents with younger children said nurseries, 'stay and play' and music activities are what they care about most; and parents with older children and young people said they really value being able to access a range of different opportunities that work for them. Our Early Years Strategy protects those services into the future.

We also know that families appreciated some of the digital resources we developed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and we will be looking at how we can cater for more of Hackney's communities in an increasingly digital world. The Council is committed to Rebuilding a Better Hackney out of the pandemic. That includes better supporting our communities who need extra help. That's why our new strategy focuses on ensuring we provide more holistic help to families by working more closely with partner organisations, including health teams; and reviewing the services we deliver to children and families on the ground.

At the same time, this is also an opportunity to ensure our services, such as children's centres, remain fit and sustainable into the future, both operationally and financially. A children's centre is a place where local families with young children can go to enjoy facilities, and receive the support that they need, including free parenting support. Eleven of these offer childcare places,

subsidised by us. All of our children's centres have been judged good or outstanding by Ofsted; and 97% of people we talked to were positive about the centres they used.

We want to use this strategy to build on that accomplishment. However, the strategy is also a means to address some of the challenges ahead of us. The Council must make many millions of pounds of savings in order to meet our severe budget deficit – a legacy of more than a decade of sustained core Government cuts combined with the more recent, extreme, financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Early Years Service has a £1 million savings target for 2022/23.

We have 20 children's centres across the borough. There is currently a 23% childcare vacancy rate across the borough, which reflects a London-wide trend of falling reception class rolls. This means some children's centres are no longer viable in the current financial climate. We now must ensure that we are doing the best we can, with the resources available, and continue to support Hackney's children to achieve the best possible start in life.

What are we proposing?

Development of 'children and family' hubs

We are proposing to broaden the role of our six 'multi-agency children's centres' into 'children and family hubs', offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with young children.

This will make it easier for parents with children of different ages to access the support and information they need in one place. To achieve this, we will provide joined up support for families with children of all ages.

The 'children and family' hubs will provide:

- Universal early years services such as 'stay and play' activities to support language, communication, physical, emotional and social development.
- Targeted support for families with children pre-birth to 19 years who need extra help.
- Support for vulnerable and disadvantaged children, and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Closure of two children's centres

We are proposing to close two children's centres in the north of the borough, where there are currently five centres within walking distance of each other, and where more and more young children are attending independent settings.

The two centres proposed for closure are:

- Hillside Children's Centre, 1 Leatherhead Close, Holmleigh Road, N16 5QR
- Fernbank Children's Centre, 1A Fountayne Road, London N16 7EA

Parents and carers of children using childcare at these two centres will be offered individual support to find alternative local childcare that meets their needs. Families will also be able to attend 'stay and play' activities, and family services at nearby children's centres. The closure of the two centres is not something that we want to do, but we will focus our remaining resources to ensure they have the biggest impact for those who need them most.

This includes:

- Bringing together early years and health visiting teams to provide holistic support and guidance for young children and their families.
- Developing two early years hubs, one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan.
- Developing plans to turn the six multi-agency children's centres into new 'children and family hubs', outlined above, that bring together family-focused support. They will see professionals, working together, to provide friendly, cohesive and tailored support for families with children of ages 0-19 years.

Youth hubs

We are proposing that the four youth hubs work alongside the proposed 'children and family hubs' to provide joined up support for families with children 0-19 years.

The four youth hubs are located at:

- Young Hackney Forest Road, 29 Forest Road, London, Hackney E8 3BY
- Young Hackney Stoke Newington, Chaucer Court, N16 8TS
- Young Hackney The Edge, 7 Woodberry Grove, London, N4 1ST
- Concorde Youth Hub, Kingsmead Way, E9 5PP

The youth hubs are run by Young Hackney, a service that works across the borough in youth clubs, adventure playgrounds, community halls, voluntary and community sector provision and in schools. They provide individual support within schools, community settings or at our youth hubs, but will often provide support within the family home.

Young Hackney services are for children and young people aged 6-19, or up to 25 years if the young person has a special education need or disability.

Who do we need to hear from?

We would like to hear from all residents, but especially parents and carers of children and young people who have used, currently use, or may use, children's centres in the future, and from professionals who support families in Hackney.

How to take part:

You can take part by completing the online survey at consultation.hackney.gov.uk or by providing your feedback at your local children's centre. You can also pick up a paper copy of the survey at your local children's centre.

Please submit your comments before the consultation closes on **16 November 2021**. If you have any queries or require further information, please do get in touch. We look forward to hearing from you.

What happens next?

Feedback received from the consultation will help us deliver the Early Years Strategy and inform how we deliver service in our children's centres, ensuring that what we do reflects local needs and continues to support outcomes of children at risk of underachievement.

Should these proposals be agreed, changes will take place from September 2022.

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2018 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). This information is optional and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

- Being bought on a mortgage
 Owned outright
 Rented (from a private landlord)
 Rented (from a Local Authority/Council)
 Rented (from a Housing Association/Trust)
 Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)

What is your age group?

- Under 16
 16-17
 18-24
 25-34
 35-44
 45-54
 55-64
 65-74
 75-84
 85 or over
 Prefer not to say

Gender: Male Female

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here: _____

Ethnicity: Are you

- Asian or Asian British
 Black or Black British
 White or White British
 Mixed background
 Other ethnic group
 Other, please tell us if you wish: _____

What are your religious beliefs?

- Atheist/no religious belief
 Buddhist
 Charedi
 Christian
 Hindu
 Jewish
 Muslim
 Secular beliefs
 Sikh
 Other, please tell us if you wish: _____

Disability: Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

- Yes No

Pregnancy or maternity: Have you been pregnant and / or on maternity leave during the past 2 years?

- Yes No

Sexual orientation: Are you

- Bisexual
 Gay man
 Lesbian or Gay woman
 Heterosexual
 Other please state if you wish: _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.

If you would like to find out what this document says please tick the appropriate box, put your name, address and phone number at the bottom of this page and return it to the address below.

Bengali

এই দলিলে কি লেখা আছে সে সম্পর্কে যদি আপনি জানতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে উপযুক্ত বাক্সে টিক দিন, এই পাতার নীচে আপনার নাম, ঠিকানা ও ফোন নম্বর লিখুন এবং এটি নীচের ঠিকানায় ফেরত পাঠান।

French

Si vous désirez connaître le contenu de ce document, veuillez cocher la case appropriée et indiquer votre nom, adresse et numéro de téléphone au bas de cette page et la renvoyer à l'adresse indiquée ci-dessous.

Kurdish

Ger hun dixwazin bizanibin ku ev dokumant çi dibêje, ji kerema xwe qutîka minasib îşaret bikin, nav, navnîşan û hejmara telefona xwe li jêrê rûpel binivîsin û wê ji navnîşana jêrîn re bişînin.

Polish

Jeśli chcesz dowiedzieć się, jaka jest treść tego dokumentu, zaznacz odpowiednie pole, wpisz swoje nazwisko, adres i nr telefonu w dolnej części niniejszej strony i przeslij na poniższy adres.

Urdu

اگر آپ یہ جاننا چاہتے ہیں کہ دستاویز میں کیا لکھا ہے تو ازراہ کرم مناسب باکس میں صحیح کا نشان لگائیے اور اپنا نام، پتہ اور فون نمبر اس صفحہ کے نیچے لکھئے اور اسے نیچے دیئے گئے پتہ پر واپس بھیج دیجئے۔

If you would like this document in any of the following formats or in another language not listed above, please complete and send the form to the address below.

- In large print
 On Disk
 In Braille
 On audio tape

In another language, please state: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
Tel: _____

Return to: Early Years Service, Hackney Education, 2nd Floor, Learning & Technology Centre, 1 Reading Lane, E8 1GQ

Somali

Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd in aad ogaato waxa dokumeentigani sheegayo fadlan calaamadi godka ku haboon, ku qor magacaaga, cinwaanka iyo telefoon lambarkaaga boggan dhankiisa hoose ka dibna ku celi cinwaanka hoose.

Spanish

Si desea saber de lo que trata este documento, marque la casilla correspondiente, escriba su nombre, dirección y número de teléfono al final de esta página y envíela a la siguiente dirección.

Turkish

Bu dokümanda ne anlatıldığını öğrenmek istiyorsanız, lütfen uygun kutuyu işaretleyerek, adınızı, adresinizi ve telefon numaranızı bu sayfanın alt kısmına yazıp, aşağıdaki adrese gönderin.

Vietnamese

Nếu bạn muốn biết tài liệu này nói gì hãy đánh dấu vào hộp thích hợp, điền tên, địa chỉ và số điện thoại của bạn vào cuối trang này và gửi lại theo địa chỉ dưới đây.

Chinese

如果你想知道這分文件的詳細內容，請在方框內打鉤，在本頁下面寫下你的名字、地址和電話號碼並寄到下面的地址。

Consultation on the Early Years Strategy and proposed changes to Hackney's Children's Centres Questionnaire

Please return the completed questionnaire by 16 November 2021, to your local children's centre or post it to:
Early Years Service, Hackney Education, 2nd Floor,
Learning & Technology Centre, 1 Reading Lane, E8 1GQ

1. Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

- I am a current parent/carer/guardian of a child(ren) under 6, who uses children’s centres
- I am a parent or carer of a child under 6 who does not use children’s centres.
- I am a current parent/carer/guardian of a child(ren) 6-12 years of age
- I am a current parent/carer/guardian of a child(ren) aged 13-19 years of age
- I am a parent/carer/guardian and I have used children’s centres when my children were younger
- I am a prospective parent/carer/guardian of child(ren) who will use these services in future
- I am a young person aged 13-19 years of age
- A professional working in an early years setting
- A professional working in a children’s centre
- A professional working in a school (e.g. headteacher, teacher, SENCO)
- A health professional (e.g. health visitor, GP, CAMHS professional)
- Someone who works with children and young people in another professional or voluntary capacity (please specify your role)
- I have a role which involves representing the views of a particular group
- I am an interested member of the public
- Other, please tell us:

2. Where do you live? (this information will help us to better understand the views of Hackney residents)

- E1
- E2
- E5
- E8
- E9
- E10
- E15
- EC1
- EC2
- N1
- N4
- N16

If other, please tell us:

3. Which children’s centre do you usually use? (please select up to 3 options)

- Ann Tayler Children’s Centre
- Brook@Pembury Children’s Centre
- Children’s Centre at Gainsborough
- Clapton Park Children’s Centre
- Comberton Children’s Centre
- Comet Nursery School and Children’s Centre
- Comet at Thomas Fairchild Children’s Centre
- Daubeney Children’s Centre
- Fernbank Children’s Centre
- Hillside Children’s Centre
- Ihsan Children’s Centre
- Linden Children’s Centre
- Lubavitch Children’s Centre
- Mapledene & Queensbridge Children’s Centre
- Millfields Children’s Centre
- Minik Kardes Children’s Centre
- Morningside Children’s Centre
- Oldhill Children’s Centre (Tyssen)
- Sebright Children’s Centre
- Wentworth Children’s Centre
- Woodberry Down Children’s Centre

4. How often do you visit this children’s centre? (please select one option)

- Daily
- A few times a week
- A few times a month
- A few times a year
- Never

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to broaden the role of six of our children’s centres into multi agency ‘children and family’ hubs, offering support for families with children and young people aged up to 19 years old, rather than just for families with children aged up to five years old?

The six children’s centres are Ann Tayler, Linden, Woodberry Down, Sebright, Daubeney and Oldhill.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please explain your response above:

6. How would the ‘children and family’ hubs proposal (outlined in the consultation document) affect the way you currently access our services?

- Positively
- Somewhat positively
- Neither positively or negatively
- Somewhat negatively
- Negatively

7. If the ‘children and family’ hub proposal was to go ahead, please indicate which services you would like to see continued in the hub? (please tick all that apply).

- Midwifery antenatal and postnatal services
- Stay and play and music activities
- Health visiting baby clinics and breastfeeding support
- English for speakers of other languages and training
- Parenting and family support for children up to 5 years of age
- Parenting and family support for older children between the ages of 6-12 years of age
- Parenting and family support for teenagers from 13-19 years of age
- Employment support and benefits advice
- Housing advice and support
- Specialist support for parents and carers i.e. domestic violence, drug and alcohol, mental health support
- Early education and childcare with free places for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds
- Child and family health services i.e. speech and language therapy, healthy eating and nutrition
- Support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- Online services i.e. child and parent activities, parenting programmes
- All of the above plus services for teenagers

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the idea that youth hubs work alongside the proposed ‘children and family hubs’ to provide joined-up support for families with children 0-19 years?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. Proposed closure of two children centres:

We are also proposing to close two children’s centres: Hillside and Fernbank next year. These centres are in the north of the borough, where we have five centres within walking distance of each other. This will allow us to focus our resources to ensure they have the biggest impact for those who need it most. Parents and carers of children using these two centres will be offered individual support to find alternative local childcare that meets their needs, including at other children’s centres.

In making the decision to propose these centres for closure, we’ve considered the following:

- There are five children centres within walking distance of each other, which would allow children to conveniently attend the remaining 3 centres.
- The lease of one of the children’s centre buildings is unaffordable, therefore the closure will mean we can focus our limited resource more sustainably.
- The closures will allow us to develop an early years hub in the north and south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan.
- The centres are situated in an area where increasing numbers of children are attending independent settings, up from 1,345 in 2020 to 1,446, with fewer children in the community attending mainstream provision.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of closing the two centres based on the rationale as outlined above?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to develop two ‘early years hubs’, one in the north and one in the south of the borough for children with complex needs to access provision, whilst they undergo assessment for an education, health and care plan?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission 6th October 2021 Item 7 - CYP Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22	Item No 7
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OUTLINE

The CYP Scrutiny Commission work programme is regularly updated throughout the municipal year. A number of updates have been made to the work programme since it was last discussed by the Commission in July 2021. These include:

- Ofsted focused visit outcome (October 2021)
- Early Years Strategy & Reconfiguration of Children’s Centres (October 2021)
- School Estates Strategy (November 2021)
- Early Help Strategy (November 2021)
- School Improvement Partners (March 2022)
- Parental Involvement in Education (March 2022)

Reports:

CYP Scrutiny Work Programme 2021/22

ACTION

Members are asked to review and agree the latest version of the Commission’s work programme for October 2021/22.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

One Page Overview

June 14th 2021	July 12th 2021
School Admissions (Standing Item)	Ofsted Action Plan - Progress
Pupil Attainment (Standing item)	CFS Budget Monitoring (Standing Item)
Childcare Sufficiency (Standing Item)	Commissioning Independent SEND
Work Programme Discussion	
October 6th 2021	November 1st 2021
CFS Ofsted Inspection Report (Following focused visit 7/21)	School Estates Strategy (Pre-decision)
HMI Probation Inspection - Youth Justice (Following group inspection 7/21)	Early Help Review (Pre-decision)
Adolescents Entering Care (Scoping Report)	Outcome from school exclusions - Final report of the Commission
Early Years Strategy - Reconfiguration of Children' Centres consultation	
December 6th 2021	January 19th 2022
Cllr Woodley Q & A - topics to be agreed (Mid October) (Standing Item)	CHSCP - Safeguarding / Disproportionality
Budget Monitoring HES (Standing Item)	Unregistered Educational Settings -Update
CFS Annual Report (Standing Item)	Sexual harassment in schools
February 28th 2022	March 2022
Cllr Bramble Q & A - topics tba (Mid January (Standing Item)	CFS Annual Report (Standing Item)
Addressing inequalities HFS/HES	Attainment gap - School Improvement Partners
	Parental Involvement in education - worker project

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 1	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p><u>Meeting Date:</u> 14th June 2021</p> <p>Deadline for reports: 1/6/21</p> <p>Publication 4/6/21</p>	School Admissions – to review sufficiency of primary and secondary school places ahead of September 2021 school entry. (Standing item within the work programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marian Lavelle, Head of Admissions and Pupil Benefits, HLT • Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT 	
	It is a statutory requirement for members to review the sufficiency of childcare in their local authority area and a report is produced every two years. The Commission to review an update for this year 2021 in light of the impact of Covid 19. (Standing item within the work programme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being • Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager • Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT 	
	Pupil Attainment: Annual Review of performance of educational attainment in Hackney. Usual scrutiny is not possible due to the impact of Covid and school closures and use of school assessments instead of exams. Update and overview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Hall, Head of School Improvement • Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT 	
	Development of new CYP Work Programme for 2021/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission/ Scrutiny officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To consult local stakeholders • Meet with service Directors • Collate topic suggestions

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 2	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p><u>Meeting Date:</u> Monday 12th July</p> <p>Papers deadline: 29/6/21</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 2/7/21</p>	<p>Ofsted Inspection Action Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to receive and update on progress to meet the recommendations from Ofsted. - To note changes to the Hackney Unit model of Social Work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care ● Annie Coyle, Interim Director of Children's Social Care 	
	<p>Commissioning Independent SEND Provision to assess:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the commissioning framework for independent SEND provision; - Quality monitoring and outcomes; - Arrangements for financial and contract monitoring. Commissioned; - Costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fran Cox, Head of High Needs and School Place ● Joe Wilson, Head of SEND ● Wendy Edwards, SEND Contracts Consultant ● Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	
	<p>CFS Budget Monitoring: review of CFS budget for year end to March 2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Naeem Ahmed, Director of Finance Children, Education, Adults, Health & Integration ● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care 	
	<p>CYP Work Programme 2021/22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Martin Bradford, Scrutiny Officer / Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Details of all topic suggestions circulated to members and published in the agenda. ● Arrange meetings with senior officers to scope out work items.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 3	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Meeting Date: October 6th 2021 Papers deadline: 12.00 27/9/21 Agenda dispatch: 28/9/21	<u>Outcome of Ofsted Focused Visit July 2021).</u> To review the outcome and service response to the Ofsted focused visit of services for Children in Need Children on a Child Protection Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Education & Children’s Services ● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care 	- Publication of report timing in preparation for the meeting - expected 7th September 2021.
	<u>Outcome of HMI Probation Inspection of Youth Justice Services</u> To review the outcome and service response to the HMI Probation Inspection visit in July 2021. Service update to be considered alongside.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention ● Brendan Finnegan, Service Manager Youth Justice ● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care 	- Publication of report timing in preparation for the meeting.
	<u>Early Years Strategy</u> (and reconfiguration of Children’s Centres). The Early Years Strategy was confirmed at Cabinet in September 2021 and Hackney Education is now consulting on the planned reconfiguration of Children's Centres (to mid Nov 2021).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annie Gammon, Director of Education ● Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being 	
	Adolescents Entering Care: to discuss and agree the Scoping Report for Commission’s planned review for 2021/22.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Overview & Scrutiny Officer/ Members of the Commission 	
	CYP Work Programme 2021/22: updated version from July 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scrutiny Officer / Commission 	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 4	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Officers	Support work
<p>Meeting Date: <u>November 1st 2021</u></p> <p>Papers deadline: <u>19th October 2021</u></p>	<p><u>School Estates Strategy</u>: a review of how the Council will manage its maintained education estate in relation to projected falling pupil rolls and increased demand for in-borough SEND provision.</p> <p>This is an opportunity for the CYP Scrutiny Commission to contribute to this review before its finalisation by the Executive (December 2021) in relation to principles for reform, prospective impact on services and for young people and their families and service budgets.</p> <p>As part of this scrutiny exercise it would be useful to understand the demographic of children with SEND who are currently supported in mainstream educational settings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	
<p>Agenda dispatch: <u>22nd October 2021</u></p>	<p><u>Early Help Strategy</u>: a review of the Council's early help offer which has incorporated Family Support, Targeted Support, Young Hackney and Children's Centres.</p> <p>This is an opportunity for the CYP Scrutiny Commission to contribute to this review before its finalisation by the Executive (January 2022) in relation to principles for reform, prospective impact on services and for young people and their families and service budgets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacque Burke, Group Director for Education and Children's Services 	
	<p><u>School Exclusions Final Report</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To agree and confirm recommendations of the Commission's investigation; To agree on follow up monitoring arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny Officer / Commission 	
	<p>CYP Work Programme 2021/22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scrutiny Officers 	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 5	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: 6th December 2021</p> <p>Papers deadline: 23rd November 2021</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 26th November 2021</p>	<p><u>Hackney Education Service Budget Monitoring:</u> To review in-year spending within the Directorate. (Standing item)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naeem Ahmed, Director of Finance Children, Education, Adults, Health & Integration • Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	
	<p><u>Cabinet Q & A:</u> Cllr Caroline Woodley Annual Question Time for the Cabinet member for Families, early years, parks and play. (Standing item) (Likely to be SEND focus).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play. 	Topics to be scrutinised to be agreed 6 weeks in advance of the meeting in consultation with CYP SC (25th October 2021)
	<p><u>Children and Families Services Annual Report.</u> To report on the full outturn of children's social care activity for the year end March 2021 (Standing item)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Education and Children's Services • Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care 	
	<p>CYP Work Programme 2021/22</p>	- Scrutiny Officer	- To review and monitor progress.

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 6	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
	Safeguarding themed session		
Meeting Date: 19th January 2022	<u>Sexual Harassment in Schools</u> : to receive a report on the nature and level of sexual harassment recorded in local schools and the support provided to young people affected and those efforts to prevent this in the future.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annie Gammon, Director of Education • City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership • Local Head Teachers - tbc 	
Papers deadline: 7th January 2022	<u>Unregistered Educational Settings</u> : a brief update from Hackney Education Service and City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership on previous recommendations of the Commission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Gamble, The Independent Child Safeguarding Commissioner • Rory McAllum, Senior Professional Leader, CHSCP • Annie Gammon, Director of Education • Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding 	
Agenda dispatch: 11th January 2022	The Commission usually received the annual report of the CHSCP. Further to last year's discussion, as CHSCP is moving toward a more flexible system of reporting - the focus of the item to be agreed : <u>Disproportionality in Safeguarding</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Gamble, The Independent Child Safeguarding Commissioner • Rory McAllum, Senior Professional Leader, CHSCP 	Meeting with CHSCP to agree scope and focus of this item
	CYP Work Programme 2021/22	Scrutiny Officer	To review and monitor progress

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 7	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Meeting Date: 28th February 2022	<u>Cabinet Q & A:</u> Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Annual Question Time for the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member for education, young people and children’s social care. (Standing item)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cllr Anntionette Bramble 	Topics to be scrutinised to be agreed 6 weeks in advance of the meeting in consultation with CYP SC (17th January 2022)
Papers deadline: 15th February 2022	<u>Addressing Racial Inequalities across Children’s Services</u> Hackney Education Service and Children & Families Service to provide an update on work to address racial inequalities and disproportionality in both policy and practice across both Directorates. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anti-racist Action Plans - Audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care ● Annie Gammon, Director of Education ● Jacquie Burke, Group Director Education and Children's Services 	Further clarify focus and reporting requirements with Directors by December 2021
Agenda dispatch: 18th February 2022	CYP Work Programme 2021/22	Scrutiny Officer	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 8	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Meeting Date: 21st March 2022	<u>Parental involvement in education</u> : Hackney Education to report on the project to enable parents to be more involved with local schools, colleges and their children's education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annie Gammon, Director of Education Project Worker (TBC) 	
Papers deadline: 8th March 2022	<u>School Improvement Partners</u> : the role of school improvement partners in improving quality provision and closing the attainment gap between pupils.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annie Gammon, Director of Education School Improvement Partners 	<i>Meet school improvement partners ahead of the meeting</i>
Agenda dispatch: 11th March 2022	<u>Children's Social Care Annual Report</u> - To provide a focus on the impact of parental drug, alcohol and domestic abuse on children and families, the range of support options available and uptake of services during pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care 	
	Work Programme Review 2021/22; members to feedback on scrutiny work programme for the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members of the Commission 	
	CYP Work Programme 2021/22	Scrutiny Officer	To review and monitor progress

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission (jointly with CYP Scrutiny)

Meeting A	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Meeting date: <u>October 11th 2021</u>	Disparities in Maternal Mental Health Outcomes: session to explore the current position in relation to maternal emotional mental health screening, disparities in diagnosis and treatment and the possible problems created downstream when this issue is not adequately addressed early on. (60 mins)	a) Context and background briefing paper - Amy Wilkinson (Workstream Director - Public Health) b) Overview of existing provision (ideally in briefing paper) - Ellie Duncan (CYP&M Workstream in Integrated Commissioning CCG-LBH-Col) - Health Visitors Service - ELFT Perinatal Service - HUHFT maternity services? - Family Nurse Partnership (antenatal support for under 25s) - Maternity Voices Partnership (replacement for Maternity Services Liaison Cttee?) including BME subgroup and Charedi subgroup Who else?? c) Clinical overview - Clinical Psychiatrist from ELFT Perinatal Service (name TBC) d) Service user/support group lead - Representative from the BME Sub Group of the Maternity Voices Partnership (name TBC) to provide a service user input. e) Q&A led by the Councillors	

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With Skills, Economy & Growth Scrutiny Commission (jointly with CYP Scrutiny)

Meeting B	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Skills, Economy & Growth	Priorities, policies and approach to developing cleaner and greener	As part of the session the SEG Commission will aim to hear from CYP about their views of cleaner and greener transport.	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Commission meeting date: <u>December 15th 2021</u>	transport for Hackney for 2022 and beyond.	The Commission to work with HYP to facilitate engagement with young people and conduct other focus groups where necessary.	
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Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission (jointly with CYP Scrutiny)

Meeting C	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Living in Hackney Meeting Date: <u>24th February 2021</u>	<p>Housing support for young people leaving care.</p> <p>What are the housing options for young people leaving (or about to leave) care and seeking accommodation in Hackney and elsewhere?</p> <p>What is the council doing to increase housing supply and options for this vulnerable group of young people?</p>	<p>Local Policy & Practice: Corporate Parenting Team, Housing Supply (and Needs)</p> <p>Housing Needs of Young People: Hold focus group with Leaving Care group - Children's Social Care Council (Hackney Tomorrow)</p> <p>Specialist/ legal input: what are the duties and obligations of LA in supporting housing needs of young people leaving care (in and out of borough)</p> <p>Comparative assessments: other Local Authorities in respect of Corporate Parenting offer / housing supply for care leavers.</p>	<p>Scoping this item:</p> <p>Meeting with Housing Needs and Corporate Parenting (completed)</p> <p>Meeting with Housing supply</p> <p>Prepare brief and agree with Chairs and Officers.</p>

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Long list of scrutiny issues from suggestions (to be added if space develops in the programme or added to next year)	
Supporting children in temporary accommodation, particularly those placed outside the borough. Is there any impact on the consistency or coordination of education, care or support available to such children? What disproportionalities are there in this cohort and how does this impact/ drive delivery?	
Contextual Safeguarding - implementation and embedding of this across the council and partner agencies.	Possible incorporation with review of adolescents in care
Young Futures Commission: implementation of YFC recommendations? The YFC is currently being reconfigured and an update on progress/ plans.	
Integrated Commissioning (CYP and Maternity Services) - usually taken as a joint item on HiH agenda (not scheduled for 2021/22)	
Impact of Covid on the mental health of young people	Possible focus for Cabinet Q & A
Effectiveness of Kickstart in supporting young people back into work -providing high quality opportunities	

Planned Site visits	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission 6th October 2021 Item 8 - Minutes of the last meeting	Item No 8
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OUTLINE

The minutes of the meeting which was held on the 12th July 2021 are submitted for review and agreement..

There were two actions arising from the meeting where Officers agreed to share review findings on the following:

- Residential Children's Home Review June 2021
- Semi Independent Review March 2021

Reports:

Minutes from meeting held on 12th July 2021

Action: Residential Children's Home Review June 2021

Action; Semi Independent Review March 2021

ACTION

Members are asked to:

- Note and agree the minutes from the meeting held on 12th July;
- Note the actions from the last meeting.

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 12th July 2021

Attendees

Sophie Conway (Councillor) (Chair)
Margaret Gordon (Councillor) (Vice Chair)
Lynne Troughton (Councillor)
Katie Hansen (Councillor)
Anya Sizer (Councillor)
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)
Steven Olalere (PG Representative)
Salmah Kansara, North London Muslim Community Centre

In attendance:

- Cllr Sarah Young
- Cllr James Peters
- Cllr Caroline Selman
- Shabnum Hassan
- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play
- Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Annie Coyle, Independent Consultant (Inspection readiness project)
- Wendy Edwards, SEND Contract Consultant
- Joe Wilson, Head of SEND
- Fran Cox, Head of High Needs and School Places
- Naeem Ahmed, Director of Finance, Children, Education, Adults, Health and Integration
- Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
- Huw Bevan, Head of Family Intervention & Support Service

Cllr Conway in the Chair

Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and those members of the public who were viewing the livestream. It was noted that this was a hybrid meeting with members of the Commission in attendance and with officers connecting virtually.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Diane Benjamin, the new Director of Children's Social Care.

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:

- Cllr Anna Lynch
- Cllr James Peters (connected virtually)
- Cllr Humaira Garasia
- Cllr Caroline Selman (connected virtually)
- Cllr Sarah Young (connected virtually)

- Richard Brown
- Shabnum Hassan (connected virtually)
- Ernell Watson

2. Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as had been published.

3. Declarations of interest

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

- Cllr Gordon noted that she was a member of the Member Oversight Board for Children's Social Care and would not participate in Item 6 - the Ofsted Action Plan Update.
- Cllr Peters was a governor at a school in Hackney;
- Shabnum Hassan, was a governor at a school in Hackney;
- Cllr Sizer was a parent with a child with additional needs (in relation to item 4);
- Jo McLeod was a governor at a school in Hackney.

4. Commissioning of Independent SEND Provision

4.1 At its meeting on May 11th 2021, the Commission received a report on SEND performance and financial recovery plan. In response to local concerns about independent SEND provision, it was agreed that a further follow-up report would be provided to allow the Commission to explore:

- The nature of independent SEND provision and how such services are commissioned;
- The type of contracts issued to independent provision and how these are monitored and reviewed;
- The cost of independent SEND provision.

4.2 The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play and Director of Education introduced the report to the Commission highlighting that an internal review of Independent SEND Commissioning had been in progress and that the report highlighted the work undertaken to date. It was acknowledged that a large number of young people with SEND are supported within Independent provision, many of which were located in settings outside the borough and that this report would give reassurance to members about how these services are commissioned.

4.3 In supporting children with SEND, Hackney Education Service was aiming to deliver on a number of key objectives:

- Ensure that every child has access to a place of learning and support;
- Respecting the rights of parents to choose their child's placements;
- Ensuring that there is a good range of quality placements for parents to choose from;
- Making sure that placements offer good value for money to the Council.

4.4 As of January 2021 there were 2,645 children and young people with an EHCP in Hackney, 1,543 of which were supported in mainstream schools and further 373 placed in local Special Schools. A further 474 children were placed in Independent and Non Maintained Special Schools (INMSS) both within and external to the borough.

- 4.5 There has been a significant increase in the number of children placed in INMSS: 474 children with an EHCP were placed in independent SEND provision in 2020/21 compared to just 272 in 2016/17. This has resulted in a significant increase to the spend on iINMSS from £8 million to £13.8 million over the same period. The significant rise in the number of children with an EHCP being supported within INMSS settings has necessitated a review to ensure that local commissioning is robust in face of increased service demand and contract monitoring requirements.
- 4.6 A significant number (256) of the young people in the cohort of children placed in INMSS were from within the Orthodox Jewish Community. Most parents choose to have their child educated within Orthodox Jewish settings, and the SEND team currently commissions 23 different schools to meet the needs of this community.
- 4.7 Hackney Education is also developing a School Organisation Strategy which is considering how the school estate can provide more in-borough maintained options for children with SEND in light of falling rolls within the mainstream sector. In this context, it should be understood that the INMSS report is part of a wider transformation strategy for SEND services which is responding to increased demand for services against a backdrop of ongoing financial pressures.
- 4.8 It was understood that as part of the review of INMSS, HES had undertaken a benchmarking exercise with a number of other local authorities which provided assurance that Hackney was facing similar pressures in relation to increased demand and rising costs of SEND provision. The SEND service was working with Health and Social Care partners as part of the transformation and improvement programme to ensure that quality services were being commissioned which were delivering good outcomes and value for money.
- 4.9 More rigour was being introduced to contracting with INMSS providers moving onto National Schools and Colleges Contracts (NSCC). To date, 42% of INMSS were on the new NSCC. The SEND team had also undertaken a number of INMSS market engagement exercises with all schools and colleges in the sector to develop shared intelligence and to develop working partnerships which can better plan for the needs of young people with SEND in the future. The SEND service reassured the Commission that each child had been individually assessed and were appropriately placed within an INMSS provision that met the needs of the child as were set out in individual EHCP.
- 4.10 The review had identified a lack of specialised provision for children with SEND in the borough which was illustrated by the fact that currently 56% of young people with an EHCP attending an INMSS setting did so outside of Hackney borders.
- 4.11 The SEND team has also developed a Market Provision Map in which all providers are now required to complete an application form as part of the accreditation checks process. This form seeks assurance about the robustness of individual settings delivery model, and will form part of a new system of permanence management and contract monitoring for the service. In addition, Hackney is a member of Children's Cross Regional Arrangements Group which will inform outcomes monitoring and value for money for schools commissioned within the INMSS sector. These

developments will further help to ensure that the team is placing children in provisions which meet their needs at the best available cost option.

Questions from the Commission

- 4.12 What are the strategic ambitions of the INMSS review and how does this link with the School Organisation Strategy? In increasing Hackney provision, what sort of SEND provision is the service seeking to develop?
- The School Place Planning Strategy sits within the Education Estate Strategy. The latter has four priorities: moving additional SEND provision in Borough; managing falling rolls in primary settings; preparing secondary schools for falling rolls within 2-5 years, and: developing a sustainable and effective education estate for the next 10 years.
 - In respect of creating additional capacity for SEND provision within Hackney, the council is seeking to increase capacity by developing satellite provision attached to existing local Special Schools. Secondly, more Additional Resource Provisions (ARP) will be developed in mainstream settings to enable them to support young people with ASD, Moderate Learning Difficulties and Speech and Language and Communication Difficulties. Finally, the SEND team will be working with schools to develop a 'graduated response' to enable more children with SEND to be supported in mainstream settings.
- 4.13 Currently is there any spare capacity among local Special Schools?
- There are 3 Special Schools in Hackney (Ickburgh, Stormont House and The Garden) and all three schools are at capacity and operate a waiting list for when places become available in-year.
- 4.14 In relation to the Education Estates Strategy, how will this address the needs of the local Orthodox Jewish Community (OJC), who appear to be reliant upon the INMSS sector for SEND needs of their children?
- A key aim of the strategy is to provide equity of service for all communities across the borough, and there is a definite need to improve access to good quality provision within the OJC. There is an example of good dedicated OJC provision within the borough called Side By Side Special School and the SEND team was working with this service to formalise commissioning and to understand how provision might be extended. The service was also working with Interlink and the communities that they represent are reflected in the Estates Strategy particularly Side by Side .
 - The service was also working with those schools which support boys aged 13+ from the OJC with an EHCP as the service currently had little oversight or an assessment of informed practice. There is an opportunity to reset this relationship and address any inequalities within the system. The intention of the review is to address OJC reliance on INMSS settings for SEND provision. Parental preference plays an important role in selection of SEND provision, and the SEND service aims to develop good quality service options for the OJC.
 - Side by Side is an Independent School adjudged 'good' by Ofsted for pupils with complex needs including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD)

- HES was also seeking to develop more professional development input into the INMSS sector to ensure that these are within the 'good' or 'outstanding' category. There were also concerns around the curriculum offered within these settings and HES was seeking to develop support for key subjects offered.

4.15 How is the service responding to young people whose SEND needs may have varied as a result of the pandemic?

- The SEND team is instigating a system of annual reviews for every child with an EHCP to ensure there is an updated assessment of children's needs. This will also ensure that collectively, the SEND team is aware of emerging local needs (e.g. girls with autism). In this way the service is continually reviewing local SEND needs. This is a significant challenge for the service however, given that there are over 2,600 children with an EHCP in Hackney.

4.16 Whilst the SEND team has ambitions to increase Hackney based SEND provision and reduce reliance on INMSS settings, a large number of children are still supported in these settings and are likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future. What assurance can the service provide about the quality of INMSS settings or highlight if there are concerns around any specific types of settings. It is noted that 58% of INMSS had not moved to the new NSCC contact monitoring, so how satisfied is the service of the efficacy of contract monitoring and quality assurance for these settings?

- Monitoring is undertaken at two levels: organisational and the individual child.
- In terms of the individual monitoring of the child, annual reviews are undertaken which assess the child's needs and how well these are being addressed by the INMSS. The review tracks the outcomes and progress and is undertaken as a joint assessment with contributions from parents and the EHCP Coordinator.
- At the organisation level, although 42% of INMSS providers had signed over to the NSCC, this was expected to rise as this transfer programme had only been in operation for 6 weeks. Sign over to the new contract will help to monitor individual organisation performance. Before a child is placed in any INMSS, the SEND Team will check the Ofsted report of the setting and ensure that the setting is Section 41 registered.¹
- The SEND service will also assess if other Hackney learners have attended this setting and how good their learning outcomes had been. A panel is in operation which approves every placement within the INMSS sector to ensure that the needs of the young person are met at the commissioned setting.
- A Senior Contracts Monitoring Officer was appointed in January who will be prioritising those settings which are rated as Inadequate or Require Improvement by Ofsted. Improved contract monitoring will also help to acquire a breakdown of how the fees for these services are calculated. A renegotiation of fees has also been commenced with some providers which had helped to cap costs.

¹ Section 41 schools – These are independent special schools which have been approved by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Children and Families Act (“CAFA”) 2014 as schools which a parent or young person can request to be named in an EHC plan. This means parents or young people have a right to request that this type of school is named in an EHC plan in the same way they can request a maintained school.

- 4.17 What outcome monitoring is undertaken of current contracts with Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools and importantly, how does this inform future commissioning? Is there any historical outcome data for these settings?
- This data is recorded and tracked in the pupils annual review process over time.
- 4.18 How is the service involving local parents with SEND in these decisions about INMSS and future strategy involving this provision? Is the service reaching a broad range of parents?
- The SEND team works with the Parent Carer Forum not only to share information, but also to help co-produce that strategy. There is also a SEND Partnership Board which has a number of working groups which all have parent representatives. Whilst the service works closely with HiP, the needs of young people with SEND were wide-ranging however, and it was recognised that there were other parent groups with whom the service wished to develop a working relationship. The team were working with an organisation called Contact which is undertaking a best practice review of parental engagement which will not only provide a picture of what is currently being provided but also help to identify if there are any gaps in local provision and how best to take this forward locally.
 - It was also noted that there was also work taking place to develop Youth Voice within the service. The service will be looking to further develop opportunities for young people with SEND to contribute and feedback on service development and improvement. This is still a work in progress, but the service has high ambitions and is a priority for the team.
- 4.19 What impact has the cyber attack on the Council had on this work?
- The SEND team were not directly affected by the cyber attack, though social care partners were. The social work service had been in contact with education partners to help rebuild case information.
- 4.20 Section 4.1 sets out the new Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS) which is to be introduced to support commissioning INMSS. How will the views and feedback of children and their parents interface with this tool?
- The PDPS allows commissioners to develop pre-qualification or accreditation checks data on all providers. The PDPS in effect builds a list of INMSS providers which have been checked and for which due diligence has been undertaken for every provision named on an EHCP. This is then a resource for the SEND service.
- 4.21 The Chair thanked officers for attending and summed up the information provided by officers. It was felt that the information provided had been very frank and open and highlighted the challenges faced in commissioning INMSS SEND settings. It was expected that the Commission would continue to look at how independent children's services are commissioned and the quality assurance processes that underpin that commissioning process. It was also noted that this remains a very significant area of spend and risk for the Council and would therefore remain in sight in terms of budget monitoring.

5. Budget Monitoring Children and Families Service

5.1 Budget monitoring is a key element of the scrutiny function and the Commission monitors in-year spending on services for children and young people across respective Directorates. The Children and Families Service budget outturn for the year to end of March 2021 was presented for review.

5.2 The Director of Finance introduced the report noting that all figures contained within it were provisional at this time (although no material change was expected). Key data highlighted from the report were as follows:

- After the application of reserves (£3.86m commissioning reserve and a £1.6m Ofsted Improvement reserve) a £3.3million overspend was anticipated for Children & Families Service;
- Additional expenditure arising from Covid accounted for £2m of the overspend;
- The main areas of overspend were in the corporate parenting budget which, after the application of the commissioning reserve, recorded an overspend of £4m. Residential Care is the most significant area of overspend where services have 40 children placed at an average cost of £200k per placement per annum;
- Independent fostering placements are twice as expensive as using the in-house fostering team and this was also an area of significant overspend;
- A Social Care Grant of £9.3m was received to support adult and children's social care which was distributed evenly between these services;
- There were underspends in Clinical Services (£217k), Management (£944k) and Safeguarding and Learning Team (£182k) which contributed to an improved overall financial position;
- In terms of management actions taken to help reduce costs the Post 16 Commissioning panel has been set up to help address costs across the wider health, education and social care partnership. Further still, all high cost placements are reviewed weekly to ensure that children are stepped down where this is appropriate. The Workforce Development Board was also undertaking a strategic assessment of future staffing needs for the Directorate.

Questions from the Commission

5.3 Understanding that £2m of the overspend was related to Covid 19, what proportion of the additional costs attributed to Covid are anticipated to continue into the 2021/22 budget?

- The bulk of the Covid 19 overspend related to increased staffing costs and delays in social care placements for children, and as such these costs are not expected to continue into 2021/22. It was acknowledged that this scenario could change however if there was a 3rd wave in the year ahead. The Finance Team was beginning to undertake preliminary financial modeling that possible future waves of Covid 19 would have on the Children and Families Service budget.

5.4 It was noted that there has been a reduction in the number of No Recourse to Public Funds Applications, can further details be provided as to what factors might be underpinning this?

- Although numbers had been falling, there had been a small recent increase in the number of families presenting for No Recourse for Public Funds (NRPF) assessment. The CFS was working with the University of Wolverhampton 'What Works' which is an early intervention project for families likely to seek NRPF. The decline in number of applications was attributed to the impact of Covid and increased border restrictions.

5.5 What factors are underlying the increase in demand and budget pressures for both Under 18 and post 18 semi-independent placements? What options does the Council have to help contain costs for semi-independent placements?

- CFS had undertaken a forensic review of the use of 40+ children in residential care and 46 semi-independent care. There are a number of key lessons from this piece of work:
 - 1) The service was confident that children are placed in high quality semi-independent care and well supported;
 - 2) Many young people presenting are around 16/17 years of age who are often troubled with acute housing needs. Placement options for these young people are relatively limited as few can be placed in foster care. In response the service has further developed and improved the joint assessments process when these young people first access the service, where the service has tried to support the young people and address needs through a social care framework rather than solely housing.
 - 3) A number of these children would be better cared for by a foster carer, but there needs to be additional work to improve the recruitment of local foster carers. These foster carers need additional support to help care for 16/17 year olds who have very specific needs.
 - It was noted that whilst there has been an increase in the number of children being placed in semi-independent care over the past 18 months, the most recent data would suggest that this has levelled off over the past 3 months. This has been the result of tighter assessments at the 'front door' and more engagement with families, and holding families to account more in supporting the needs of this cohort of adolescents.

5.6 Could further clarification be provided on the areas of underspend in the CFS budget and whether these were due to Covid? Has this contributed to a better financial position?

- It was acknowledged that there had been areas of underspend but these were marginal compared to additional costs for Covid. The Finance Team were reviewing how Covid had impact on services with a particular view about how this may generate future efficiencies.

5.7 In terms of residential care homes in which children are placed, can further details be provided as to where these are located? What impact does an out of borough placement have on young people? Is there any intention in developing a more localised response where additional capacity is created closer to home?

- No data was available on the number and location of children in residential care placed out of the borough, though this could be provided to the Commission. CFS agreed that it was important to keep children safe and

protected and where possible close to their family and social networks. For some young people with highly complex needs, a residential home was the best option, though the placement options were very limited. A placements manager oversees this process and ensures that placements do meet the needs of young people. For all these placements there is an emphasis on therapeutic input to ensure that children are developing and their needs are being addressed with a view to bringing them back into other less intensive care options such as foster care. Out of the 40 children that were assessed in the forensic review, the majority were deemed to be in the correct setting and that just 4 could have been placed in foster care. These children had very high needs which were being met well by the residential home. There would be a residential placement review across the service every 6 months,

- Hackney is part of a consortium of other Children's Services across NE London which does support 3 children's homes, which CFS does have access to. It is really important to match needs of young people to these settings, and whilst there had been a number of vacancies in the past few months children from Hackney could not have been placed there as their needs would have disrupted the home and other children there.

Agreed: CFS to provide data /mapping on the residential homes in which children are placed.

Agreed: Forensic analysis of the review of residential - semi-independent care to be sent to the Commission.

5.8 The report has indicated a dependency on reserves to offset overspends in the CFS. How sustainable is this approach?

- At present CFS was having to contend with a significant surge in demand for children's social care services. The Finance team were looking to look at demand planning and income stream over the next 3 years to understand further what the service pressures are likely to be. This exercise has commenced and will complete over the summer and will hopefully result in a cost reduction plan to bring the budget back in line.
- It was expected that the Social Care Grant would continue and increase in the future, but it was accepted this was not sustainable and that a more comprehensive settlement would be needed.

5.9 The Commission had earlier heard about new developments in commissioning INMSS for SEND provision which will improve contract monitoring and value for money assessments. Is there any potential learning from these new developments in the SEND team which can be applied to commissioning children social care provision?

- As part of the cost reduction plan for 2021/22 CFS had been meeting with high cost residential homes to build a better understanding of how fees were calculated. In this process it was noted that some residential settings had been charging for 24 hour care when young people were actually in education during the day. Whilst there was a much more forensic look at the fees being charged, in general there was very little leeway given the nature of the residential children's home market.

- 5.10 The number of children being placed in independent foster care appears to be rising at the expense of in-house foster care placements. What is the service doing to increase recruitment for in-house foster carers?
- The service is aware of this issue and wishes to recruit more foster carers. 15 households were currently being assessed for eligibility for the in-house foster care team. There has been a realignment of the fostering team over the past 6 months where the recruitment team and foster care team are now working more closely. Now foster care social workers also undertake assessments that would have previously been made by the recruitment team, this is beneficial as the foster carer can provide professional support to new foster carers who they know through the assessment process. This has been important to help retain foster carers.
 - As a result of Covid, people were re-evaluating their lives and there had been an upsurge in the number of people seeking to become foster carers. A key issue remains however is that there is a mismatch between the expectations of new foster carers (who are looking to foster young children) and the reality that the main demographic of children entering care are children aged 14+. A permanent recruitment manager was also now in place.
- 5.11 The commission noted that housing was a significant barrier to foster carer recruitment. Are there any ways which the council can address this issue more corporately?
- CFS had been working with finance to assess how prospective foster carers could be supported to extend their homes when they had insufficient bedroom capacity. If a loft conversion or extension could be built this would enable new foster carers to be recruited, and given the relative high costs of residential care, this would have a short payback period. There were contractual issues to consider however, such as whether the foster carer would be required to continue fostering. There were concerns around the enforceability of such arrangements.
- 5.12 What does the data reveal about foster carer retention in Hackney?
- There was a comprehensive training programme to support in-house foster carers. There is an issue around retention of foster carer retention as the skills expected of foster carers is evolving in response to the evolving needs of children entering care. There were real contextual safeguarding risks for many children which foster carers often found difficult to manage and address, and the service was working with foster carers to help improve their skills and confidence to be able to retain these placements. Foster carers have to hold children through some very turbulent times in their lives and the skills, patience and expertise they demonstrate in doing so should not be underestimated.
 - The Mockingbird Hub was also being used to support foster carers on the ground as was increased levels of peer support. Officers were also developing a non-academic pathway for accreditation at Level 3 so that this can be used for further career development.
- 5.13 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. The Chair noted that there had been financial pressures within the corporate parenting budget for a number of years and it was right that the

Commission retain oversight of this to ensure that adequate measures are in place to contain these without compromising services to young people. It is hoped that the work of the Commission in respect of adolescents entering care will contribute to this issue.

6. Action Plan Arising from Ofsted Inspection

[Following an earlier declaration of interest, Cllr Gordon excused herself from this item.]

6.1 Ofsted inspected the Children and Families Services in Hackney in November of 2019 where children's social care was adjudged to 'require improvement'. Six areas were identified as requiring improvement:

1. The quality of information-sharing by partners and the quality of 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 assessment and planning for children subject to private fostering arrangements.
4. The 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 conference chairs.

6.2 In response to the inspection, the Children & Families Service drew up a Childrens Social Care Action plan which was submitted to Ofsted for approval in March 2020. The Commission scrutinised progress against this action plan in November 2020. Two reports were submitted as part of the ongoing scrutiny of the improvements required by the Ofsted inspection:

1. An update on the Children's Social Care Action Plan
2. Proposals to review the Unit Model of Social Work in Hackney

6.3 The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care introduced the Action Plan Update. The Cabinet member thanked officers in preparing the update and for the ongoing work to improve children's social care in light of the Ofsted report. It was noted that the Council was trying to be as open and transparent as possible about the work to improve, and all updates were published on the website as it was important that the local community hold the council to account.

6.4 Officers highlighted a number of key issues from the report:

- Audits were showing a positive trajectory on information sharing across the safeguarding partnership;
- A training and development programme for all staff in dealing with child neglect had been commissioned for all staff;
- Over 90% of assessments are completed within statutory time frame of 45 days;

- 12 children are in private fostering arrangements, a small but very vulnerable cohort of young people - case audits had found that practice for 10 out of 12 was rated as 'good' or 'outstanding';
- The CFS has also strengthened its supervision offer by front line managers to improve effective oversight of cases.
- Children's summaries have been introduced on the front of case files which is important in the context of the interim information management systems which have been introduced;
- A new monthly meeting with staff has been developed to provide an additional perspective to improve quality assurance, this is very much a 'bottom-up' process in which front line managers can raise issues with senior management.

Questions from the Commission

6.5 Metrics detailed within the report would suggest that whilst progress is being made in some areas, there are a number of metrics which show that further improvement is still required (e.g. information sharing, children living in neglectful environments). How confident is the service that sufficient and timely progress is being made in readiness for a future inspection?

- The improvement journey is still progressing for CFS and the acting Director of CFS had taken on a supporting role for the new Director, to ensure that the service was ready for the next Ofsted inspection. The key areas for improvement that were highlighted by Ofsted (lack of management oversight, drift and delay in decision making, children staging too long in neglectful circumstances) have all undergone significant improvement though it will take some time to embed all these new systems. Every authority has to be ready for an inspection as this can come at any time, and the service was confident that it can evidence improvement for the service areas required for an expected Ofsted focused visit between July and December. It was acknowledged however that the CFS was still on a journey to obtain a good rating from Ofsted in an inspection of children's social care.

6.6 Well supported, positive and engaged staff are central to service improvement yet it is clear that front line staff have faced acute pressures over the past 18 months as they have had to deliver practice improvements required for Ofsted alongside dealing with the impact of Covid and the cyber attack. What assurance can be provided to the Commission about the morale of children's social care staff? Have any audits or surveys taken place? Has there been any increase in staff turnover in the past 12 months? What additional resources and support mechanisms have been put in place to help staff?

- The CFS is acutely aware of the pressures that staff have been under over the past 18 months and is at the forefront of concerns. Although staff morale was assessed to be good at the last inspection, it cannot be complacent on this and has a number of programmes and plans in place to support this. New communication systems with staff were developed over the pandemic and the service is now at a point of transition in which it is trying to retain the positive elements of how the service adapted (virtual meetings). 'Schwartz Rounds' have been piloted in CFS which is a themed support approach for staff, giving them space to discuss the emotional impact of their work.

- No data was available on staff turnover at the meeting, but in general it was reported that compared favourably to other neighbouring authorities. It was noted however that the pandemic had prompted staff to re-evaluate their lives and careers and it was clear that some staff had left (e.g. to return to their home country).
- Early this year, a new cohort of social workers had been recruited from the pool of agency workers which was a positive development, and CFS would be working to ensure that this group of staff are well supported and maintain their positions within the service. An additional 12 newly qualified social workers had also been recruited who would be joining CFS over the summer.
- It was important that the service not only created structures which listen to the views of front line staff, but help to embed suggestions for improvement into practice.
- It was also noted that caseloads across CFS were good where social workers were on average looking after between 12-17 children (slightly more within the assessment team). This has been a conscious decision of the CFS. The shift from the unit model to a more individually accountable model of professional practice has also enabled a higher level of management support for individual caseloads.

6.7 Is the CFS satisfied that children are not living in neglectful situations or situations of harm for too long before action is taken?

- The CFS had undertaken an enormous amount of work in responding to this issue identified by Ofsted and the service has directed additional support to the management and support of children's plans. There has been much work to improve the management sign-off of interventions and review of casenotes. It was suggested that the previous Hackney model in which a consultant social worker oversaw a caseload of 34 children and young people with a collaboration of social workers supporting these children was not effective in identifying the progress that children were making. It was also noted at the time of the last full inspection that consultant social workers had in the region of 80+ children within their caseloads limiting the oversight that could be provided. There is now improved individual accountability within the structure where individual social workers are accountable for their professional practice. There is now a three tiered layer in which social workers are supported by Consultant Social Workers who are in turn supported by a Practice Development Manager which will increase managerial oversight and reduce the risk of children being left in neglectful circumstances. The introduction of the Children's Resource Panel has brought a systematic approach to supporting children from prevention right through to permanence.

6.8 The Commission noted that just 54% of children being electively home educated (specifically those with an EHCP) had been provided with an annual review. Why were so few being undertaken and what was the service planning to do to increase the number of reviews?

- The EHCP review process is the responsibility of the SEND team who would be best able to respond to this question. It was noted that this service had worked hard to improve the quality and consistency of these assessments.

- 6.9 What steps is the CFS taking to ensure that the workforce reflects the community which it supports?
- Officers did not have data to hand, but reassured members of the Commission that workforce data was monitored quarterly for the whole of CFS. At practitioner level the service is broadly reflective of the community, though there is some room for improvement. In terms of permanent practice staff there is a higher proportion of white staff whereas among agency staff there is a higher proportion of practitioners who are Black. The service has written to individual agency staff encouraging them to become permanent and this has been successful. In terms of senior managers, there is a disproportionate number of white staff which CFS hopes to rectify through inclusive recruitment, the Anti-Racist Action Plan and succession planning. The service is also working to develop the cultural competency of staff for working with children and families who may not be of the same cultural background as them.

- 6.10 The Hackney model has been in operation for a number of years, what has changed to prompt the re-evaluation of the Hackney model? What are the strategic intentions for the review of the model?
- The Hackney model was innovative in 2008 which through the provision of additional administrative support helped social workers to spend more time with children and families with whom they worked. Changes in resources and increased demand has changed the context for social work, and staff had raised concerns that the model was not giving them enough time to do what was expected of them given the number of children being held within units. The Ofsted focused visit and inspection with its assessment of the need to improve managerial oversight was also a catalyst for change. In the end, the model was mismatched to the demands and expectations of the service and the level of support that children and families need.
 - The landscape of children's social care has evolved significantly since 2008 for example there is now much greater emphasis on contextual safeguarding in assessing risks to children and young people and there is now much greater awareness and understanding of the impact that domestic abuse has on families. The Clinical Service has been critical to the success of the Hackney model and still plays a significant role in supporting children, families and staff across CFS. The Clinical Service has adapted and modernised and is now central to the Hackney model. In essence the Hackney model hasn't been erased, it's been updated and refreshed.

- 6.11 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. In summing up, the Chair noted that it was important to maintain oversight of the key metrics which underpin the measurement of improvement of children's social care in readiness for a future Ofsted inspection.

7. Work Programme

- 7.1 The updated outline work programme was discussed by the Commission. Since the last meeting the Chair and Vice Chair had met with both Cabinet members to discuss the work programme going forward into 2021/21 and will also be meeting senior officers in the coming weeks. The Commission will be consulting and

updating the Commission as we go forward in agreeing the work programme over the summer.

- 7.2 The main additions to the work programme are as follows:
- Maternal mental health disparities will be taken at a joint meeting of the health in Hackney and Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission on October 11th 2021.
 - A briefing paper had been received by the Commission on housing options for children leaving care. The Chair and Vice Chair together with members from Living in Hackney will meet officers to scope this item.
 - In respect to the impact of LTN on children and young people, the Chair and Vice Chair together with members from the Skills, Economy & Growth Commission to scope and plan for this as part of a broader item on decarbonising transport.

- 7.3 The Commission will be updated on new development over the summer with a finalised programme published in October 2021.

8. Minutes

- 8.1 Matters arising - at 5.5-5.6 the Commission discussed borough wide attainment data for children and young people sitting exams for 2020 and in the forthcoming year. The absence of this data is concerning as this is central to assessments on the attainment gap, an ongoing piece of work of the Commission. The Commission will meet with officers to see how best to take this work forward.

- 8.2 The minutes of the meeting held on the 12th June 2021 were agreed by the Commission.

9. Any other business

The date of the next meeting is at 7pm on 6th October 2021.

Meeting closed at 9.45pm

Residential Children's Home Review June 2021

There has been a significant increase in the number of our looked after children who are living in residential children's homes over the past few years. In May 2021, our budget for this type of care arrangement was projected to be over £4.2million pounds overspent by the end of the year. In this context, and building upon the significant organisational learning from a review of semi-independent accommodation carried out in February 2021, the Interim Director requested a review of residential care. The purpose of this review was to look at both our value for money and the quality of care for our children who are currently living in residential children's homes.

This review was undertaken in June 2021. Over the course of 2 weeks, practitioners (and where possible Independent Chairs) allocated to 37 of our looked after children met together with Annie Coyle (Interim Director); Laura Bleaney (Interim Head of Service for Corporate Parenting); Claudia Hillaire and Korinna Steele (Service Managers in Corporate Parenting); Maria Zazovskaya (Resource Manager of the Placements Management Unit) and Marissa Gardner-Wright (Practice Development Manager for the Safeguarding and Reviewing Team) to review their children's care planning.

Key features of the children in the cohort reviewed included:

- The average age of the children was 15.2 (the youngest was 11.4 and oldest 17.7);
- 39.5% were female and 60.5% were male;
- 2.6% of the children were Asian, 39.5% Black African or Caribbean, 31.6% dual heritage and 26.3% white (in contrast to 40% of the overall population of Hackney's children who have a Black, Asian or minority ethnic heritage, with approximately half of these from a Black African or Caribbean family background);
- The average cost of the residential homes was £4,608 per week (ranging from £2,300 p/w to £10,500 p/w);
- 19.25% of the homes had an education cost included (ranging from £600 p/w to £1,673 p/w);
- 16.39% of the homes included therapy or health costs (ranging from £190 p/w to £2,596 p/w). Currently we are awaiting a CCG contribution towards the therapeutic costs for one of these children only;
- 21% of the children have ADHD; 18% have autism and 11% have a learning disability;
- 82% of the children had an Education and Health Care Plan.

Strengths in practice noted included the following:

- Through the course of the review we heard stories of a number of children who were doing well in their current residential homes. Many of these children had experienced several unplanned moves in foster care before transitioning to their residential homes and had been supported to settle in their new home over a period of time, by skilled, resilient and empathetic staff teams. These staff had learnt to understand these children's needs and (critically) how to contain their distress when they became upset, angry or frustrated. Some of these children are benefiting from particularly meaningful relationships with therapeutic staff attached to their care homes.

- We were delighted to hear from some excellent social workers, who spoke with joy about the achievements of their children and who were proud to celebrate their successes with us. These practitioners knew their children incredibly well and had a detailed understanding of their care needs. Many had long-term relationships with them and referenced their own resilience in working through challenges in these relationships over time.
- Although few and far between, we heard some good examples of planned transitions into residential care, with children playing a proactive role in the search for their new care arrangement and being offered a sense of agency by being invited to share an opinion about the right match for them.
- Some examples of outstanding care being offered in a residential children's home setting were shared, often by trusted providers who PMU have developed relationships with over time. The best examples referenced providers who offered a clear programme of intervention, which was goal focused, where providers gave regular, detailed updates about the outcomes their care achieved for the children and their recommended next steps.
- For a small handful of children, we heard that the residential children's homes had truly become 'home' for them and although they were approaching adulthood, it was right to continue to support them to remain where they were living in preparation for this important transition.

However, over the course of the reviews it became increasingly clear that there was a significant amount of organisational learning emerging. This included:

- 1. An absence of a shared sense of organisational responsibility for commissioning high quality care arrangements, which represent value for money.**
- 2. Outcome focussed planning for children living in residential homes needs to be stronger.**
- 3. There is significant scope for improvement around the commissioning and review of therapeutic support.**
- 4. Struggles to find the right foster care household to meet our children's complex needs hampered move on plans.**
- 5. There are concerns about the prospect of some of our children 'growing up' in institutional care.**
- 6. There is work to do to ensure that the plans for transition to adulthood for disabled children living in residential care is better and offers a more containing experience for our children.**
- 7. Where our children are living in homes that Ofsted has rated less than good, we need a shared organisational understanding of what we need to do to ensure they are getting good enough care.**

Recommendations

- All new requests for a child to move to a residential children's home must be presented and agreed at the Children's Resource Panel.

- Joint review to take place with the CCG of all children who are accessing homes inclusive of a therapeutic cost, to consider CCG contribution.
- A new High Cost Provision Panel to be established, to take over responsibility from the Care Planning Panel for the quality assurance of the care planning for all children and young people living in residential children's homes, as well as other high cost provisions (e.g specialist fostering households, or high support semi-independent accommodation) at a strategic level. Panel to be Chaired by the Head of Corporate Parenting, Panel members to include Corporate Parenting Service Managers, Designated Nurse for Looked After Children (representing CCG commissioning), the Head of the Virtual School, the CFS Clinical Service and the Safeguarding and Reviewing Team.
- Review to be undertaken of our Fostering Recruitment Strategy, to consider potential for recruiting for specific children.
- Going forward, consideration for children who have disabilities, where their need for residential care is primarily related to their disability, to remain allocated to the Disabled Children's Service when they become looked after, so they can continue to benefit from this service's specialist knowledge and skills.
- Further work to be undertaken with Adult Social Care to improve transition planning for disabled children living in residential children's homes.
- Practice guidance to be developed around roles and responsibilities of allocated practitioners, Independent Chairs and the Placement Management Unit for commissioning and reviewing care arrangements for our children and young people.
- Practice guidance to be developed about children living with providers that have been rated by Ofsted as less than good.

Semi-Independent Review - February 2021

Following concerns about the number of requests for young people to be offered semi-independent accommodation through the Children's Resource Panel, at the beginning of this year the Interim Director requested a review of our use of this type of provision. This review was undertaken in February 2021. Over the course of 3 weeks, practitioners allocated to 28 of our looked after 16 and 17 year olds living in semi-independent homes met together with Annie Coyle (Interim Director); Robert Koglek (Head of Service for Corporate Parenting); Claudia Hillaire, Nina-Duro-Emanuel and Abiola Banwo (Service Managers in Corporate Parenting); and Maria Zazovskaya (Resource Manager of the Placements Management Unit), in order to review the care planning for these young people.

Key features of the reviewed cohort included:

- All of the young people were aged 17 at the time of the review, although 82% of them had moved into their homes at the age of 16;
- 43% of the young people had been looked after by us for a number of years, whilst the other 57% came into our care at the age of 16 or 17;
- Of those young people who had been in our care long-term, 50% had been moved into semi-independent provisions from a residential children's home, whilst 25% had moved following multiple foster care breakdowns.
- Of the young people who entered our care at the age 16 or 17, 43% entered care - and were accommodated straight to a semi-independent provision - in an emergency situation, whilst 25% were moved to semi-independent provisions following foster care breakdowns.

Themes emerging from the review included:

- Too many young people entered care in emergency situations, at which point semi-independent providers were often the only option for accommodation that could be sourced by the Placement Management Unit. Reviewers felt for several young people there were missed opportunities prior to this for more effective planning to support a smoother transition into foster care.
- There were some examples where semi-independent accommodation was offered as young people refused offers of foster care. In these circumstances, opportunities were missed to revisit family options or continue to explore possibilities for foster care, or potentially supported lodgings, rather than offer semi-independent provision.
- Where semi-independent provisions were sourced in an emergency, too often this became the de facto long-term plan, with no ongoing efforts made to continue the search for the right foster care arrangement for a young person.
- Where young people were spending a lot of time away from their semi-independent provisions, and often known or suspected to be with their parents or other family members, this was rarely seen by practitioners as an opportunity to revisit the possibility of rehabilitation back home.
- At times the provision of semi-independent accommodation appeared to be our default position, particularly for 17 year olds. However, over the course of the review

it became increasingly clear that these provisions generally do not offer the level of 'care' that we would want for our young people, particularly those with additional vulnerabilities, for example, linked to their mental health or extra-familial risk.

- Practitioners' knowledge of the commissioning arrangements for our semi-independent providers - what we were paying for them and what we expect them to provide to our young people in return - was often very limited. There was little evidence of practitioners having a detailed knowledge of the service being delivered and holding them to account for this e.g. what work key workers were doing, week in week out, with their support hours. The context of lockdown - where many visits over time have been virtual - seemed to have exacerbated this tendency, as practitioners had limited opportunity to quality assure the atmosphere and physical environment of the homes themselves, or see support staff directly interact with the young people in this setting.
- For some young people who spent little time in their semi-independent homes, often in the context of extra-familial risk, there were concerns about arrangements for them to be given a weekly subsistence lump sum, with little oversight of how this was being spent.
- Questions were raised about whether arranging for young people who were deemed to be at risk of criminal exploitation out of the borough actually significantly increased safety for them, given most remained within relatively easy travelling distance from Hackney.

Actions taken following the review

- A renewed organisational commitment has been made that foster care is our best hope for all children and young people in our care, no matter what their age. To reinforce this message, since the review all new requests for semi-independent accommodation must be agreed by the Director of Children's Social Care.
- The structure and terms of reference for the Children's Resource Panel have been amended, to encourage Social Work Units to proactively refer children and young people who are on the edge of care, prior to any need for accommodation, rather than after they are accommodated. The ambition is to try and mobilise organisational resources at the earliest opportunity, in the hope of a) preventing the need for accommodation where possible and appropriate, or b) where care is deemed to be in the young person's best interests, to support a well planned entry into care.
- A new Subsistence Payments Guidance for 16 and 17 year olds is being developed to ensure our young people living in semi-independent provision receive appropriate support and monitoring around the money they are given and spend.
- A proposal for a new Edge of Care Service is being developed that can offer an intensive, specialist, evidence based model of support, not only around prevention of care, but also return home from care (where appropriate).
- The Placements Management Unit is now documenting on children and young people's all potential care options sourced during home finding on files, so these options can be reviewed over time.
- Ongoing work is taking place on the Housing Needs only Pathway: PMU are now able to access two emergency beds through One Housing and Outward providers.

These are only available during working hours (not on EDT) and should be considered for young people who are more likely to have a housing need only, for example, those young people that are approaching their 18th birthday in less than 13 weeks. The properties in which these emergency beds are located are mainly staffed 24 hours. Whilst using these emergency beds the young person will be assessed and prioritised to move to one of the licensed rooms. There is also an agreement with Greenhouse and the Housing Department that young people that are close to approaching their 18th Birthday will be assessed by them prior to their 18th birthday. PMU Manager and LAC and Leaving Care Manager delivered a training session around this with Access and Assessment social work managers in May 2021.

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Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 6th October 2021

Official Attendees for the record

Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair)
Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice Chair)
Cllr Lynne Troughton
Cllr James Peters
Cllr Humaira Garasia

Connected Virtually

Cllr Caroline Selman
Cllr Anya Sizer
Jo Macleod (HASGA)
Shabnum Hassan (PG Representative)
Ernell Watson (Free Churches)
Salmah Kansara (North London Muslim Community Centre)
Volkan Ganidagli (Hackney Youth Parliament)

In attendance:

- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play
- Jacquie Burke, Group Director, Education & Children's Services
- Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance
- Brendan Finnegan, Head of Youth Justice Service
- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years & Early Help
- Peter Algacs (Team Leader, Young Hackney)

Cllr Conway in the Chair

Welcome and introduction

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and those members of the public who were viewing the livestream. It was noted that this was a hybrid meeting with members of the Commission in attendance and with officers connecting virtually.

The Chair also welcomed Jacquie Burke to the meeting, the new Group Director for Education and Children's Services.

It was noted that since the last meeting, the Commission had amended the Constitution to enable young people to be represented at its meetings from both Hackney Youth Parliament and Hackney Tomorrow (Hackney Care Council). It was noted that the Commission would facilitate young people's involvement in its work as well as attendance at its meetings.

At the start of the meeting as only three members of the Commission were present, the meeting was not quorate and therefore not able to make formal decisions.

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1. Apologies for absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:

- Cllr Caroline Selman (Connected virtually)
- Cllr Anya Sizer (Connected virtually)
- Jo Macleod (Co-opted member) (Connected virtually)
- Shabnum Hassan (Connected virtually)
- Salmah Kansara, North London Muslim Community Centre (Connected virtually)
- Ernell Watson (Connected virtually)
- Cllr Sarah Young
- Steven Olalere (PG)
- Richard Brown (CoE Representative)
- Michael Lobenstein (UOHC Representative)

2. Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no urgent items and the agenda was as had been published.

3. Declarations of interest

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

- Cllr Margaret Gordon was a member of the Member Oversight Board for Children's Social Care and would not participate in Item 4 - the Ofsted Focused Visit;
- Shabnum Hassan, was a governor at a primary school in Hackney;
- Cllr Sizer was a trustee of Ivy Street Family Centre;
- Jo McLeod was a school governor at a primary school in Hackney;
- Salmah Kansara worked at a Children's Centre and would therefore not participate in item 6 (Early Years Strategy & Reconfiguration of Children's Centres).

4. Ofsted Focused Visit

4.1 Since the Commission received an update on the improvement plan for Children's Social care in July, Ofsted have undertaken a further focused visit within Children's Services to assess arrangements for Children in Need and those children on a Child Protection Plan. The outcomes of this focused visit were published in a letter by Ofsted on September 7th 2021.

Cabinet member introduction

4.2 The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care introduced this item. Managers and staff from across the service have reflected on the outcomes of the last full inspection and made substantial progress in improving services for young people and their families. Whilst the outcome of recent focused visit (July 2021) noted that there were areas which still required improvement, it was clear that there were many positive aspects to service provision and that as a whole, the service was moving forward in a positive direction of travel which would hopefully meet local ambitions for the service to be rated as 'good' and 'outstanding' in future inspections.

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4.3 The Cabinet member also noted that whilst the pace of change was not as quick as they would have hoped, service improvements have been developed for the longer-term to ensure the sustainability of provision. The new appointment of both Group Director (for Education & Children's Services) and Director (for Children's Social Care) would also cement these improvements. The Members Oversight Board (jointly Chaired with the Mayor) continued to maintain an overview of service improvements in children's social care alongside the staff board which is to be Chaired by the Group Director.

4.4 The Cabinet member wished to thank all staff for the hard work in supporting improvements across the Children & Families Service.

Children and Families Service

4.5 The Group Director, Director and Head of Safeguarding & Learning noted that the Ofsted inspectors had been on site for two days and had assessed casework relating to children identified as Children in Need and or who were on a Child Protection Plans. Officers highlighted a number of assessed outcomes of the focused visit:

- The CFS now has dedicated scrutiny of service improvement by Senior Management;
- There was a strong local understanding of the needs of young people and their families, and that assessments and plans were strong with improved management oversight of casework;
- Practitioners worked hard to know young people and had strong and positive relationships with them and their families;
- There was a good understanding of needs and application of care thresholds, and care plans were proportionate and helped to keep children safe.

4.6 There were a number of service areas highlighted for improvement which included:

- Quality of written records;
- Accessibility of case records and management systems, particularly access to historical records.

4.7 Children and Families Service (CFS) had developed a response to the outcomes of the focused visit which were detailed in the attached report. These would eventually be merged with an updated Children's Social Care Action Plan. Key actions highlighted within the report included:

- In respect of the quality of written records, a new Child Summary has been developed to sit at the front of case records to provide a condensed case history together with statements from the voice of young people. This had been recently rolled out across the service.
- The cyberattack had necessitated the service to develop an interim children's social care database whilst record management data was being recovered. Whilst it was recognised that the establishment of the interim system was a significant achievement in the timeframe, it was not as accessible or user friendly as the previous system and did not provide the reporting functions which management needed.
- Additional guidance had also been developed to help improve the quality of written records. Similarly, work was commencing on improving the simplicity and accessibility of children's social care plans.

7.20 pm: Four members of the Commission were now present and the meeting was therefore quorate.

Questions from the Commission

4.8 In respect of required developments to improve the voice of the child, is the issue related to practitioners not collecting such data or not recording it? Also, what improvements in recording the voice of the child have been seen as a result of new guidance and systems described in the presentation and report? How are Hackney Tomorrow involved in developing the voice of young people in social care?

- The issue identified by Ofsted was that practitioners fully and positively engaged with young people during their visits and fully reflected this in subsequent case notes. However, the voice of the young person is edited or diluted in subsequent social care plans and/or iterations of those plans. Therefore, at the end of the process it is difficult to determine the views or wishes initially expressed by the child. It was also noted in the Ofsted report that the views of children were not always consistently recorded at the outset and this should be improved.
- Children do attend child protection conferences and this is a very meaningful and powerful way in which children are engaged in decisions about them and the care that they receive.
- Hackney Tomorrow was noted to have done some excellent work to support CFS, in particular its approach to Looked After Children Reviews.

Action: The Commission noted that where possible it would like the inclusion of the voice of the child reflected in reports it receives.

4.9 Following the impact of the cyberattack, what improvements have been made in relation to record keeping. To what extent will the current records management system and difficulty accessing case histories be a barrier to positive outcomes for future Ofsted inspections, that is, is this likely to be an ongoing problem or something that will be resolved shortly?

- The effect of the cyber attack is a considerable challenge for the service and until there is a record system in place which is fit for purpose, this will affect the outcome of any graded assessment by Ofsted. The current system does not have the functionality to give Ofsted the information that it needs in the timescale required for them to undertake the inspection. CFS is working closely with in-house IT teams and external software manufacturers to improve local systems. The Group Director was also meeting with officials at both Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) to work out the next steps for the organisation. It was noted that there were major decisions ahead, not only in relation to access case records systems across Education as well as children's social care, but also for adult social care.
- There is a system in place where practitioners can write down and record notes from their visits (and from partner visits) but this is an interim system and it does not have the functionality of previous systems (MOSAIC), e.g. searches, performance or data retrieval. This is a significant issue for the Council and whilst Ofsted were sympathetic to the situation, the Council recognised that it had to move at pace to restore a viable and compliant records system as soon as possible.

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4.10 Aside from improved records management, what are the key milestones for the CFS to reach its ambitions for the service to be inspected as 'good' and then on to 'outstanding' service?

- The CFS is now keenly aware of what it must do to move to good and onto outstanding practice, and there are a number of work streams supporting this process. Following on from this, the key aim will be to ensure that there is consistency in the application of improved social work practice. It was also acknowledged that there would be a need to amalgamate the outcomes and action from respective inspection into one development plan for the service, which could be monitored and reviewed.

4.11 To what extent does the limitations of the record system have in terms of risks for CFS?

- Although reporting was limited at the moment because of the recording system, officers were confident that they were not missing anything; officers were aware of all looked after children, where they were and what support they were getting. There was also a full record of all meetings (including with partners) held in supporting children in care or being supported by the service. Once a new record system was decided upon, the service would then begin to migrate existing information across.

4.12 How are managers assessing what staff feel about recent changes made to social work practice? What are the key areas of feedback that staff have provided and what changes have been made as a result?

- Staff have responded well to new patterns of service delivery. There were some initial concerns about morale of staff, but there is now a marked improvement. Staff from across the service have been positive about the outcomes of the focused visit and that Ofsted recognised the hard work of staff in making service adaptations and improvements. Staff were buoyant and ready for the ongoing challenge of development and improvement.
- There is also a rich forward plan in terms of communication and engagement with staff and a number of livestream engagement events with all staff had already been undertaken or were planned. As new senior staff in the organisation both the Group Director and Director had undertaken preliminary meetings with staff which helped 'temperature check' how staff were feeling.
- In terms of pace and new developments, these issues will be ever-present in the organisation as this was part of the continuum of improvement. It was also noted that staff were now spending a lot more time together physically, and that working in small teams again had had a positive impact on morale.
- The Cabinet member also noted that they had undertaken floor walking exercises with the Director and reported that staff felt more comfortable in reporting issues of concerns and were confident that action would be taken.
- Regular staff surveys are undertaken across the whole service and the most recent one undertaken in July was positive with staff reporting that they had a sense of autonomy in their work and that management was supportive. There were some key areas of learning for CFS from this survey which centred on the need to improve in support to staff through the process and pace of change. Wellbeing was also an area identified by staff which was also being addressed by the service.

DRAFT

- 4.13 Is there a timeframe for the next full inspection of children's social care services by Ofsted?
- In recent conversations with regional officers at HMI Education, it was suggested that Ofsted would return for a further focused visit within 12 months and that a full graded (ILAC) inspection would follow sometime thereafter.
 - CFS is ambitious and a development plan is currently being drafted which not only encompassed how the service would respond to Ofsted outcomes, but broader service wide improvements.
- 4.14 The Chair thanked officers for attending the meeting for this item and responding to questions from the Commission. The Chair acknowledged that staff had faced many difficult issues over the past months and whilst that ongoing issues pertaining to the recording system were clearly hampering progress, it was hoped that these could be resolved soon to better support staff and ensure children and young people continue to receive a good service. The Commission would continue to maintain oversight of the Ofsted Action Plan once this was updated.

5. Youth Justice Service

- 5.1 In July 2021, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) undertook a themed inspection across 9 different Youth Justice Services, including Hackney. This item was planned as an opportunity for the Commission to consider the outcomes of this inspection and how local services have responded. The report was not published as planned (on 4/10/21) and therefore the Youth Justice Service provided a short briefing for members in advance of the meeting which provides useful contextual information about the service.
- 5.2 The HMIP inspection report is expected to be published on 21st October 2021 and will be circulated to the Commission thereafter. It was agreed that should any lines of enquiry be developed from the report, that the Commission would present these to officers and their responses published in a future agenda to note.

Agreed: HMIP inspection report to be distributed to the Commission when published, and any questions arising from that report to be submitted to officers, with a response published in a later agenda.

Youth Justice Service

- 5.3 It was noted that Hackney was selected to be part of the HMI probation inspection not because the borough was perceived to be a problem, but because of the diversity of the resident communities. The thematic inspection focused on the disproportionate outcomes of youth justice, issues to which the service was already alert. As an organisation, the service was beginning to analyse and understand what might be improved for such young people earlier on in their life pathways which might have prevented them from entering the youth justice system. In Hackney, this narrative was rightly focussed on black Caribbean and mixed heritage boys and how supporting bodies can intervene earlier and more effectively to address their needs.
- 5.4 Fewer than 1 in 100 children and young people aged 10-17 were involved (either formally or informally) in the criminal justice systems locally, meaning that 99% of local young people were therefore doing well in difficult and challenging times. Of the 1% of young people who are in the local criminal justice system, there is an over

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representation of black Caribbean boys. When considering serious crimes and those which end in a custodial sentence, the over representation of black Caribbean boys in this cohort is exacerbated further still: at times over 90-95% of those young people detained by the state locally have been from black or mixed heritage families.

- 5.5 There are however, low numbers of young people in Hackney who are first time entrants into the Youth Justice System (YJS). There have been fewer than 100 first time entrants to the YJS in Hackney for each of the past 5 years, and most recently (2020) there were just 79. Also, for informal out of court disposals, 82% of these young people did not come back into the YJS. In terms of re-offending, which is an important measure in youth justice, the re-offences per offender ratio is lower than many of the neighbouring 'family' of boroughs who have similar demographic profiles.
- 5.6 There are areas where the service would like to perform better, particularly in relation to education, employment and training (EET) as it is widely understood that education is a protective factor for many children in preventing them from entering the YJS. Whilst Hackney does achieve well locally with 69% of young people in EET at the end of an order, the YJS would like to do better and has an aim to reach 80%.
- 5.7 The other area of concern locally was the high levels of violence and use of weapons within local youth offending. Again, the same ethnic disproportionalities are evident in this specific cohort.
- 5.8 The YJS does achieve good outcomes for children and young people it supports. This was attributed to the the approach that the service adopted which incorporated the following principles:
- 'Child first, offender second' approach, recognising that all these young people are all under the age of 18;
 - Trauma informed approach - recognising that children and young people require support for emotional development;
 - Young offenders are not treated as 'mini adults' and that there is a real effort on behalf of staff to understand the narrative of young people and their family and to project this to the court;
 - A recognition that unmet needs are a common denominator for this group of young people where there is a high incidence of abuse, neglect and other harms and where many have educational or other learning needs.
- 5.9 A key aim of the YJS workers is to help these young people build, develop and maintain supportive relationships with adults. This is challenging because the YJS is an agent of the state, and many local young people across different communities have a strong distrust of law enforcement and other governmental bodies. Staff do not condone behaviour but encourage young people to reflect, learn and look forward to the future.

Questions from the Commission

- 5.10 There is a growing body of evidence, both national (Lammy Report) and local (Account Report) which indicates that young black boys are treated differently within local law enforcement and criminal justice systems. How is the service addressing these disproportionalities locally within the CJS?

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- One of the most important aspects of this work data is data analysis, and the ability to be able to track and explain. The service has data which shows such disproportionality and is seeking explanations from partner agencies. For example, the YJS invited police to review 20-30 'stop and searches' that took place in Hackney, and where improvements were identified this informed the provision of further advice and training within the organisation. The YJS is also reviewing 'red dot' stops and use of tasers on young people with the police at an upcoming meeting.
- On a day-to-day level staff in the YJS work with the lived experience of the young people that they support, and ensure that young people and their families know how to respond to repeated stop and searches and are encouraged to use the Independent Office of Police Complaints. There is also an advocacy role to ensure that young people have a voice and their views are heard in YJ proceedings and to bring challenge to the justice system and other legal processes.

5.11 Adultification is where young people are perceived to be more mature (e.g. less innocent, more sexually aware) than their actual age, which leads to young people being viewed and treated as adults and particularly affects black and other minority ethnic communities. What is the local YJS doing to address adultification?

- Evidence from Middlesex University which has assessed young people's access and engagement with local youth justice provision found that there was no statistically significant difference among different ethnic groups accessing support services in Hackney which was encouraging. Notwithstanding this, the YJS acknowledges that there are issues with adultification and that this is issue really grounded in racial and ethnic bias and discrimination. Problems with adultification were most keenly felt in the post court stages of the YJ system in relation to courts, sentencing and defence solicitors.
- It was noted that adultification was also structural with young people treated as adults in Home Office and Ministry of Justice policy positions, for example the Domestic Abuse Act which treats 16 year olds as adults.
- It was also noted that the Education and Children Services Directorate was developing an Anti- Racist Action Plan which would address adultification in the wider adolescent population as well as young offenders.

5.12 Hackney Youth Parliament Question: How is the YJS helping to improve trust between local young people and the police?

- The YJS is a multi-agency partnership and the Head of Service manages a wide range of officers including police, SLT, Education as well as Youth Justice officers. All these officers are subject to the same oversight and training in their approaches to young offenders which includes (seeking the child at the centre and offending as part of a wider system, trauma informed approach, emotional intelligence and coaching; effective, evidence based practice). It is hoped that this approach and understanding of youth offending is similarly adopted and utilised by police officers when they return to other duties within the force.
- Senior officers within the Council would, with the assistance of local data and records, hold the police to account for their actions. For example, there was a

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stop and search survey, and those officers which did poorly within this were given further advice and additional training.

- The Head of YJS also raised this issue with senior police officers, both locally and nationally, noting that young people in London were policed more aggressively and that much more should be done to engage young people. Whilst the police have improved communication and engagement with adults, further improvement was required in their engagement with young people.

5.13 As improved partnership working at both a governance level and operational level has been previously highlighted as an area for improvement, what progress has been made in this respect? In particular, to what degree is there a shared understanding and approach to key local issues such as safeguarding and adultification?

- In terms of partnership, the CHSCP will have some oversight of the work and will play a role in signing off the annual report. It is now widely understood that education helps to keep young people safe, and that keeping young people engaged in education and training is a key safeguarding issue for all services. There is good linkage between those boards which have oversight of those children which offend and who are in need of safeguarding support.
- Any disproportionalities that arise in the cohort of young people that offend, be it in terms of race, gender, or undiagnosed need, is an indication that earlier intervention is needed on behalf of the collective of local services.

5.14 How does the service plan to involve the voice and lived experiences of young people in local policy and practice? How does the YJS work within the local community such as local youth groups to ensure that the voice of young people is heard?

- It was acknowledged that this was not currently one of the strongest areas of the YJS work. It is clear that young people do have a mistrust of local law enforcement and youth justice services, which is a barrier for developing engagement and involvement of young people in service development and improvement. The YJS is clear that this was a community safety issue and that it would be seeking to engage young people who have experience of the local criminal justice system for their feedback on the services provided to support them. The YJS service was planning to support this engagement through accredited learning and or provision of fair wage for their time and input.

5.15 Other work undertaken locally would suggest that undiagnosed SEND or other additional needs is associated with youth offending? How significant is this issue among the local cohort of young offenders?

- From a local perspective, 6 out of 10 young offenders have an undiagnosed /unmet need particularly centering on speech, language and communication difficulties. All materials used within the service to engage and support young people have been developed in consultation with SLT service. The service also tried to avoid the jargon of youth justice and other public service, so young people can better understand the process.

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- 5.16 In relation to unmet needs of young people, how is this understanding communicated and shared with local partners, for example, the police in stop and search processes?
- Whilst the Head of Service does raise the issue of unmet needs (poor education engagement and attainment, physical & sexual abuse, loss and bereavement, experience of crime as victims) at strategic partnership board meetings, this remained a valid and live issue.
- 5.17 How does the service ensure that the language used in supporting children and young people in the CJS does not exacerbate or compound the disadvantage that different groups young people experience?
- Race continues to be a significant narrative in the youth justice systems and the disproportionate impact that this has with children and young people of Black and mixed heritage communities. The HMI Probation report on disproportionality will undoubtedly make for a sobering read when it is published in (21/10/21) and this will emphasise the need for local services to work in partnership to be more assertive in their support for young people at an early stage.
- 5.18 Given that young people can come into contact with the criminal justice system at an age as early as 10 years old, and that records of their involvement may remain on the system for a considerable period of time, what is the YJS doing to support local young offenders in helping young people to move on and forward with their life?
- It was noted that informal disposals do not create a criminal record for young people. Further still, a recent ruling by the Supreme Court now means that a pre-court disposal (Youth Caution and Conditional Caution, Community Resolution) is now spent upon completion and young people do not have to disclose this in the future. This gives young people the opportunity to leave adolescent offending behind.
 - Scotland has moved the age of responsibility for criminal behaviour to 12 years whereas in England this remains at 10 years. Whilst the local service may be in favour of such a move, this was of course in the control of the MoJ.
- 5.19 Although only 10-15% of people on the local gangs matrix are young people, given that these young people are children, should they actually be on this matrix and how are local services supporting them?
- The YJS works hard to ensure that only those young people who are on the gangs matrix are those who are embedded within local gangs and actively engaged with serious violence.
 - Previously young people who were being sexually exploited were referred to as child prostitutes, and there has been a similar paradigm shift with those young people involved in gangs and associated gang cultures, where there is now a greater recognition that these young people may be criminally exploited. Thus young people for whom there is grave concern and who may appear on the gang matrix are increasingly viewed through a safeguarding lens.
- 5.20 Given that Tower Hamlets has lower numbers of young people who have been permanently excluded and Hackney shares a borough Command with Tower Hamlets, the Commission enquired if comparative data was available for the number

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of First Time Entrants (FTE) into the YJS and the youth reoffending rate per offender?

- Officers noted that they did not have this data to hand but would make enquiries at TH and pass this data back to the Commission.

Action: To provide the Commission with data from Tower Hamlets on FTE into the YJS and the youth reoffending rate per offender.

- 5.21 The Chair summed up the item by reiterating how important it has been for the Commission to maintain oversight of this area. Questioning within the session highlighted similar patterns of ethnic disproportionalities in the YJS data to what are recorded for other policy areas, such as school exclusion. The Commission would review the HMI Probation inspection report when its published and forward questions on to the service. On the evidence presented and subsequent discussions with officers, the Commission would also review whether it would be beneficial to revisit this area again within the next work programme.
- 5.22 The Chair thanked officers for their reports and for attending the meeting and responding to questions from the Commission.

6. Early Years Strategy and Reconfiguration of Children's Centres

[Following an earlier declaration of interest, Salmah Kansara excused herself from this item.]

- 6.1 Further to the confirmation of the Early Years Strategy at Cabinet, a consultation on the reconfiguration of Children's Centres was launched on 15th September 2021. The Commission is being consulted as part of that consultation which closes on 16th November 2021. Officers presented a number of supporting documents which included:
- Early Years Strategy Cabinet Report;
 - Early Years Strategy
 - Consultation Strategy
 - Consultation Questionnaire.

Early Years Service

- 6.2 The Group Director introduced the item noting the following:
- The Early Years Strategy (EYS), which was grounded in sound evidence base, aimed to ensure that services worked strategically to give young people the best start in life;
 - The EYS will respond to the wide ranging impact that the pandemic has had upon young people and their families.
 - The Consultation sets out a proposal for the reconfiguration of children's centres which is an approach which will lead to financial savings to improve the Council's financial position.
 - The reconfiguration aims to limit the impact that this will have on young people as proposals are about service reach as opposed to physical buildings.
- 6.3 The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play thanked officers for the development of the EYS. The Cabinet member noted the following:

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- That a number of engagement exercises had been undertaken to support the development of the EYS including a user survey of parents. Members were also consulted through the Health & Wellbeing Board, Member Oversight Board and a dedicated member drop-in.
- Community feedback from the survey of parents noted the importance of integrated services that children centres offer as well as access to universal facilities such as stay and play. It is hoped that the EYS will protect these but it was noted however that the merging of services into the future.
- The vacancy rate for childcare had been growing in nurseries and some children's centres, and there was a wider regional trend of falling rolls across reception age children.
- It was acknowledged that there was a savings context for the EYS as the Council needed to respond to funding pressures not only as a result of declining central government funding, but also due to additional pressures arising from the pandemic and the cyberattack. The Council had been forced to look at discretionary spending, which includes children's centres, as this service is almost exclusively resourced through discretionary funding.
- As a consequence it had been necessary to make savings within the children centre network through the proposed closure of two children's centres. It is important that this is done strategically and in a planned way to minimise impact. In addition, the EYS will see the development of:
 - Six Family Hubs for children (aged 0-19) and their families;
 - Two Early Years Hubs for children with complex needs;
 - Further integration of EY and Health Visiting services.

6.4 The Head of Early Years and Early Help also outlined the main changes set out in the EYS and the consultation process:

- The consultation on the EYS and the reconfiguration of children's centres was launched on 15th September 2021 and would run until 16th November.
- It is acknowledged that the closure of two children's centres is a contentious part of this wider service reconfiguration and that the consultation would give affected families an opportunity to contribute and respond.
- The EY service was holding meetings with families who will be directly affected by the planned closures and these would provide an opportunity for the service to set out the rationale for the closures and for parents to respond.
- Both children's centres proposed for closure were in Cazenove Ward which whilst an area of significant growth, demand was centred in the independent sector rather than mainstream settings.
- At the time of the meeting there were in excess of 500 childcare vacancies across Hackney, and a number of local primary settings were reducing the number of forms for school entry.
- The impact of covid on young children has been well documented with young people presenting with significant gaps in social, emotional and educational development. Similarly, the pandemic had impacted on the takeup of the 2 year-old free childcare entitlement for vulnerable children.
- Whilst it was acknowledged that the reconfiguration would mean taking some services away, this would enable the service to focus on those groups who may have been underserved in the past (e.g. children with additional or special educational needs). The EYS was therefore an opportunity to refocus

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local efforts and to target those most in need of support and tackle disproportionalities in the service.

Questions from the Commission

- 6.5 Both the proposed closures are located in the north of the borough. What impact will the closure have on other surrounding children's centres and nurseries? Do they have sufficient capacity to pick up additional demand? How will service users of children's centres proposed for closure be supported to transfer across to other services?
- There are 4 children's centres within 10 minutes walk of each other. Whilst this is an area of high growth, this growth is focused within the independent sector. There will still be a need for the drop-in and the stay and play services and there will still be capacity in the sector to deliver to this need after the closures.
 - It was noted that even with these closures there will still be three other centres in close proximity which are all well used by parents.
 - The Cabinet member also sought to reassure the Commission that in a previous closure of a children centre, the service has worked well with affected families and helped them move to other nearby centres.
- 6.6 What is the total savings that will be realised from the closure of the two children's centres and what additional investments will be necessary to support the wider development of the EYS (e.g. Family Hubs)?
- There is no additional new money and proposals for Family Hubs and Early Years Centres for additional needs will be developed from existing resources across services supporting children and young people.
 - It is estimated that the cost savings from the closure of the two children's centres will be approximately £1.2m, though it was emphasised that the costs of children's centres were rising year on year (e.g. salaries, catering, resources).
 - The only way to fund increased costs of children's centres with no additional funding would be to increase childcare fees. The new fees structure introduced in 2019 reduced the subsidy to higher income families to enable support for lower income families to be increased. Whilst £500k of savings were released in year 1 (of 2 year plan), the second part of the programme was not applied because of Covid and the anticipated savings (£500k) were not possible. Therefore the additional savings from the children centre closure will help offset this shortfall.
 - Health partners will not bring new money into the service, though they will bring new opportunities in the form of new and improved ways of working to better support the holistic needs of children and their families.
- 6.7 Since the pandemic, families have been accessing less childcare and in different ways. Does the service not expect that the way that families access services will change once again once the pandemic is over. Is the service making decisions about the service based on current patterns of usage which may not be representative?
- The Council has had to make savings and the EY service has been given a savings target as part of this wider programme of savings.

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- There has been widespread change in the pattern of parental takeup of childcare, with parents focusing usage within 15 and 30 free childcare entitlement and less use of wrap-around services.
- Whilst the local birth rate and the number of births at the Homerton (circa 4,000 to women resident in Hackney) has remained broadly static, there has been an increase in births among the Orthodox Jewish Community.
- There are a number of transitions in the early years sector which are taking place, not all of which are attributable to Covid. There have also been changes in overall vacancy rates.
- The Group Director noted that even whilst this was a painful decision and not without impact, and even if two children centres closed, there would still be 18 children's centres remaining in Hackney which was substantially higher than other neighbouring boroughs. It was important not to focus on the buildings but on the services that are available locally, and that the new proposals set out in the EYS would help local services to reach more young people and their families.
- The proposals put forward in the strategy were centred on sustainability of future provision and these proposals to close children's centres have been reluctantly put forward.

6.8 Whilst the service has indicated that this was a strategic review across the whole children centre network, what assurance can be provided for the financial viability of the remaining 18 children's centres and that further closures would not be necessary in the near future?

- The Cabinet member would have liked to offer more confidence on this, but the service was in a vulnerable position financially. The Cabinet member was confident that the service would respond to closures by ensuring vulnerable families were supported, for example, ensuring that vulnerable two-year-olds entitled to free 15 hours of child care continued to access their entitlements.
- The Cabinet member was confident that the right decision had been taken on the proposed closure of the specific centres. The other 18 services were secure, and these centres would not be 'hollowed out' but continue to provide an integrated range of services. The service had to focus on the remaining 18 centres to ensure that staff morale is not impacted.

6.9 The Cabinet report (at 6.4.1) states that the Early Years Strategy presents an opportunity for integrated funding for local health and education support services. Will the Early Years Strategy provide an opportunity to lever in additional funding to support shared early years ambitions and priorities with our partners?

- The Early Help Review (EHR) and Early Years strategy are interlinked, and the former will be brought to scrutiny at a future date (November 1st). The EHR has reviewed the early help offer provided by different services across Hackney Council (e.g. Children Centre, Young Hackney and Children and Families). The EHR will help develop a more coherent early help offer from the council, and further work will then be undertaken with the wider partnership to build wider buy-in and support.

6.10 How will the Early Years Strategy synchronise with other key council strategies such as the Community Strategy, and the upcoming Early Help Strategy? How does the

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geographical fit of Children's Centres and other early years services correlate with neighbourhood areas developed by the local CCG?

- The key part of the EYS is about greater integration and working more closely with colleagues in Public Health and in the Homerton Hospital who deliver the Health Visiting service. HV and children's centres are working with the same children and the same sets of parents to deliver shared priorities. Thus closer working relationships would hopefully mean better access to shared data and the ability to target parents in need and to deliver interventions earlier. The HV service will be redesigned for the end of the current contract in 2023 to reflect these shared ambitions and objectives.
- There are 6 children centre clusters and 8 neighbourhood areas. The early years team were working closely with neighbourhood areas to improve communication and partnership with adult teams (e.g. recognising where children may be present in the way that adult services may be provided and vice versa). Early analysis was positive that bridges were being developed between early years and adult services. There were 8 neighbourhood areas as these related to the number of patients in a specific area and would not correspond to 6 cluster areas. It is hoped that further work with neighbourhoods will bring improvements with the way that early years connects with GP's and wider family of services (e.g. Midwives).

6.11 Can further details be provided on funding for Family Hubs?

- In terms of funding for the Family Hubs, these financial figures for these were not to hand at the meeting, but it was emphasised that there was no new funding for this new development.

6.12 Will the SEND hubs developed in the north and south of the borough be funded through the High Needs Block?

- Yes. The intention is that this will support SEND and Early Years working together more effectively to better support children and young people.

6.13 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. As noted earlier, the Commission would develop a response to the consultation and formally respond before this closed on 16th November 2021.

Agreed: The Commission to develop a formal response to the consultation and submit this by 16th November.

7. Work Programme

7.1 The latest version of the work programme was presented to the Commission. A number of updates were highlighted which included:

- Early Help Review to be taken on November 1st;
- School Estates Strategy to be taken on November 1st;
- School Improvement Partners role in closing the attainment gap;
- Parental engagement and support in schools.

7.2 The Commission was finalising off the scope for its prospective review for this year which was focusing on adolescents entering care. This would be shared with senior officers and members of the Commission for their views and input.

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7.3 At the 6th December meeting it was noted that it is Cabine Q & A with Cllr Woodley. The Chair requested that members put forward suggestions for specific policy areas to focus on.

7.4 The work programme was evolving and would aim to address key themes arising from the consultative process.

8. Minutes

8.1 The minutes of the last meeting held on 12th July 2021 were discussed by the Commission.

8.2 There were a number of actions from that meeting on the 12th July 2021 which included requests for further data from the Children and Families Service on:

- Children placed in residential care;
- Children placed in semi-independent care.
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8.3 This data was provided by Children and Families Service and included in the minutes. It was noted that this data provided a helpful understanding of both the successes and challenges of supporting children in these different residential home settings and would be useful for the Commission in its work on adolescents entering care and housing options for children leaving care.

9. Any other business

The date of the next meeting is at 7pm on 1st November 2021

Meeting closed at 9.30pm