

# 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

**Monday 1 November 2021**

**7.00 pm**

**Council Chamber, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street. London E8 1AE**

Contact:

Martin Bradford

☎ 020 8356 3315

✉ [martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk)

**Mark Carroll**

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, Cllr Sarah Young, Cllr Anya Sizer, Cllr Lynne Troughton  
and Cllr Caroline Selman

**Co-optees:** Steven Olalere, Shabnum Hassan, Salmah Kansara, Jo Macleod, Ernell  
Watson and Michael Lobenstein

## Agenda

**ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

- |          |                                     |                  |
|----------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Agenda &amp; Papers</b>          | (Pages 5 - 88)   |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Minutes of 1st November 2021</b> | (Pages 89 - 104) |

## Access and Information

### Getting to the Town Hall

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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

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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: Monday 1st November 2021 at 7.00pm**

**Venue: Council Chamber, 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/iNj0FNssMqY>

(An alternative link is provided below in the event of technical difficulties)

<https://youtu.be/NfsUleZu8MQ>

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  
martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

**Mark Carroll**  
Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

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

**VACANT** 1 Labour, 1 Opposition,

**Co-opted Members:** Shabnum Hassan, Steven Olalere, Jo Macleod, Salmah Kansara, Ernell Watson and Michael Lobenstein, RC Rep (VACANT) CoE Rep (VACANT)

5 representatives: Hackney Youth Parliament / Hackney Tomorrow

**Publication Date:** October 22nd 2021

## Agenda

1.	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>
2.	<b>Urgent Items / Order of Business</b>
3.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
4.	<p><b>Early Years Strategy and Reconfiguration of Children’s Centres (19.05)</b>            To support its formal response to the Early Years Strategy and Reconfiguration of Children’s Centres, parent representatives from Hillside Children’s Centre and Fernbank Children Children’s Centre have been invited to present to the Commission.</p> <p>A joint submission from parents group representatives has been provided for members.</p> <p>Parent Representatives from Fernbank and Hillside: Lizzie Kenyon, Nick Yates &amp; Natalie Aguilera</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(30m)</p>
5.	<p><b>School Estates Strategy (19.35)</b>            In the context of falling school rolls, but increasing demand for more in-borough support for children with an EHCP, Hackney Education Service is developing a new School Estates Strategy.</p> <p>A report on the context and drivers for change as well as the underpinning priorities is enclosed for members to review.</p> <p>Joe Wilson, Head of SEND            Fran Cox, Head of High Needs &amp; School Places            Annie Gammon, Director of Education            Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(50m)</p>
6.	<p><b>Early Help Review (20.25)</b>            A review of Hackney Council’s Early Help Services has been ongoing since 2019 which has encompassed services provided through Young Hackney, Family Support Service and Early Years &amp; Children’s Centres. Members are invited to review reports which set out the aims and principles underpinning the review, the emerging outcomes and priorities from the review as well the implications for services.</p> <p>Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education            Joshua Naisbitt, Early Help Project Manager</p> <p style="text-align: right;">(50m)</p>

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7.	<b>CYP Work Programme 2021/22 ( 21.15)</b> To receive an update on the Commission's work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.
8.	<b>Minutes of the last meeting (21.20)</b> To note and agree the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th October 2021.
9.	<b>Any other business (21.25)</b>
	<b>Meeting Close 21.25</b>

## 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](mailto: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).

# Overview & Scrutiny

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.

# Overview & Scrutiny

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## Hillside and Fernbank Parents - Feedback on Early Years Strategy & Consultation Process

22 October 2021

1. There are significant issues with how Hackney residents are being consulted on these proposals and specifically the proposed closures of two Children's Centres. There is also a significant lack of information about what data underpins the proposals. Without this information it is very difficult to give a meaningful response to this consultation. Examples are as follows:

- This consultation is only open for 8 and a half weeks (16 September - 16 November) as opposed to 12 weeks which is best practice in public consultation.
- The consultation documents are not clear about the scope to influence through the exercise as is recommended in best practice.
- A meaningful consultation on a topic of this nature should be proactively seeking views from relevant stakeholders - it is not clear what steps have been taken to reach interested parties beyond a letter to parents in the centres at risk of closure and invitation to a one-off meeting lasting one hour.
- It is not clear whether Hackney has a consultation standard / code of practice and if so, how this exercise complies with it.
- On September 13th, Hackney Today published an article regarding the proposed closure of the two children's centres prior to that evening's Cabinet Meeting where Cabinet then approved the Early Years Strategy. The public consultation then only opened two days later on September 15th.
- The report about the Early Years Strategy which went to cabinet for approval on the 13th September did not contain details of the proposed closures, only about the strategy and loose wording around 'reconfiguration'.
- The proposed Early Years Strategy is a standard process by which the Council reviews policy. The closure of the nurseries has to do with the overall budget of the Council, and what it is considering for the upcoming 2022/23 financial year. These two issues are different and should be consulted on separately.
- The online survey does not allow for views to be given as to why respondents agree/disagree with the closure of the two centres (question nine) - only to question five - not allowing residents to give relevant views in relation to this very significant proposal.
- The way in which the consultation survey question about the closures is presented is leading - the information presented is highly selective and present the closures of the children's centres and the other plans within the Early Years Strategy as mutually exclusive when they are not. This is misleading and could influence the way in which people respond to the question.
- It is not clear whether the £1m budget cut to Early Years Services is commensurate with cuts across the whole budget. If it is not, we would like

understand on what basis the decision that cuts were necessary for the youngest and most vulnerable residents of Hackney.

- The consultation documents contain insufficient information about/references to the data on which decisions have been based:
  - The consultation states: "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." How were residents spoken to? Was this representative? On what basis were residents responding to questions about priorities? Were they aware of the potential uses of their views? Is there a write up of this evidence?
  - The documents lack any detail on the expected costs and benefits of the proposals or as compared to alternative models explored.
  - The consultation survey states: "The centres are situated in an area where increasing numbers of children are attending independent settings, up from 1345 in 2020 to 1446, with fewer children in the community attending mainstream provision" - What is this 'area' referenced? How are the boundaries defined and how does this relate to the location of the proposed closures? How does this relate to vacancies in the same area rather than borough-wide as referenced? The statistic given without this detail is meaningless. Donna Thomas herself, in her evidence to the scrutiny commission on 6<sup>th</sup> October stated that research showed that families travel from all over the borough to access childcare so the number of children attending independent setting in the immediate area is not entirely relevant.
  - The map included in the strategy and consultation is at best, not fit for purpose and at worst, misleading in terms of how it illustrates availability of existing childcare provision across Hackney. For example, it does not include any detail of the ages provided for (e.g. some settings do not offer childcare for under twos), quality of provision, hours of operation (i.e. full time v part time, term-time or year-round), nor the cost of places. In at least one case, provision marked on the map has closed down. Anyone answering the consultation would not necessarily know what this means and could assume there is sufficient provision when agreeing/disagreeing with the proposals to close two centres.
  - The consultation survey states: "There are five centres within walking distance of each other, which would allow children to conveniently attend the remaining 3 centres." This is misleading - there are parents who already travel to Hillside nursery from the North West side of the borough for whom the remaining three centres would not be 'conveniently' located. The statement presents the case as though all affected families live between the five centres which is simply not the case. This could unfairly influence people responding to the survey to agree with closures.
  - No information is shared in the consultation documentation about the criteria for assessment of the two particular centres for closure. This was provided verbally at a one-off meeting for parents only of the two affected centres. When a parent who wasn't able to attend requested a copy of the minutes from the Fernbank meeting in a follow up email they were told by Donna

Thomas that they didn't exist but that our feedback had been 'captured' by the consultation team. This means there is no way of sharing the information or feedback gathered there with e.g. parents not able to attend or to other local stakeholders.

- No information has been given about the numbers of families affected
- No information has been given about the other options considered in the development of these proposals and why these conclusions have been reached.
- It is not clear from the consultation documents whether an equality impact assessment has been undertaken in relation to the new Early Years Strategy and proposed closures and what this has found.
- It is not clear from the documents whether the proposals were developed based on a recent childcare sufficiency assessment or not. The last assessment in the public domain appears to have been conducted in March 2020 - this information is over 12 months old and likely to be out of date, not least because of the impacts of COVID.
- It is not clear if any other comprehensive needs assessments have been undertaken in the development of the new Early Years Strategy and if so, what this has found.

2. The proposal to close two Children's Centres, which currently offer excellent services and care to local families, will make the lives of over 100 families worse and less supported. These centres have been serving local people for decades and are trusted by the community. Closing these centres will increase inequality and division in an area of the borough that is already struggling with these problems.

Parents at affected settings have been told they will need to send their children further away, to childminders (which is a completely different form of childcare and one which many parents don't want for their children), to private nurseries which are unaffordable, or to provision for under twos which doesn't yet exist at Woodberry Down. These are not reasonable alternatives.

<b>Children &amp; Young People Scrutiny Commission</b> 1st November 2021 <b>Item 5 - School Estates Strategy</b>	Item No <b>5</b>
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### **OUTLINE**

In response to falling school rolls in mainstream settings and increased demand for in-borough placements for children with an EHCP, Hackney Education Service is developing a School Estates Strategy.

An outline of the emerging strategy is provided to members including the rationale for change, together with plans to increase in-borough provision for children with SEND and effective use of the boroughs school estate.

The School Estates Strategy is due to be approved by Cabinet in December 2021.

### Reports

Emerging School Estates Strategy

### Action:

Members are invited to contribute to the ongoing development of the School Estates Strategy by reviewing the attached report and questioning officers present.

### Attendees

Joe Wilson, Head of SEND

Fran Cox, Head of High Needs & School Places

Annie Gammon, Director of Education

Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education



# **CYP Scrutiny Commission: School Estates Strategy**

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**Annie Gammon, Director of Education**

**Fran Cox, Head of High Needs and School Places**

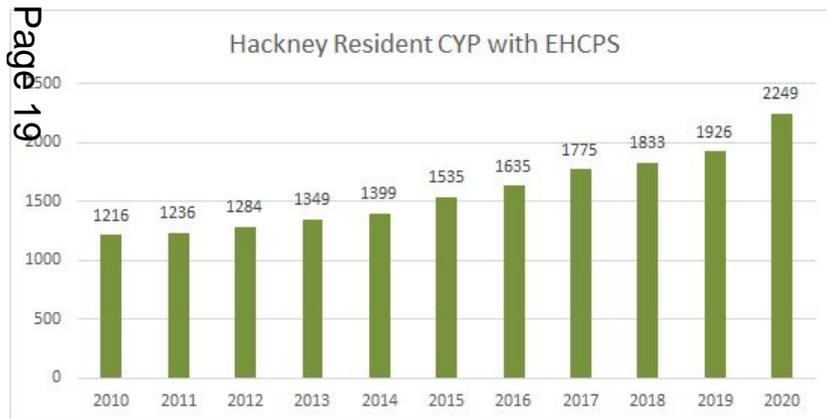
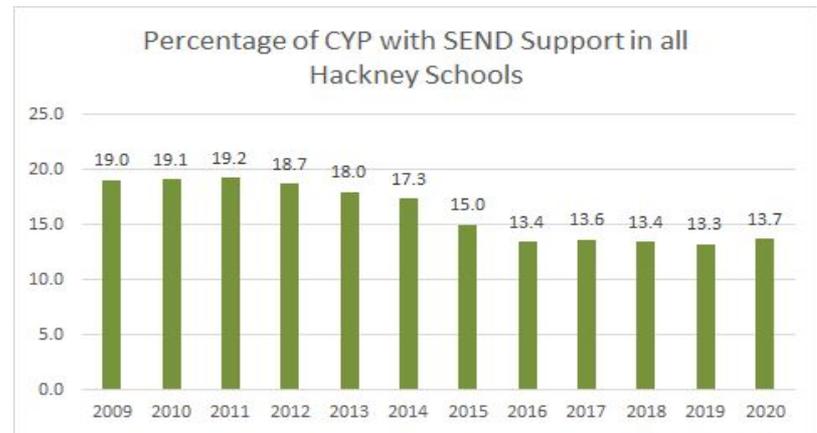
# Hackney Context

## Mainstream school places and specialist places

- **505** vacant reception class places in January 2021
- **16%** surplus against a GLA recommendation of between 5 and 10%
- Secondary schools - **52** vacant places in September 2022 with a peak of 247 places predicted in September 2025
  
- A forecast **400** additional EHCPs a year until at least 2026
- We will require an additional **336** places in special provision by 2023 and a further **168** annually after that through to 2026
- **460** pupils go out of the borough to independent provision
- **Post 16** young people leaving the system

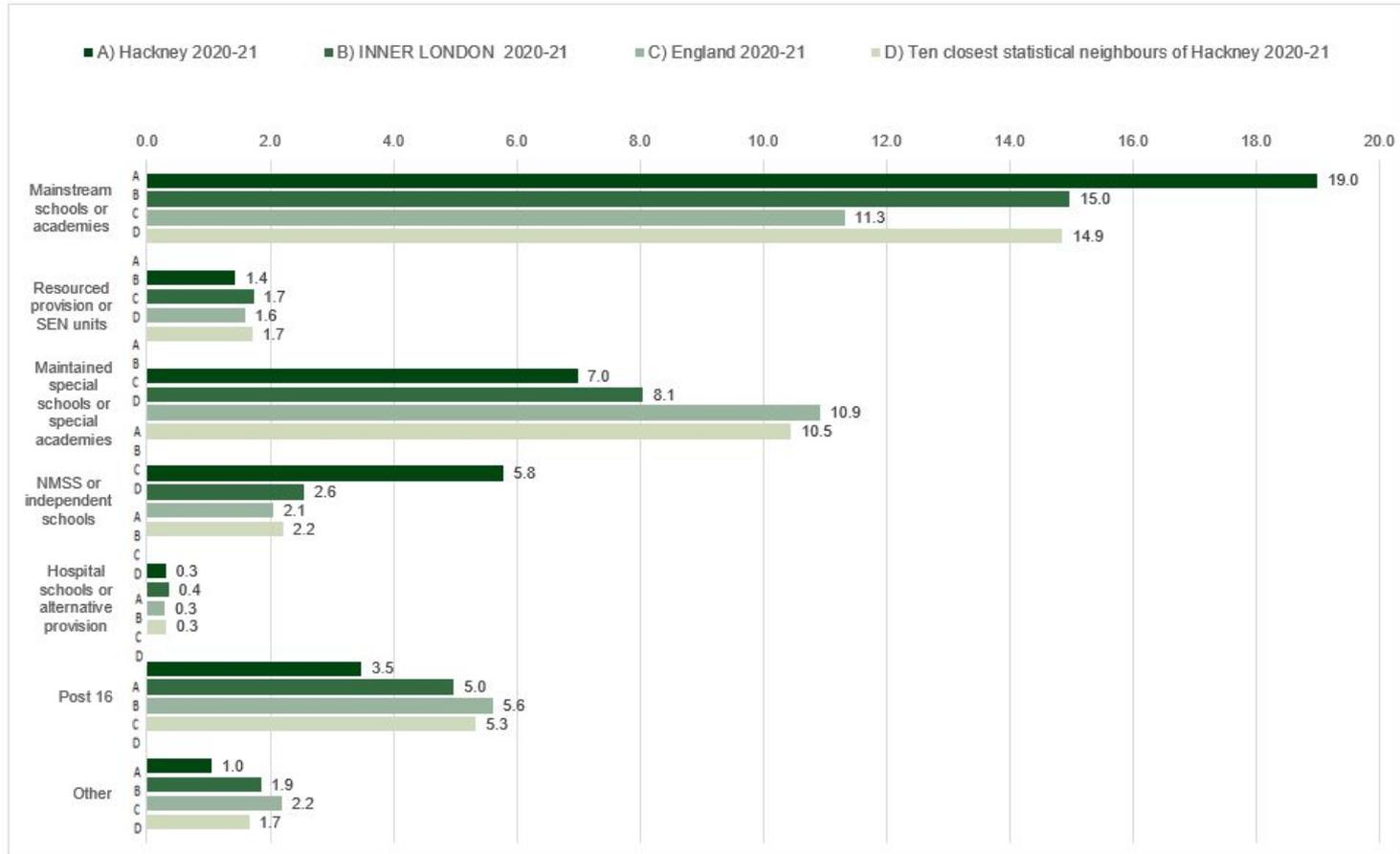


## Local context



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## Placement of pupils aged up to 25 with SEN statement or EHC plan (per 1000 of 2-18 population) comparison





# Our Strategy

What our strategy will include;

## 4 Key Priorities

1. The creation of sufficient additional in borough special school places
2. Partnership working with mainstream Primary schools whose rolls are falling to seek viable solutions.
3. Partnership working with mainstream Secondary schools over the coming five academic years whose numbers are likely to be below PANS over the period 2022-2027
4. A long term sustainable use plan for all education sites in the borough

We will consider equalities across the borough in taking this forward.



# Our Strategy

## Priority 1 - Additional SEND Provision

- We will seek expressions of interest from Primary and Secondary schools in relation to the running of **4 Additional Resource Provisions**.
- We find **three potential special school expansion sites** and work with our existing special schools to extend provision.
- Should the above 2 recommendations not provide adequate places to meet the growth identified above, we will consider the provision of a new special school.
- We will formulate a **commissioning strategy** to provide special school places for the **Orthodox Jewish community in borough**.
- We will develop a **commissioning strategy** for the commissioning of **specialist SEMH places** for both primary and secondary pupils in borough.



# Our Strategy

## Priority 1 - Additional SEND Provision

### New Regent College - a new vision

- Currently provision support and resource focused on specialist group of learners
- Need to shift focus of provision, support and resource to earlier intervention to enable better outcomes
- Education Early Help from Hackney Education and partners
- A wider early help offer from New Regents



# Our Strategy

## Priority 2 and 3 - Working with Primary and Secondary Schools with low and falling rolls

- We need to move to **10%** surplus placements initially in line with the GLA recommendations, which equates to a reduction of **450** primary places, of which 135 have already been agreed for 2022/23.
- Neighbourhood meetings for headteachers have taken place late September/early October 2021



# Our Strategy

## Priority 4 - A long term sustainable use plan for all education sites in the borough

- Review of education estate to ensure best use
- Protection of all education sites for future need
- Gaining a better understanding of environmental sustainability within the estate
- 10 year capital investment plan



# **SEND Timeline in further detail...**

**SEND Provision**

Special  
Schools

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ARPs

SEPT 21	OCT 21	NOV 21	DEC 21	JAN 22	FEB 22	MARCH 22
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Cabinet Submission of strategy and business case for budget allocation

Feasibility Studies to determine viability, cost and programme

Cabinet submission of capital programme and budget sign off

**SEND Provision**

Special  
Schools

ARPs

APRIL 22	MAY 22	JUNE 22	JULY 22	AUG 22	SEPT 22
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6 week consultation

Publication of statutory notice and 4 week representation period

SLT decision

Publication of decision

SEND expansion programme

**OCT 22**

**NOV 22**

**DEC 22**

**JAN 23**

**FEB 23**

**MARCH 23**

SEND expansion programme

**APRIL 23**

**MAY 23**

**JUNE 23**

**JULY 23**

**AUG 23**

**SEPT 23**

SEND expansion programme

**SEND Provision**

**ARPs**

Special  
Schools  
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**SEND Provision**

**ARPs**

Special  
Schools



## Invest to save and next steps...

- SEND Provision Invest to save business case - this report will include the cost comparisons of sending children and young people to Hackney schools (Special Schools or Additional Resource Provision at maintained schools) compared to independent and schools outside of the borough.
- Identification of capital investment through SEND Capital Grant, Basic Need grant and additional capital investment requirements



# Communication with stakeholders

- Headteachers and Governors
  - Social care leadership team
  - Health leadership team
  - Neighbouring boroughs leads
  - Early Years
  - Diocese contacts
- 
- Consultation with residents



# Leadership and Governance

- Political leadership/steer
- Executive leadership
- Delegated authority affirmation
- Headteachers' and Governing Board engagement
- Communications



# December 13th Cabinet

- 1) Overview & sign off of the School Estate Strategy Paper
- 2) Budget sign off and approval of the invest to save business case for SEND/ Special School places (priority 1 of the School Estate Strategy)



# **Discussion**

## **- feedback and suggestions**

<b>Children &amp; Young People Scrutiny Commission</b> 1st November 2021 <b>Item 6 - Early Help Review</b>	Item No <b>6</b>
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### **OUTLINE**

A review of Hackney Council's Early Help Services commenced in 2019 and has encompassed services provided through Young Hackney, Family Support Service and Early Years & Children's Centres.

The review has helped to develop a local vision and principles for early help services and how this may shape future provision. Findings from the review also sets out those priorities and actions to support the delivery and implementation of an Early Help Strategy.

The Early Help Strategy is to be approved by Cabinet in January 2022.

### Reports

1. Overview and outcomes of the Early Help Review
2. Outline of services providing early help to children and young people;
3. Vision and principles for Early Help

### Action:

Members are invited to contribute to the development of the Early Help Strategy by reviewing attached reports and questioning officers present.

### Attendees

Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education  
Joshua Naisbitt, Early Help Project Manager

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Outcomes of the Early Help Review</b>
<b>Meeting for:</b>	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date:</b>	1st November 2021
<b>Produced by:</b>	Joshua Naisbitt, Project Manager
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Jacque Burke, Group Director Children & Education

## **OUTLINE**

A review of Hackney Council's Early Help Services has been ongoing since 2019. This review is now nearing completion, with a set of outcomes identified as a result of the review.

The attached reports collectively cover the following areas:

- Background on the review, including the scope, drivers and objectives of the review.
- The work undertaken in completing the review.
- The key learning from the review, in shaping Hackney Council's future Early Help offer.
- The outcomes of the review, including the vision and working principles that will underpin changes to service delivery, and the changes to service practice and processes that will be delivered.

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

- Outcomes of the Early Help Review
- Additional background on Hackney Council Early Help Services
- Vision and principles of Hackney Council Early Help

### **Attendees**

Jacque Burke, Group Director of Children and Education  
Joshua Naisbitt, Early Help Project Manager

## **ACTION**

Members are asked to consider the report and ask questions of officers present, as part of engagement with the commission on the outcomes of the review ahead of a Cabinet decision in January 2022.

<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Outcomes of the Early Help Review</b>
<b>Meeting for:</b>	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
<b>Date:</b>	1st November 2021
<b>Produced by:</b>	Joshua Naisbitt, Project Manager
<b>Authorised by:</b>	Jacque Burke, Group Director Children & Education

## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** 'Early Help' refers to the non-statutory support that is provided to a child, young person and their family when there are indicators that they are at risk of poor outcomes and need some help to achieve a good level of wellbeing and support.

**1.2** The aim of Early Help is to support children, young people, and their families, to address their needs in such a way that they do not escalate, become entrenched or recur through their lives, at the same time as promoting self-determination and empowering individuals and families.

**1.3** Early Help is provided on a consent basis to children, young people, and families who choose to engage with the council's support.

**1.4** Effective Early Help can enhance both the immediate wellbeing, on the one hand, and the longer-term life chances and resilience, on the other hand, of children and young people in the area, including those children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes.

**1.5** This paper outlines the scope, drivers, and process of the Hackney Council Review into Early Help services, as well as what the review has learnt and what the outcomes of the review are.

**1.6** In summary, the proposed outcomes of the review are:

- A. The delivery of practice and process improvement changes to targeted Early Help services delivered by Hackney Council, as noted as 'priorities' under Section 5 of this paper.**
- B. The commencement of a wider piece of Early Help system transformation; through the establishment of a strategic partnership Early Help group and the development of a partnership Early Help Strategy.**

## **2. Background on the Review**

### **2.1 Drivers**

In 2019, it was agreed by senior officers and members of the council that a review of Hackney Council's internal Early Help model should be undertaken. This decision was driven primarily by three reasons:

- 1. A review would give officers and members confidence that Hackney's Early Help model is still fit for purpose and that it will continue to be fit for purpose during the coming few years.**

- a. This review was not driven by a need to address perceived ‘failings’. The quality of Early Help services was recognised by Ofsted in November 2019 as “well-developed and effective”.

**2. Developments in the social, political and economic context in Hackney since Early Help services were designed or last reviewed, including:**

- More families in temporary accommodation.
- More families under strain from cumulative impacts of austerity.
- Increased complexity in safeguarding adolescents.
- Changes in residents’ expectations of how services and transactions are carried out: a ‘digital shift’.

**3. Ensuring a sustainable financial model**

This review was driven by a need to ensure that the financial model for delivery of Early Help services is sustainable for the future. The outcomes of the review, and outlined in this paper, will be delivered within the current budget framework.

**2.2 Scope of Review**

**2.2.1** In scope for this review, and delivering the bulk of the Early Help offered by the council, is the work delivered by the services included in ‘Table 1’ below. Each service delivers Early Help to a different key group, which benefits from their specialist knowledge and experience in dealing with the kind of challenges they are facing. For more information about the offer of these services, please view [‘Additional background on Hackney Council Early Help Services’](#).

Table 1

Service	Who the service supports
<b>Early Years and Children’s Centres</b>	Children aged up to 12 years out of school provision.  Pregnant women, teenage parents and families with children up to 6 years or children aged up to 8 where there is a preschool sibling including those identified as meeting ‘Supporting Families’ criteria. <sup>1</sup>
<b>Young Hackney</b>	Children and young people aged 6 to 19 (or 25 where they have SEND).
<b>Family Support Service</b>	Families with children aged 6 to 19 (or 25 where they have SEND), including those identified as meeting the ‘Supporting Families’ criteria.

<sup>1</sup> A Government funded programme which supports families with multiple and complex problems including crime, anti-social behaviour, educational attendance, unemployment, mental health problems and domestic abuse.

**2.2.2** The focus of this review has been a close look at Hackney Council's internal Early Help services, however these services are just an aspect of a wider mosaic of Early Help offered across Hackney; including by schools, the health sector and the community and voluntary sector.

**2.2.3** Under statutory guidance, it is the responsibility of all local organisations and agencies to:

- identify children and families who would benefit from Early Help
- undertake an assessment of the need for Early Help
- provide targeted Early Help services to address the assessed needs of a child and their family which focuses on activity to improve the outcomes for the child

Local authorities, under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, have a responsibility to promote inter-agency cooperation to improve the welfare of all children. Local authorities should also work with organisations and agencies to develop joined-up Early Help services based on a clear understanding of local needs.<sup>2</sup>

**2.2.4** The outcomes of this review will deliver changes that ensures that Hackney's Early Help services are best placed to work effectively as part of that wider system of support and opportunities, and will mark the start of a commitment to a wider piece of system transformation work with partners in Hackney, to ensure that the whole Early Help system is working in a joined-up and effective way to help our children, young people and their families

## **2.3 Review Objectives**

### **2.3.1 The purpose of this review was to:**

1. Develop a better understanding of the current and likely future needs of children, young people, and families in Hackney.
2. Identify a) particular strengths of the current Early Help offer and features it is important to protect, and b) any gaps in provision, instances of inefficiency and instances of duplicated effort.
3. Clarify the vision, proposed outcomes and principles for Early Help in Hackney.
4. Identify a financially sustainable operating model and Early Help offer that can effectively meet local need.
5. Identify what work needs to be done in order to implement this new model, e.g. re-allocation of resources and re-organisation of services, updating service documentation, introduction of new technology, staff training.

## **3. Review Process**

**3.1** The review has been led by an 'Early Help Working Group', inclusive of senior officers from across the Children & Education directorate since 2019. The review was paused for a period of 6 months in 2020, due to the impact of the pandemic and associated pressures on services. An 'Early Help Members Oversight Group', chaired by Deputy Mayor Bramble, has provided oversight and input on the review between January 2021- October 2021. Ongoing

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<sup>2</sup> 'Working Together to Safeguard Children: 2018', Department for Education, 2018

Member oversight of Early Help service delivery will be provided through the CYP Scrutiny Commission and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

**3.2** In completion of the review, the following work has been delivered:

**1. Undertaken an extensive piece of engagement with stakeholders, including:**

- a. Deliberative workshops with over 100 frontline staff and partners, including representatives from schools and health.
- b. A series of interviews with children, young people and families who were accessing or had previously accessed targeted Early Help from Hackney Council. Interviewers spoke to 26 people from 17 different families: 7 young people, 19 parents or carers.
- c. An on-line engagement survey providing an opportunity for stakeholders to share their views of Hackney Council Early Help services ran for 8 weeks, receiving 91 responses.
- d. Engagement with primary and secondary schools at key meetings, and follow-up 1:1 conversations with 5 schools to share their views of Hackney Council Early Help services
- e. Review of recent engagement and consultation exercises completed by Hackney Council.

**2. Consulted the latest research on Early Help and work being done by other local authorities** to identify evidence-based effective practice Hackney could adopt.

**3. Held a number of service redesign workshops** with senior leaders in Early Help to clarify the visions and principles of Hackney Council Early Help services, and identify key service changes for a new model.

**4. Undertaken an analysis of referral and assessment data** in Early Help case management systems to understand current demand.

**5. Conducted a series of pilot projects** to explore opportunities for changes to aspects of Hackney Council's future Early Help delivery model.

## **4. What we learnt**

**4.1** The learning of the review indicated there were some really strong aspects of the Council's Early Help offer, and the changes that are being proposed seek to build on these strengths.

Here are some of the key strengths identified:

- **The strength and range of the services** delivered, including:
  - **Culturally appropriate** opportunities, support and intervention
  - **The trusted role of Children Centre's and Young Hackney youth hubs** in the community
  - **The importance of specialised services with specific expertise**
  - **The value of taking a multi-agency approach** to Early Help interventions and the importance of strong relationships between key partners.
- **Trusting relationships between Early Help workers and families and young people**, built-on warm, judgement-free way Early Help workers relate to people they are supporting.

- **Our Early Help staff encouraging aspiration and acting as advocates** for children and young people and their families
- **The importance of practitioners being able to take a creative and flexible approach** and a personalised approach to providing support

**4.2** Our learning also indicated that there were opportunities to build on existing strengths, share expertise, and develop the Council's skill set, in order to extend and improve the Council's Early Help offer.

**4.3** Based on what the learning of the review told indicated was already effective and valued, and where there were opportunities to improve, this learning has been focused into 6 key areas for what Hackney Council's future Early Help offer should look like:

1. **Visible, approachable services** that are local to children, young people and their families, and that they trust.
2. **Effectively communicated support**, and clarity and consistency on how to access this support.
3. **Support able to meet the needs of the whole family**, especially parenting capacity.
4. **Services built on trusting and consistent relationships** with practitioners and services, so that engagement with children, young people and their families is the basis of all support.
5. **Support which is able to meet the specific needs** of children, young people and their families, through specialist and expert interventions, including at key points in a child's, young person's or family's life.
6. **Interventions led by outcomes and impact**, and young people and families being able to feedback and shape support.

## **5. Outcomes of the review**

**5.1** The review has developed a vision and a detailed set of working principles for Early Help delivered by council services. This Vision and Principles can be found [here](#).

**5.2** Based on this learning, and a 'gap-analysis' of how the council's offer could better meet these outcomes, a set of priorities have been identified from the review. These are outlined from 5.4 onwards, in this report.

**5.3** These priorities are underpinned by the following focused practice principles for Early Help delivered by the council:

- There should be **no delay to getting support**
- We should have a **Single Point of Access**
- We offer **consistent and evidenced quality of support**
- **Our work is predicated on consent** for support and consent to information-sharing
- **We enable multi-disciplinary working** with family involvement at its core
- **We work with parents / carers as experts** and know that work with young people should always involve parents
- **Our interventions are evidence-based** and ongoing service development is led by the needs of the children, young people and families we work with versus the evidence-based interventions we can offer

**5.4** Delivery of these priorities equates to some changes to practice and processes for Hackney Council targeted Early Help services.

**5.5 Short-term priorities** (to be embedded from January 2022):

1. All requests for Early Help will be made via one 'request for support' form and will be screened by the Early Help Hub in the Multi-agency Agency Safeguarding Hub. One assessment form and process will be embedded for all Early Help assessments delivered by Hackney Council.
2. We will embed consistent protocol for children whose needs and/ or risk of harm escalate from needing an Early Help intervention to needing a Children's Social Care intervention, and whose needs and risk of harm decrease from Social Care to Early Help. This will ensure that children, young people and their families experience consistent timely and joined-up support as their needs change.
3. A single set of practice standards will be adopted across Hackney Council targeted Early Help services, in order to ensure that interventions are consistently of the same standard for children, young people and their families. This will include timescales for how quickly children will be seen, how quickly an assessment will be completed and a plan developed with the family.
4. Targeted Early Help services, including Young Hackney targeted units, Family Support delivered through Children's Centre multi-agency teams and Family Support delivered by FS Units will all allocate targeted cases on the same locality basis. This will ensure that families are able to receive holistic support from joined-up services, with a strong understanding of other local support and opportunities available. Work will also take place in 2022 to explore how synergies with the 'Neighbourhood' Primary Care Network localities could be built upon.
5. We understand that parents and carers are experts; targeted Early Help interventions will always involve work with parents and carers, or other key family members.
6. We will embed a single performance framework for targeted Early Help services overseen by an officer oversight group. This will include a shared Quality Assurance framework, service KPIs and the use of a common measure for the impact our services have for children, young people and their families.
7. We will develop a brand for Hackney Council targeted Early Help services, in order to have a clear delineation between the targeted Early Help that the council offers and the extensive Early Help delivered across the borough by other organisations. We will work with partners in 2022 to develop communication and branding around a borough-wide Early Help strategy.

**5.5.1** The priorities above are the immediate focus for Early Help services. The review has also identified opportunities to deliver some medium to long-term priorities. These will be delivered through 2022.

**5.6 Medium-term priorities** (delivered April - September 2022)

1. Ongoing development of 'children & family hubs' through key workstreams, linked to the Early Years strategy
2. Evaluation capacity of parenting groups available across Hackney Council and ensure these are being targeted- audiences
3. Multi-agency Early Help Strategy developed through engagement with partners (including schools, health, police and the Community and Voluntary Sector) , led and agreed by an Early Help Partnership Strategic Group- ensuring a shared responsibility for the delivery of Early Help.
4. Multi-agency training programme developed and delivered to embed Early Help Assessment across the partnership
5. Local Early Help performance framework developed and agreed, to provide oversight of local datasets related to children, young people and their families.
6. Review approach to commissioning in Early Help, to ensure evidence-based and impactful.
7. Ongoing review of presenting needs through Early Help hub versus evidence-based interventions available. Identify gaps and how these can be met through training and resources continually.
8. Partnership locality Early Help teams will be brought together to periodically review specific locality needs, trends and resources available.
9. Develop principles and associated actions for embedding effective and consistent co-production of Early Help service delivery with families and young people, so that families are able to shape the support that Hackney Council Early Help offers, and how we can best approach and work with them.
10. Identify and embed actions for the delivery of anti-racist practice in Hackney Council Early Help services, linked to the Anti-Racist Action Plan being delivered across the Children & Education directorate;

#### **5.7 Longer-term priorities (6-12 months)**

1. One case-management system for all Early Help services, with the ability for improved information-sharing with partners, in-line with GDPR and consent.
2. Greater alignment of management structures to deliver seamless targeted Early Help.
3. Regular review of performance and quality assurance of Early Help by the 'Early Help sub-group'.
4. Yearly recommissioning of Early Help delivered in-line with a shared evidence-base and framework.

5. Ongoing co-production of service improvements, working with families to understand how we can continue to shape how Early Help services work with families.
6. Ongoing delivery of actions identified, to embed anti-racist practice in Early Help services.

**5.8** An officer project board has been established, that will oversee the implementation of the practice and process changes associated with delivery of the outcomes of the review.

**5.9** Members oversight of ongoing service delivery and improvement will be provided through the CYP Scrutiny Commission and the Hackney Health and Wellbeing Board.

**5.10** Completion of the review also recommends the establishment of a partnership Early Help Sub-Group, reporting to the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Board. This group will be established from January 2022 and will include representation from Schools, Health, the Police and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

**5.11** The sub group will be tasked with developing, embedding and overseeing the effectiveness and impact of the London Borough of Hackney Early Help Strategy. This will be a strategy that outlines the shared vision and working principles of agencies delivering Early Help in Hackney, and a shared commitment to the steps needed to be taken as a partnership to fulfil that vision. As such, the sub-group will build on and improve partnership working across agencies, creating the infrastructure to provide a seamless service delivery which will evidence clear and positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

## **6. Key Implications**

**6.1** Delivery of the recommendations and associated service changes outlined in this paper will be done so within current budget frameworks.

**6.2** Delivery of the outcomes of this review will ensure that Hackney Council's targeted Early Help services are delivering a consistently high standard of service for children, young people and families, that can be accessed quickly and without stigma, will ensure that we have a Quality Assurance framework in place for ongoing service improvement, and will provide a foundation for the next phase of Early Help partnership development to begin.

**6.3** No further consultation is required to deliver these practice changes, and ongoing communication with staff will underpin service changes.

**6.4** Wider engagement with partners will be facilitated through the Early Help sub-group, and will be underpinned by a shared communication plan.

**6.6** Changes to service processes outlined in this report will not impact who can access targeted Early Help services or the interventions available, notably families with children aged 0-19, or up to 25 where a young person has a Special Educational Need or Disability. There will not be an unequal impact on any groups, and recommendations should equate to

an overall positive impact for children, young people and their families with protected characteristics, through consistent pathways to support, a reduction in any delays to getting help and an improved understanding of the specific needs of families in the borough.

**6.7** The service changes outlined do not equate to any job losses or change in job roles. If, in the future, insight from improved monitoring of capacity and a developed understanding of the needs of children, young people and families, indicates that resources could be better allocated, any changes this will be implemented in-line with the Council's Organisational Change Policy.

## **7. Next steps**

**7.1** Approval of the priorities outlined in this paper, and the associated completion of the Early Help Review, will be sought by Cabinet in January 2022.

**7.2** Services will, between now and January, continue to work to put in place the necessary steps in order to embed changes from January 2022 onwards.

**7.3** A partnership Early Help group will be established from January 2022, with an Early Help strategy being developed by the group as the group's immediate priority.

**7.4** As practice changes are implemented from January 2022, this will be supported by proportionate communication for partners, as well as targeted communication to those previously engaged with as part of the review process. A wider communication plan will be associated with the launch of the Hackney Early Help Strategy, that is led by the Early Help partnership group. This will ensure that communication with partners emphasises the shared responsibility for Early Help in Hackney.

# **What support and opportunities are delivered by our Early Help services?**

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This section provides detail on the offer of the Early Help services, in the scope of this review. This refers to the state as is, before changes arising from the review are embedded.

# Children's Centres



Family **with children aged 0-5 years with needs that can be met by Universal services**, often working singularly



Hackney's 21 children's centres provide a range of services, information and support in the community, with the goal of improving the well-being of young children through the provision of universal and targeted, integrated early childhood services, including:

- early years provision (integrated childcare and education)
- parenting and family support (targeted intervention)
- child and family health services, including antenatal support
- training and employment services for parents and prospective parents.
- information and advice for parents and prospective parents.

Children's centres are strategically grouped into clusters, with each cluster providing a holistic programme of universal and targeted services, inclusive of stay and play sessions, music and movement sessions and toy libraries.

# Family Support through Multi Agency Team (MAT) interventions

Where a family with a child 0-5 years\* needs co-ordinated, targeted intervention from more than one agency...

A Multi-Agency Team will coordinate and review targeted intervention for a child and family.

**A Multi-Agency Team is** an inter-agency, interdisciplinary group of professionals. MAT panels are linked to each of the 6 strategic children's centres.

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Family practitioners

Health visitor

Public health midwife

Psychologist

Speech and language therapist

Early years practitioners

Dietician



This support will be delivered by a **Virtual MAT** - professionals from two or more disciplines that works together to support a young child and their family.

\*or families with a school aged child, where there is a pre-school child in the family and MAT is best placed to support the family.

# Family Support Service



When a family with a child / young person aged 6-19 years\* needs co-ordinated, targeted intervention



Support provided by the Family Support Service, includes 4 Family Support units funded through the Troubled Families Programme.

These units work with all families identified by the MASH\* as needing family support with children aged 6-19\*, to address their needs and prevent escalation to a statutory social care level. Each Family Support unit is managed by a Consultant Social Worker, and includes at least one qualified Social Worker, and a number of Family Support Practitioners. Clinical consultation is available.

Each unit can hold statutory and non-statutory social work which promotes continuity for families if their needs escalate from a 'Family Support Plan' to needing a Child and Family Assessment or Child in Need Plan.

3 types of family support work:

- before statutory SW threshold is reached ('early help')
- during statutory SW threshold being reached ('parenting support')
- after statutory SW threshold is no longer reached ('step down')

\*Or up to 25 years if the young person has a special education need or disability.

\* Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

- [YH service guide](#)
- <https://www.younghackney.org/>



Young Hackney is the Council's early help, prevention and diversion service for children and young people aged 6-19 years or up to 25 years when the young person has SEND.

It provides a wide range of development opportunities and leisure facilities that are available to all young people at the same time as delivering outcome-focused, time-limited interventions to those who need more targeted support.

## Universal provision includes:

- Structured activities at four YH youth hubs
- Play activities, including Adventure playgrounds
- Sports activities
- Youth voice and participation
- Health and wellbeing (inc PSHE)
- Commissioned VCS play and youth provision

## Provision for children / young people who need targeted support includes:

- Early help teams linked to schools
- Detached outreach team
- Young Carers
- Substance misuse and prevention and diversion services

**The majority of secondary schools in Hackney have an allocated Young Hackney team** who will work with them to identify students who require additional support to participate and achieve. If schools identify students who would benefit from individual support, Young Hackney will create an appropriate intervention with the school.

# Hackney Council Early Help: **Vision & Principles**

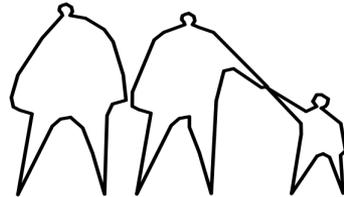
# Background

This vision and these working principles have been developed through the Early Help Review. These relate only to the work of Council Early Help services.

A partnership strategy will be developed, led by the partnership.

## Our vision

Early Help in Hackney involves connected services working together to ensure that all Hackney's children and young people, and their families, have access to the opportunities, resources and support needed to set them up for whole-life success.

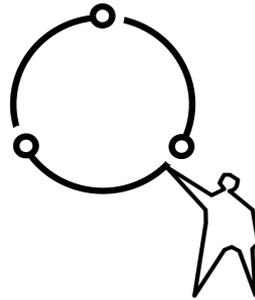


**Working for every child**



# Our principles

These are the key working principles for Early Help delivered by Hackney Council. Changes associated with the review have been predicated on delivering these principles.



# Who?

- Early Help takes a **whole family approach**, recognising the critical role of parents and carers as experts in the child's wellbeing.
- Early Help support is delivered with **a constant awareness of the context** around a child or young person (while ultimately remaining child / young person focused).
- Early Help services are **connected and deliver integrated support**, in partnership with schools, community partners and other settings, to ensure that children and young people, and their families receive the right support for them and experience continuity in support when moving between services / settings.

# Why?

- Early Help has **high aspirations** for each child and young person, and their families, and takes **a strength-based approach** to support.
- Early Help seeks to meet **immediate needs but also focuses on building longer-term resilience** in the family and community
- Early Help can make a difference for every child and every community; it must contribute to **reducing overrepresentation of Black and Global Majority children** in statutory services

# When?

- Early help involves **the right and proportionate intervention** at key times in a child / young person's life, in order to enhance both their immediate wellbeing, and also set them up for whole-life success, with a strong focus on their development, education and preparedness for adulthood.
- This includes **a focus on early intervention**, and an awareness of the specific challenges of **adolescent development**.

# How?

- Early Help relies **on trusting relationships with families** and young people, and is **predicated on their informed consent** for support and information-sharing. Engagement with families and young people is at the heart of early help delivery and support is always led by them, and they are always present.
- There should be **no delay to getting Early Help**, and help should be accessed without stigma through **a single point of access**.
- Early Help practitioners use **a reflexive practice approach**; ensuring our support is led by the individual circumstances, age and needs of a family, young person and child.
- **Interventions are always evidence-based** and early help services will continually develop to ensure that they can offer the right evidence-based interventions that families need.

<b>Children &amp; Young People Scrutiny Commission</b> 1st November 2021 <b>Item 7 - Work Programme</b>	Item No <b>7</b>
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Outline

The workprogramme of the CYP Scrutiny Commission is reviewed and updated at each meeting. Members are invited to note and agree the work programme as attached.

Reports

CYP Scrutiny Commission Work Programme - November 2021

# Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

## One Page Overview

<b>June 14th 2021</b>	<b>July 12th 2021</b>
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	
<b>October 6th 2021</b>	<b>November 1st 2021</b>
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)	Early Years Strategy - Reconfiguration of Children' Centres - Parents Voice
Early Years Strategy - Reconfiguration of Children' Centres consultation	
<b>December 6th 2021</b>	<b>January 19th 2022</b>
Cllr Woodley Q & A - topics to be agreed (Mid October) (Standing Item)	CHSCP - Annual Report - Outcomes of SCRs and Adultification
Budget Monitoring HES (Standing Item)	Unregistered Educational Settings - Update
Outcome from school exclusions - Final report of the Commission	Sexual harassment in schools
Adolescents Entering Care (TBC)	
<b>February 28th 2022</b>	<b>March 2022</b>
Addressing inequalities HFS/HES	Attainment gap - School Improvement Partners
CFS Annual Report (Standing Item) (TBC)	Parental Involvement in education - worker project
	Cllr Bramble Q & A - topics tba (Mid January (Standing Item) (TBC)

# 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> <b>14th June 2021</b></p> <p>Deadline for reports: <b>1/6/21</b></p> <p>Publication <b>4/6/21</b></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"> <li>• Marian Lavelle, Head of Admissions and Pupil Benefits, HLT</li> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT</li> </ul>	
	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"> <li>• Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help &amp; Well-being</li> <li>• Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager</li> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT</li> </ul>	
	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"> <li>• Stephen Hall, Head of School Improvement</li> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT</li> </ul>	
	Development of new CYP Work Programme for 2021/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commission/ Scrutiny officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To consult local stakeholders</li> <li>• Meet with service Directors</li> <li>• Collate topic suggestions</li> </ul>

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

# 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: <b>October 6th 2021</b>  Papers deadline: <b>12.00 27/9/21</b>  Agenda dispatch: <b>28/9/21</b>	<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"> <li>● Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Education &amp; Children’s Services</li> <li>● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care</li> </ul>	- 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"> <li>● Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention</li> <li>● Brendan Finnegan, Service Manager Youth Justice</li> <li>● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care</li> </ul>	- 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"> <li>● Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>● Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help &amp; Well-being</li> </ul>	
	CYP Work Programme 2021/22: updated version from July 2021.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scrutiny Officer / Commission</li> </ul>	

# Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting 4	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Officers
<p>Meeting Date: <b>November 1st 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: <b>19th October 2021</b></p> <p>Agenda dispatch: <b>22nd October 2021</b></p>	<p><u>Early Years Strategy &amp; Reconfiguration of children’s centres:</u> To hear from parents and carers of children impacted by the proposed closure of two children’s (Fernbank/Hillside) to contribute to the Commission's formal response to the consultation on the Early Years Strategy.</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"> <li>● Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>● Fran Cox, Head of High Needs &amp; School Places</li> <li>● Joe Wilson, Head of SEND</li> </ul>
	<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"> <li>● Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Education and Children’s Services</li> </ul>
	<p>CYP Work Programme 2021/22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scrutiny Officer</li> </ul>

# 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: <b>6th December 2021</b></p> <p>Papers deadline: <b>23rd November 2021</b></p> <p>Agenda dispatch: <b>26th November 2021</b></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"> <li>• Naeem Ahmed, Director of Finance Children, Education, Adults, Health &amp; Integration</li> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> </ul>	
	<p><u>Cabinet Q &amp; 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"> <li>• Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play.</li> </ul>	Topics to be scrutinised to be agreed 6 weeks in advance of the meeting in consultation with CYP SC (25th October 2021)
	<p><u>School Exclusions Final Report:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To agree and confirm recommendations of the Commission's investigation;</li> <li>- To agree on follow up monitoring arrangements.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scrutiny Officer / Commission</li> </ul>	
	<p><u>Adolescents Entering Care:</u> to discuss and agree the Scoping Report for Commission's planned review for 2021/22.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview &amp; Scrutiny Officer/ Members of the Commission</li> </ul>	
	<p>CYP Work Programme 2021/22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scrutiny Officer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To review and monitor progress.</li> </ul>

# 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: <b>19th January 2022</b>	<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"> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>• City &amp; Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership</li> <li>• Local Head Teachers - tbc</li> </ul>	
Papers deadline: <b>7th January 2022</b>	<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"> <li>• Jim Gamble, The Independent Child Safeguarding Commissioner</li> <li>• Rory McAllum, Senior Professional Leader, CHSCP</li> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>• Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing &amp; Education Safeguarding</li> </ul>	
Agenda dispatch: <b>11th January 2022</b>	City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Annual Report: With a focused discussion on how to address adultification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jim Gamble, The Independent Child Safeguarding Commissioner</li> <li>• Rory McAllum, Senior Professional Leader, CHSCP</li> </ul>	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: <b>28th February 2022</b>  Papers deadline: <b>15th February 2022</b>	<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. - Anti-racist Action Plans - Audits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care</li> <li>• Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>• Jacquie Burke, Group Director Education and Children's Services</li> </ul>	Further clarify focus and reporting requirements with Directors by December 2021
Agenda dispatch: <b>18th February 2022</b>	<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)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Education and Children's Services</li> <li>• Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care</li> </ul>	
	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: <b>21st March 2022</b>	<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"> <li>Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>Project Worker (TBC)</li> </ul>	
Papers deadline: <b>8th March 2022</b>	<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"> <li>Annie Gammon, Director of Education</li> <li>School Improvement Partners</li> </ul>	<i>Meet school improvement partners ahead of the meeting</i>
Agenda dispatch: <b>11th March 2022</b>	<u>Cabinet Q &amp; A: (TBC)</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"> <li>Cllr Anntionette Bramble</li> </ul>	Topics to be scrutinised to be agreed 6 weeks in advance of the meeting in consultation with CYP SC (7th February 2022)
	Work Programme Review 2021/22; members to feedback on scrutiny work programme for the year.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members of the Commission</li> </ul>	
	CYP Work Programme 2021/22	Scrutiny Officer	To review and monitor progress

# Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2021/22

Meeting A	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<b>Meeting date:</b>  <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 Commission meeting date:	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

<b><u>December 15th 2021</u></b>	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: <b><u>24th February 2021</u></b>	<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 &amp; 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	

<b>Children &amp; Young People Scrutiny Commission</b> 1st November 2021 <b>Item 8 - Minutes</b>	Item No <b>8</b>
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The DRAFT minutes of the meeting from 6th October 2021 are attached to note and approve.

Reports

Minutes of the 6th October 2021

# 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)  
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)
- 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.

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

## DRAFT

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.

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?

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- 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.

4.13 Is there a timeframe for the next full inspection of children's social care services by Ofsted?

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- 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 representation of black Caribbean boys. When considering serious crimes and those which end in a custodial sentence, the over representation of black Caribbean

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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?
- 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

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

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- 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.

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?

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

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- 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:
- That a number of engagement exercises had been undertaken to support the development of the EYS including a user survey of parents. Members were

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

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### 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.
  - 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.

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- 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 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

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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.

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.

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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.
- 

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**

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## Overview & Scrutiny

### Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Minutes of 1st November 2021

#### Official Attendees for the record

Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice Chair)  
 Cllr Caroline Selman  
 Cllr Anya Sizer  
 Cllr Lynne Troughton  
 Cllr Humaira Garasia  
 Cllr Katie Hanson  
 Cllr Sarah Young  
 Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)  
 Shabnum Hassan (Co-opted member)

#### Connected Virtually

Cllr James Peters  
 Steven Olalere (Co-opted member)  
 Salmah Kansara (Co-opted member)  
 Ernell Watson (Co-opted member)  
 Two members of 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 of Children and Education
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Fran Cox, Head of High Needs & School Places
- Joe Wilson, Head of SEND
- Joshua Naisbitt, Early Help Project Manager
- Peter Algacs, Team Leader, Young Hackney
- Hillside and Fernbank Children's Centre representatives: Natalie Aguilera, Lizzie Kenyon & Nick Yates

#### Cllr Margaret Gordon in the Chair

##### **Welcome and introduction**

The Vice Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and those members of the public who were viewing the livestream. The Vice Chair noted that the Chair, Cllr Sophie Conway was unwell and was therefore not able to attend the meeting.

The Vice Chair reminded those attending that this was a hybrid meeting, with members of the Commission and officers attending both in person and connecting virtually and that the meeting was being broadcast live via the internet.

#### **1. Apologies for absence**

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

- Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair)
- Cllr Anna Lynch.

## **2. Declarations of interest**

- 2.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:
- Cllr Margaret Gordon was a member of the Member Oversight Board for Early Help and Early Years and would therefore not participate in items 4 and 6;
  - Shabnum Hassan, was a Governor at a primary school in Hackney and a parent of a child with SEND;
  - Cllr Sizer was a trustee of Ivy Street Family Centre and in relation to item 5, was also a parent of a child with SEND currently looking for a secondary school placement;
  - Cllr Caroline Selman noted that in relation to item 4 she was a mother of a child in early years education and was until recently, a Governor at a school outside the borough which had an Additional Resource Provision (ARP). Cllr Selman indicated that she would not participate in item 6 given her previous Cabinet position and part in decision making around Early Help. In relation to item 5, Cllr Selman had visited Side by Side SEND provision as a ward councillor.
  - Jo McLeod was a Governor at a primary school in Hackney and a parent of a child with additional needs;
  - Cllr Peters was a Governor at the Garden Special School in Hackney.

## **3. Urgent Items / Order of Business**

- 3.1 Given that the Vice Chair would not be able to participate in items 4 and 6 other members were nominated to Chair these respective items:
- Cllr Caroline Selman would Chair item 4 - Early Years Strategy & Reconfiguration of Children's Centres;
  - Cllr Katie Hanson would Chair item 6 - the Early Help Review.
- 3.2 To help assist flow of agenda, it was agreed that the running order of the agenda would change, where items 5 and 6 were switched.

### **Cllr Caroline Selman in the Chair**

## **4. Early Years Strategy & Reconfiguration of Children's Centres**

- 4.1 At the last meeting of the Commission on October 6th 2021 the Commission noted plans for the development of Early Years Strategy and questioned officers on proposals to reconfigure local children's centres. A public consultation is in progress which runs through to November 16th 2021, and the Commission will formally contribute to that consultation.
- 4.2 To support the Commission's response to the consultation, parent representatives from the two children's centres which have been proposed for closure were invited to attend and present their views on:
- What impact the planned closures will have on children and their families;
  - Planned mitigations and support to help parents move to alternative services;
  - The consultation and engagement strategy.
- 4.3 It was noted that whilst it is not a decision making body, the Commission welcomed this contribution from parents which will further inform its response to the public consultation.

Parent representatives from Fernbank and Hillside Children's Centres

4.4 Three parent representatives attended and presented to the Commission and highlighted the following issues in relation to the planned closure of Children's Centres. Natalie Aguilera highlighted the following points:

- The proposed closures would have a significant impact on the availability of subsidised childcare in the locality and would impact directly on those 90 families currently using the nursery facilities and a much larger number of families using open access services (drop-in / Stay And Play).
- The proposals would also mean that 35 staff who support these children's centres would be made redundant.
- Parents cited concerns over the decision making process for the planned closures given that details of the children centre closures were published in local media on the 13th September, despite the Early Years Strategy (of which there was no mention of specific closures) not being approved by Cabinet until the evening of the 13th September.
- The consultation process on both the Early Years Strategy and the planned closure of children centres was launched on the 15th September. Parent representatives were unclear as to why the consultation was taking place on the Early Years Strategy when this had been approved by Cabinet on the 13th September and why the planned closures were not disclosed as part of the Early Years Strategy report.
- Parent representatives were also concerned that policy making decisions had been conflated with budget making decisions and that these issues should have been treated differently and subject to separate consultation processes.
- It was felt that the planned children centre closures were not given adequate recognition within the consultation survey with just one multiple choice question provided for parents to feedback their views.
- Parents were not assured about the robustness of the process in which the children's centres were identified for closure, particularly as there did not appear to be a 'Plan B'. As there had been little data or evidence forthcoming about the rationale for closure, this suggested to parents that the planned closures were a 'done deal'. At the time of this meeting, no data had been provided from a Freedom of Information Request which was submitted to the Council.
- To conclude, it was reiterated that parents were dissatisfied with the consultation and decision making process for the Early Years Strategy and reconfiguration of children's centres.

4.5 Lizzie Kenyon, a parent of 3 year old at Hillside Children Centre, highlighted the following issues:

- There has been a lack of information to support the consultation on new Early Years Strategy and the proposed closures of children's centres, for example, parents' views were referenced in the development of the Early Years Strategy but there was no document provided to substantiate this.
- There were also concerns in the way that data has been used to substantiate the proposed closures, for example, the local vacancy rate has been suggested as a reason for proposed closures which relates to vacancies across all settings rather than specific to children's centres. It was also noted that the Childcare Sufficiency Report which evidenced the vacancy rate, is just a 'snapshot of provision at this time'.

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- There was also concern that underlying assumptions about current and future service use were predicated on evidence collected during the pandemic, which might not be representative or illustrative of future patterns of service use by local families.
- The Council issued a Q & A format response to support the consultation on the 20th October which was somewhat into the consultation process and those parents completing the survey before this time would not have had access to this information.
- A central premise of the Early Years Strategy is to target resources on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and families, yet, by its own admission the Council's own Equality Impact Assessment (in the Cabinet Report) acknowledged that low income families and working families will be directly affected by the planned closures.
- There were also concerns about some of the assertions made in the consultation literature, particularly in relation to the accessibility of alternative services given that suggested alternatives did not offer a 'like for like' service and that some parents already travelled some distance to access specific services.
- It was also emphasised that the planned closures had come out 'out of the blue' for parents and that the proposals to close children's centres had caused significant anxiety for those parents affected. The 8 week consultation process was also a challenging time frame to enable local parents to come together and meaningfully contribute.

4.6 Nick Yates, also a parent with a child at one of the children's centres proposed for closure also highlighted the following:

- Considerable efforts had been made to contact and engage parents across affected children's centres and to understand what impact the planned closures would have on them. The views presented at the meeting reflected a wide range of parents' views and not just those parents presenting tonight.
- Children's centres offer childcare from 7.45am through to 5.45pm which is critical in supporting working parents. These hours were generally not available in the independent sector.
- Parents were clear that these children's centres provided a high quality service where staff were passionate about the care and support that they provided to local children and their families. Children like attending the services provided by both centres and they looked forward to attending each morning.
- Parents indicated that the Council had not offered any guarantee about alternative provision for those affected by the closure which was of concern given that alternative sites were known to have long waiting lists. Additionally, alternative childcare provisions such as childminders or independent nurseries were not affordable or always suitable for children and families.
- Parents were of the view that the planned closure of children's centres represent reduced access to affordable childcare to local families which would reduce opportunities for children from different communities to meet and be educated alongside each other. In this context, parents questioned whether the Council wanted children to be educated within inclusive settings where children were taught in mixed classes which reflected the diversity of Hackney.

Questions from the Commission

- 4.7 What proposals have been put forward to mitigate the impact of the proposed children centre closures, particularly in relation to the accessibility of alternative services?
- One parent noted that they had initially applied to 10 local children's centres yet only one was able to provide a place. This suggested that there were limited spaces in alternative local children centre settings.
  - It was noted that alternatives are presented as 'like for like' when in fact two of the alternative children centre's target specific communities for support. Given the differences in services provided, parents struggled with the notion that they can use different children's centres interchangeably, and noted that just 5-10 minutes additional travel time may mean that services are inaccessible.
- 4.8 The Commission understood that whilst vacancy rates may change, there was a high vacancy rate at the Children's Centres concerned? As parents, why do you think there is a vacancy rate and why are parents choosing to send their children to other non-subsidised nurseries? Are there any aspects of children centre provision which makes this less attractive to parents?
- The 30% vacancy rate is across all nursery provision including independent and maintained sectors. Further still, this figure was taken mid-pandemic which may not reflect the true demand for childcare services. In consultation with the Centre manager, parents noted that occupancy had been around 93% at Fernbank during the summer. Given the demand for children centres places, parents could not understand why there would be a vacancy rate for this type of childcare provision. Parents were adamant that there was not a surplus of affordable childcare in this area and the Family Information Service had not given any notification of any vacancies at the Centre for many years. If there are any vacancies at this site, it was suggested that this is more to do with visibility and promotion rather than the nature of services on offer.
- 4.9 How clear and accessible did you find the documentation to support the consultation?
- Parents were expecting more substantive documentation to support the consultation, whereas the consultation document itself was just two sides of A4. So aside from the Early Years Strategy itself (which was a strategic document) parents had very little information to inform their participation within the consultation. Parents wanted to know about the background information and underpinning evidence which supported the strategy and the proposals to reconfigure children's centres as provision of such information was critical to their meaningful engagement in the consultation. In the absence of this information being provided, parents have had to undertake this research themselves which has enabled them to ask questions and challenge proposals being brought forward.
  - Parent representatives acknowledged that what consultation information was provided was clear and in plain English, and could be readily understood.
  - Parents were only provided with one date where they could attend and ask questions of officers about the plans for the children's centres. Whilst this session was useful, many parents could not attend and it's not clear if the

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minutes from the meeting will be made publicly available. Although parents were reassured that their feedback was being captured, requests for the minutes of the meeting have been declined. A further consultation session had now been set up for the 9th November 2021.

- Parents noted that many attendees at the consultation session were only able to do so because staff at the Children Centre worked later to look after their children, which again, was testament to the dedication and commitment of staff.

4.10 Notwithstanding the years of government austerity and reductions to local council's funding, do you think that if the consultation process could be improved, this may lead to a different substantive outcome?

- Parents were cognisant of the pressures that councils were under, but no evidence had been presented to substantiate the proposed cuts to services, such as for example, a fall in the demand for local children centre places. In this context, parents found it difficult to understand the rationale for the cuts. Data from the Homerton Hospital suggested that the local birth rate was buoyant at around 6,000 births per year which would suggest strong underlying demand for provision. Furthermore, parents again challenged the supposition of the consultation which suggests that there was an excess of affordable childcare available locally.
- It was emphasised that it was not the role or responsibility of parents to speak to finances of this service, but to ensure that officers understood how valuable children centre's services were to local communities and the positive impact that these have on local children and families. Aside from the proposed closure of children's centres, it should also be understood that no different funding options have not been presented to parents, therefore as parents of children at centres proposed for closure, the only option is to set out what the impact of the closures will be.

4.11 What were parents' perceptions of other proposals contained with the rest of the Early Years Strategy, such as Family Hubs?

- The Family Hubs were a different service offer with a new extended client group, which whilst to be welcomed, their inclusion within the consultation was unclear.
- Parents were of the view that there was insufficient information presented on the Family Hubs for them to meaningfully contribute, for example, data on how these have been implemented elsewhere. With the target age group being extended to 0-19 year olds, parents were unclear as to how such a wide range of services can be collectively provided through one setting and were worried that this may be a dilution of early years services currently available.

4.12 The Chair thanked parent representatives for attending, preparing their written submission and for responding to questions from members of the Commission. The Chair acknowledged how important children's centre services were to the local community and the anxiety that proposed changes had for local parents. The Chair once again emphasised that the information which parents have provided had been very helpful to the Commission, and that this will inform its own response to the public consultation which closes on the 16th November.

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- 4.13 The Group Director for Children and Education was invited to set out the next steps for the consultation and decision making on Early Years Strategy and the reconfiguration of Children's Centres. The Consultation will close on the 16th November and a report of the findings will be produced and shared with the Senior Leadership Team. Following on from this, a paper will be taken to Cabinet in December outlining proposals for Cabinet members to take a decision. It was confirmed that the consultation report would be a supporting document and would be published alongside the proposals to Cabinet.

### **Cllr Katie Hanson in the Chair**

#### **5. Early Help Review**

- 5.1 A review of Hackney Council's Early Help Services has been ongoing since 2019. This review has encompassed services provided through Young Hackney, Family Support Service and Early Years & Children's Centres. Members of the Commission were invited to review reports which set out the aims and principles underpinning the review, as well as the resultant outcomes and priorities and the possible implications for local services.
- 5.2 The Group Director introduced the report. The review sets out those principles and processes which should inform the Council's internal early help offer. The review also details short, medium and long term actions to support the service development process.
- 5.3 The Project Manager for Early Help reported to the Commission the key findings from the review which are summarised below:
- Early help is non-statutory support that is provided to children and families at risk of poor outcomes and need additional help to achieve a good level of well being.
  - There were three drivers to the review: 1) ensure that the model of early help was fit for purpose 2) changes in social and political landscape (e.g. increase in families in temporary accommodation, cumulative impact of austerity) 3) financial sustainability.
  - The scope of the review encompassed early help delivered through Early Years & Children's Centres, Young Hackney and the Family Support Service. Whilst the review was internal to Hackney services, it was recognised that there were a wider range of partner agencies involved in early help and that the outcomes of the review would inform a broader multi-agency partnership approach (e.g CVS, Health, Police).
  - The review was overseen by an officer working group and a member oversight board. Stakeholders were also involved in the review process where over 200 individuals, including young people and their families, contributed.
  - The review identified a number of strengths to existing early help provision (breadth of service provision, supporting complex needs, multi-agency approach & high aspirations for young people) which would be retained and enhanced in the new early help offer.
  - The review highlighted 6 key aspirations for the new early help offer: 1) service visibility 2) effectively communicated support 3) addressing the needs of the whole family and increasing parenting capacity 4) build trusting

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relationships 5) address specific needs of young people 6) outcome focused interventions.

- A range of short, medium and long term priorities have been developed for early help services to enact from 2022. Short term goals include the development of a single assessment process through an early help hub (within the MASH), and the establishment of supporting protocols and standards to ensure that interventions are consistent, timely and effective.
- The delivery of these priorities will not equate to any job losses or change in job rolls and will be delivered within current budget frameworks.
- The review marks the end of Phase 1, and the next phase will be to engage the early help multi-agency partnership group which will ultimately report into the CHSCP Board. From this, a borough wide multi-agency partnership early help strategy will be developed.
- The principles and priorities for the early help review will be taken to Cabinet in January 2022 for approval. Subject to that approval the development priorities and actions will be implemented thereafter. An Early Help Partnership Group will be established in January 2022 to lead on strategy development.

#### 5.4 The Cllr Anntoinette Bramble Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care highlighted a number of points:

- Trusting relationships was highlighted as a strength of the existing model of early help and the Council would build on this;
- There is a need to further engage and involve the voluntary sector in early help work;
- Hackney Education Service have played an integral role in this early help review.

#### Questions from the Commission

#### 5.5 The review notes that much of early help and support is provided on a consensual basis to local families in need. Given that some communities may be reluctant to engage with local support services, particularly where this engagement is voluntary and where there may be a genuine mistrust of public services / social care interventions, what community engagement is planned alongside the development of the Early Help Strategy to build trusting relationships and ensure that those children and families in need of support come forward and are accepting of help?

- The Group Director indicated that children are seen in a wide range of early help settings and organisations including schools, GP's, Health Visitors. The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is now extending its role to look at early help and actively seeking to enable parents in need to access services and support. This system is in its infancy, and at the moment it is important to make sure everyone is aware of it, everyone working within the system is working to the same goals and standards. Not all early help comes from the Council, as there are a wide range of services providing support to children and families. The service will have a particular focus on disproportionality as it is known that black and other minority ethnic groups are accessing early help services, as it's not clear at the moment if these groups are not being offered services or there is a reluctance on behalf of the communities to take up support. The service is committed to addressing such disproportionalities.

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- 5.6 It is important to include the voice of young people in this new approach to early help and to ensure that it reflects and responds to the lived experience of young people. How have young people themselves been involved in the development of this model of early help to date, and how will they be involved in the future as the strategy evolves? How will you make sure you get feedback from young people being supported through early help?
- 26 families and 7 young people were spoken to as part of the early help review and these were mainly families who were using the early help services. An on-line survey was carried out which makes up the remainder of the consultation with children and families. Whilst it was acknowledged that more young people could have been engaged at this early stage, services would need to develop ongoing 'feedback loops' with young people to constantly reappraise and refine early help service provision in the future.
  - It was emphasised that the new early help model would focus on outcomes rather than processes and what impact that it would have on young people's lives. It's important to understand that we review and monitor outcomes to know that interventions are having a positive impact on children's lives.
- 5.7 In terms of performance of the new model of early help, can further information be provided as to how the outcomes of families referred in to the early help hub will be measured and monitored? How will we know that this new model of early help is effective and delivers good outcomes for local children and families it supports? What tangible outcomes will the early help model deliver?
- Data is critical to the success of the service. At the moment requests for early help can land at a number of possible services including Young Hackney, Family Support or children centres, and it's not possible to capture the needs of young people and their families, and the nature, timeliness and effectiveness of interventions delivered. A singular point of access through the early help hub will bring greater oversight and consistency to the early help process, and the singular point of access will enable local services to know what is working best to support parents and children. It will also help the local multi agency partnership to understand where to appropriately direct and focus resources to best meet the needs of children needing early help. It was emphasised that earlier interventions were known to be more effective for children and families and were also more financially effective.
- 5.8 Is the aim of the early help review to help more families or to provide more in depth support to a number of families. Is the aim of the review to provide early help services more cheaply? Are there a target cost savings attached to this review or is the review aimed to contain spending?
- There are no budget savings attached to the review. The review is all about improved services for greater impact for families for children and families across Hackney. The main reason for establishing the early help hub is to ensure that children are directed to the right help at the right time. If multi-agency partners are working together better to provide early help, then more families are likely to get the right help when they need it.
  - The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care noted that it was also important that the early help model would also bring more services together in the same location so that those in need of multi-agency support do not have to access multiple sites across the borough.

- 5.9 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. Given the sound problems in the Chamber, it was requested that if members did have additional questions that these could be sent to the Clerk who would then seek a written response from officers.

**Cllr Margaret Gordon in the Chair**

**6. School Estates Strategy**

- 6.1 In response to falling school rolls in mainstream settings and increased demand for in-borough placements for children with an EHCP, Hackney Education Service is in the process of developing a School Estates Strategy (SES). An outline of the emerging strategy was provided to members including the rationale for change, together with plans to increase in-borough provision for children with SEND and effective use of the boroughs school estate.
- 6.2 The Director of Education introduced the item. The School Estates Strategy was still in the process of development, including the finance and resources required to support planned developments. Officers set out the rationale and context for change and ambitions to extend SEND placements within Hackney mainstream and specialist school settings.
- 6.3 The Head of High Needs and School Places presented to the Commission highlighting the following issues:
- The SES would address two key issues - falling school rolls and an increase in the number of EHCPs. Hackney was not alone in facing these issues, indeed, these were London wide trends.
  - A healthy surplus for the primary sector is considered to be between 5-10% of places, but in Hackney this is currently 16% (505 vacant places in reception). There were around 50+ surplus currently across secondary schools when ideally this should be around 0.
  - Conversely, an additional 400 EHCPs were expected year on year up until 2026.
  - In terms of post 16 provision, most of the young people with SEND have placements outside of the borough.
  - The proportion of young people on SEND support had fallen from 19% in 2009 to just below 14% in 2020. Conversely the number of children with an EHCP has grown from 1,216 to 2,249 over the same period. This would further suggest schools need more help to deliver a graduated response to supporting children with SEND.
  - Comparatively to the rest of London, Hackney has more children with an EHCP in mainstream settings and fewer children in specialist schools.
  - The strategy has 4 priorities: 1: creation of additional places in special schools, 2 and 3) partnering with primary and secondary schools to combat falling school rolls 4) sustainable site usage across the maintained sector.
  - Additional SEND provision will be provided through additional ARP's, and more places in Special Schools.
  - There will also be a new role for NRC where it will be more proactively working with local schools, to focus on early intervention and early help and helping young people in need to achieve better outcomes.

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- Firstly, the borough needs to move to a point of '10% of surplus school places' (from 16%) which equates to a reduction of 450 primary places (135 have already been agreed). HES is drilling down into local neighbourhood data to understand what is happening in local communities and the education choices parents are making.
- Education sites are important and need to be protected and maintained and the strategy will set a long term plan for their sustainable use of the estate.
- The SES will be taken to Cabinet in January 2022 which will contain the project plan and budget case for the strategy (Capital and Revenue). The service was also building an 'invest to save' business-case, it was also clearly more cost effective to support young people with in-borough settings than commissioning external independent provision. The implementation plan will then be taken back to Cabinet in March 2022.
- The SEND expansion programme would commence in September 2022, where it was hoped some additional capacity would be available through additional ARPs.
- HES was currently working with a range of local stakeholders to support the emerging strategy.

6.4 The Cllr Anntoinette Bramble Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care highlighted a number of displacement issues underpinning the number of vacant places on school rolls:

- Free Schools, which have no obligation to consult the Council, have set up schools which have impacted on school rolls;
- The cap on housing benefits had impacted on families ability to live and stay in Hackney;
- Brexit had also impacted, with families choosing to remain in Europe after the pandemic;
- Whilst many families like and want to live in Hackney, the comparative benefits of living outside an inner city area (e.g. improved access to larger properties with gardens) were proving an incentive for some families to relocate.

### Questions from the Commission

6.5 To what degree is there a link between new ARPs and those schools with falling rolls? How can we ensure that ARPs are developed in a strategic way and located where they are most needed?

- Schools have been asked to submit expressions of interest and there has been a very good response. School responses had been analysed alongside other factors such as their location, availability of on-site space, school ethos and views of inclusivity. Therefore this combined data will help provide a more strategic assessment for the placement of ARPs (structured scoring system in place). The second step was about working with potential sites to identify how the ARP may be codesigned with schools and parents and young people as to what the provision may eventually look like.
- A viability assessment will be commissioned for all ARPs to ensure that the best use of public funds are made for each new location selected.

6.6 Could you expand further around some of the financial considerations within the School Estates Strategy? Can you outline what financial drivers are behind the

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strategy and the nature of revenue costs and capital investment which are envisaged to be needed? How will planned variations impact the High Needs budget?

- Although a lot of hard work was being undertaken by colleagues in finance, it was too early to give any concrete figures around capital or revenue expenditure. What was clear however was that it costs on average around £45k to support each child in independently commissioned SEND provision, yet local specialist schools costs are well below this (c£35k). It was also noted that greater use of independent provision outside the borough also incurred significant transport costs.

6.7 What will be the underpinning objectives (e.g. more in-borough placements, quality of provision) of the commissioning strategy for special school places for the Orthodox Jewish Community? What has been done so far to capture the views and opinions of this community in support of this strategy?

- Side by Side (an Orthodox Jewish SEND provision) was very inclusive and would provide a good model (inclusive practice, good rating by Ofsted, and good value for money) which can be replicated or inform additional provision across the borough. Working with this provision will further help the SEND team to understand the needs of the OJ community and map out how their needs may be met locally.
- The SEND team is working to engage and involve the OJ community and had recently met with Step by Step to gain an understanding of the families that they are working with.
- The Head of SEND was also working with the local independent OJ schools to help improve SENCO support to help identify and support young people with additional needs in these settings. Independent schools were very positive about this development and the service was considering whether an ARP could be set up in the independent sector (with support from Side by Side) to provide additional SEND support to the OJ community. It was reported that the community was very positive about these new developments.

6.8 The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play noted that the school estates strategy had been broadly welcomed by local Head Teachers who recognised the need for a strategic response to evolving SEND needs. The Commissioning of SEMH was very complex and difficult to resolve and a lot of this work was undertaken outside of the borough and would require substantive change to bring this back into the borough. This may be an area of interest to scrutiny at some future meeting. The Cabinet member thanked SEND officers for their leadership and support in taking this work forward.

6.9 Can you outline how the 336 additional places required will be delivered by 2023? Assuming that ARPs have 10 pupils this will deliver 40 places and with the capacity of local special schools around 450 at present, how feasible will it be to deliver the remaining 200 places in these specialist settings?

- It was acknowledged that the strategy is ambitious and the need is urgent not only from a financial perspective but also to best respond to the needs of local young people with additional needs. The service has benefited from over a year of data analysis to understand the nature of local SEND needs

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- Subject to viability assessments, it was hoped to expand provision at each of the 3 local special schools by 50 places (150) and where possible, each of the ARPs will deliver 24 places.
- Some of these additional places will be on-line much earlier than 2023 and some may take longer to put in place, but the service was working to prioritise those options that will deliver places more quickly.

- 6.10 What strategic needs assessment underpins this strategy in terms of the evolving cumulative needs of young people? Is further support required for particular needs groups?
- In terms of the strategic analysis of need, analysis had shown what was needed was greater volume of what was already being provided. Analysis of spending had shown that resources were being equally spent in local mainstream and specialist schools. There was however a growing need to support children with autism which would need to be reflected in the SES.
  - In secondary schools there was a growing number of young people with MLD. In this context, the SES was not just about increasing capacity, but must also be viewed in parallel to developing and improving actual SEND provision in mainstream settings. Therefore whilst the authority wanted to develop MLD offer through expansion of Stormont House School, it also wanted to develop the way that Stormont House School worked with other local schools to improve support to pupils with MLD in the mainstream sector. For example, there could be opportunities to develop innovative curriculum for young people with MLD in mainstream schools.
- 6.11 How have the three local special schools been engaged thus far, and what are their views about expanded provision if appropriate local sites can be found?
- A workshop was held with the 4 local special schools (including Side by Side) to drill down into what their offer is to local families and ensure that this is clearly communicated. This then needs to be made clearer to local families. The workshop helped to understand the gaps in provision and what needs to be done to improve and extend provision locally. The Head of SEND meets with local Special School Heads every 2 weeks as these are crucial partners in this process.
- 6.12 Why is there a target of zero headroom for secondary school capacity given that additional families may move into the borough during the course of the school year? Is the assumption that more children will move out?
- In terms of the secondary surplus, the guidance to maintain a 0% surplus comes through the GLA and where there is a recognition that it is much easier to track children and that this cohort are able to travel more freely and independently across boroughs (and needs may be met more broadly). Generally, primary schools serve a more localised community therefore there is a need to ensure that there is sufficient local capacity.
- 6.13 A new proactive role is planned for New Regents College to provide early education help across local mainstream settings. Can you expand on the vision for this role: Will this role have a focus on the maintenance of school placements and prevention of exclusions? How will this intersect with its role as PRU and commissioner of AP? Will children have shorter placements at NRC before reintegration back into

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mainstream schools?

- NRC were a key partner in the SES given that the College provides support to children with additional needs, including excluded young people under a SLA with Hackney Education. The College does provide a range of services to support local schools and can help broker places for children. Hackney Education would like to work with NRC to develop this expertise across borough to ensure more young people can benefit. The offer of NRC would therefore be wider to include early help placements to prevent exclusion as well as bespoke projects to support other needs groups. Hackney Education also wanted to make sure that it works more closely with NRC in the Commissioning of AP and to develop better and more robust systems of quality assurance for AP. This would be a partnership approach, ensuring that the authority makes use of the skills and experience that NRC have in supporting young people. These changes will hopefully come into effect by the end of 2021/22 and reflected in the new SLA going forward.

6.14 Post 16 provision for young people with SEND has been highlighted as an area of under provision. How will the School Estates Strategy contribute to developing an improved range of options for young people post 16?

- The service intends to map current provision and that will help to identify where the gaps are in this provision. The SEND team was also working with secondary schools to understand how a more inclusive 6th Form option can be supported for more local students. Schools understand there is a need to extend provision and are actively engaging with the authority to see how options can be improved. The SEND team was also working with Stormont House to assess routes into employment and training options to support this (preparing for adulthood).

6.15 A common theme in feedback with parents with SEND is schools not delivering to the specifications set out in their child's EHCP. Will there be any additional safeguards put in place to ensure that schools deliver requirements set out in EHCPs?

- The school census provides detailed data on pupils at the local level including the areas of need. What can happen in school is that resources are diverted to children with an EHCP (statutory provision) at the expense of the children at the SEND support level. In terms of monitoring this, it is important to assess whether children are getting the right support at the right time and that schools have the right level of trained staff to deliver the support needed. The LA has a monitoring and oversight role in this process, and provides training for SENCO and makes sure that children with SEND are making good progress. It was acknowledged however that more can be done, in particular around developing a more graduated response and what schools should do before resorting to statutory support (via EHCP). There will be a period of embedding this practice across the borough to make sure this is consistent and equitable across schools.

6.16 How will the plan help to deliver more around the needs of the child with additional needs rather than what a school can deliver?

- When a child with an EHCP is looking for a placement, it is important that this is matched to the needs of the child set out in the EHCP. If specific support

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cannot be provided, then there is assurance that the school has resources to buy in additional support that might be needed. This is not a perfect system as there will always be children whose needs might not exactly match the 'template' for support which might be expected to be provided and additional support may be required in such cases.

- 6.17 What influence and or controls does the Council have in terms of the environmental sustainability (net-zero targets) of the educational estate? What are the council's ambitions for environmental sustainability for this estate?
- The SEND team was working closely with property services and wider council services to ensure that the education estate is aligned to efforts to reduce to net-zero by 2030. The strategy has been a good way to develop a corporate approach and solution to the education issues it faces, and in this context it was drawing on the expertise of environmental sustainability services.

### **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:
- At the next meeting in December it will be Cllr Woodley's Q & A - where the Commission will focus on the following issues(s)
  - The Children & Families Service Annual Report - will now be taken in February 2022.
  - January 2022 will be a safeguarding focused meeting - with an update on unregistered settings, and the City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership will present their annual report - with a focus on adultification.
  - February will also see the Commission reviewing the work of children's services, both Education and Children's Social Care, in implementing Anti-Racist Action plans across their family of services.

- 7.2 The Commission noted and agreed the work programme.

### **8. Minutes**

- 8.1 The draft minutes of the previous meeting held on 6th October were reviewed by members of the Commission.
- 8.2 There was one action arising from the minutes which was a request for further information for Tower Hamlets Youth Justice Service (Number of first time entrants to the YJS, Number of offences committed per reoffender). This data was provided by Officers and was sent around to members of the Commission. This data showed that whilst there was a higher number of first time entrants to the YJS in Tower Hamlets compared to Hackney, both boroughs had a similar reoffending rate.

- 8.3 Members agreed the minutes.

### **9. Any other business**

- 9.1 Ernell Watson noted that she was present at the last meeting on 6th October 2021.
- 9.2 The Chair apologies for any inconvenience for the sound problem in the Council Chamber and agreed to follow this up with IT.

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

**Meeting closed at 9.20pm**