

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

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

Wednesday 30 November 2022

7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA

The press and members of the public are welcome to join this meeting in person (please note the guidance below) or remotely via the following link:

https://youtu.be/igay_KdHtq0

A backup link is provided in the case of technical difficulties:

<https://youtu.be/VlxMtKRCwIU>

Contact:

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Mark Carroll

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair), Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott, Cllr Midnight Ross, Cllr Caroline Selman, Cllr Anya Sizer, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge, Cllr Lynne Troughton and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof

Co-optees: Richard Brown, Andy English, Salmah Kansara, Jo Macleod, Steven Olalere and Monique Pink

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**
- 3 Declarations of Interest**
- 4 Children's Social Care Data Briefing (19.05)** (Pages 9 - 16)
To review a summary of activity across children's social care for the period 2021/22 (*to be taken alongside budget monitoring*).
- 5 Children and Families Service - Budget Monitoring (19.55)** (Pages 17 - 26)
To review in-year budgets for the Children and Families Service, including progress against agreed cost savings. *To note, additional data has been requested for corporate parenting budget.*
- 6 SEND Strategy 2022-2025 (20.30)** (Pages 27 - 44)
To note the SEND Strategy 2022-2025 (agreed by Cabinet 21/11/22) and update on the development of a partnership action plan.
- 7 Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review (21.20)** (Pages 45 - 56)
To note the scrutiny response to the Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review.
- 8 Housing Support for Care Leavers (21.25)** (Pages 57 - 74)
To note the letter to the Cabinet member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care setting out the recommendations of the Children and Young People and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission's work on housing support for care leavers.
- 9 Work Programme 2022/23 (21.20)** (Pages 75 - 86)
- 10 Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 87 - 114)
- 11 Any Other Business**
To include updates on children and young people related issues from other scrutiny commissions

Access and Information

Public Involvement and Recording

Public Attendance at the Town Hall for Meetings

Scrutiny meetings are held in public, rather than being public meetings. This means that whilst residents and press are welcome to attend, they can only ask questions at the discretion of the Chair. For further information relating to public access to information, please see Part 4 of the council's constitution, available at <https://hackney.gov.uk/council-business> or by contacting Governance Services (020 8356 3503)

Following the lifting of all Covid-19 restrictions by the Government and the Council updating its assessment of access to its buildings, the Town Hall is now open to the public and members of the public may attend meetings of the Council.

We recognise, however, that you may find it more convenient to observe the meeting via the live-stream facility, the link for which appears on the agenda front sheet.

We would ask that if you have either tested positive for Covid-19 or have any symptoms that you do not attend the meeting, but rather use the livestream facility. If this applies and you are attending the meeting to ask a question, make a deputation or present a petition then you may contact the Officer named at the beginning of the agenda and they will be able to make arrangements for the Chair of the meeting to ask the question, make the deputation or present the petition on your behalf.

The Council will continue to ensure that access to our meetings 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. The latest general advice can be found here - <https://hackney.gov.uk/coronavirus-support>

Rights of Press and Public to Report on Meetings

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

Those wishing to film, photograph or audio record a meeting are asked to notify the Council's Monitoring Officer by noon on the day of the meeting, if possible, or any time prior to the start of the meeting or notify the Chair at the

start of the meeting.

The Monitoring Officer, or the Chair of the meeting, may designate a set area from which all recording must take place at a meeting.

The Council will endeavour to provide reasonable space and seating to view, hear and record the meeting. If those intending to record a meeting require any other reasonable facilities, notice should be given to the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting and will only be provided if practicable to do so.

The Chair shall have discretion to regulate the behaviour of all those present recording a meeting in the interests of the efficient conduct of the meeting. Anyone acting in a disruptive manner may be required by the Chair to cease recording or may be excluded from the meeting.

Disruptive behaviour may include moving from any designated recording area; causing excessive noise; intrusive lighting; interrupting the meeting; or filming members of the public who have asked not to be filmed.

All those visually recording a meeting are requested to only focus on recording Councillors, officers and the public who are directly involved in the conduct of the meeting. The Chair of the meeting will ask any members of the public present if they have objections to being visually recorded. Those visually recording a meeting are asked to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed or photographed. Failure by someone recording a meeting to respect the wishes of those who do not wish to be filmed and photographed may result in the Chair instructing them to cease recording or in their exclusion from the meeting.

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

Providing oral commentary during a meeting is not permitted.

Advice to Members on Declaring Interests

Advice to Members on Declaring Interests

Hackney Council's Code of Conduct applies to all Members of the Council, the Mayor and co-opted Members.

This note is intended to provide general guidance for Members on declaring interests. However, you may need to obtain specific advice on whether you have an interest in a particular matter. If you need advice, you can contact:

- Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services
- the Legal Adviser to the Committee; or
- Governance Services.

If at all possible, you should try to identify any potential interest you may have before the meeting so that you and the person you ask for advice can fully consider all the circumstances before reaching a conclusion on what action you should take.

You will have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter if it:

- i. relates to an interest that you have already registered in Parts A and C of the Register of Pecuniary Interests of you or your spouse/civil partner, or anyone living with you as if they were your spouse/civil partner;
- ii. relates to an interest that should be registered in Parts A and C of the Register of Pecuniary Interests of your spouse/civil partner, or anyone living with you as if they were your spouse/civil partner, but you have not yet done so; or
- iii. affects your well-being or financial position or that of your spouse/civil partner, or anyone living with you as if they were your spouse/civil partner.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest in an item on the agenda you must:

- i. Declare the existence and nature of the interest (in relation to the relevant agenda item) as soon as it becomes apparent to you (subject to the rules regarding sensitive interests).
- ii. You must leave the meeting when the item in which you have an interest is being discussed. You cannot stay in the meeting whilst discussion of the item takes place, and you cannot vote on the matter. In addition, you must not seek to improperly influence the decision.
- iii. If you have, however, obtained dispensation from the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee you may remain in the meeting and participate in the

meeting. If dispensation has been granted it will stipulate the extent of your involvement, such as whether you can only be present to make representations, provide evidence or whether you are able to fully participate and vote on the matter in which you have a pecuniary interest.

Do you have any other non-pecuniary interest on any matter on the agenda which is being considered at the meeting?

You will have 'other non-pecuniary interest' in a matter if:

- i. It relates to an external body that you have been appointed to as a Member or in another capacity; or
- ii. It relates to an organisation or individual which you have actively engaged in supporting.

If you have other non-pecuniary interest in an item on the agenda you must:

- i. Declare the existence and nature of the interest (in relation to the relevant agenda item) as soon as it becomes apparent to you.
- ii. You may remain in the meeting, participate in any discussion or vote provided that contractual, financial, consent, permission or licence matters are not under consideration relating to the item in which you have an interest.
- iii. If you have an interest in a contractual, financial, consent, permission, or licence matter under consideration, you must leave the meeting unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee. You cannot stay in the meeting whilst discussion of the item takes place, and you cannot vote on the matter. In addition, you must not seek to improperly influence the decision. Where members of the public are allowed to make representations, or to give evidence or answer questions about the matter you may, with the permission of the meeting, speak on a matter then leave the meeting. Once you have finished making your representation, you must leave the meeting whilst the matter is being discussed.
- iv. If you have been granted dispensation, in accordance with the Council's dispensation procedure you may remain in the meeting. If dispensation has been granted it will stipulate the extent of your involvement, such as whether you can only be present to make representations, provide evidence or whether you are able to fully participate and vote on the matter in which you have a non-pecuniary interest.

Further Information

Advice can be obtained from Dawn Carter-McDonald, Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services via email dawn.carter-mcdonald@hackney.gov.uk

Getting to the Town Hall

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

Accessibility

There are public toilets available, with wheelchair access, on the ground floor of the Town Hall.

Induction loop facilities are available in the Assembly Halls and the Council Chamber. Access for people with mobility difficulties can be obtained through the ramp on the side to the main Town Hall entrance.

Further Information about the Commission

If you would like any more information about the Scrutiny Commission, including the membership details, meeting dates and previous reviews, please visit the website or use this QR Code (accessible via phone or tablet 'app')

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





Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 4 - Children's Social Care Activity	Item No 4
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Outline

The Children and Families Annual Report is presented annually to the Commission. However, this report was not available to be included within this agenda, therefore a brief summary of children's social care activity for the period 2021/22 is presented.

A budget monitoring report for Children and Families Service accompanies this report so that members can scrutinise police and budgets in alignment.

Reports

- Children and Families Service key Performance Headlines 2021/22

Attending:

- Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
- Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Children and Education

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Report Title:	Children and Families Service Key Performance Headlines at September 2022
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
Date:	30th November 2022
Produced by:	Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
Authorised by:	Jacque Burke, Director of Children and Families

Report Summary

This report is intended to provide a very brief overview of the key performance headlines for the Children and Families Service as at September 2022. It is not intended to replace the full CFS Annual Report which will be reviewed at a later date by the CYP Scrutiny Commission and contains a full narrative around performance as well as key updates about the service.

Overview of report headlines

- 3,707 referrals were received in 2021/22, a 27% increase from 2,930 received in the previous year. 1,935 referrals have been received between April and September 2022.
- 3,293 social work assessments were completed, a 15% decrease from the 3,858 completed in 2020/21. 2,075 assessments have been completed between April and September 2022.
- 211 children were supported on Child Protection Plans as at 31st March 2022, a 11% decrease compared to 237 children at the same time in 2021. 186 children are supported on Child Protection Plans at the end of September 2022.
- 405 children were looked after as at 31st March 2022, a 6% decrease from 431 children at the same time the previous year. 404 children were looked after at the end of September 2022.
- 179 children entered care during 2021/22, a 3% decrease from 185 children in 2020/21. 95 children entered care between April and September 2022.
- 15.3% of looked after children had three or more care arrangements in 2021/22, compared to 10% in 2020/21. 14% of looked after children had three or more care arrangements as at the end of September 2022.
- 71.2% of children who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years were in stable care arrangements of more than 2 years in 2021/22, a decrease from 77% in 2020/21. 65% of children were in stable arrangements at the end of September 2022.
- 387 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2022, an increase of 11 from 376 at the same point in 2021. 357 care leavers were supported at the end of September 2022.

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Children and Families Service Key Performance Headlines at September 2022

Introduction

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Key Performance Headlines

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Information about our looked after children

As of end September 2022, there were 404 Looked after children, down from a peak of 470 in November 2020. We believe numbers of looked after children increased as a result of family

stressors related to lockdown, with them coming down again and stabilising with a renewed focus across the service on ensuring right children come into care at the right time.

Number of children in care

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	End of September 2022
Number of children in care at snapshot date	432	426	406	404
Children entering care	228	182	163	95 (April-September)
Children leaving care	208	181	187	98 (April-September)

Rate of children in care

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	End of September 2022
Rate of children in care per 10,000	68	67	64	63
Statistical neighbours	60	63	n/a	n/a
England	65	67	n/a	n/a

Rates of looked after children per 10,000 in Hackney are now similar to our statistical neighbours. 31 (8%) of these children are unaccompanied minors, with the number of unaccompanied minors remaining below pre-pandemic levels.

Percentage of looked after children with three or more care arrangements in one year

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	September 2022
Hackney	12%	10%	15%	14%
Statistical neighbours	10%	9%	n/a	n/a
England	11%	9%	n/a	n/a

The percentage of children aged under 16 who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years, who have lived in the same home for over 2 years

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	September 2022
Hackney	66%	77%	71%	65%
Statistical neighbours	71%	70%	n/a	n/a
England	68%	71%	n/a	n/a

There has been an increase in the number of children experiencing three or more care arrangements over the course of a year - the 2021/22 outturn was 15% which is higher than the statistical neighbour and national averages of 9%. There has been a decrease in the proportion of children aged under 16 who have been looked after for more than 2.5 years, who have lived in the same home for over 2 years (71% in 2021/22 compared to 77% in 2020/21). Hackney's performance against this indicator is in line with the statistical neighbour and England averages in 2020/21. 2020/21 stability figures were particularly good, believed to be influenced by the context of lockdown in the pandemic. However, further analysis is underway on the cohort of children with 3+ care arrangements and those who have left long term homes to think about what we need to do to address this

We have also taken steps to improve the process of oversight for planning for children once they enter a legal framework and beyond the conclusion of any legal proceedings, again to help ensure that the right decisions are made for children, at the right time. For example through our Permanency Planning Meetings, which are overseen by senior managers, and ensure parallel planning is in place to consider alternative routes to permanency for long-term looked after children.

Adoption

Three children were adopted in 2021-22, with ten children adopted in the first six months of 2022-23 alone, all aged under 5 years old. Adoption levels were low in 2020/21, due primarily to court delays related to the pandemic (trend seen across Adopt London North). A significant number of adoption proceedings are expected to conclude in 2022/3.

There have been 16 Special Guardianship Orders (SGO's) in 2021-22, with a further 7 granted in the first six months of 2022-23. Greater attention has been placed over the past year on the prospect of progressing alternative routes to permanency through adoption or SGO for children in long-term care, with a small but significant number of positive outcomes to this approach.

Care Leavers

387 care leavers aged between 17 and 21 were being supported by the Leaving Care service at 31 March 2022, an increase of 11 (3%) from 376 at the same point in 2021. 357 care leavers were supported at the end of September 2022. There were 63 care leavers aged 22 and older being supported as at 31st March 2022, lower than the 79 supported as at March 2021. This has decreased to 55 care leavers being supported as at 30th September 2022.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 5 - Budget Monitoring - Children and Families Service	Item No 5
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Outline

Budget monitoring is a key function of overview and scrutiny, and each year the Commission reviews the in-year budgets of the Children and Families Service. The aim of this item is to:

- Review in-year spending and cost pressures;
- Management actions to reduce any projected overspends;
- Progress in achieving identified cost savings for 2022/23.

This item is taken alongside the Children and Families Annual Report so that members can review budgets alongside policy priorities for the service.

Additional data has been requested on the Corporate Parenting Budget given the ongoing cost pressures in this area of service.

Reports

- Budget Monitoring Report - Children and Families Service

Attending:

- Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
- Jacque Burke, Group Director for Children and Education

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Report Title:	Children's Services 2022-23 Finance Report
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
Date:	30 November 2022
Produced by:	Children and Education Finance Team
Authorised by:	Naeem Ahmed

Summary

- This report highlights the 2022-23 forecast outturn financial position for Children's Services at the mid-point in the year.
- The report highlights the main budget variances across the service as well as the management actions that have been developed to reduce the overspend across the service.



Children's Services Finance Update

Financial Year 2022-23 (Period 6 - September 2022)



Children and Families Services (CFS) 2022-23

CFS are forecasting a £1.7m overspend as at the end of September 2022 after the application of reserves and after the inclusion of the Social Care Grant allocation. £12k of this is in relation to legacy cyber related activity in the service.

There is a gross budget pressure in staffing across Children and Families Services (CFS) of £1.6m. Following the Ofsted inspection in November 2019, £1.6m of non-recurrent funding was agreed for 2020/21 to increase staffing levels to manage demand alongside additional posts to respond to specific recommendations from the inspection. In 2021/22, this additional £1.6m of staffing resource was funded from the corresponding increase in the Social Care Grant allocation. This resource continues to be factored into the forecast, and proposals are being developed by the Group Director and Director to review the staffing structure across the service. The expectation is that the implementation of the new structure will take place from October 2023. A further Ofsted focused visit took place in September 2022, and focused on the 'front door' services, including decision-making and thresholds for referrals about children, child protection enquiries, decisions to step up or down from early help, and emergency action out of hours. The findings from the focused visit were positive, and recognised the strength of 'front door' services, the recent integration of early help services, and that senior leaders continue to make improvements to services in a challenging context.

The main areas of pressure for CFS continue to be on looked-after children (LAC) and leaving care (LC) placements costs. **Corporate Parenting** is forecast to overspend by £1.2m after the use of commissioning reserves, largely driven by a change in the profile of placements linked to the complexity of care for children and young people coming into the service. Similarly, **Looked After Children** and **Leaving Care Services** is expected to overspend by £0.1m after the use of reserves, and this relates to an increase in commissioning costs and some staffing costs pressures linked to additional posts and agency staff usage. This financial year we have seen a reduction in residential placements, however this month this has increased to 33 placements. We are expecting further reduction in young people stepping down from residential placements in the next six months.

Disabled Children's Services are forecast to overspend by £0.2m after the use of reserves. This is due to an increase in demand for placements in direct payments (including short breaks) due to higher usage amongst families to provide respite and prevent the need for further intervention.

The **Access and Assessment and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub** have an overspend of £0.3m primarily related to increased staffing costs for maternity cover and agency premiums due to a significant proportion of social workers leaving the Council towards the end of the last financial year. The Workforce Development Board has a rolling Social Worker recruitment process which should address the agency premium costs, providing successful permanent appointment of candidates. The service is also considering initiatives to retain staff such as market supplements in hard to recruit areas of the service.

Children's Forecast - September 2022

Table 1: Summary Table - Children's Forecast (£'000)

Original Budget	Virement	Revised Budget	Service Area	Forecast Variance after reserves/ grants	Change in Variance from August 2022	Of variance - Cyber Amount
23,233	36	23,269	Corporate Parenting [Fostering, Placement and Permanency Team]	1,173	90	
7,257	97	7,354	Family Intervention Support Services [Children in Need, Parenting Support and NRPF]	58	(75)	
4,791	71	4,862	Access & Assessment and Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub	320	196	
4,727	101	4,827	Looked After Children and Leaving Care Services	123	(58)	
5,485	39	5,525	Disabled Children Services	155	(1)	
2,772	42	2,815	Safeguarding and Learning Service	115	6	
1,639	28	1,667	Clinical Services	(225)	12	
712	11	723	Family Learning Intervention Programme	(98)	(99)	
285	4	290	City & Hackney Safeguarding Children's Partnership	-	-	
-	-	-	Teaching Partnership	-	-	
-	-	-	Contextual Safeguarding	-	-	
50,901	429	51,330	Children's Social Care subtotal	1,621	70	-
7,429	92	7,521	Young Hackney	13	(28)	
1,770	(84)	1,686	Directorate Management Team	(23)	15	
1,496	27	1,523	Youth Justice	(112)	7	
967	15	982	Children's Commissioning & Business Support Team	50	-	8
593	13	606	Domestic Abuse Intervention Service	53	(4)	
483	37	520	Supporting Families & Early Help Family Support	50	11	4
63,640	529	64,169	Children's Services Total	1,653	72	12

Corporate Parenting - Corporate Parenting remains the area of the service with the most significant demand pressures. The overspend for the service in 2021-22 was £2.1m after the application of reserves. The predicted position for 2022-23 is a £1.2m overspend after the use of reserves, and this has reduced from last year due to a combination of additional corporate growth in the budget and the allocation of increased Social Care Grant that was allocated to the local authority in 2022-23.

One of the main drivers for the cost pressure in Corporate Parenting continues to be the rise in the number of children in costly residential placements which has continued to grow year-on-year and the number of under 18s in high-cost semi-independent placements. Where children in their late teens are deemed to be vulnerable, and in many cases are transitioning from residential to semi-independent placements, they may still require a high-level of support and in extreme circumstances bespoke crisis packages. We are also seeing an increase in the number of in-house fostering placements. The tables in the next part of the report provide a more in-depth breakdown by placement type, including budget and cost along with client numbers:

Table 1: Breakdown by placement type (gross expenditure) - Looked after Children (September 2022)

Looked After Children (LAC)						No. of Placements
Description	Budget £ 000	Forecast £ 000	Variance £ 000	Movement £ 000	Δ %	September
Residential Care	6,132	9,254	3,123	259	3% ▲	33
Secure Accommodation (Welfare)	-	98	98	-	-	-
Semi-Independent (Under 18)	1,570	3,094	1,524	-75	2% ▼	35
Independent Foster Agency Carers	7,688	6,928	-760	-114	2% ▼	119
In-House Fostering	2,400	2,661	261	90	4% ▲	100
Family & Friends	869	896	27	-44	5% ▼	62
Residential Family Centre (P&Child)	300	675	375	112	20% ▲	7
Other Local Authorities	-	124	124	5	4% ▲	3
LAC Total	18,958	23,728	4,770	233	1% ▲	359

Table 2: Breakdown by placement type (gross expenditure) - Leaving Care (September 2022)

Leaving Care (LC)						No. of Placements
Description	Budget £ 000	Forecast £ 000	Variance £ 000	Movement £ 000	Δ %	September
Semi-independent (18+)	1,343	1,950	607	-70	4% ▼	87
Overstayers	290	-	-290	-	-	-
Staying Put	500	819	319	-45	5% ▼	44
Supported Lodging	-	89	89	-1	1% ▼	6
Extended Fostering	-	13	13	11	579% ▲	1
Other SS (YP's Sup Accom Pathway)	-	1,257	1,257	4		-
LC Total	2,133	4,127	1,995	-100	2% ▼	138

Table 3: Breakdown by placement type (gross expenditure) - UASC (September 2022)

UASC / Former UASC						No. of Placements
Description	Budget £ 000	Forecast £ 000	Variance £ 000	Movement £ 000	Δ %	September
UASC	310	986	676	69	8% ▲	27
Former UASC	390	1,318	928	-76	5% ▼	72
Total	700	2,304	1,604	-7	0% ▼	99

Savings/Vacancy Factor

Savings for Children's Services include:

- £200k for Clinical Services from increased contributions from NEL CCG towards health costs within the service;
- £100k from joint funding towards complex health and social care packages; and
- a review of early help services designed to reduce costs by £350k this year. The saving for early help services of £350k will not be achieved fully this year and mitigating non-recurrent funds have been identified.

A vacancy rate savings target of £0.9m has been set for the Children and Families Service and the forecast assumes that this will be achieved or mitigated. Progress against the target is carefully monitored and tracked by the C&E Senior Management Team and this will continue to be monitored closely and reported through this year.

Management Actions to reduce the overspend

In addition to budgeted savings further cost reduction measures have been developed for 2022/23 to seek to reduce the overspend in the service. Management actions of £1.5m have been identified and these are factored into the forecast when they have been delivered.

	Initiative	Description	Target
1	Reduction of residential placements	As part of the forensic analysis of residential placements, the service is targeting a reduction of five residential placements (costing on average £200k per annum, per placement). This is being monitored through the Corporate Parenting budget review meetings. To date circa £750k of cost avoidance has been achieved, the target is on track to be met this financial year.	£1m
2	Operations: Implementation of an overall panel process and forensic review of the Top 20 high cost placements.	Bringing together multiple panel processes into one process, enabling closer financial oversight and strategic oversight across all operational services. The £300k cost reduction will be achieved by reviewing the top 20 high cost placements and seeking a 5% reduction in costs through analysis of care package support and through targeted negotiations with care providers. Cost avoidance of £31k per week is being achieved after a review of 5 high cost placements, the target is on track to be exceeded this financial year.	£300K
3	Review Agency Spend & implement a new process for sign off for new agency staff	Reviewing spend on agency staff will enable us to make savings/reduce overspend. Regular reporting and scrutiny through the Workforce Development Board for sign-off for new agency staff will enable the directorate to closely monitor the use of agency staff and related expenditure. The London Pledge which is a shared agreement of London Boroughs for agency children's social workers may also have an impact in this area in 2022/23. This target is on track to be delivered.	£100K
4	Placement Management Business Support Improvement	The cost reductions realised from the Leaving Care Welfare/ Benefits Officer post will achieve in the region of £130k-£230k, by increasing the number of young people claiming housing benefit post 18 from 50% to between 70%-80%. The £100k target has already been exceeded, with the potential to deliver £330k this financial year.	£100K

Conclusion

Despite significant further funds made available to Children's Services this year, primarily through the Social Care Grant, additional corporate growth and drawdown from one-off reserves/grants, the service is forecast to overspend by £1.7m. The service has worked in collaboration with finance to develop a set of management actions for 2022-23 to reduce the overspend position and the reliance on non-recurrent funding. Key to making real inroads into expenditure are actions to reduce the numbers of children and young people looked after, particularly those in a residential care setting where the net cost of one placement for a year is approximately £200k and managing demand so staff numbers in post can be maintained at budgeted levels.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 6 - SEND Strategy 2022-25	Item No 6
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Outline

Hackney Education has developed a new SEND Strategy for the period 2022-25 which was approved by Cabinet on November 21st 2022. An Action Plan is being developed with partners to support the delivery of the key aims of the strategy, which itself is being presented to the Commission in February 2023.

The Commission is therefore invited to note the contents of the SEND Strategy and to question officers on plans to deliver key objectives detailed within.

Reports

- SEND Strategy 2022-25

Attending:

- Joe Wilson, Head of SEND
- Paul Senior, Director of Education and Inclusion

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Overview & Scrutiny

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 30th November 2022
Title of report: Hackney SEND Strategy 2022 - 2025
Report author: Joe Wilson, Head of SEND
Authorised by: Paul Senior, Director of Education & Inclusion
Brief: <p>This report is to provide the Commission with the opportunity to note the work of the SEND Strategy 2022 - 2025. The report is provided to also illustrate the key priorities and strategic aims that local partners have identified as being key for focus over this period in response to local needs.</p> <p>Hackney is committed to ensuring that children and young people achieve positive outcomes educationally, within the community and in preparing them for adulthood and independence.</p> <p>The SEND Partnership Board has set an ambitious programme to transform the experience of families and the delivery of high-quality services to achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people.</p>

Report to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

Report title: SEND Strategy 2022 - 2025

Meeting date: 30th November 2022

Report originator: Joe Wilson, Head of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. This report will provide Councillors with an overview of the local area SEND Strategy.
- 1.2. The Strategy has been co-produced with a wide range of key stakeholders across Hackney including: Families, young people, schools and settings. The overall aim of the Strategy is to provide detail on Hackney's current approach to SEND, and to set key priority areas for the coming years.
- 1.3. Hackney has a vision to provide an excellent, inclusive and equitable local experience for all Hackney children and young people with SEND.
- 1.4. We want all our children and young people to have access to the right support at the right time from local services and to be able to travel easily to a great inclusive local school, which engages with their neighbourhood parent/carer community. We want all our children and young people to be in schools and to access services which fairly reflect the diversity of the Hackney community.
- 1.5. The four main priorities in the Strategy will ensure that the above vision is progressed for our children and young people and are as follows:

Priority One - Outstanding Provision and Services

Priority Two - An Earlier Response

Priority Three - Preparing for Adulthood

Priority Four - Joining up our Services

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Commission members are asked to note the contents of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1. There has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people (CYP) with Education Health Care Plans (EHCP) which has increased year on year since the 2014 SEND Reforms framework and the associated duties was set in government policy.
- 3.2. Hackney currently has the 12th largest number of children and young people with SEND nationally, with over 1 in 20 children and young people having an EHC Plan (5.3% of local school age population has a EHCP, compared with 4.4% statistical neighbour LA average). This context has meant that leaders have had to adapt to ensure that our vision for SEND is able to meet growing numbers and levels of need, but also ensure that our children and young people have the opportunity to make excellent progress.
- 3.3. The underpinning principles of the Strategy are as follows:

Listening to our children and young people

- We will actively listen to our children and young people with SEND through a number of mechanisms that support and promote our children to have a voice
- We will incorporate the feedback we receive from our children and young people into our planning both on an individual level and when strategically planning

Co-production

- We will work with our parents, carers and those who represent them to co-produce on an individual basis but also to develop and deliver strategy

Outstanding communication

- We will communicate with our families and young people in meaningful ways
- We will form excellent relationships with our partners to ensure communication is easy and effective
- We will make sure we share information between agencies effectively and in a timely way

Transparency

- We will operate honestly and within a framework of reflective practice
- We will be transparent with families, children and young people about what can and cannot be achieved
- We will be clear about timescales with families, schools and setting

Multi-agency working

- We will think multi-agency in every aspect of our work to make sure silo working is removed
- We will actively work to break down barriers between agencies to improve the experience of our families accessing multiple services

Data quality

- We will actively work to improve our data quality across the partnership
- We will use our data to inform decision making and evaluate progress
- We will be transparent with our data when co-producing with parents and carers

Excellence and ambition

- We want the best for our children and young people in Hackney
- We will aim high and always strive to improve and evolve to meet the changing needs of our community

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Hackney SEND Strategy

Report originator: Joe Wilson, Head of SEND

Date: 17 November 2022

Cleared by: Paul Senior, Director of Education and inclusion



Working for every child

Hackney's SEND strategy

2022–2025



SEND

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Educational journey

Joining up services

Support

Strong partnerships

Education Health Social care

Inclusion

Working together

Clarity

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If you need any information on this brochure in a different format please email consultation@hackney.gov.uk We'll consider your request and get back to you in 5 working days.

Foreword

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a disruptive impact on the learning of all our young people (from 0-25) across the country and we recognise that those with SEND may have been more affected than their peers.

In Hackney we are ambitious in supporting all of our children and young people to have the best possible start in life and enter into adulthood with all the skills they need to thrive. We are also ambitious about inclusion and will be working alongside our schools and settings to facilitate a system where every child can belong. For our children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), this requires us to provide outstanding services and provision, have a strong partnership with parents, identify needs early and work together as a partnership in all we undertake.

We believe SEND is everyone's business and through the new SEND Strategy 2022 – 2025 we would like to make clear to all who work with and for children and young people with SEND and their families what our priorities are for the coming 3 years. Young people, parents and carers have been involved in the co-production of this strategy and will be instrumental in its successful delivery. Only when working together can we achieve what we need to for some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

The increasing number of children and young people who are requiring support from SEND Services is a significant challenge for all partners, within a context of changing national policy. It is therefore even more essential that we work together to achieve great things.

This strategy identifies our co-produced SEND Priorities across education, health and social care which will be monitored and overseen by the SEND Partnership Board. There will be consistent monitoring of the strategy itself in a changing environment to ensure that we remain focussed on the right priorities and are making good progress towards them, so as to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Hackney.

We look forward to working in collaboration to ensure that our children and young people with SEND achieve their aspirations.

CLLR WOODLEY

CLLR BRAMBLE



Introduction

Hackney's SEND Strategy brings together the key priorities for children and young people with SEND and their families to make sure everyone works together to achieve our vision.

Vision

Hackney has a vision to provide an excellent, inclusive and equitable local experience for all Hackney children and young people with SEND.

- We want all our children and young people to have access to the right support at the right time from local services and to be able to travel easily to a great inclusive local school which engages with their neighbourhood parent/carer community.
- We want all our children and young people to be in schools and to access services which fairly reflect the diversity of the Hackney community.

Why is our vision important?

The commencement of the Children and Families Act in 2014 marked the biggest change in SEND delivery in a generation.

Eight years on in 2022 the world has changed significantly and as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic we must make sure that the current needs of our children and young people are known and understood as we formulate our strategy to meet these needs and support them to thrive.

This strategy has been co-produced by members of our SEND Partnership Board which includes parent carers, health, children's social care, adult social care and education representatives. The voice of our young people is essential in developing our strategic approach and also in our delivery. Young people's feedback will be a key aspect of our evaluation of progress as we deliver this strategy over the next 3 years.

Hackney is a vibrant, evolving and ever changing borough with new housing and a changing population as we emerge from the pandemic. We must remain current and responsive to the local needs and are committed through this strategy to building a better understanding of how these needs are evolving.

Our strategy is based on evidence and founded on core data and performance which we will strive to improve over the lifetime of the strategy. Alongside our data we will build a culture of listening, evaluation and learning across our partnership in order to continuously improve our offer to local families.

As a partnership we are committed and focused on the priorities set out in this strategy through co-produced systems and structures and a framework within every service that welcomes good communication and relationships that are built on a shared understanding of what is important and what must be achieved.

Every individual involved in the delivery of this strategy will be asked to make a contribution towards one or more of the priorities identified. We believe that it is only through working in partnership that we can achieve our vision and provide every child and young person with SEND in Hackney an enriching and purposeful journey into adulthood that allows them to thrive and achieve their potential.

We want every child, of every background, to be fairly, equally and inclusively supported, at every stage of their educational journey.

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Underpinning principles



1. Listening to our children and young people

- We will actively listen to our children and young people with SEND through a number of mechanisms that support and promote our children to have a voice
- We will incorporate the feedback we receive from our children and young people into our planning both on an individual level and when strategically planning

2. Co-production

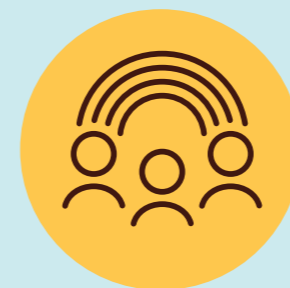
- We will work with our parents, carers and those who represent them to co-produce on an individual basis but also to develop and deliver strategy

3. Outstanding communication

- We will communicate with our families and young people in meaningful ways
- We will form excellent relationships with our partners to ensure communication is easy and effective
- We will make sure we share information between agencies effectively and in a timely way

4. Transparency

- We will operate honestly and within a framework of reflective practice
- We will be transparent with families, children and young people about what can and cannot be achieved
- We will be clear about timescales with families, schools and settings



5. Multi-agency working

- We will think multi-agency in every aspect of our work to make sure silo working is removed
- We will actively work to break down barriers between agencies to improve the experience of our families accessing multiple services

6. Data quality

- We will actively work to improve our data quality across the partnership
- We will use our data to inform decision making and evaluate progress
- We will be transparent with our data when co-producing with parents and carers

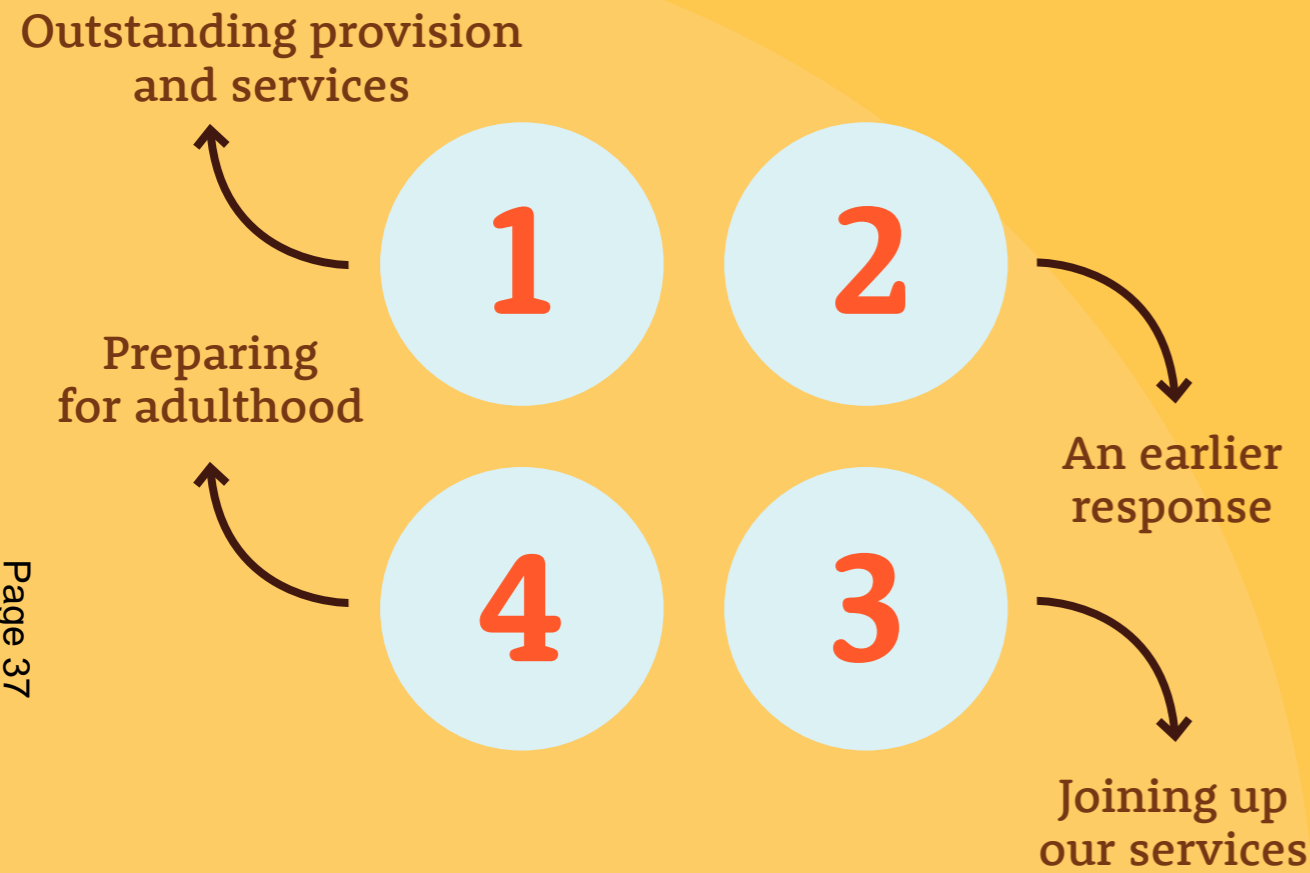
7. Excellence and ambition

- We want the best for our children and young people in Hackney
- We will aim high and always strive to improve and evolve to meet the changing needs of our community

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Our priorities



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Priority 1 Outstanding provision and services

Children and young people with SEND and their families require high quality local provision and services that provide a foundation for a future in which they can thrive.

Why is this important?

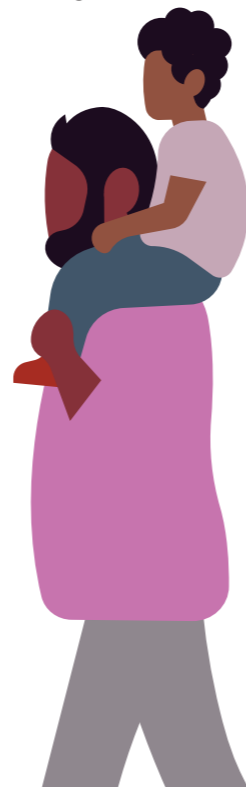
- The services we provide and the provision we offer to our children and young people from birth and into adulthood at 25 are the fundamental mechanisms to support and enable good outcomes.
- The experiences of families tell us that good quality services and provision are a key aspect of their experiences and can positively and negatively impact greatly on all aspects of their lives.
- There are some key legal duties that we must take into account when providing high quality services to children, young people and their families.
- We want our children and young people in Hackney to feel like they belong in their community. To enable a sense of belonging we need to ensure we promote local and inclusive provision and services.
- Post-pandemic we know Covid-19 has had a significant impact on some of our children and young people. This warrants a dynamic response to address this.





What is the current picture?

- The numbers of children and young people requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) is forecast to grow by an additional 400 every year until 2025.
- We anticipate that an extra 170 children and young people will need a specialist placement a year over the next 5 years.
- Our families tell us that we need to place more focus on co-producing our Education Health and Care Plans.
- The timeliness of our education, health and care planning has improved from 40% completed on time in 2020 to an average of 55% of plans completed on time in 2021.
- We know that our current capacity to undertake Educational Psychology assessments on time isn't enough.
- Our local special education provision is at capacity, despite delivering 80 additional places in 2020/21.
- Schools tell us it is hard to interface with some of our education SEND services and the timeliness of our communication needs to improve.
- We are not undertaking Annual Reviews as often as we need to.
- Young people tell us that they would like more social opportunities to meet other young people, and have more of a platform to collectively share their thoughts around inclusion within their education.
- Some young people report that there is good practice in meeting their needs within Inclusion/SEN Departments in schools, but this practice isn't always carried out across all teaching staff.
- A large proportion of our children and young people with SEND attend independent schools within the Charedi community.



What difference will this make for children and young people in Hackney?

Children and young people will have the benefit of a clear assessment of need. They will feel listened to and supported by services and provision that is provided locally.



How will we improve?

- We will work closely with families and young people to develop feedback mechanisms to ensure we are actively listening to the lived experiences of those who access our services.
- We will change our central operating model to allow for a multi-disciplinary approach to SEND support in Hackney.
- We will build capacity in the EHC planning process to enable improved timeliness of educational psychology assessments and completion of the 20 week process.
- We will co-produce all EHCPs with children, young people and their families.
- We will focus operational capacity on annual reviews in order to ensure that all children and young people have had a review post pandemic and on an annual basis.
- We will increase our local special provision over the next three years to enable more children and young people to go to school locally in their communities.
- We will work closely with our schools and settings to build capacity to deliver an outstanding local offer for each child with SEND accessing a mainstream school or setting.
- We will have high expectations of our schools and settings to be inclusive and create a strong sense of belonging for our children and young people with SEND in the classroom.
- We will develop a robust Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for our SEND partnership.
- We will work closely with the Charedi communities to ensure that services and provision are in place to meet the specific needs of the children and young people with SEND within the communities.
- We will create shadow parent forums to jointly oversee the key transformation of services.

Priority 2

An earlier response

We know that supporting children and young people with SEND earlier, providing access to targeted support leads to better outcomes.

Why is this important?

- Research is clear in this area that providing targeted support to children and young people early will often lead to better outcomes and a reduced escalation of need.
- Early help enables better progress at school and will often improve outcomes for a child or young person and their family at home.
- Families tell us that they would like to see more support and intervention offered before Education, Health and Care planning has begun.
- Waiting for services and support can leave families feeling isolated and unheard. This often has a detrimental effect on the family's well being as a whole.
- Schools and settings report that they feel an Education, Health and Care Plan is the only way in the current system to receive adequate support for their children and young people.
- We want to provide the right support to all children and young people in Hackney at the right time for them in order to support them to achieve as much progress as is possible.

What is the current picture?

- Hackney's Graduated Response has now been consulted on and published.
- SEND Support services are starting to think about how the graduated response can be embedded in schools and settings.
- Hackney has launched a new Early Years Strategy.
- There is little capacity in the current operating model to provide earlier support to families and schools.
- Schools have developed their own mechanisms for earlier support and intervention, sometimes commissioning third parties to support both individual children and schools as a whole.
- There is no single point of contact for education early help.
- The Re-engagement Unit and New Regents College are used by some schools to provide early support for children and young people who are finding it difficult to access school. These services are not currently available as an equitable offer across the Borough.
- Families and schools tell us that SEND Support in schools is a big area of need that is not currently being addressed.



What difference will this make for children and young people in Hackney?

Voices will be heard earlier and the benefit of support and services will be felt sooner to improve outcomes for children and young people.



How will we improve?

- We will reshape our services to wrap support around schools, settings and families to create a more consistent framework for earlier identification of need and support.
- We will recruit family coaches to work with families with SEND to support the interface between education, health and social care.
- We will work with Early Years services to create Early Years assessment hubs through the Borough to ensure we have a platform for early assessment for children with the most complex needs.
- We will ensure there is a good CPD offer and outreach programme into our early years settings to ensure needs are being identified as early as possible.
- We will work with our Early Help services across Hackney Council to align a single point of contact for families and schools in relation to SEND.
- We will work with schools and settings to embed the graduated response in a meaningful way into schools alongside a wider earlier support offer.
- We will consider how to widen the offer of the Re-engagement Unit so all children and young people can access the right support from it at the right time.
- We will ensure services have a clear focus on the reduction of exclusions of children and young people with SEND.
- We will ensure services are established to support the improved attendance and access to school for children and young people who feel too anxious to attend.
- We will ensure pathways and points of access are clear and well communicated to families and young people.



Priority 3

Preparing for adulthood

We believe that young people with SEND should have equal life chances as they move into adulthood.

Why is this important?

- Higher Education should be accessible and available to all including our young people with SEND.
- Young people with SEND should have access to paid employment options.
- Independent living options are key to providing young people with SEND the opportunity to thrive in the community.
- Services that have a statutory responsibility should focus on how they can support young people to progress towards Preparing for Adulthood outcomes.
- Young people and their families should be involved in strategic planning and service design and would support commissioners in design and development of future services.
- Good health and friendships within a home community is an essential part of wellbeing and one that should be available to all in our community.

What is the current picture?

- Education, health and social care teams are aligned with families on the shared vision for young people in Hackney.
- Preparing for Adulthood is a key priority for the SEND Partnership Board to ensure there is good progress in this area.
- We have a shared understanding of what is currently on offer for young people and we understand where the gaps are.



What difference will this make for children and young people in Hackney?

Young people will move into adulthood with an assurance that they have received the best support to help them to move into their future and thrive as a valuable member of their community.

- We are not engaged as a multi-agency team with health early enough in a child's journey.
- Children do not transition from children's social care to adult social care early enough.
- We have gaps in our Post 16 education options for young people.
- We have a clear and accessible Local Offer which enables our families and young people to see what is available to them within Hackney.
- We have good mechanisms for seeking young people's voices.
- We will organise our SEND services to provide resources dedicated to Preparing for Adulthood.
- We want to improve our data quality in this area to make sure we can evidence good outcomes for our young people.
- We will undertake a provision mapping exercise to better understand the gaps in provision and from this formulate an informed commissioning strategy.
- We will look for opportunities to jointly commission within services through joined-up decision making.
- We will ensure young people are informed and involved in the development of key strategies and plans.

How will we improve?

- Building on the multi-agency shared vision we will ensure there are clear targets for transition for each agency involved in supporting young people.
- We will publish clear and accessible information for young people and their families to enable a better understanding of the transition process in education, health and social care.
- We will support schools and colleges earlier to be aware of the Post 16 and Post 19 education opportunities so they can support students to make informed choices.
- We will use case studies to ensure we are understanding the lived experience of our young people.
- We will recruit a Preparing for Adulthood post that is cross partnership to ensure this priority is driven forward.

Priority 4

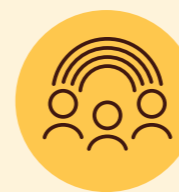
Joining up our services

Only by working together and pooling resources can we commission and provide services to our children and young people with SEND that they need to achieve good outcomes.

Why is this important?

- The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on agencies to work together across education, health and care to secure better outcomes. Section 26 of the Act notes that Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups have an obligation to make joint commissioning arrangements within education, health and care services.
- When services are commissioned in isolation there is often a disconnect or an overlap in arrangements which do not produce best value for money.

- Shared data and intelligence across agencies leads to a better understanding of the needs and how to address them.
- Joint commissioning often fosters better partnership working and innovation between agencies.
- Families do not want to go to three or four different services to access support if they can go to one joined up solution.



What difference will this make for children and young people in Hackney?

Families will benefit from a simplified system and children and young people will thrive from the right services being delivered locally and cost effectively.

What is the current picture?

- All agencies are aligned in their vision to provide jointly commissioned services to children and young people with SEND and their families.
- Joint commissioning is a priority for the SEND Partnership Board who will ensure governance is in place to promote progress towards set goals.
- A Joint Agency Panel will be established this year (2021) to enable joint commissioning conversations and decisions on an individual child and young person level.
- There are currently no jointly commissioned services in Hackney, although conversations have taken place to identify areas of opportunity.
- There is emerging practice in relation to joint care management and decision making between education, health and social care.

How will we improve?

- We will discuss all children and young people with complex needs at the Joint Agency Panel to ensure decision making and commissioning are aligned between services.
- We will review our speech and language and occupational therapy commissioning arrangements to ensure these are jointly commissioned by education and health.
- We will review our information, advice and guidance (IAG) statutory duties and aspirations to ensure these are aligned and potentially jointly commissioned.
- We will track and monitor data jointly around the commissioning of services and support for children and young people with complex needs to better understand the emerging population needs and formulate a commissioning strategy that responds to those needs.
- We will create systems that are transparent for parents and carers in terms of financial allocation of resources.

Monitoring and evaluation

It is essential that we assess our progress and monitor the impact of this strategy on the outcomes for our children and young people with SEND.

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	Outcomes	Measures
<p>1</p> <p>Outstanding provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A refreshed SEND Services operating model • Improved 20 week timescales • Improved feedback from families relating to education, health and care planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from children, young people and families • Feedback from schools and settings • 20 week timescale data • SEND place planning data
<p>2</p> <p>An earlier response</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased exclusions for SEND children and young people • Increased referral rates for education early help • Decreased referrals for EHCPs • Improved feedback from schools relating to SEND support services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusion data • Attendance data • EHCP referral data • Feedback from school and settings • Increased referral rates from EYFS settings
<p>3</p> <p>Preparing for adulthood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved transition pathways into post 16 settings • Increased numbers of young people transferring from children's to adult's social care at 16 • Increased local provision for 16–25 year olds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition data • SEND place planning data • Improved feedback from young people and their families
<p>4</p> <p>Joining up our services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All children and young people with complex needs are re-viewed at the Joint Agency Panel • Jointly commissioned Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JAP data • Financial monitoring • Commissioning outcomes data • Feedback from children, young people and their families

It is also important that every member of staff in all agencies knows how they can actively work to support at least one of the priorities identified in this strategy.

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Hackney has a vision to provide
an excellent, inclusive and equitable
local experience for all Hackney children
and young people with SEND.



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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 7 - Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review	Item No 7
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Outline

In June 2022, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held a joint scrutiny session on the outcome of the Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review.

Further to this session, both Commission have developed a response to local partners highlighting key outcomes from the scrutiny session and a number of preliminary recommendations. Members are requested to note the agreed response.

Reports

- Letter from joint review of Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review.

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Room 118, 2nd Floor
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14th November 2022

martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

To:

Jim Gamble, Independent Chair City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership

Mike Hamer, A/Detective Chief Superintendent & BCU Commander,

Kenny Bowie, Director of Strategy & MPS Oversight, MOPAC

Mark Carroll, Chief Executive, Hackney Council

Dear Jim, Mike, Kenny and Mark,

Joint Scrutiny of the Response to Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review

Thank you for attending the joint scrutiny meeting of Living in Hackney and the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission on 13th June 2022. This was a helpful meeting that enabled members to further understand the response of statutory partners to the Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review (SPR) and those arrangements put in place to ensure that recommendations set out in that report are implemented.

The [video recording](#) of this scrutiny session alongside the published [minutes](#) together provide a public record of the meeting.

Firstly, the Scrutiny Commissions (the Commission) would like to place on record their thanks to the City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership (CHSCP) for initiating the Safeguarding Practice Review of Child Q and its determination and rigour in ensuring that the key learning outcomes from the review are both recognised and acted upon across the safeguarding partnership. In particular, the Commission recognised the significance of the finding that racism was likely to have been a contributing factor in the decision to undertake the strip search of Child Q. This clearly underlines the need for a fundamental change in the way that the police engage and involve black and global majority communities to ensure that policing is fair, effective and helps to keep children safe from harm.

The gravity of the recommendations within the Child Q SPR has quite rightly precipitated a number of reviews, some of which remain ongoing, and led to a number of plans to improve local child safeguarding and policing arrangements. The aim of the Commission's inquiry on the 13th June 2022 was to help bring public oversight to these plans and ensure that there are effective accountability and monitoring structures in place to oversee the implementation of recommendations and commitments made within them. This letter summarises key issues arising from the session and our requests for further information to Metropolitan Police and

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MOPAC to guide and inform next steps that the Commission intends to take. Preliminary recommendations of the Commission made to local agencies are also set out at the end of this letter.

Key Findings

Strip Searches of Children

As members of the Commission and indeed other community representatives have clearly and consistently stated, whilst shocking, the incident and circumstances surrounding Child Q was not surprising, as black children in Hackney and across London have consistently endured the disproportionate impact of broader *stop and search* activities of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). More challenging to the Commission however, was the understanding that the case of Child Q was far from an isolated incident, and that *thorough and intimate searches* of black and global majority children, some undertaken without a responsible adult present, reflected a wider, institutional practice across the MPS.

Police representatives at the meeting on 13/6/22 acknowledged that there had been seven other intimate searches conducted on children in Hackney and that this approach was used across London by the MPS. This has been substantiated in subsequent investigations by the [Children's Commissioner](#) who noted that 650 children were strip searched by the MPS over a two-year period to 2022. The Children's Commissioner also noted that no appropriate adult was present in 23% of strip searches of children, that black children were disproportionately impacted and that in over half of all cases no further action was taken. All of this data confirms to the Commission that the assault on Child Q was a part of a systemic pattern of abuse of Black and Global Majority children by the police.

Whilst police representatives at the meeting argued that the use of strip searches remained an operational necessity, particularly where children were felt to be at risk or were being criminally exploited, the case of Child Q is emblematic of the problematic nature of their application, indicative of their being used as a reactive tool of oppression and control. In addition, given the scale of which strip searches of children are now known to be used and the failure of police to consistently apply safeguarding controls (e.g. presence of an appropriate adult, recording the location of searches) this would suggest that the Child Q case reflects much broader concerns for the efficacy of this policy in effectively safeguarding children and ensuring that their dignity and rights are protected.

The traumatic impact that a police strip search can have on a child has been devastatingly exposed by the case of Child Q. From the personal testimonies of her family and Child Q herself, the trauma resulting from the search is all too clear where Child Q has experienced panic attacks and no longer feels safe and is afraid to go out. For Child Q and her family, there is a clear sense of injustice, frustration and anger in the understanding that this strip search would have been unlikely to have taken place if she had not been black. These same sentiments have been echoed from communities across Hackney in reaction to this case.

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Whilst the Commission notes the proposed changes being piloted by the police which would require higher authorisation (by an Inspector) to strip search procedures, the current lack of data, monitoring and oversight of strip searches conducted on children means that there is little or no effective scrutiny of this process and child safeguarding cannot be assured. The Commission expects that this will be addressed in the planned review of strip search arrangements announced by MOPAC and the MPS and it looks forward to receiving the outcomes and recommendations of these.

Safeguarding in schools

Parents entrust their children to schools not only to support their learning and development, but also to ensure that they are kept safe and that their rights are protected and upheld in their absence. Rather than adopting a safeguarding first approach, the school initiated a criminal process and deferred to police officers present and did not question or challenge the decision to conduct an intimate strip search. The school did not act on behalf of or advocate for Child Q's best interests which led to a situation in which her welfare and safeguarding concerns were overridden by policing considerations. To ensure consistent and effective safeguarding of all children, it is imperative that safeguarding partners feel *equally* confident and empowered to question or challenge the decisions and or practices of fellow safeguarding practitioners.

[*Keeping Children Safe in Education*](#) requires all schools to establish and publish their own safeguarding policies and ensure that this is updated annually. Whilst individual schools' safeguarding arrangements are formally inspected by Ofsted, such visits are infrequent. Given the events surrounding Child Q there must be some question as to the efficacy of such arrangements, and whether schools should work more closely still with local designated safeguarding partners to ensure that their safeguarding policies are tested and assured within local safeguarding networks and support systems.

Whilst the Commission was encouraged to note that Hackney Education has audited safeguarding policies and practices of local schools, from the meeting it was not clear what learning had been derived from the Child Q SPR and what practical steps school leadership teams had taken to prevent similar events from happening again in the future. The Commission would welcome further transparency and openness on the process and outcomes of the school safeguarding audits to ensure that there is genuine systems wide learning across the safeguarding partnership from the Child Q SPR. This will help to ensure that safeguarding policies across local schools consistently put children first, are publicised and readily accessible to parents and the broader community.

Members of the Commission were also perplexed as to why the school in question did not seek to engage or involve the parent of Child Q leading up to or during the search, particularly given the nature of the incident and the involvement of police authorities. The Commission is of the view that this relates to a broader narrative concerning the accountability of schools to parents. In our own local scrutiny work, increasing numbers of parents have spoken about the difficulty of engaging meaningfully with schools, getting their voice heard and not feeling sufficiently

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involved in decisions about their children. Sadly this does seem to suggest that in some schools at least, there is a growing accountability gap between schools and parents and the community of which they are a part. As a first step, the Commission is of the view that memberships of local school governing bodies should be reviewed to ensure that these truly reflect and represent the views and interests of parents and the local communities which they serve.

The case of Child Q has generated a broader debate as to the role of policing in schools and Safer Schools Officers, who were involved in this case. This is of particular significance because in 2020, following a legal challenge in relation to concerns around the disproportionate impact of the Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) on children from black and other ethnic backgrounds, the Metropolitan Police Service agreed to review the SSP and the role of the Safer Schools Officer (SSO). Whilst the Commissions were informed that this review was ongoing and would report imminently, at the time of writing no reports have been forthcoming.

The Commission notes and welcomes local collaborations to update the protocols for SSO. It is important however, that the overarching review by MPS is completed together with an impact analysis so that local communities are reassured that policing in schools is fair, proportionate and acting in the best interests of children at all times. The Living in Hackney and Children and Young People Scrutiny Commissions have both declared an interest in investigating the SSP and the role of SSO's locally with the MPS to further support improvements and accountability.

Safeguarding / adultification bias training

The case of Child Q has also exposed the differences in safeguarding practices and principles across those local agencies that work with and support local children, and in particular whether a safeguarding first approach is adopted equally for *all* children. At the heart of the SPR is the assertion that Child Q was treated differently and that she may not have been afforded the range of safeguarding protections because of assumptions based on her ethnicity. Members of the Commission rightly focused their questioning on the nature, delivery and effectiveness of safeguarding and adultification bias training across local agencies where it is clear that an improved understanding of the lived experience and history of local black communities should be central to the local training response to Child Q SPR.

The Commission noted plans to develop and extend adultification bias training within the local Metropolitan Police Service and across the broader safeguarding partnership. Further reassurance was however needed in relation to the consistency of this training across partner agencies and the degree to which this demonstrated a shared understanding of the need for a safeguarding first approach for *all* children across Hackney. Given issues raised by the case of Child Q and the long standing nature of concerns around the disproportionate impact of policing and other agency interventions within our communities, it is clear that there is a need for more robust oversight and monitoring within the safeguarding partnership. In short, local agencies need to be held accountable for delivering this change.

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Trust and confidence of the community in local policing

The case of Child Q has further eroded trust and confidence in policing amongst communities in Hackney. From the work the Commissions have undertaken in recent years, the community response was, unfortunately, anticipated. The Commission therefore sought to explore the role of local communities in policing and the efforts of the Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC to restore trust in those communities where it is lost.

The Commission recognised the steps taken by the local Metropolitan Police Service and wider safeguarding partnership to meaningfully engage with affected communities in Hackney following the Child Q incident. However, the Commission was keen to see real change in the community engagement structures of the Metropolitan Police Service funded by MOPAC to ensure that they are truly representative of local communities. This is in light of the longstanding concerns around the effectiveness of their community engagement methods, and recognition from both the local Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC that more needed to be done to ensure their structures were as representative as they should be.

It was also noted that feedback from local community groups had recommended not to hold another public meeting to allow the community time to heal and until further details emerged following the publication of the Independent Office of Police Complaints (IOPC) findings. The Commissions sought reassurance from the local Metropolitan Police Service that it would continue to hold further community engagement events following the publication of the IOPC report to help restore trust and confidence and avert any escalation of community tensions.

Ongoing scrutiny and oversight

From the SPR of Child Q and discussions at the scrutiny session, Members agreed that there were a number of policy areas in relation to statutory functions for the accountability of the crime and disorder partnership and the oversight of education and child safeguarding arrangements which would benefit from further scrutiny by the Living in Hackney (LiH) and Children and Young People (CYP). The following issues have been identified for consideration within forthcoming work programmes, and respective Commissions will look forward to working with partners and local agencies and the local community to support scrutiny of these policy areas:

- Role of policing in schools and role of SSP and SSO's (CYP/LiH)
- School behaviour policies (CYP)
- Anti-racist policies and practices across children services (CYP)
- School accountability to parents and the local community (CYP)
- Trust and confidence in policing (LiH)
- Policing of drugs (LiH)
- Use of stop and search powers (LiH)

From evidence presented and the ensuing discussion at the scrutiny session, members have outlined a number of emerging recommendations from this work which are detailed at the end of this letter. The Commission would welcome a response to these recommendations from respective agencies by **Friday 23rd**

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December 2022, and would like to follow up agreed actions with partners at a future meeting.

Members of the Commission have also agreed that it should meet again in early 2023 with key stakeholders to help maintain public oversight and ensure progress against the recommendations and commitments made by local agencies in relation to Child Q. It is expected that by this time subsequent investigations, reviews and follow-ups by local agencies will have been completed (i.e. Independent Office of Police Complaints) and local action plans to support the local response to Child Q will have been fully developed. This further meeting will provide an opportunity to review action plans and other work undertaken by respective Scrutiny Commissions as a result of the Child Q SPR.

Once again, members of the Commission would like to thank you for your support in the public scrutiny process of the outcomes from the Child Q SPR and the work of your respective organisations across Hackney to ensure such an incident is not repeated in the future. Members of the Commission would welcome a response to the further information requests and the recommendations (which directly impact on the organisations) made that are detailed at the end of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Soraya Adejare
Chair of Living in Hackney Scrutiny
Commission

Cllr Margaret Gordon
Vice Chair, Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission

Cllr Clare Joseph
Vice Chair of Living in Hackney Scrutiny
Commission

Cc:

- Mayor Phillip Glanville
- Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor and cabinet member for education, young people and children's social care
- Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas, Cabinet member for community safety and regulatory services
- Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Children and Education
- Paul Senior, Interim Director of Education
- Rickardo Hyatt, Group Director Climate, Homes and Economy

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Outstanding questions

The Commission has a number of outstanding issues and questions to which it would be helpful to receive a response. We would be grateful if you could provide us with this information by **Friday 23rd December 2022**.

To Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC

1. Can further data be provided on the outcomes of strip searches (both thorough and intimate) undertaken in Hackney, both for under 18s and adults and ethnicity?
2. Can further information be provided in relation to local stop and search data and the reasons put forward for this to take place:
 - Can video recordings of stop and search incidents routinely be made available via Subject Access Request?
 - Is there any publicly available analysis of stop and search incidents which are not recorded?
3. There has been a relaxation of the Best Use of Stop and Search (BUSS) guidance which means that the police would not need to notify/engage communities ahead of Section 60 being applied. Can the Borough Commander commit to retaining community notification ahead of any Section 60 stop and search notice?
4. It was noted that the MOPAC Disproportionality Board brings criminal justice partners together to tackle disproportionality across the system.
 - How long has the Board been in place, what is its membership and what is its remit?
 - The Child Q case was considered by the Board. What was discussed and what were the outcomes?

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Recommendations to Local Agencies (The Commission would welcome a response to these recommendations from respective agencies by **Friday 23rd December 2022**)

To LBH, CHSCP, Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC

1. The Commission would welcome the development of a singular partnership wide action plan to coordinate the response to recommendations from Child Q SPR and other commitments stemming from this review. It is hoped that the action plan will clearly set out those priorities for improvement and/or change, together with those agencies who are accountable.

To Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC

2. Members of the Commission retain strong reservations about the efficacy of the Metropolitan Police Service policy of undertaking strip-searches of children. Whilst additional controls for administering strip searches of children in response to the Child Q SPR have been put in place these do not sufficiently address the need for further protection of children or disproportionate impact on local communities. If this policy is to continue, it is recommended that this is embedded within a safeguarding first approach recognising first and foremost that children being subject to this procedure are children and should be afforded necessary protections to keep them safe, protect their dignity and be effectively safeguarded. In addition, further reassurance will also be required that ongoing use of such an intrusive procedure is appropriately targeted recognising the ethnic disproportionality evident in this data.

To Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC

3. The Commissions endorse the findings of both CHSCP and the Children's Commissioner in noting that the breadth, consistency and quality of data around the strip searching of children is inadequate. The quality and inconsistency of data available does not befit the intrusive nature of the strip search process and the personal impact it has on children or reflect the safeguarding duties and responsibilities of Metropolitan Police. MOPAC should improve monitoring, oversight and transparency of this data to enhance accountability arrangements for these intrusive and sensitive procedures and to ensure that children are effectively safeguarded.

To CHSCP

4. All local agencies that work with children have an important and *equal* role in the effective safeguarding of children, as it is this broad network of partners which helps to create an environment which maintains oversight of children, promotes their rights, advocates for them and helps keep them safe. The Commission would therefore welcome reassurance from the CHSCP that there is no deference to any agency, and that this local partnership is one of equals in which individual agencies and practitioners are knowledgeable, confident and empowered to challenge and support each other where they see this is in the best interests of children.

To CHSCP and Hackney Education

5. The Commissions recommend that Hackney Education continues to monitor and audit safeguarding policies and practice across local schools to ensure that the

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safeguarding learning from the case of Child Q is reflected in annual reviews and updates of child protection policies which they are obliged to undertake. Alongside many parents, the Commission would like further reassurance that these important policies which help to keep children safe away from home are developed in collaboration and are actively and rigorously tested.

To CHSCP, LBH and Metropolitan Police Service

6. The Commission would like further reassurance that the planned extension of adultification bias training is consistently applied and reflects the values and principles of the safeguarding partnership. The Commission would also like a commitment from the CHSCP that it will fully evaluate this training across the safeguarding partnership to ensure that it is delivering the fundamental but necessary changes to safeguarding practice.

To Metropolitan Police Service and MOPAC

7. The Commissions believe that the Metropolitan Police Service's current arrangements for consultation and community engagement are opaque, where named local community groups involved, the structures through which they are engaged and how the outcomes of consultations are used, remain unclear. The Commission recommends that the Metropolitan Police Service actively works with Hackney Council to review their arrangements and approach to engagement to ensure:
 - There is an agreed understanding between the police, community organisations and other stakeholders on the principles of good local community engagement;
 - Greater clarity on which groups are consulted, in what capacity and how consultation is used to inform policing;
 - That those local groups involved in consultation truly represent the diversity of the community in Hackney.

To LBH and Metropolitan Police Service

8. The Commissions would recommend that Metropolitan Police Service, in collaboration with the London Borough of Hackney, commit to a series of community engagement events after the publication of the IOPC report and work with London Borough of Hackney.

To LBH

9. The Commission recommends that, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Hackney Education reviews the procedure in which its senior officers are placed on the governing bodies of local schools. If necessary, guidance should be developed to ensure that where appropriate, officers can contribute practically and positively to such educational partnerships yet avoid any conflicts with their duties and responsibilities.

For ALL to note:

10. Members have agreed to convene a follow-up meeting of the Commission to take place in early 2023. The aim of this meeting will be to:

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- To review outcomes of subsequent reviews and investigations (i.e. IOPC and CHSCP)
- To review progress against the emerging partnership action plan;
- To hear from local representatives of local children and young people;
- Update on Living in Hackney and Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission work resulting from Child Q SPR.



Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 8 - Housing Support for Care Leavers	Item No 8
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Outline

The Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission held a joint scrutiny session on housing support as part of the 2021/22 work programme. The Commissions have agreed and finalised their recommendations over summer of 2022 for presentation at Cabinet for a response.

Members are requested to note the agreed response.

Reports

- Letter from joint review of housing support for care leavers.

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Room 118, 2nd Floor
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21st October 2022

martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Cllr Anntionette Bramble,
Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education,
Young People and Children's Social Care
&
Cllr Sade Etti,
Mayoral Adviser for Housing Needs and Homelessness

Dear Cllr Bramble and Cllr Etti,

Housing Support for Care Leavers (Recommendations)

The Children and Young People and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commissions have completed their joint scrutiny of housing support for care leavers which they commenced earlier this year. Both Commissions would like to extend their thanks to you both for attending the dedicated scrutiny session, and for the ongoing collaborative support of your officers from across Corporate Parenting, Benefits & Housing Needs and Housing Strategy throughout the summer.

This was an extended piece of work in which members of both Commissions conducted focus groups with care leavers, undertook site visits to supported housing schemes and received evidence from Leaving Care and Housing Needs Teams from a number of other London boroughs. Wide ranging [documentary evidence](#) was also submitted and considered by Commission members, which together with the meet [recording](#) and [minutes](#) provide a public record of scrutiny activity.

Hackney Leaving Care Service has a statutory duty to support children leaving care until the age of 25, including the responsibility of finding suitable accommodation between the ages of 18 and 21 years and currently supports around 400 young people who have left care. Many of these care leavers will have experienced significant personal challenges and family upheaval in their lives which makes their journey to adulthood and living independently more difficult, especially as they may not have access to the same support network of families and friends that many other young people do. Further to discussions with care leavers, members of the

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Commission know how important accessible, sustainable and affordable housing is in their journey to independence, but officers face real difficulties in meeting these needs given the lack of local housing options available resulting from the ongoing housing crisis.

On the evidence provided and through extensive consultation with officers, members of the Commission have made 10 recommendations to help extend and improve the range of housing options available for care leavers in Hackney. In particular the Commission have made recommendations in the following priority areas:

- To enable more care leavers to develop access to the social housing register;
- To ensure that there is parity of support for care leavers required to seek accommodation in the private rented sector;
- To improve future housing supply for care leavers.

The recommendations of the Commissions are timely. Both the Hackney Care Leaver Offer and the Hackney Housing Strategy are due to be updated and refreshed in 2022, so the Commissions' hope that its recommendations will guide and inform new iterations of these key policy documents and help to improve Hackney's offer to care leavers. Hackney's offer to care leavers is important, as it will come under further scrutiny and challenge from Ofsted which has recently amended its inspection framework to include the specific assessments of '*The experiences and progress of care leavers*' and which will contribute to its overall determination on the quality of children's social care.

The Commission would particularly like to thank those care leavers that shared their experiences of their journey into independent living with members as part of this review. The number of care leavers who were eager to engage with this scrutiny process, and their willingness to engage and talk openly with members is perhaps a testament to how important quality, safe and affordable housing is in their (and other young people's) journey into independence.

The Commission would also like to thank the working group of officers from across Corporate Parenting, Benefits & Housing Needs and Housing Strategy which was convened to support this scrutiny process, and hopes that this work will continue as they oversee and implement those recommendations which are approved by the Executive.

It is hoped that the recommendations given below will contribute further to the positive work that is already taking place across the Council for our looked after children. We look forward to receiving an update on the agreed recommendations at a future scrutiny meeting.

Yours sincerely

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Cllr Soraya Adejare

Chair, Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Cllr Sophie Conway

Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

Cllr Clare Joseph

Vice Chair, Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

Cllr Margaret Gordon

Vice Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

Cc:

- Jacquie Burke, Group Director Children and Education
- Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
- Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting
- Stephen Haynes, Strategic Director Inclusive Economy, Corporate Policy and New Homes Strategic Director Customer and Workplace
- Jennifer Wynter, Head of Benefits and Housing Need
- James Goddard, Interim Director, Regeneration
- Naeem Ahmed, Head of Corporate Finance
- Ben Bradley, Cabinet Office

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Recommendations of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission [The Commission].

Improving quality, consistency and timeliness of Housing Advice & Support for Care Leavers across the Council

1. Whilst the Commission recognises the complexity of the housing support landscape for care leavers, it was apparent from the testimonies of young care leavers themselves, that improved quality and greater consistency was needed in the provision of housing advice that was provided to care leavers.

The Commission therefore recommends:

- a) That additional specialist housing advice and support is commissioned to meet the housing needs of care leavers across both Corporate Parenting and Housing Needs services (in particular for care leavers seeking accommodation in the private rented sector - see recommendation 3);
- b) That Social Workers and Personal Advisers in the Corporate Parenting team and housing workers in the Housing Needs team are provided with regular updates and dedicated training to maintain and improve the quality and consistency of housing advice for care leavers;
- c) That at least two housing support officers within the Greenhouse (which supports local homeless young people) are dedicated to support/ or identified as nominated leads for care leavers (to help improve consistency
- d) That in collaboration, the Corporate Parenting and Housing Needs team regularly audit the quality and timeliness of advice and assess and validate with care leavers / prospective care leavers.

Improving strategic oversight and coordination of housing support for care leavers across the Council

2. The Commission has noted the positive working relationships developed across Corporate Parenting, Benefits & Housing Needs and Housing Strategy and Supply resulting from this scrutiny exercise. The Commission recommends that this should be formalised and structured through the establishment of a joint corporate parenting and housing protocol. The development of such a protocol (as recommended by government departments) will ensure that there is a strategic and coordinated approach to supporting the housing needs of care leavers across the Council and bring greater transparency and accountability for the provision and delivery of housing support and accommodation for care leavers.

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In developing the joint housing protocol for care leavers, the Commission recommends that Corporate Parenting, Benefits & Housing Needs and Housing Strategy:

- Note the [Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework](#) developed by St Mungo's & Barnado's
- Note the [information and advice](#) provided by government departments (DCLG/DfE/DLUHC) to support the development of local protocols;
- Engage and involve local care leavers, other looked after children, foster carers and other stakeholders;
- Develop and agree on oversight and monitoring arrangements with the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure that there is ongoing review of delivery across children's and housing services;
- The protocol should be agreed and implemented by the end of financial year 2022/23 at the latest.

Improved support for care leavers seeking to live independently within the private rented sector (PRS).

3. Given the limited availability of social housing lets, the reality for most care leavers in Hackney who are seeking to live independently is to source accommodation within the private rented sector (PRS). From the evidence presented the Commission noted a number of key issues:

- Many care leavers held a number of genuine and well founded anxieties about accessing accommodation in the private rented sector including; transitioning from more more supportive housing arrangements, high rental costs, insecurity of tenure and the location of affordable options.
- Although the Council has equal responsibility for all looked after children in its corporate parent role, the Commission felt that there was little parity in the nature of support offered to care leavers seeking independent tenancies in the PRS compared to the social housing sector.
- Care experienced young people face three significant barriers to renting privately; access to a deposit, the need to provide rent in advance *and* access to a guarantor.
- Other London boroughs have responded to similar concerns and developed a PRS support strategy for care Leavers (e.g [Wandsworth](#)). (Whilst the Council operates a deposit and rent in advance scheme - is this only available through the homeless route - to clarify?)

The Commission recommends that additional specialist support should be commissioned to provide more help to those care leavers transitioning from supported housing into the private rented sector. To support this the Commission recommends:

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- a) That further investigative work should be undertaken to assess the **experiences of care leavers in the private rented sector** to further understand issues around the acceptability and accessibility of tenancies and what support might be needed to help them sustain their tenancies (e.g. how well are care leavers sustaining PRS tenancies at the moment);
- b) The Council considers commissioning the [The National House Project](#) (or similar) which provides a peer support framework to assist care leavers to develop the skills, confidence and social networks to progress to independent tenancies within the PRS. This will help young people to leave supported housing earlier and live independently, if they wish to do so.
- c) Corporate Parenting and Housing Needs should consider how **additional floating support** can be commissioned to help young people transitioning from supported housing to housing within the private rented sector;
- d) That the Council considers developing an **accredited landlord scheme**, which identifies those local landlords who would be willing to work with care leavers, their personal advisers and housing officers to help support them into and maintain tenancies in PRS accommodation (e.g. flexible tenancies, commitment to work with the LA to avoid eviction, reduced deposit);
- e) That the Council considers **providing a deposit / rent in advance** scheme (outside homeless route) and considers developing a pilot scheme in which the **Council acts as a guarantor** for care leavers seeking accommodation in PRS for the first 6/12 months of tenancy.

Improving how the local quota system for social housing works for care leavers.

4. For looked after children who have experienced significant personal upheaval, placement instability and possible breakdown of care arrangements, independent social housing tenancies can offer an affordable, secure and supportive accommodation option for when they leave care. The Council currently operates a social housing quota with 18 social housing tenancies available per annum available for care leavers (16 x 1 bedroom 2 x 2 bedroom). The total number of social lets that the Council is able to provide has reduced significantly in recent years, with latest figures indicating that this totalled just over 400 lets annually.

Given that the number of care leavers (376 in year to March 2021) far exceeds the number of social lets available (18), the Commission noted a number of challenges with the current social housing quota in Hackney:

- The eligibility criteria and prioritisation process for care leavers to be considered for social housing tenancy has not been sufficiently defined and / or communicated to social workers, personal advisers or care leavers themselves.

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- The lack of clarity around eligibility has resulted in possibly inaccurate information given to young people by personal advisers/social workers which has led to inflated expectations among care leavers, with many believing that this is a realistic and possible accommodation option for them, when in reality just a small fraction will be eligible and put forward for consideration for social housing via the quota.
- Whilst acknowledging the totality and scale of local housing needs in Hackney, and the individuality of housing demand and supply across other London Boroughs, it would appear that comparatively, fewer care leavers are placed in social housing in Hackney than many other boroughs. Evidence presented by Lambeth indicated that they found permanent social housing for 103 care leavers in the 12 month period to November 2021.
- A number of other London Boroughs operate social housing quotas for care leavers. In [Sutton](#) this is set at 28 and in [Haringey](#) it is 66. In the former, 15% of all 1 bedroom lets in the borough were made to care leavers in 2019/20 and was running at 22% mid-way in 2020/21.
- At present most care leavers put forward for social housing tend to be aged 20 years (so that they can get a tenancy before reaching the age of 21). The Commission noted that this approach created a number of challenges:
 - The age 'restriction' is unrelated to the actual support needs of individual care leavers;
 - It may encourage more young people to remain in supported housing for longer in the hope of obtaining a social rented tenancy (inflated expectations);
 - Creates an unnecessary 'cliff-edge' in service provision, which may leave limited time for care leavers to plan and prepare for independent tenancy.

The Commission also discussed with officers the possibility of moving away from a social housing quota altogether and instead placing all care leavers on the local housing register at the age of 18. Under this process all care leavers would be encouraged and supported to bid for a social rented tenancy for the three year period until they reach the age 21 (with those not successful during this time, providing they were actively bidding, being given a direct offer). Whilst this would give all care leavers an equal opportunity to bid and achieve consistency and parity of housing service offer, a number of uncertainties would remain:

- Whether this would actually result in a high number of care leavers being placed in social housing tenancies;
- How care leavers who attended university outside the borough be included (possible deferral);
- How care leavers with families would be impacted (bidding for 2 bedroom properties).

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This is clearly a complex issue which needs further investigation and modelling by the Housing Needs and Corporate Parenting services. Irrespective of the outcome of any further investigation the Commission is of the view that the number of social housing tenancies let to care leavers should increase from current levels. The Commission therefore recommends that:

- a) That Council considers ways in which the social housing (Council) quota for care leavers can be increased from 18 units **to a minimum of (30)** units per annum;
- b) A defined set criteria should be developed to determine care leavers eligibility for permanent social housing tenancy through the council quota. The eligibility criteria should be:
 - i) Developed in consultation / co-produced with looked after children /care leavers;
 - ii) Underpinned by an open and transparent scoring system;
 - iii) Clearly communicated to professionals supporting care leavers (Social Workers, Personal Advisers, Housing Support Officers and Foster Carers) and care leavers themselves (in particular details to be set out within the local offer).
- c) Housing Needs and Corporate Parenting undertake further research and modelling to assess the impact of placing all care leavers on the housing register at the age of 18, in particular:
 - i) Whether this would lead to more care leavers placed within permanent social housing;
 - ii) How the rights of care leavers with children or those attending university could be preserved in such a system.

Improving housing supply for care leavers

5. The Commission was in broad agreement that many of the issues and concerns that care leavers face in relation to housing was a result of the lack of quality and affordable accommodation options available to them in Hackney. This remains a significant and ongoing challenge for the Council (and many other inner London boroughs).

The Commission received evidence from a range of other boroughs on their efforts to increase housing capacity and extend accommodation options for care leavers which included:

- [Commissioning modular developments](#) - Lambeth is creating 40-50 such units in partnership with Centrepint;
- [Working more closely with housing associations](#) - Wandsworth collaboration with local housing associations ensures that there are 300 housing units for care leavers;
- The addition of new housing units through an [audit of local housing/ building assets](#).

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The Commission noted that a new 5 year Hackney Housing Strategy was currently in development, which would set out the housing needs and priorities of the borough and how the Council would deliver on these. Given that the current strategy (2017-2022) makes no reference to the housing needs of care leavers, the Commission anticipates that the outcomes and recommendations of this work would help to set out the housing priorities for this cohort within the future reiteration of the strategy which may then begin to address these needs in the medium to longer term.

To improve the supply of housing available for care leavers the Commission recommends:

- a) In line with the actions of [other boroughs](#) regarding this issue, a full asset review is undertaken across the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to identify potential properties which might be reconditioned / repurposed as accommodation for care leavers. (It is noted that a number of community flats on estates, currently being used for tenant engagement, have already been identified as possible units which might be considered for repurposing.)
- b) That the newly developed Housing Strategy:
 - i) Recognises and prioritises the housing needs of care leavers;
 - ii) Set out the approaches the Council will take in responding to the housing needs of care leavers particularly in creating additional housing capacity and broader range of accommodation options:
 - 1) Investment needed to *prevent* housing needs (e.g Staying Put, Supported Lodgings, Staying Close etc)
 - 2) How the role of modular builds can increase and extending housing options for care leavers (e.g. both studios and shared accommodation);
 - 3) Expansion of Peer Landlord Scheme;
 - 4) Utilisation of 'Live and Work Schemes' for care leavers
 - iii) Sets out how local Housing Associations will be directly engaged and involved to create additional social housing capacity to meet the needs of local care leavers;
 - iv) That care leavers are prioritised for opportunities within the *Living Rent* scheme;
 - v) Set out how the role of the Hackney Housing Company can be used to create additional housing capacity and further housing options for care leavers through:
 - 1) Purchase and repurposing of properties (internal and external to the borough);
 - 2) Modular build schemes.

Improving supply, quality and flexibility of supported accommodation available to care leavers

6. Many care leavers are accommodated in supported housing arrangements, generally houses of multiple occupation with different levels of on-site or floating support commissioned by Corporate Parenting. The Commission notes that these housing

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units were generally supplied by independent / private housing providers, many of whom were relatively new to this 'developing market'.

The Commission learnt that commissioning arrangements for supported housing had recently been reassessed and reconfigured to:

- (i) Improve the quality of housing commissioned
- (ii) reduce the size of individual units commissioned (to house max of 7 young people)
- (iii) ensure that there was greater flexibility in support arrangements for care leavers
- (iv) focus provision within Hackney
- (iv) ensure that housing support is delivered in the most cost effective way through a new longer term 7 year contract with providers.

Care leavers consulted by the Commission were generally positive about the range of supported housing provided, though had a number of concerns in relation to:

- Affordability of this accommodation option, particularly when considering options to progress and move on (77% of young people felt 'trapped' by their accommodation);
- The limited agency which they had in their choice of supported accommodation;
- Accessibility and quality of housing support arrangements.

The Commission noted that there are many new and emerging providers in this field of housing support for young people and [reported concerns](#) that national guidance and regulations had failed to keep up with such a new and emerging market of new service provision / providers. In this context, the Commission was keen to ensure that quality services were commissioned, and that there were effective controls in place to assess and monitor the quality of provision and that providers were able to deliver complex packages of care/support to meet the multiple needs of local care leavers.

Whilst the Commission noted that new Commissioning arrangements would aim to ensure that provision was focussed within Hackney, this could not always be the case and that for many reasons (personal safety, specialist support) some care leavers would continue to be placed outside of the borough. In this context, the Commission noted the importance of the need for additional safeguarding controls in light of [safeguarding practice review](#) of the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership and the children placed outside of the borough.

The Commission recommended that Corporate Parenting ensure:

- That care leavers are actively engaged in processes to assess, monitor and review the quality of supported housing provided;
- That commissioned accommodation remains affordable to allow care leavers to move on, or that there are adequate step-down arrangements to allow care leavers to transition to more independent living;
- That equally effective processes are in place to monitor and review supported housing which is commissioned in locations outside of the borough;

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- That wherever possible, care leavers are given a choice of available supported housing options suitable to their needs.

Improving the scope and consistency of the Corporate Parenting Offer in Hackney

7. In conducting this review, the Commission noted the wide variations in the corporate parenting offer across London Boroughs to care leavers, not only in relation to housing but also for a wider package of financial support and other benefits that were made available. For example, there were wide variations in relation to Council Tax exemption / reduction support and the age to which care leavers were able to claim this benefit (ranged from 21 or 25). [Analysis undertaken by the Commission](#) highlighted the wide range of different levels of provision for housing support, council tax reduction and support in setting up a home (e.g. provision of contents insurance, Wifi, TV Licence, mobile phone contract and cooking equipment).

The Commission also noted that even when care leavers were in the care of the same borough, there were marked inconsistencies in the range of support and benefits depending on whether they were placed *within* or *external* to that borough boundary. The Commission considered it unfair that care leavers placed outside of the borough which was responsible for them often did not get the same level of support to care leavers placed within its boundaries, especially when care leavers may exercise little choice as to where they may be placed. Thus, for example, care leavers placed outside of Hackney are not automatically exempt from Council tax as those placed in Hackney are.

In this context, the Commission noted the work of the Children's Society to develop a [London-wide offer for care leavers](#) to help develop common standards and to identify good practice across London Boroughs in their respective offers to care leavers. The Commission also noted that Greater Manchester had already agreed a [city-wide offer](#) to care leavers among all its 10 constituent local authorities.

The Commission was strongly of the view that the role of the Corporate Parent does not rest solely with the Corporate Parenting team and wider Children and Families service, but a responsibility that sits across the Council as a whole. In this context, the Commission believes that further work should be undertaken to benchmark local provision and to explore ways in which Hackney's local offer to care leavers (and wider looked after children cohort) can be further developed and extended *through the wider family of council departments* e.g. council tax, sustainable travel, education and training, therapeutic services, youth provision and leisure facilities.

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To improve the consistency, coherence and coordination of the care leaver offer, the Commission recommends that:

- a) The Council makes arrangements (either through reimbursement or reciprocal arrangements) to ensure that all care leavers are exempt from Council Tax until the age of 25, irrespective of which London borough they are placed/accommodated within;
- b) (In the absence of a pan London agreement) The Council works with key local neighbouring boroughs¹ with whom the majority of care leavers placed externally to the borough are located to develop reciprocal housing support arrangements for care leavers;
- c) That the [Corporate Parenting Board](#) is convened periodically (annually) to review the nature and level of the Hackney offer to care leavers (financial and all other support available).
- d) That the Mayor / Council write to London Councils and the GLA to urge them to use their influence and to lead / coordinate or facilitate work with London Boroughs for further the development of a London-wide offer for care leavers.

Making care leavers aware of the local offer website - greater openness and transparency - maintaining contact with care leavers up to age of 25

8. From the consultation with local care leavers, it was evident to the Commission that details of the local offer were not presented in a clear and consistent way to young people and that further work was needed to ensure that this cohort of young people were aware of full extent of their rights, entitlements and how they could access support and services.

Whilst it is a statutory duty for local authorities to publish their local offer to care leavers, it was apparent that these often lack the detail about the full range of services available. The Commission felt that this was illustrated in the [Hackney Care Leaver Offer](#) (both on-line and printed) where there was little detail of the social housing offer, in particular the number of units available through the quota system and the eligibility criteria used to determine access. It should be noted however, that this lack of detail was a common feature of many Local Authority care leaver offers assessed by the Children's Society in their work to develop a London wide offer detailed in their evidence to the Commission.

¹ Current LA location of care leavers: Enfield (40), Waltham Forest (30) Haringey (22), Redbridge (19), Croydon (13), Newham (13), Islington (12) and Tower Hamlets (9)

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The Commission also noted that the local Care Leaver offer is primarily focused on those benefits, entitlements and support which are available through the Council and that there was a wider range of support which could be included, particularly from the independent, community and voluntary sectors. In this context, the Commission noted the approach of Lambeth to set up a **Care Leaver Hub**, in which care leavers can access a wide range of support services from one integrated site. The Commission also heard evidence from Islington about their [Grandmentors Scheme](#) which matches care leavers with older volunteers (aged 50) to provide ongoing advice and support into adulthood.

Care leavers who are settled in independent tenancies may at times also need to be given additional support and be reminded of the care leaver's offer of support up to the age of 25. Evidence provided by Housing Needs service to this work also suggested that some care leavers continue to need additional housing (and other) support after the age of 25 (when legal duties of corporate parenting services cease). Other boroughs which gave evidence to the Commission also identified this as an area of concern, as care leavers often emerged in other areas of the welfare support system. This would suggest that there may be some benefit for local Corporate Parenting services to maintain lines of communication / keeping track / contact with care leavers past the statutory limit (25) to help with signposting of early help and support (with accessing adult social care, CAMHS etc).

To increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of the local offer for care leavers the Commission recommends that the Corporate Parenting (in collaboration with other services):

- a) Establish a local offer website dedicated to the services, entitlements and support available to care leavers;
 - i) That it incorporates not only services available through CPT, but the wider council and non-statutory services;
 - ii) Ensure that this is designed / co-produced with care leavers and foster carers.
- b) Consider how a care leaver hub, with an integrated on-site offer with opportunities for peer support and networking might be provided in Hackney;
- c) Consider ways in which the needs of care leavers beyond the statutory age limit (25) are identified / monitored - and identify ways in which support might be provided in a sustainable way e.g. [Lifelong Links](#) or similar scheme set up in Islington [Grandmentors](#)

Ensuring that local services remain focused on prevention and, where appropriate, helping more looked after children (potential care leavers) to remain in supportive family / foster homes for as long as possible (e.g. preventing placement breakdowns and enabling looked after children to remain with their foster carers after the age of 18).

9. From the Children and Families Act (2014) looked after children may remain with their foster carer after the age of 18 under *Staying Put* arrangements. *Staying Put* arrangements help bring continuity of support for looked after children as they transition to adulthood. This approach helps looked after children move to more independent living when they are ready and have the emotional and practical skills to do so (rather than just turning 18). Such arrangements can help looked after children to maximise opportunities for education, employment and training, reduce the likelihood of homelessness and social exclusion.

As of January 2022, there were 48 children who were looked after by Hackney within a *Staying Put* arrangement. As part of a [£99.8m national package of support](#) Hackney currently receives [£322k annually](#) to support local *Staying Put* arrangements.

To help more children and young people to remain in family / foster carer homes under *Staying Put* arrangements the Commission recommends that the Corporate Parenting Team (Children and Families Service):

- a) Increase awareness, information and advice for looked after children on *Staying Put* arrangements as part of a wider package of housing options;
- b) Increase awareness, information and advice for local foster carers of *Staying Put* arrangements, particularly aiming to resolve any financial and / or administrative barriers local arrangements;
- c) Work with local foster carers and other stakeholders (e.g. IFAs) to encourage, develop and support a sector wide understanding that young people can (where appropriate) be able to continue to live at their fostering home / family after the age of 18.
- d) The above is accompanied by a renewed focus on the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers to help replace those who are providing ongoing accommodation and support to looked after children under *Staying Put* arrangements.

Supported lodgings offer young people (aged 16-21) an alternative to fostering when they are unable to remain with their birth families, leaving care or at risk of homelessness. Whilst not suitable to all children leaving care, this provides a further housing and accommodation option. The Commission noted that 12 supported lodgings had been recruited since 2020 and that as of the end of January 2022, six

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care leavers were supported in such accommodation. In this context, the Commission recommends:

- e) Children and Families undertake a dedicated awareness and recruitment campaign to help increase the uptake of Supported Lodging as an accommodation option for care leavers.

Finding financial opportunities and synergies through further Housing support for care leavers and impact on children and families and wider corporate finance.

10. The Commission noted the forecasted spend within the Children and Families Service for care leavers accommodation for 2021/2 was £4.9 million, £3.8m of which was for the provision of supported housing. This has remained an area of budgetary concern in particular in relation to the provision of semi-independent housing where a cost pressure of approximately £1.6m was recorded in [January 2022](#) for this services alone. Ongoing cost pressures within this and wider corporate parenting budget therefore continues to impact on children's services and in the wider council services beyond.

The Commission received a wide range of evidence on finances and budgets connected to children leaving care. It is clear that this is a complex area of budgeting, which not only interrelates with other aspects of children's social care (e.g. foster care) but also beyond this directorate to other department (i.e. Benefits and Housing Needs). Whilst it has not been possible during the course of this piece of work to undertake a detailed assessment of all such interrelated budgets, the Commission is confident that a more strategic and detailed analysis of both policies and budget can realise positive budgetary developments. The Commission would recommend a time-limited group be established led by corporate finance to identify:

- Opportunities for joint commissioning with Adult Social Care (floating support) and SEND (housing support);
- How helping young people move into independent living from supported accommodation when they were ready to do so rather than at age 21 would help to remove service 'cliff edges' (e.g. opening up the social housing register, further support to PRS);
- Opportunities for an invest to safe approach given that annual average cost of care leaver supported housing is £26,000.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 9 - Work Programme 2022/23	Item No 9
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Outline

The CYP work programme is updated regularly and presented at each meeting for members to review and agree. The most recent work programme for November 2023 is attached for members to review.

Reports

- CYP Work Programme 2022/23

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Bold= confirmed **Red =- to be scoped /agreed**

July 11th 2022	September 29th 2022 (Moved from 8th September 2022)
School Admissions (40)	Foster Carers (i) Recruitment and Retention Strategy (ii) Assessing local support offer (ii) (75)
Childcare Sufficiency Strategy (40)	Update on GCSE and A Level results in Hackney (20)
Outcome of School Exclusion - Cabinet response (10)	Demographic Analysis of EHCPs in Hackney (40)
Work Programme - Consultation Reporting 2022/23 (40)	Work Programme - Outline 2022/23 (10)
October 31st 2022 -	November 30th 2022
School Exclusions and School Moves Monitoring (45m) (To include absence, persistent absence, emotional withdrawal)	Budget Monitoring - Children & Families Service (30-45)
Ofsted Focused Visit Outcome (10m) verbal update	Children & Families Annual Report (45)
Childhood food poverty - eligibility, accessibility and uptake of FSM (60)	SEND Strategy (30)
January 16th 2023	February 27th 2023
City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (45)	Cabinet Q & A - Cllr Woodley (Early Years, SEND, Parks and Play (45) Areas of questioning to be agreed
Unregistered Educational Settings (15)	SEND Action Plan (60 min)
Outcome of School Exclusions - Progress of Recommendations (45)	
Budget Monitoring - Hackney Education (30)	
March 20th 2023	April 17th 2023
Support for Young Parents (Race, racism and children's social care)	Accessibility of CAMHS - single point of access (to be scoped)
Pupil Attainment - Attainment Gap (45) Focus on children in AP (To be scoped)	Cabinet Q & A - Cllr Bramble (Children, Education & Children's Social Care) (45) Areas of questioning to be agreed

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 1	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: Monday 11th July</p> <p>Deadline for reports: 28/6/22</p> <p>Publication 1/7/22</p>	<p>School Admissions To review sufficiency of primary and secondary school places ahead of September 2022 school entry.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Court TBC Annie Gammon, Director of Education and Head of HLT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background reports to be circulated
	<p>Childcare Sufficiency It is a statutory requirement for members to review local childcare sufficiency reports which are produced bi-annually. The Commission to review the full assessment report for 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus groups with small number of nursery providers
	<p>Outcome of School Exclusions The note and review the Cabinet response to the Commission's review of the Outcome of School Exclusions.</p>	<p>Members of the Commission</p>	
	<p>Development of new CYP Work Programme for 2022/23</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission/ Scrutiny officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To consult local stakeholders Meet with service Directors Collate topic suggestions Informal meeting with Commission

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 2	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: Thursday 29th September</p> <p>Papers deadline: 30/8/22</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 21/9/22</p>	<p><u>Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to review the progress of Commissions recommendations contained in an earlier review - to assess the local offer to in-house foster carers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care • Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting • Korinna Steele, Head of Fostering Placements • Hackney Foster Carer Council representatives 	<p>Consultation with in house foster carers set for 31st August 2022</p> <p>Supported by a survey to all in-house foster carers.</p>
	<p><u>School Exam Results 2022</u></p> <p>A brief verbal update on the performance of young people at GCSE and A Level in Hackney</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anni Gammon, Director of Education 	
	<p><u>Demographics of EHCPs in Hackney:</u></p> <p>The Commission has requested the following data for the past 3 years (age group, ethnic group, originating setting (inc those not in education):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Children with EHCPs in Hackney; - New EHCPs granted in Hackney; - Number of EHCP requests - Number of requests for assessments refused - Requests for assessments which do not result in EHCP issued. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Wilson, Head of SEND • Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	
	<p><u>Work programme 2022/23</u></p> <p>To continue discussions on future work programme items for 2022/23.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission • Scrutiny Officer 	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 3	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: <u>Monday</u> <u>October</u> <u>31st</u> <u>2022</u></p> <p>Papers deadline: <u>18/10/22</u></p> <p>Agenda dispatch : <u>21/10/22</u></p>	<p>School Exclusions and School Moves: (45) This is a standing item on the work programme of the Commission to review the number of school exclusions, School Moves, children in Elective Home Education and in Alternative Provision (with demographic analysis including SEND status). In light of rising rates (in connection with exclusion) a short section on school /AP absence, persistent absence to be included. Including missing children - emotional withdrawal etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding Paul Senior, Director of Education 	
	<p>Ofsted Focused Visit (15) A focused visit by Ofsted was announced for 21st and 22nd of September 2022. Ofsted will focus on front door service for children’s social care (e.g. assessments, thresholds etc).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jacque Burke, Group Director for Children and Education Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care 	
	<p>Childhood food poverty: eligibility, accessibility and uptake of free school meals (FSM) (60) In response to the scrutiny consultation which raised childhood food poverty, the Commission is assessing schools response: the eligibility and uptake of FSM, breakfast club provision and connection to wider food poverty networks and programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paul Senior, Interim Director of Education David Court, Head of School Organisations, Admission and Pupil benefits and Commissioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invite local head teachers for illustrative work they have been doing in relation to FSM, accessibility On site visits to local schools and community food programme projects
	<p>Work programme 2022/23 To continue discussions on future work programme items for 2022/23.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission Scrutiny Officer 	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 4	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Officers	Preparatory Work
<p>Meeting Date: <u>November 30th 2022</u></p> <p>Papers deadline: <u>18th November 2022</u></p> <p>Agenda dispatch: <u>22th November 2022</u></p>	<p><u>Children and Families Annual Report (45)</u> This report could not be provided for this meeting and a briefing will be provided to members of the Commission summarising activity in children's social care for the period 2021/22.</p> <p>To be taken alongside budget monitoring report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care • Jacquie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education 	
	<p><u>Children and Families - Budget Monitoring (30-45)</u> This is a standing item on the work programme which reviews and monitors in year budgets for Children and Families Service, including progress against agreed savings proposals. This is taken alongside the CFS Annual report, so scrutiny of policy and budgets are aligned.</p> <p>The Commission has requested a more detailed breakdown of the Corporate Parenting Budget (e.g. foster care, residential placements, supported housing etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naeem Ahmed, Director of Finance (Children, Education, Adults, Health & Integration) • Sajeed Patni, Head of Finance Children's and Education, Finance • Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care 	
	<p><u>SEND Strategy (20-30)</u> Alongside partners, the Council has developed a SEND Strategy for 2022-2025 which is due for approval at Cabinet in November 2022.</p> <p>This item is predominantly to note the key priorities set out in the Strategy and to update the Commission on the progress on the subsequent Action Plan, and scrutiny role in the oversight and monitoring of that.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Senior, Director of Education • Nick Wilson, Interim Head of High Needs & School Places • Joe Wilson, Head of SEND 	
	<p><u>Work programme 2022/23</u> To continue discussions on future work programme items for 2022/23.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission • Scrutiny Officer 	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 5	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Meeting Date: January 16th 2023	<p><u>City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (45)</u> This is a standing item on the work programme which reviews the annual report and activities of the local safeguarding children partnership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jim Gamble, Independent Chair, CHSCP • Rory McCallum, Senior Professional Adviser 	
Papers deadline: 4th January 2023	<p><u>Unregistered Educational Settings (15)</u> This is a short item to review progress against the Commission's recommendations made in 2018.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding • Jim Gamble, Independent Chair, CHSCP • Rory McCallum, Senior Professional Adviser 	To invite UOHC to present on progress?
Agenda dispatch: 6th January 2023	<p><u>Outcome of Schools Exclusions (30):</u> The Commission to follow up the recommendations made in its review which was completed in December 2021 and approved by Cabinet March 2022.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding • Paul Senior, Director of Education 	
	<p><u>Hackney Education - Budget Monitoring (30)</u> This is a standing item on the work programme to review in year budgets and progress against savings proposals for Hackney Education.</p> <p>The Commission has also requested a more detailed budget breakdown for: - Childrens Centres (budget circa £10-12m); - Commissioning of (SEND) Independent and Non-Maintained Special Schools (budget circa £14m).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sajeed Patni, Head of Finance Children's and Education, Finance • Naeem Ahmed, Director of Finance (Children, Education, Adults, Health & Integration) 	

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 6	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
Meeting Date: 27th February 2023	<p>Cabinet Q & A The Commission may question the Cabinet member on three policy areas for which they are responsible within their Cabinet portfolio.</p> <p>Cabinet members to verbally present on these three areas and take questions from the Commission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet member for Families, Parks and Leisure 	Cabinet member notified of topics 6 weeks in advance: January 11th 2023
Papers deadline: 14th February 2023	<p>SEND Action Plan The SEND Strategy was agreed by the Cabinet in November 2022. A partnership action plan has been developed in response which the Commission will maintain oversight, review delivery and progress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paul Senior, Director of Education ● Nick Wilson, Interim Head of High Needs & School Places ● Joe Wilson, Head of SEND ● Health Partner tbc ● CVS Partners tbc 	
Agenda dispatch: 17th February 2023			

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 7	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: 20th March 2023</p> <p>Papers deadline: 7th March 2023</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 10th March 2023</p>	<p><u>Race, Racism and Children's Social Care - Support for Young Parents (75 mins)</u> Following on from the work in relation to disparities in maternity outcomes, the Commission will assess what support is available to young parents and how this is coordinated across statutory partners and other responsible agencies.</p> <p>The Commission will view this in the context of disproportionality of children's social care, where it has requested ethnicity data for children's social care contacts in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Looked after children - Children in Need - Children on a Child Protection Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's social Care ● Family Nurse Partnership ● Pause? 	<p><i>To scope with Officers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amy Wilkinson ● Visit Family Nurse Partnership
	<p><u>Pupil Attainment - Attainment Gap (45)</u> This is a standing item on the work programme where the educational attainment of children in Hackney is reviewed.</p> <p>This will be the first year since returning to in person exams. The Commission has indicated that in addition to usual focus on the attainment gap between key cohorts (Black Caribbean boys, Turkish Cypriot boys, Gipsy Roma/ Irish Traveller) there will be an additional emphasis on children in Alternative Provision.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paul Senior, Director of Education ● Jason Marantz, Interim Assistant Director, School Standards & Improvement 	<p>To be confirmed with the Director.</p>

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 8	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: 17th April 2023</p> <p>Papers deadline: 31st March 2023</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 5th April 2023</p>	<p>Accessibility of CAMHS The accessibility of CAMHS figured prominently in the scrutiny consultation 2022. There were ongoing concerns around waiting times, access to services and plans to develop a single point of access.</p> <p>This item is being scoped with respective service leads.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amy Wilkinson, Workstream Director Integrated Commissioning: Children, Young People, Maternity and Families, NHS North East London London Borough of Hackney • Nadia Sica, Children, Young People, Maternity and Families Workstream Programme Manager, Public Health 	<p>Scoping 24th October 2022: Amy Wilkinson, Integrated Commissioning Director</p> <p>Ahead of this meeting the Commission to visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - key CAMHS services - CYP Mental Health Groups
	<p>Cabinet Q & A The Commission may question the Cabinet member on three policy areas for which they are responsible within their Cabinet portfolio.</p> <p>Cabinet members to verbally present on these three areas and take questions from the Commission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Bramble, Deputy Mayor and cabinet member for education, young people and children’s social care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet member notified of topics 6 weeks in advance: • February 15th 2023

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission November 30th 2022 Item 10 - Minutes	Item No 10
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Outline



To review and agree the minutes of:

- 29th September 2022
- 31st October 2022

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London Borough of Hackney
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2018/19
Date of Meeting Thursday 29 September 2022

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

Chair	Councillor Sophie Conway
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Midnight Ross, Cllr Lynne Troughton and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof
Apologies:	Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott and Cllr Anya Sizer
Connected Virtually	Salmah Kansara, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge and Cllr Caroline Selman.
Co-optees	Richard Brown, Andy English and Jo Macleod
In Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children’s Social Care- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play- Jacque Burke, Group Director, Children and Education.- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education- Paul Senior, Interim Director of Education- Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting- Korinna Steele, Service Manager, Fostering, Permanency and Placements Service- Anton Francic, Principal Secondary Advisor, School Improvement Secondary- Joe Wilson, Head of SEND- Lolita Sutherland, Hackney Foster Carers Council- Liz Hughes, Hackney Foster Carers Council- Symone Robins, Hackney Foster Carers Council- Natasha Grant, Hackney Foster Carers Council
Meet recording	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0yNsBUiEKY
Officer Contact:	Martin Bradford  020 8356 3315  martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair

The Chair welcomed all those attending both in person and on-line. The Chair noted that Ernell Watson had resigned from her role as co-opted member for Free Churches in July 2022 and thanked her for 7 years of service to the Commission. The Chair also noted that there were ongoing discussions with the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations to ensure that there was community representation on the Commission since the departure of Michael Lobenstein.

It was also noted that Annie Gammon, the Director of Education was retiring and that this would be her last meeting. The Chair and Vice Chair expressed their thanks to Annie for her support not only to the work of this Commission but for her many years of service to local education services as a Headteacher and latterly as Director of Education of Hackney. The Vice Chair thanked the Director of Education for her work and positive engagement with the Commission over the years and for her work in ensuring that the borough's largest secondary school had remained a community maintained school.

1 Apologies for Absence

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

Cllr Anya Sizer

Cllr Suso Runge;

Cllr Laudat Scott;

Cllr Caroline Selman;

Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care.

1.2 To note a correction from minutes of the previous meeting of 11th July 2022, that Cllr Binnie Lubbock and Cllr Suso Runge attended virtually. This has been noted in the approved minutes of that meeting.

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:

- Jo McLeod was a Governor at a primary school in Hackney and a parent of a child with SEND.

4 Recruitment and Retention of In-House Foster Carers (19.05)

4.1 The Commission completed a review of the recruitment and retention of foster carers in 2018 which contained 10 recommendations to the Council. The Commission has received a number of updates before this meeting, the last being in October 2019.

4.2 Having been approached by Hackney Foster Carers Council, the Commission agreed to revisit this review to reassess the Hackney Foster Carer offer and to ensure that there has been sustained progress in the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers.

4.3 To support this session, the Commission undertook a local consultation with local in-house foster carers supported by Hackney Foster Carers Council. The Commission held a consultation evening on 31st August 2022 where members met 10

local foster carers. This event was supported by a survey conducted by the Commission for which 48 responses were received from foster carers.

4.4 The Commission would produce a report with recommendations based on the consultation focus group, the survey and the discussions that take place at this meeting. This will be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Corporate Parenting

4.5 The Corporate Parenting team (CPT) believes that the in-house foster care team remains the best option for children in care and is committed to recruiting and retaining foster carers.. There have been challenges to the recruitment of foster carers due to national conditions (i.e. impact of Covid), which has been felt in Hackney and across North London boroughs. Despite this, the department has maintained a strong track record of recruitment of foster carers and has in excess of 170 fostering households in Hackney.

4.6 Supporting in-house foster carers does present a number of challenges including how increasing numbers of carers are supported. The CPT was always keen to develop the local support offer to carers including through developing links with national care bodies (e.g. Fostering Network) and by setting up additional support groups for carers (e.g. male carers group). The service is aware that it needs to develop its out of hours and emergency response support offer to carers which was challenging within a small team of social workers. There was also a good training and support offer for foster carers.

4.7 The team was supported by experienced managers who not only knew and understood how to support staff, but also had good connections with foster carers themselves and understood the issues that they faced. For example, local foster carers were interested in developing a trauma informed approach and were keen to work with service leaders in implementing this across the service.

4.8 Around 75% of all children are placed in foster care, of which 44% are with the in-house foster carer team. The CPT would like to increase the number of looked after children who are cared for by the in-house foster carer team. The matching service within the CPT were also working hard to make the most of the in-house foster carer team and to ensure that the right child was placed with the right foster carer. CPT have also been assessing how in-house foster carers can be used to support each other and other children who may be placed at a distance (outside of Hackney). The CPT was receptive to new ways of working or other developments which could improve support for in-house foster carers and welcomed this review.

4.9 In terms of the previous recommendations of the Commission from 2018, it had been difficult to achieve progress in relation to Council Tax exemption. There was now however a clear plan now for this to be rectified and it was hoped that an exemption for foster carers would be installed for the next financial year (2023/24) and a similar compensation scheme for those not resident within the borough.

Questions from the Commission

4.10 An Increase in fostering households is recorded from 128 to 170. To what extent has this growth accounted by 'Connected Carers' who are mainly relatives or friends or named children? Has there been any growth in the mainstream fostering households?
- From 1st April 2022 there has been an increase of 14 in house foster carers and an increase in connected foster carers also.

4.11 Can further details be provided on the 'capacity restraints' which limit in house foster carer assessments through the in-house recruitment unit. Is this a staffing issue - or budget restriction? What can be done to ensure that this key service is brought back in house?

- This was a resource issue and was being negotiated with finance colleagues as increased numbers of in-house foster carer recruits needed to be supported by a higher level of resource to support them (e.g. social work support, training etc.). The CPT would like to bring the recruitment and assessment team back in house so that this function can be better quality assured and is working with service leaders and finance to achieve this.
- The Group Director indicated that transformational work was starting across children's social care and education to ensure that an investment to save opportunity such as this was not missed.

4.12 In relation to recruitment of in-house foster carers, how accessible is information, advice and guidance on becoming an in-house foster carer in the community? Also how does the Hackney offer to in-house foster carers compare to Independent Fostering Agencies (IFA)?

- Although the council may pay an IFA £1,000 per week for a looked after child maybe only half of this would go to the foster carer themselves. The weekly cost of an in-house foster care placement is approximately ½ that of an IFA placement, though social work support would need to be factored into the in-house model costs.
- There were significant variations in the level of service offered through IFAs. There were undoubtedly services of high quality and support to foster carers though other IFA's offered a less consistent service. It was noted that many smaller IFA's had been taken over by larger IFA's which had led to some deterioration of service quality.
- The North London Consortium pools resources to support recruitment across a number of local authorities which is more cost effective than if this was performed by individual authorities.

4.13 Given that officers have said that the use of in-house foster carers is preferred in terms of quality and also the most cost effective approach to care of looked after children, what are the barriers to investing more in this service?

- In principle, senior managers and staff were all in agreement that this was the best approach, but quite simply, the pressures within the overall Corporate Parenting budget were so significant, that the current options for re-investment were limited.

4.14 It was noted that some authorities offer retainers to carers (whilst they are not supporting a placement) and provide financial assistance during the assessment process or where allegations are being investigated, all of which are not provided in Hackney. Is there a consistency of support and financial help across local authorities participating in the North London Fostering Consortium?

- Although authorities do not offer the exact same package, participating authorities do meet and benchmark financial support to ensure that this is consistent and does not encourage an inter-borough flow of foster carers. The CPT were keen to understand what in-house foster carers needed in terms of additional support and would look at this in the context of what was provided elsewhere. It was important that the local offer across authorities was consistent to prevent competition for foster carers between partner boroughs.

4.15 Are mainstream foster carers who leave the in-house service routinely offered an exit interview? Is this independent and are there clear procedures to derive learning from these interviews? What is the main reason that mainstream fostering households leave the service?

- Exit interviews are offered to all foster carer leavers. The reasons for leaving can be quite varied with some leaving as they have come to the end of their fostering career. Recently, there have been a number of foster carers who have left who have cited that they have not felt fully supported in their role as their reason for leaving (e.g. high turnover of social worker support).
- There are a number of common scenarios for carers to leave, these being when the child that they are caring for leaves care, or when a foster carer is relatively new (within the first year) and they have found the experience does not match up to what was

expected. It was noted that all of the children have some form of trauma and will provide some challenge to foster carers. The CPT is keen to learn from these exit interviews and to develop the service as necessary.

- It should be noted that there was a national crisis in the recruitment of social workers and there had been a high turnover of social workers.

4.16 Foster carers consulted in the lead up to this review suggested that assessment processes were excessively long and personally very challenging. When did the Council last review its recruitment and assessment procedures? What informs the assessment process and how much flexibility does LA have? Is the Council assured that current assessment systems are culturally sensitive? Is there a process for a more gradual entry into the in-house fostering support?

- It was noted that the assessment process for in-house foster carers was 8 months duration which included a wide ranging package of training, reflection and learning. It is important that foster carers have a clear understanding what happens during the assessment and what to expect as a foster carer. It was acknowledged that this process is intrusive, but was necessary as carers would be looking after the most vulnerable children and the CPT must ensure that they have the right skills to be able to do this. The assessment process is regularly reviewed.

- In house assessment is preferred as this enables the service to get to know the prospective foster carer better and how best their needs can be supported.

There have been times when the assessment periods have been very long as the service has been reliant on agency social workers to undertake this function. Additional checks and balances have been put in place to prevent this, but it should be acknowledged that it was not possible to cut corners in this process as the service must have full confidence in its team of foster carers.

4.17 There are many related professionals who work with children and have relevant experience and understanding which can be brought to fostering. Are these professionals being included within fostering recruitment campaigns? Also, in relation to connected carers, were opportunities to foster with friends of the family being fully explored?

- Connected carers can offer a positive and stable foster carer placement which can also help children to maintain contact with local support networks. Family Group Conferences help to identify possible connected carers with whom children can be placed when they may need to be removed from their parent or carer. This process is however reliant on the information provided by the family and CPT would need their consent to contact them. It was also noted that sometimes children themselves suggest potential connected carers. It should be noted that connected carers can sometimes present very complex relationships for the family and wider network of family and friends to maintain. There is further work that can be undertaken in the community to increase general awareness of the fostering options such as connected carers, especially as some of these carers can progress to become mainstream foster carers.

4.18 What are the benefits of a child being placed with an in-house foster carer rather than with a foster carer working for an IFA?

- Within the CPT there is better knowledge of the carer and of the children involved which can lead to placement that better suit the needs of children in care. It was acknowledged that some IFA do provide excellent therapeutic support and the CPT was keen to learn from these where this was identified.

4.19 There was a perception among foster carers that their knowledge and understanding of what it is like to be a foster carer in Hackney or their experience of looking after children in Hackney is not valued or utilised by the service. To what degree are foster carers involved in training, assessment and the placement of children with respective carers? Can carers views be integrated into practice better?

- Foster carers are involved in recruitment as it is important for new carers to hear the voice of existing carers and learn about their experiences. The service also offers

'buddying' support for new social workers which enables established foster carers to be involved in their development.

4.20 Understanding the limitations of social work support available to foster carers, what alternative support is available in relation to therapeutic support, clinical supervision and individual therapy?

- There is a clinical service in Hackney and the CPT were assessing how this offer can be extended to in house foster carers. It was also noted that there was a therapeutic support group for carers which offered a drop-in service. This development had been well received and a high take up had been recorded.

4.21 Whilst rates of remuneration were connected to levels of experience, the placement of children with most complex needs did not always tally with experience. Therefore there were circumstances in which children with higher needs were sometimes placed with relatively inexperienced (and lower remunerated) foster carers. Is this being addressed?

- There is now a full-time matching officer to ensure that needs of the child are matched with the skills, abilities and experience of the foster carer. There was always the possibility that new or emerging needs of the child would come to light after the child has been placed with a foster carer which may be challenging for the foster carer concerned. Matching is important as all the children will have some degree of trauma. It should be noted that the level of qualification of the foster carer is linked to training and development and not the needs of individual children.

- It was noted that there is a fostering social worker in the out of hours service who can match children coming into care with the in-house fostering team where appropriate.

4.22 What level of scrutiny takes place in relation to private fostering to ensure that arrangements are appropriate to the needs of the child?

- Private fostering assessments are subject to a rigorous statutory assessment. In Hackney this is undertaken by the No Recourse to Public Funds Team rather than within the fostering service. If there were safeguarding concerns that emerged in this assessment these would be dealt with by the safeguarding team. It was important to recognise the vulnerability of a child living away from their parents and the safeguards that need to be put in place.

4.23 Foster Carers noted how disruptive and challenging allegations by young people they care for can be, and how disempowered they feel in these investigations (e.g. last to be consulted, lack of information). When did the Council last review its procedures for investigating "allegations". Why is there not a "tier" of seriousness that would avoid the unnecessary disruption of a placement and a presumption of innocence until proven guilty particularly for less serious allegations? The previous review recommended that foster cares have access to independent advice and guidance through allegations, can you update the Commission where this is?

- There is an allegations policy which has recently been updated to ensure that these are dealt with fairly and consistently. Allegations are related to allegation of child abuse not in the failure to deliver standards of care and therefore have to be investigated under child safeguarding procedures which can be very lengthy, especially when other parties may be involved (e.g. police). The financial policy indicates that payments to foster carers will continue for a set amount of time after an allegation has been made.

4.24 Within the survey there were very favourable reports of the additional support that the MockingBird hub and constellation support system provided to foster carers in the survey. To date there are 3 Mockingbird sites, two of which are in the process of being embedded. The Commission notes the ambition for all foster carers to be included within a Mockingbird Constellation, but can you set out the challenges and financial implications of increasing this provision. What is the planned time frame for this ambition?

- There are 3 Mockingbird projects in, 1 in Hackney, 1 in Barnet and 1 in Essex. The number of projects is growing year by year and it is hoped that all foster carers will benefit from the additional peer support and experience that these provide. The hub carer is central to the operation of the Mockingbird as they can offer experienced support as well as respite care for other carers and looked after children (therefore this hub carer needs to have additional rooms to be able to undertake this support). CPT regularly updates all foster carers on the work of Mockingbird constellations and how these extend support to carers and looked after children.
- Housing is a barrier to the Mockingbird model, as the hub carer needs to have two spare rooms to adopt this central role. This can be a significant barrier to the rollout of additional constellations. There was flexibility around this space, but it was acknowledged that this was a significant commitment for hub carers.

4.25 If foster carers could change one thing to improve recruitment and retention what would this be?

- Emergency Placement of children needs to be assessed in greater detail to ensure that there is full follow up to check that this is the best arrangement for the child and the foster carer. Too often these are placed in IFA or specialist accommodation which may be far away from home and still not meet all their needs. In house foster carers were not being utilised enough, and their skills and experience could be developed further because in an emergency children were being placed elsewhere.
- The relationship between foster carers and social workers needed to be examined, in particular in the way that they advocate and represent the views of foster carers. IFA social workers were not afraid to challenge and advocate for their foster carers, whereas in-house foster carers were part of the Hackney system and not able to challenge other progression or effectively represent them in the local system.
- Additional support was the thing that needed to change most for foster carers.

Hackney Foster Carers Council

4.26 Representatives from Hackney Foster Carers Council presented to the Commission and highlighted the following key issues:

- Mockingbird is a very supportive model which is very welcomed by foster carers, yet only a small fraction of foster carers currently benefit (30 out of 170). There were waiting lists to join which indicated the level of needs among foster carers.
- Foster carers look after children because they care and have a commitment to improving the lives of children. There were however, many challenges for foster carers in looking after such children.
- Many children coming into care were traumatised and needed high levels of support which was challenging to foster carers. Children were finding it difficult to access therapeutic or clinical support or mental health support which was challenging. Foster carers also needed therapeutic support to help them manage foster placements - but such opportunities were relatively limited.
- In terms of out of hours services, there is not the level of support available which is needed to support foster carers. In particular, there was rarely an opportunity to talk to a social worker in any detail about a crisis that may be happening at the time for foster carers.
- There is a chronic shortage of social workers. This made it very difficult for foster carers to form relationships with social workers and get the advice, help and support that they needed.
- Too often, the records of looked after children appeared not to have been updated which was frustrating to foster carers, as it was very difficult to progress and support children effectively.
- In terms of recruitment, potential foster carers need to know the whole picture of what it is like to be a foster carer and to hear about their experiences. At the moment, it felt like a revolving door with as many leaving as there were joining. Exit interviews were not rigorous enough to learn more about the experiences of why foster carers were leaving.

- There was no difference in the way that foster carers were treated in relation to an allegation or a standard of care issue, and that for some carers, payments had immediately stopped once investigations were launched.

- HFCC was not aware of the outcomes of the review completed in 2018 and would like to be further involved in the outcomes of this update and monitoring.

Concerns around complaints and allegations were widespread and potentially devastating for carers. Foster carers working for an IFA found this process much easier as they had the agency to represent and advocate for them, which in-house foster carers did not have.

-In-house foster carers felt that they could be more involved in service provision and there were other models which the service may need to look at to inform this such as adult social care or other patient involvement approaches.

Step-up and step-down approaches have not been fully applied and that there was a need for greater dialogue between foster carers and social workers when this could take place.

4.27 The Chair noted that this conversation would continue and that the Commission would draw up a report with recommendations to the Cabinet member. This would draw on evidence presented in this meeting, the focus group and the survey.

5 Hackney GCSE and A Level Results 2022 (20.20)

5.1 The Commission requested a short verbal update on the GCSE and A Level results of Hackney students from 2022. As this is the first year that students have sat public examinations since 2019 this was an opportunity for the Commission to reflect on how well students have performed and to ensure that there has been appropriate support mechanisms in place for students.

Hackney Education

5.2 Public examinations resumed in 2022, as these were replaced by teacher assessments in both 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Hackney schools and students have performed comparatively better than national averages for both GCSE and A Level results. Full data would not be available until February of next year, and today's summary represented an on the day snapshot of performance.

5.3 Key areas to highlight from local performance included:

At GCSE level:

75% of students achieved a standard pass in mathematics and English which is substantially higher than results in 2019 (69%);

57% of students achieved a strong pass in mathematics and English which is substantially higher than results in 2019 (48%);

At A Level:

32% of students gained an A* and an A;

59% of students gained an A* and a B;

81% of students gained an A* and a C.

The range of courses at post 16 has also diversified with some schools offering up to 27 different pathways.

5.4 All secondary schools are involved in WAMHS, therefore every school has a wholesale school framework to support emotional wellbeing and support for students. Some schools also provide access to counsellors and mentors as additional to pastoral support. A number of case studies were used to illustrate how additional support was provided to vulnerable students to achieve. Schools have become trauma aware, trauma informed and practitioners in supporting children.

Questions from the Commission

5.5 The Commission is aware of the profound impact that Covid and school closures has had on a number of pupils and in this context, percentages reveal one aspect of

performance. Is there any additional data on the numbers of children which have taken exams or the number of children who have dropped out of exams?

5.6 As there is no resource for children to need to be assisted for exam retakes?

- More secondary settings are now offering resit exams at post 16. This was less of an issue for post 18, as many students who were not going to achieve the required standard would be guided to different examination paths at the end of year 12. It was noted that the failure rate for children taking the same exam was very high which meant that this was not a viable option for schools to support. It was important to intervene before the end of year 12 so that additional measures could be put in place.

5.7 What are the future plans for 'grade downs' as schools will be graded to 2019 levels?

- The aim of the assessment bodies is to gradually return to 2019 standards which will mean a further adjustment in 2023.

5.8 Would it be possible to have a breakdown of BTech results for the later paper in February 2023?

- Data was collected differently for BTech, but additional data can be provided with the full paper on attainment is provided in February 2023.

5.9 The Chair thanked officers for this summary and overview and requested that when the more detailed item on attainment is discussed in February 2023 it can also look at:

- Attainment gap between disadvantaged students;
- Attainment of children in Alternative Provision (including the PRU);
- BTech data.

6 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) - Demography (20.40)

6.1 Following the Commission's work programme discussions in June and July, it was evident that SEND services would figure prominently within Commissions work programme for 2022/23 with a number of key developments in the service:

Changes in relation to the SEND Green Paper;

The emerging local SEND Strategy and Action Plan, SEND restructure and Better Value review.

6.2 To inform possible scrutiny of the above, and in recognition of the wider context of increasing demands for the SEND services, the Commission requested a short report from Hackney Education setting out the current demographic profile of children with and EHCP and new EHCP applications. This request also relates to ongoing disproportionality work undertaken by the Commission which suggests that the identification of additional needs of some groups of children and young people remain unidentified until much later in their education.

Hackney Education

6.3 It was widely recognised that demand for EHCPs was growing with around 400 EHCPs being approved each year. This was creating significant pressures on local specialists and mainstream schools, and had resulted in rising numbers of children being supported in non-maintained settings outside of the borough. This issue was being addressed by the School Estates Strategy which was not only aiming to increase local specialist provision but was also seeking to increase the number of children supported in local schools through Additional Resource Provisions (ARP).

6.4 Other highlights from the report included:

-Hackney had the 12th highest rate of EHCPs in England and 1 in 20 children had an EHCP.

- Higher proportion of children with SEND in Hackney are supported in mainstream schools compared to other boroughs.
- Hackney is rejecting a higher number of EHCP requests than other boroughs.

Questions from the Commission

6.5 At page 50, the report indicates that 153 initial requests for an EHCP were refused - which was 30% of all requests. Is there any data on the age and ethnicity of those requests for an EHCP which were refused? What proportion of these were challenged by parents and how many of these challenges were successful? Is there any tracking of students which were rejected?

- There were around 50 appeals last year, additional data was not available at the meeting, but could be supplied at a later date.

In relation to graduated response, a new system has been put in place to help track pupils. Each school will now hold a multidisciplinary team meeting on a termly basis to review all pupils with a vulnerability. This team will assess progress and whether a further review of needs is required.

6.6 The EHCP review process should be that schools should conduct an annual review which is submitted to the LA who then reassess the EHCP as necessary, which the school will then deliver upon. Locally, the last part of this process is not happening as the LA is not updating the EHCP. When is progress going to be made in this area?

- This was covered in the SEND review which was recently completed. Many LA's have been struggling with the annual review duty due to the demand in the system; there are currently 3,000 children with an EHCP which require annual review and until the review, there was insufficient resource (casework staff were holding between 300-350 cases per worker). After the restructure caseloads had been reduced to around 120-150 per worker which will enable them to implement reviews. It was also acknowledged that paperwork was excessive (8-9 pages) and that it was hoped to reduce this to around 2-3 pages in the future. More needed to be done but work was in progress.

- It was noted that performance had improved in recent weeks in ensuring that EHCPs are completed in the 20 week statutory timeframe. It was also noted that there were no cases which were with the Ombudsman which would suggest that the council was discharging its statutory duties.

6.7 At page 50 the report indicates that 153 initial requests for an EHCP were refused - is there any correlation between those requests being rejected and the presence of mental health and emotional health issues?

- Refusal could be for a number of reasons, including a lack of information provided by the school or parents, though HE will often pursue to get the correct or missing information. Sometimes the school has not sought the views of external agencies such as SLT. Refused requests can also be resubmitted.

6.8 As part of the graduated response and the whole systems approach to help reduce needs, is the universal offer to schools going to be increased as this will help support the graduated response (e.g. access to Educational Psychology assessments). In terms of the graduated response and more support provided to pupils within maintained school settings, there is a need for additional transparency and accountability of school actions. How will this be supported by HE?

- HE have set up a new offer for schools. Previously schools were funded and bought in educational psychology and specialist teachers. For approximately £3,000 per year, primary schools get access to Educational Psychology, SLT and Specialist Teachers as well as a universal training offer. HE has partnered with Autism Education Trust to roll out training to every school in Hackney.

The Green Paper on SEND was currently progressing through parliament which would bring other changes to the local support systems for children with SEND.

6.9 The Commission noted that it was still coming across cases of children whose SEND or additional needs were being missed and were increasingly benign seen in

alternative provision or in the pupil referral unit. Is there any data benign collected in this respect?

- From January 2023 data will be collected and submitted at a 'person level' which means that the authority will be in a better position to look at this issue in a more holistic way.

- It was noted that the SEND Strategy will go to Cabinet in October 2022 and the Action Plan needs to be endorsed by the partnership before it can be presented at scrutiny.

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

7 Work Programme 2022/23 (21.20)

7.1 The main updates for the Commission included:
School exclusions and school moves would be presented at the next meeting in October 2022;

Also at the next meeting in October, the Commission would assess schools' role in addressing food poverty and insecurity

Access to CAMHS would be included within the April agenda and would involve site visits to local providers and young people's groups.

7.2 The Commission noted and agreed on the work programme.

8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

8.1 The minutes of 13th July were noted and agreed.

9 Any Other Business

9.1 The date of the next meeting was 31st October 2022. There were no other items of business.



Meeting closed at 9.50pm

Duration of the meeting: Times Not Specified

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London Borough of Hackney
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2018/19
Date of Meeting Monday 31 October 2022

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

Chair	Councillor Sophie Conway
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Caroline Selman, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof
Virtual	Cllr Anya Sizer, Cllr Lynne Troughton, Salmah Kansara Steven Olalere
Co-optees	Richard Brown, Andy English and Jo Macleod
Apologies:	Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott; Cllr Midnight Ross.
In Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 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, Children and Education.- Paul Senior, Interim Director of Education- Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding.- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being.- Jenna Clark, Executive Headteacher, Gainsborough Primary School.- Louise Nichols, Executive Headteacher at Gayhurst, Kingsmead and Mandeville Primary Schools.
Live-link recording:	https://youtu.be/aRMuvjSnDJw
Members of the Public:	2 members of the press were present.
Officer Contact:	Martin Bradford  020 8356 3315  martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

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

- Cllr Lee Laudat Scott;
- Cllr Midnight Ross.

1.2 The following members connected virtually:

- Cllr Anya Sizer;
- Cllr Lynne Troughton (also joining the meeting late);
- Salmah Kansara;
- Steven Olalere.

2 Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 The outcome of the focused visit of Children's Social Care by Ofsted which took place in September was published on the 26th October 2022. Unfortunately, this was too late for inclusion within this agenda. The Commission therefore asked the Group Director for Children and Education for a brief verbal update to highlight the key outcomes from the Ofsted assessment and the service response. It was agreed that this would be taken after item 4 (and recorded under any other business item 8).

3 Declarations of Interest

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

- Jo McLeod was a Governor at a primary school in Hackney and a parent of a child with SEND;
- Cllr Anya Sizer was a parent of a child with SEND.

4 Childhood Food Poverty: Free School Meals Eligibility and Uptake (19.05)

4.1 From local data it was understood that almost one-half of local children are living in poverty after housing costs have been taken into account. Also taking the current cost of living crisis into consideration, it is clear that poverty and food insecurity will have a significant impact on local children and families and for the local services that support them, including local schools and education settings.

4.2 The aim of this item was to help understand the nature of the childhood food hunger and the role play by schools in response. It was hoped that this scrutiny would help to identify any additional support which could be provided to schools to support them in this work. In particular, the Commission focused on:

- Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement and uptake;
- The reach and focus of School Breakfast Clubs;
- How schools are connected to wider food poverty programmes and networks.

4.3 To further inform members' understanding of this policy area and support the scrutiny process, members of the Commission visited a number of local primary and secondary schools and food projects ahead of this meeting. These visits were helpful and informative and the Commission thanked all those schools and food projects that accommodated members.

Hackney Education

4.4 The Cabinet member and the Director of Education thanked the Commission for supporting this discussion and the opportunity to engage collectively with other

stakeholders across the local education system on the issue of childhood food poverty. It was noted that a task force had recently been commissioned by the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care which would support a childhood food poverty summit. The task force would:

- Review what resources were available to support this policy area;
- Assess what is working locally and how to best share good practice;
- Identify what can be learnt from neighbouring education systems in how they address childhood food poverty.

4.5 The Director of Education would be inviting local school leaders and, health and voluntary sector organisations to participate in the childhood food poverty task force and would report its work to the summit in January 2023. The aim of this work would be to improve support for children not just in local schools, but across all early years and post 16 settings. The summit will produce a set of recommendations to address childhood food poverty in Hackney.

4.6 The submitted paper set out the context for Free School Meal (FSM) provision in Hackney as well as other ways in which schools and other educational settings were addressing childhood food poverty locally (e.g. Breakfast Clubs and wider engagement with food poverty networks). The challenge now was to engage local school leaders to understand how the education system as a whole can work better to improve support to children and families at this really challenging time.

Gainsborough - Executive Head

4.7 Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) was introduced at this school as a response to falling school rolls. The introduction of UFSM was part of an overall plan to develop a new way forward for the school which responded to high levels of need among its pupils (e.g. high levels of children with SEND, on a child protection plan or who were looked after by the local authority). It was also noted that with high local levels of disadvantage, families often struggled to fund school meals and other school activities and sometimes got into arrears. This often created negative relationships between parents and teachers and the wider school. The school was also aware that there was a significant cohort of families who were just over the eligibility threshold who did not qualify for FSM but who were also struggling to fund meals for their children.

4.8 In response to the above conditions the school chose to set up two schemes:

- Universal Free School meals for all children (which equated to a further 120 meals per day);
- Free 30 hour wraparound support in the nursery (targeted at those children and families most in need)

4.9 The school indicated that the above developments had a positive impact on pupils and the wider community in respect that these:

- Offered a preventative approach to help children that might need help;
- Helped children to access lessons ready to develop and learn;
- Created more positive interactions between parents and teachers and other school staff which contributed to better relations;
- Acknowledged the wider concerns of the school community.

4.10 To support the introduction of UFSM the school also took the following steps:

- School staff were diverted from chasing school meal debts to increasing take up of FSM;
- Increased costs for staff school meals to help offset costs of introduction of UFSM.
- Free Breakfast Club offer to all children through Magic Breakfast;
- Connections to a local charity also provides free monthly meal drops for families which can be picked up from the school.

4.11 The annual cost of introducing UFSM across the whole school was much less than expected with totalling approximately £20k. It was expected that this cost would reduce in the future as the school had recently won a bid to develop a circular food programme. This would allow the school to grow fruit and vegetables on site which would contribute to reduced running costs for school meals services.

Gayhurst, Kingsmead and Mandeville - Executive Head

4.12 UFSM was introduced at one of the schools for many of the reasons set out in 4.4-4.11. Whilst around 60% of children were entitled to FSM, the schools were acutely aware of the needs of those families who were just above the threshold and did not qualify therefore the introduction of UFSM would help support them.

4.13 Schools were also aware that one of the counter arguments for the introduction of UFSM was that this would be providing a free service to some families that could afford them. In one of the schools, parents of children in years 1 and 2 (where FSM was universally available) could voluntarily contribute to the cost of free school meals if they could afford it, and this funding helped to offset FSM costs or was used for other support activities children (e.g. after school clubs and breakfast club).

4.14 All three schools offered a breakfast club, but in only one was this a totally free service. Take up of the breakfast club where this was freely provided was high with about 80-90 students per day (which is a considerable proportion of pupils in a single form entry school). Breakfast clubs are supported by Magic Breakfast, but there is now an annual fee for this service and was therefore much harder to provide sustainably given additional staffing and other costs. All three schools provide after school clubs on 2 days per week for children who qualify for FSM. This combined 'wraparound' offer was common amongst many local primary schools.

4.15 It was clear that a number of local schools were providing UFSM where there was already a high levels of FSM entitlement. Once FSM entitlement was taken into account alongside universal school meal provision (year 1 and year 2) the financial gap to reach school wide coverage of FSM was not that great.

4.16 Given the hardships that many local families are facing, FSM provision might also be important to families' decisions over which schools their children attended. In this context, FSM provision could be a contributory factor to falling school rolls in Hackney, especially where these situated adjacent to borough boundaries with neighbouring boroughs where FSM is universal to all children (e.g. Islington and Tower Hamlets).

4.17 The schools also run a weekly food drop with Felix Project (a charity which distributes surplus food to primary schools), holiday projects and other programmes supporting vulnerable children and their families. To avoid stigmatisation, food distributed in the school is free to all parents regardless of whether their child qualifies for FSM or not. This was a lesson learnt from the pandemic, when the system for food distribution was perceived to be divisive.

4.18 It was emphasised that schools were already seeing many families experiencing extreme hardship, and that a collective and an urgent local response was required to support children and families.

Our Lady's - Head Teacher

4.19 The proposal of the Deputy Mayor to set up a task force to consider childhood food poverty was welcomed as this was a shared challenge amongst many stakeholders.

4.20 Whilst providing FSM to all pupils was desirable, it was not possible within current financial constraints of the school. The school actively encouraged parents to apply for FSM using the local authority portal as well as the paper version. Costs of school

dinners at the school were £2.10 per day, which was probably the lowest daily charge made by schools.

4.21 A breakfast Club was provided free of charge to pupils every morning at which between 60-80 attended daily (about 10% of all pupils). The club was initially funded by a successful bid for £11k from a law firm and £1k donation from Kelloggs, but as this funding was not recurring, costs are now absorbed within the general school budget. The school is part of the national Breakfast Club Programme operated by Family Action and Magic Breakfast. Study spaces are also provided at breakfast time to allow children to complete homework or other studies.

4.22 Food is also provided at an After School Club alongside additional study space and time for children. All pre and post school clubs are challenged by inflationary costs for foodstuffs and wages of support staff, and additional financial backing is constantly being sought to ensure programmes are sustainable. A charity provides food and hygiene packs for about 40-60 children in need every term.

4.23 In terms of additional support, additional resources would always be welcome. A commitment from the local authority that the Holiday and Activities Funding (HAF) would continue would also be welcome to ensure that children in need are fed during school holidays. The Household Support Fund also provided food vouchers for families during the holidays and again, early clarification that this was going to be continued would be welcomed by schools.

4.24 Schools also questioned whether the local authority could play a role in bulk buying of foodstuffs which would deliver real cost efficiencies for participating schools. A local purchasing platform could help schools to access foodstuffs for school kitchens and other food provision areas.

Urswick - Head teacher

4.25 A UFSM system has been in operation for 8 years in the school, and is currently the only secondary school locally and nationally to do so. The school has the highest rate of children entitled to FSM at around 70%, therefore the cost of extending free meal provision to the remaining 30% of students is marginal (but not insignificant). The additional costs are covered by additional income from letting of school buildings and car parking charges.

4.26 Aside from reducing the impact of economic inequality, it was noted that there are many benefits to UFSM provision in the school as it reduced stigma felt by children and also reduced the administrative time and resources needed to support paid for school meals systems (collecting money, banking cash, chasing debts). Staff are also entitled to a free lunch if they commit to eating with the children. It was acknowledged that compromises had to be made within the system, in that menus could not be extensive if to retain sustainable unit costs.

4.27 UFSM was also extended to V11th form students and it was suggested that this may be a factor in children from disadvantaged backgrounds from staying on in education rather than entering the workplace (especially since the loss of the Educational Maintenance Allowance).

4.28 Schools, particularly in the secondary sector, might need additional help to enable them to transition to UFSM:

- Increased kitchen capacity;
- Offset and reduce food costs by bulk buying and similar collaborative solutions
- To support those families just above the threshold of FSM entitlement.

4.29 It was also emphasised that early notification of HAF was important so that schools could plan and prioritise holiday activities and food provision. Schools were

only notified 2 weeks in advance of half-term that vouchers would be provided so early notice is appreciated.

Questions from the Commission

4.30 [To Gainsborough] It was noted that FSM entitlement increased after the provision of UFSM. What were the reasons behind this?

The resource which was used to administer the school meals systems was transferred to target families who might be eligible for FSM and therefore increase uptake. This provided time to meet families and help them complete the necessary application forms. This resulted in about a 10% increase in eligibility and uptake and this support had now been fully integrated into the school administrative system (e.g. support at school entry).

4.31 Could Hackney Education confirm the HAF and holiday food vouchers would be provided for the Christmas holiday period for in need children and families?

Hackney Education confirmed that HAF was a central government funded initiative and that assurance had been given that this would continue for Christmas and Easter holidays, though no decision had been reached for the summer holidays for 2023. HE was aware of the success of the HAF and was keen for this to continue.

4.32 There is explicit guidance on the quality and nutritional standards for school meals and School Governors are responsible for these being maintained in their respective schools. How do schools assess the quality of meals that they provide that are balanced and nutritious? Is this independently inspected? Is there any development work undertaken with School Governors to support this food standards role? What role does the Local Authority play in any inspections and maintenance of these standards? Is there further scope for input from the local Public Health department in supporting schools to develop healthy and nutritious meals?

- This was an important area though Hackney Education did not have the information to hand to answer this fully, and suggested that this be provided in writing after the meeting. It was noted that the task group would probably consider what possible role the local authority might have in facilitating the purchase power of schools and other collaborative initiatives.

- A primary head noted that there was a local charity called Chefs in Schools which aims to improve and develop school meal provision in a cost effective and sustainable way. The charity is based in Hackney and encourages schools to bring their catering in-house as it is more effective to up-skill kitchen staff and can be used for other school wide educational activities (e.g. food tech). The model of provision varies widely across schools with some schools preferring to contract out, and prices vary from £1.65 to £3.00 per unit. Chefs in School also supports access to food apps which enable school catering teams to source in season fruit and vegetables in a more cost effective way. Chefs in Schools is a not for profit organisation and all apps are free for schools to use. The charity also offers the opportunity to collaborate with other schools. It was noted that one of the schools in the Kings Park ward shared its kitchen facilities with other schools and community groups to help distribute cooked food to those that might need it. There is much good practice taking place in relation to food distribution, though it might benefit from greater coordination. Local Authorities do not get involved in assessing the quality of food provided to children as this is a school responsibility, as too is the decision as to whether school meals are provided in-house or contracted out.

- Another primary head noted that by using Chefs in Schools, the nutritional standards of all meals was checked as part of their package of support. The real expertise of Chefs in School was bringing the staff and the community into the kitchen which made a huge difference to what was included on the menu and what children ate and so that staff understood what was important for children to eat and enabled them to make healthier choices. Education and Health Partnership charity (which is run by a former HE employee) assesses nutritional standards and food and hygiene practices in the kitchen and all schools would have access to this service. As a federation of 8 schools, the

school kitchens would work collaboratively over the holiday period to ensure that hot meals were provided across the family of schools.

- Schools present noted that quality and standards was a Governing Body responsibility. Being responsible for re-commissioning contracts was also a tool for improving standards of delivery for school meals. Catering companies working for schools could also bulk buy to achieve cost savings for schools. The local authority does have a role in inspecting and rating all food premises.

- HE emphasised that it would be important to develop a collegiate approach in response to the challenges in this policy area, to share good practice, learn what is working locally and extend and support that where possible. It was noted that the Local Authority does not have any jurisdiction in respect of nutritional standards in schools and that this is the responsibility of individual schools.

Action: Hackney Education to provide further information on school food standards and how food quality and nutrition is monitored and assessed locally.

4.33 How do local schools ensure that models of UFSM are sustainable?

A primary head reported that in many instances, schools needed to offset the shortfall in funding for UFSM provision by other sources of income or through charitable donations. In many instances these were 'one-off' funding allocation and new funders might have to be sought elsewhere if other in school budgets cannot be used to cross-subsidise provision. Whilst the local authority cannot provide additional funding for operational costs of UFSM, it was suggested that it might consider be able to assist through capital development projects for maintained schools such as those needed for school kitchen refurbishment.

4.34 Although the focus of UFSM provision has been on primary school provision, given that the eligibility for FSM among Hackney secondary schools is higher, could there not also be a case for extending UFSM to secondary pupils also?

- This will be something that the task group will be assessing to help understand why rates of FSM eligibility are higher in secondary schools than primary schools.

4.35 Given that head teachers noted the urgency of this issue, what is the timeline for the proposed task force and summit on childhood food poverty?

- Invitations for a focus group will be sent out the week commencing 31st October 2022 to local system leaders, partners, voluntary sector groups and chefs. This will create the groundwork and priorities for a summit which will meet which will convene before Christmas. Recommendations will be developed for the Deputy Mayor for early in the New Year.

4.36 Can further information be provided about neighbouring boroughs which provide UFSM to primary age children? How is this funded?

- As part of the task force and summit, officers will consider other models of provision on other local authorities including neighbouring boroughs like Islington. The local authority also had to be mindful of any unintended consequences of UFSM such as any possible impact on Pupil Premium eligibility and uptake and would need to fully assess that in relation to development proposed for Hackney.

4.37 In relation to the Council's target for net zero, have there been any moves towards introducing a plant based diet as part of the school meals service?

- Chefs in Schools operate a policy of 2 no-meat days and 3 meat days (2 meat 1 fish) per week, which all complies with national school meal standards. Non-meat days were introduced in 2014, and whilst there were some initial concerns raised by parents, vegetarian days are very well integrated into the school menu and there are no problems.

- As raised earlier, a primary school had won a bid for a circular food economy which would enable the schools to become almost self-sufficient in terms of fruit and vegetable provision within the menu, and would include no meat days also.
- HE noted that a school survey undertaken in Hackney in 2021 noted that 64% of schools had their own in-house catering and 37% had two meat free days per week and 23% had 1 meat free day.

4.38 Can further information be provided on what the Catering Framework is? Why do we think that primary schools did not sign up to the Hackney Education Catering Framework?

- A primary school noted that some schools may be reluctant to go through a catering framework as this may result in additional costs due to support the profit margins required by caterers. External contracting meant that there was less flexibility in managing catering staff and the opportunity for wider food education and support across the school. There were also concerns that less scrupulous caterers might take the opportunity to offload lower quality foodstuffs through school meals services.
- A secondary school noted that school meal provision was currently provided in-house, and although an external catering company had been approached, it was felt that the contract would not be sufficiently profitable and therefore not viable.
- A secondary school noted that they pay a management fee to their catering company in addition to the cost of the food and for catering staff. This supports training, menu development and the provision of cover for staff sickness.
- HE reported that the number of schools which operate their own meals service and those that contract out would be considered by the task group, if this is seen to be related to a wider approach to addressing childhood food poverty. It was emphasised that school governing bodies are responsible for whether school meals are provided in-house or contracted out.

4.39 Notwithstanding local finance in schools, can the local authority be any more ambitious in relation to aims for school meal provision, particularly in relation to quality and standards of meals and what can be done to support schools? It would be helpful if the task group could also look at the sustainability of school relationships with voluntary partners and local sourcing of foods.

- HE indicated that local community and voluntary sector groups which have an interest in school meal provision would be invited to participate in the summit.

4.40 From the data in the report (at Table 1 page 18/19) it was clear that FSM entitlement among children in alternative provision is high. Is Council assured that children in alternative provision who are eligible for FSM are receiving their entitlement every day? What sort of arrangements are in place? Is there any additional support provided to alternative providers to provide FSM given that AP sites are often small-scale and may not have economies of scale for food provision.

- Any child on site at the Pupil Referral Unit is entitled to a free school meal and the same applies to any commissioned alternative provision (this forms part of a service level agreement with alternative provision providers). Alternative providers are very different, therefore some will provide on-site and others will contract out to a local food provider. Schools also commission alternative providers directly, and will commission separate lunch arrangements.

4.41 The Commission felt that it would be really helpful if the task force could consider the following issues:

- The role that local authorities can play in relation to food quality and standards when they supported schools to provide meals universally (e.g. Islington)
- The approach taken to school meal debts accrued by parents;
- The uptake of FSM within the Orthodox Jewish Community at maintained schools.

4.42 The National Breakfast Club provides free breakfast foods and grants to set up school clubs. Data from the National Breakfast Club Programme suggests that whilst many Hackney schools were eligible to receive free support, only 9 local schools have actually signed up. Do we have an understanding of why this might be the case? Are there structural issues inhibiting sign-up? Is there anything that Hackney Education can do to facilitate sign-up?

- A local school noted that many local schools were signed up to Magic Breakfast, a charity that supports schools to provide breakfast clubs. In many cases this association was developed before the establishment of the National Breakfast Club programme and would not have been able to apply under the guidance (i.e. the programme predominantly supports new clubs).

4.43 What connections do schools have with local food projects and programmes? Is there anything we can do to support schools to develop these connections to better be able to support children and families?

- School connections to local food projects and programmes varied. The Felix Project works closely with a number of local schools supplying foodstuffs for use or to distribute on to parents. With their understanding of children and families in need, it was suggested that schools were ideal hubs to help distribute food and, as was underlined in the pandemic, could reach and deliver food to a wider range of residents beyond those that had children attending the school.

It was noted that the Felix project was no longer taking any further referrals as it was operating at full capacity. Most local schools would also be subscribed to magic breakfast which would mean that you cannot subscribe to other charitable food organisations.

-Another school indicated that it would be helpful if there was a database of those organisations which supported local schools around addressing food poverty and wider poverty issues.

Chair Summary

4.44 It's apparent that further research is needed by Hackney Education and the Council in general to get a better understanding of how schools are addressing childhood hunger:

- Which schools are providing universal Free School Meals and how they are supporting such initiative
- The provision of breakfast clubs, which children they are targeted at and how many attend
- How schools connect to wider food programmes and networks.

4.45 The Commission welcomed the proposal to set up a task group to look at childhood food poverty to help establish what was currently being provided, share good practice and develop a borough wide approach. The Commission will draw up a number of recommendations which it hopes will positively contribute to the establishment of the task force and summit and efforts to address food insecurity in schools across Hackney.

5 School Moves (20.15)

5.1 Exclusions and all school moves is a standing item on the work programme of the Commission to review the range and number of pupil moves across schools in Hackney. This is to ensure that the Commission has oversight of school exclusions, in the wider context of all school moves. Therefore the Commission has annual updates on

- Permanent exclusions;
- Managed Moves;
- Children in Elective Home Education
- Children in Alternative Provision.

5.2 There were two slight amendments to this data for the Commission for this year:
-The Commission also requested additional demographic information in relation to SEND status for the all school moves data; and
-In light of rising rates of pupil absence and persistent absence the Commission also requested a brief update on local data - given their clear connection exclusions and other school moves.

Hackney Education

5.3 It was noted school exclusion was an important local issue and that the local education system was working to ensure that schools were inclusive. The vast majority of pupil movement related to those children entering the borough or leaving the borough, or those moving in between Hackney schools. There were over 1800 removals from school roll and 1400 added to school rolls during the period to June 2022. The report focused on the smaller sub-group of this cohort of children who may have additional needs or vulnerabilities, such as those who are permanently excluded, moving to Elective Home Education (EHE), who transfer schools via the Managed Moves process or receive their education in alternative provision.

5.4 The rates of persistent absence in schools across the country was now almost twice as high as they were before the pandemic. Whilst rates of absence in Hackney may not be as high as regional and national averages, it was acknowledged that local rates had nonetheless doubled. This was a concern as school absence can impact on attainment and the longer term outcomes for children.

Questions from the Commission

5.5 **Given the interrelationship between these different cohorts of school moves, does Hackney Education have sufficient capacity not only to review and analyse local school move data effectively but also ensure that officers work across services to effectively support pupils? What is the total number of officers which support these policy areas?**

- Whilst additional funding would always be welcome, Hackney Education was confident that officers were working collaboratively and effectively together to support pupils and partners in all school moves. Hackney Education has some statutory responsibilities to act in respect of some aspects of school moves, but schools also have the freedom to innovate and some would be directing their own resources to these issues. The data does provide the pretext for Hackney Education to challenge schools around attendance, exclusion or any other school moves.

- The data presented in the report covers a number of teams that all create and manage their own datasets rather than one overall service, which of course brings its own challenges. It was noted that whilst there have been new duties and expectations placed on local authorities in respect of education, there has not been any budget increase from the central government to support this. It was acknowledged that staffing resources were limited for some services (Elective Home Education - 1 WTE; Children Missing Education - 2WTE). Hackney does operate a traded service for local schools in respect of pupil attendance which is focused on the statutory obligations. It should be noted that there is no legal duty on schools to share data with Hackney Education, and primary settings were generally much better at this than secondary. Legislation was going through parliament at the moment which would extend data sharing requirements for schools.

- It was also noted that the cyber-attack had a profound impact on local data collection, the directorates were aware of the importance of shared data systems and the role this played in creating a unified approach to supporting local children and families. New contracts were up for retender in the near future and this would be an important consideration in this process. In reaction to fragmentation of teams, it was noted that a new Director of Business Intelligence and Strategy position had been developed which aims to bring greater synergies and more effective working relationships across children's services and education, it is hoped that this post will also be able to bring a more streamlined approach to data collection and analysis to support local services.

5.6 Have there been any suspected cases of 'off-rolling' among local schools in the past 12 months? Accepting that this a 'grey area' what intelligence and insight does Hackney Education have around possible cases and if there are aspects which need further interrogation or follow up?

- Whilst there were examples of when the relationship between school and families had broken down which has resulted in a child being removed from the school roll, it was difficult to determine whether these constituted 'off-rolling' as such cases can be difficult to prove. There can be disagreements between the school and parents as to whether it is in the best interest of the child to stay on in a particular school or whether it may be more beneficial to move to another school.
- Since the Commission's work on this in 2019/20, HE has been looking more closely at pupil roll movement at year 10 and year 11 and who have not gone on to take exams. HE has been focusing on those schools where pupil movement has exceeded 5% where the School Improvement Team provides external challenges as to why these figures may be high. Generally schools have a very clear presentation of why these children were removed from the school roll and have an understanding of where these children have gone to. Sometimes children are moved into Elective Home Education when this may not be the best option for the child, and HE then supports that child to be reintegrated back into mainstream education, most likely in another school. The challenge of off-rolling is that it is very difficult to nail down as this is always dependent on the relationship between the schools and the family which can be complex and where there are different expectations and understanding.
- Head teachers present noted that there is now a more rigorous Ofsted assessment of those year 10 pupils which do not make it to the end of year 11 (and examinations) and if off-rolling is detected, the school will be automatically placed in 'Requires Improvement' category.

5.7 Is the Council confident that it is matching the expectations and ambitions to reduce school exclusions with the additional resources and teacher training required? Does the Council currently work with The Difference, an exclusions charity, supporting teachers to reduce exclusions?

- The Council offers a comprehensive training programme to support Continuous Professional Development for teachers, which is designed in consultation with local schools' needs.
- Reducing school exclusions is a local priority and HE was confident that local school leaders understood the importance of inclusion. It was emphasised that supporting those children for whom mainstream school might not be the best place for them to receive their education was a community wide responsibility encompassing a wide range of local services (e.g. social care, community safety, health).
- On the recommendation of the CYP Scrutiny Commission, the Re-engagement Unit was expanded to include secondary schools. From September 2022, additional investment has been made in this team which now has a universal offer to schools to support those most vulnerable students at risk of exclusion. The Unit is made up of a staff from a wide range of disciplines including teaching, CAMHS and youth work and as such has a broad range of skills which can help schools and local school leaders to develop inclusive practice and also better support vulnerable children and their families to help maintain their places in mainstream education. The focus was on prevention and that there was an early help offer to reduce the need for more reactive interventions at a later stage.

5.8 Are all schools signed up to the Re-Engagement Unit?

Although this was a universal service, and with the exception of one or two local schools, the team was in every school having conversations with school leaders about children at risk of exclusion.

5.9 Is there any associated patterns between detentions and the impact that this has on mental wellbeing of pupils and permanent school exclusions? Is there any data on this issue?

- A headteacher reported since the pandemic there has been a significant increase in the number of pupils with mental health concerns, and that the school had to be creative in responding to and supporting these needs. The school had introduced more counselling support and now employs its own counsellor and also introduced a number of peer support groups for pupils. There is a real concern around thresholds to access CAMHS support, with the school being increasingly told that pupils do not meet the threshold and therefore required to develop their own pastoral care to support pupils but this requires additional training and support to our staff.

- In relation to exclusion, one school reported that it operated a restorative justice programme where instead of sanctioning children, children are given an opportunity to repair and re-engage, where children have an opportunity to sit down and explain everything. In some instances, the manifestation of poor behaviour is a result of other unmet pupil needs and the school was of the firm belief that every pupil should have a member of staff with whom they feel confident and comfortable talking about a wider range of issues and where issues of concern can be raised. The school takes advantage of the early help offered through Young Hackney, and tries to prevent exclusions by partnering with other schools where reciprocal arrangement can be made for pupil transfer to other schools out of the borough where a fresh start may be the best option for children.

- From the PRU perspective, it was noted that a number of schools still operate a points based behaviour system, in this context there is a significant number of exclusions which arise through 'persistent disruptive behaviour'. Many exclusions that happen at secondary level relate to carrying of weapons or the physical assault of another young person, most of these are outside the school away from the oversight of adults. In this context, headteachers often feel the need to exclude a pupil to ensure the safety of other pupils which may have been affected by this behaviour and to ensure that the school remains a safe space. More training around the impact of social media on young people, and the triggering effect that this has on pupil behaviour would be welcome.

5.10 What progress has been made on the Inclusion Charter which was being rolled out within local schools?

The Systems Leader for Diversity and Inclusion had recently led a two day CPD course for local schools on this issue and it was expected that those attending will return to their schools to update and up skill other members of staff. This is a broad focused piece of work which will encompass not only issues of race, but also SEND status. The Systems Leader was also an experienced teacher with a long history of teaching at a local school in Hackney and therefore understood the local landscape of needs.

5.11 What programme of support is available for children who are persistently or severely absent from school, in particular to the cohort of children who have SEND or mental health issues? How does our approach on this issue vary from other boroughs?

Many local authorities have reduced their education and welfare support when funding was reduced some years back, so most offer a core service with some element of additional support which is a traded service. New guidance on attendance will require additional involvement and this will be problematic for many authorities. Locally, the WAMHS provides access to mental health advice and support in education settings and very few authorities have comparable services. It was also noted that the local clinicians have also been working on providing guidance for schools around emotionally based school avoidance, which of course has important connections to SEND needs and potentially permanent exclusion. Whilst there was good work locally, it was acknowledged that more could be done.

5.12 Can officers outline the process through which challenge is provided to schools with higher rates of school moves. In previous years, it has been noted

that the Director of Education has visited these schools with other officers, but these visits now have been replaced by School Improvement Partners?

The last couple of years these visits and challenge has been undertaken by the School Improvement Team under the oversight of the Director of Education. The main point of challenge is assessing whether the destination of all those children is a reasonable outcome for them and the headteachers have to account for these moves. It is clear that headteachers now see these moves as a safeguarding issue which is an important development.

5.13 There are 750 boys from the Orthodox Jewish Community which are known to be missing education and a further unknown. Will the new requirements for parents to register their children who are electively home educated increase oversight?

- It is not clear if the Schools Bill will actually progress through parliament, but if it does, it is likely to have a significant impact on the Charedi community. If it does progress, then the Council will also need to plan what impact this will have and make sure the necessary resources are in place. HE was having conversations with local education leaders around the potential impact of the Bill in preparation.

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

6 Work Programme 2022/23 (21.00)

6.1 Members were given the updated work programme for the remainder of the year. It was noted that the SEND Strategy is due to come to scrutiny on 30/11/22 which will mainly be to note as the strategy will have been agreed. The SEND Action Plan will be taken in February 2023 where the Commission will have an oversight role in ensuring that partners will be held accountable for delivering the strategy.

6.2 It was noted that the Outcome of School Exclusions update report would come to the Commission in January 2023. This update would be followed up at a date determined by the Commission.

6.3 The Commission noted the work programme.

7 Minutes of the Previous Meeting (21.20)

7.1 The minutes of the last meeting on 29th September were not ready for this meeting and would be presented at the next meeting.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 In September 2022, Ofsted visited Children and Families Service to assess front of house services (e.g. access points to children' social care and care thresholds). The Group Director summarised key issues arising from the Ofsted and outlined key actions the service is planning to take in response. If there are any substantive issues which warrant further questioning these can be scrutinised in greater detail at the next meeting (30/11/22) where this focus of the meeting is on Children's Social Care.

8.2 The Group Director noted the headline findings from the ofsted focused visit included:

There was a good front door service in Hackney which conducted appropriate assessments and applied appropriate thresholds;
Most children received proportionate responses and received the help that they needed;
Senior leaders were providing strong leadership in developing and improving practice at a pace acceptable to staff;

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Children and families had committed and experienced staff who felt well supported; There was a strong commitment to youth services and the Young Hackney offer and had been key in addressing serious youth violence.

8.3 It was noted that a nationwide crisis in the recruitment and retention of social workers had also impacted on Hackney, as evidenced by some delays in assessments and a bulge in case loads. Both of these issues were identified as areas of improvement for the service. Also whilst there was strong management oversight of cases, the inspectors indicated that there was not sufficient reflective practice recorded in the casework. The key message from the visit however was that all social work assessments viewed by the inspectors were good.

8.4 In terms of follow up actions, the service was developing a new workforce strategy to ensure that the children and families service remained attractive to employees and that they were committed to working for Hackney. This could be brought to scrutiny if needed.

8.5 In light of the positive review by Ofsted inspectors, the Chair commended officers from across the service for their achievement and thanked them for their efforts to develop and maintain children's social care services which meet the needs of local children and families.

8.6 The date of the next meeting was 8th September 2022. There were no other items of business.