

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:

Thursday 8 September 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 remotely via the live link below:

<https://youtu.be/W0yNsBUiEkY>

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

<https://youtu.be/464uHy-Uc>

If you would like to attend in person please note the guidance below and confirm with the officer below.

Contact:

Martin Bradford

☎ 020 8356 3315

✉ martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

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, Michael Lobenstein, 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 Recruitment and Retention of In-House Foster Carers (19.05)** (Pages 9 - 42)
- To review progress on the Commission's recommendations from its review of Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers and assess local support offer to in-house foster carers.
(75 minutes)
- 5 Hackney GCSE and A Level Results 2022 (20.20)** (Pages 43 - 44)
- A short verbal update will be provided by the Director of Education on GCSE and A Level results taken in June 2022.
(20 minutes)
- 6 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) - Demography (20.40)** (Pages 45 - 60)
- To review data on the demographic profile of EHCPs in Hackney (age group, ethnicity, originating setting, those not in education):
- The number of EHCPs in Hackney;
 - New EHCPs granted in Hackney;
 - Number of EHCP requests / Number of requests for assessments refused/ request for assessments which did not result in EHCP being issued.
- (30 mins)
- 7 Work Programme 2022/23 (21.20)** (Pages 61 - 94)
- 8 Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 95 - 112)
- To review and agree the minutes and actions of the previous meeting from 11th Jul 2022.
- 9 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>



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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 8th 2022 Item 4 - Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers	Item No 4
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Outline

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, the last being in October 2019. 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 is sustained progress in the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers.

The Commission requested a brief update on progress made against the recommendations together with an update on the Recruitment and Retention Strategy for In-House Foster Carers.

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 the 31st August 2022 which was supported by a survey to all members. Given the publication date of this agenda (31st August) reports of both elements of this consultation would be circulated informally to all members and published in the next agenda.

Reports

- Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers Strategy Update
- Update on Scrutiny Commissions Recommendations for Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers

Attending:

Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting
Korinna, Service Manager, Fostering, permanency and Placements Service
Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
Representatives from Hackney Foster Carer Council

Action:

Members of the Commission are asked to note both reports and review progress against recommendations.

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Report Title:	Children and Families Service Fostering Recruitment and Retention Briefing
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
Date:	8th September 2022
Produced by:	Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting
Authorised by:	Jacquie Burke, Director of Children and Families

Report Summary

This report is an update to the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission for the 8th September 2022 meeting. The contents of this report should be reviewed by the Commission.

This report consists of two documents. The first is an overview of the Fostering Recruitment and Retention approach in Hackney. The second is an update on the current status of the recommendations made by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission following a review into the recruitment and retention of foster carers in Hackney in October 2017. The Commission made a total of ten recommendations and this paper outlines Hackney's current position against each of these, building on the previous updates.

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Fostering Recruitment and Retention Update for CYP Scrutiny Commission - September 2022

Our Local Context

As of March 2022, we have 410 looked after children in the care of the Local Authority:

- 55% are male and 45% female;
- 76% are from Black or Global Majority communities and 24% are white;
- 24% are living in Hackney and 76% outside of Hackney;
- 72% living in fostering homes; 17% living with connected carers; 8.5% are living in semi-independent accommodation; 8% in children's homes; 3% living with their parents under a care order; 2% living with prospective adopters; and 2% in a mother and baby care arrangement.
- 33% are aged 16 or 17 and 31% aged between 12 and 15, with a fairly even distribution over the lower age range.

As of March 2022, we were also supporting 359 care leavers aged 18 to 25. This includes 254 care experienced young people, aged 18 to 21, who we have a statutory duty to support with finding suitable accommodation.

- 62% are male and 38% are female;
- 77% are from Black and Global Majority communities and 23% are white;
- 37% are living in Hackney and 63% outside;
- 49% are living in supported accommodation; 17% staying put with former foster carers; 10% in independent accommodation; 6% with family; 6% in custody and 4% in supported lodgings.

Of our children living in foster homes, 44% are living with in-house foster carers or connected carers and 56% with carers registered with Independent Fostering Agencies (IFAs). As with most local authorities, we do not have enough in-house foster carers to care for the number of Hackney children who need a foster home. There is a big private market in Independent Fostering Agencies. The size and ethos of each agency, as well as the quality of support on offer to their carers and costs of placing a child with them, can vary considerably between IFAs. IFA carers are supervised directly by the agency that they work for, who are also responsible for their training and support needs and oversight of their fostering registration. Most IFAs operate for profit, which drives their costs up and makes the use of an IFA carer a more expensive option than one of our in-house carers. When children are living with in-house carers, they benefit from a closer working relationship between the child's unit and our fostering service, as well as from our enhanced knowledge about the experience, skills and support needs of the carers, which helps us to put in the right support to the care arrangement to support its sustainability over time.

Our Placements Management Unit (PMU) supports the commissioning of all homes for our looked after children and care leavers, whilst our fostering service recruits and provides the support to in-house foster carers. The total spend on care arrangements for looked after children and care leavers for 2021/22 was £29.7 million. This includes £7.1 million spent with Independent Fostering Agencies, £2.7 with in-house foster care arrangements and £985,000 on connected care arrangements.

Our Fostering Service consists of:

- Two Fostering Support Units, each managed by a Consultant Social Worker, with five social workers and a Unit Coordinator;
- A Permanency Unit, which is managed by a Consultant Social Worker, with 4.6 social workers, who lead on support for Special Guardians and Connected Carers.
- A Matching Consultant, who is responsible for the matching of children with all our in-house foster carers and Supported Lodgings hosts;
- A Fostering Recruitment and Retention Manager, who is responsible for the marketing activities and overseeing the initial recruitment processes; and
- A Practice Development Manager and Service Manager.

The number of foster carer households supported by the Fostering Service since 2018 has increased year on year:

Year	Number of fostering households
2018	128
2019	136
2020	143
2021	153
2022	170

The number of foster carer households who have resigned or had their approvals terminated due to a change in their circumstances (for example, they no longer have a spare room in their home to be used for fostering, or they are moving away); a standards of care issue (where we no longer assess them to be suitable to foster); or retirement since 2018 year on year has varied and is outlined below. The most common reason for the termination of a carer's approval is the end of a connected care arrangement (usually when a child turns 18) as connected carers are approved as foster carers specifically for named children only. In 2022, 8 of the 13 de-registrations were connected carers.

Year	Number of fostering households
2018	17
2019	0

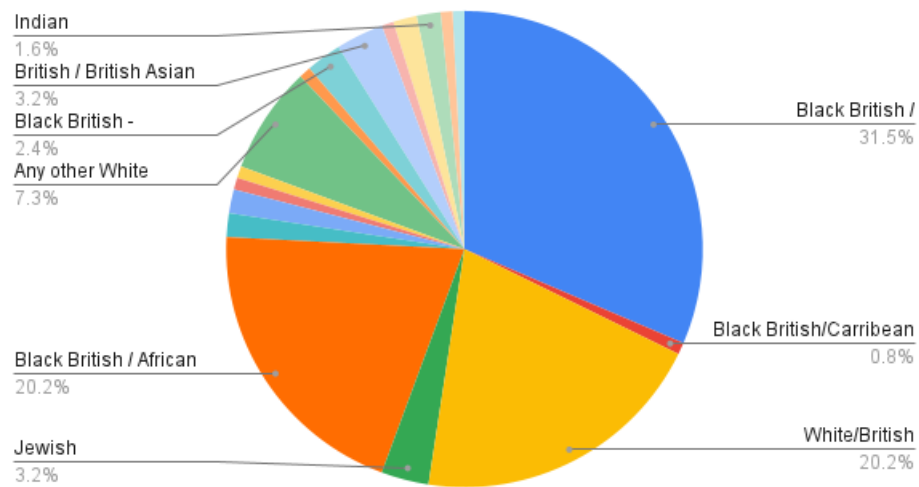
2020	15
2021	17
2022	13

As of 21 March 2022, Hackney Fostering Service had 170 supported Fostering households. This included:

- 48 Connected Carers;
- 113 mainstream fostering household; and
- 9 Supported Lodgings Hosts.

These households are predominantly female led (91%). The age range of our carers spans from 31 to 75, with the average age of Hackney carers as 53 years old. The majority of Hackney carers are of Black Caribbean (35%) followed by Black African (20%). According to the results of the 2011 census, this is not representative of the borough’s population, which is made up of 40% Black and other Global Majority groups, 36% White British and 16% White other.

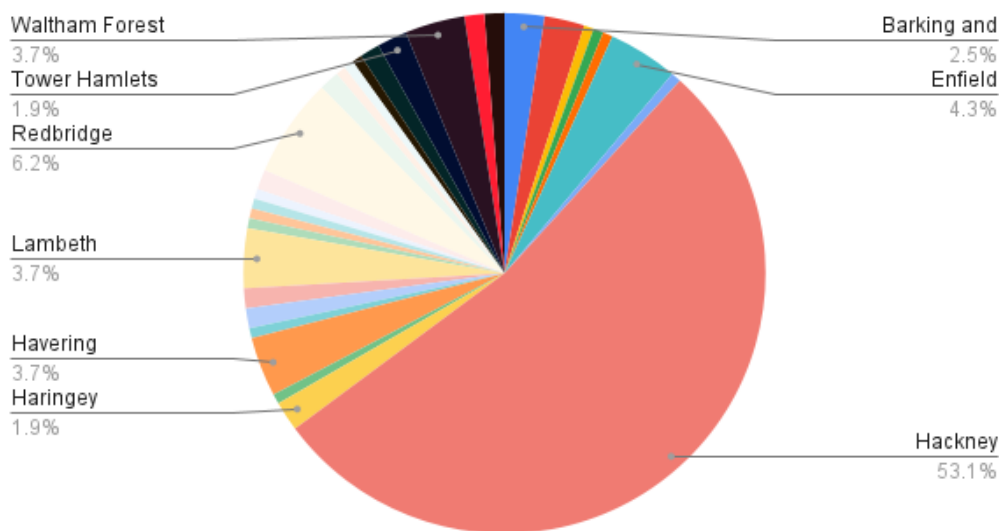
Ethnicity of Hackney Foster Carers



Of our 170 fostering households, the majority are single carers. This is reflective of the London population as a whole, as only 40% of adults in London are married or in a civil partnership.

Fifty-three percent of Hackney carers live in the borough. This is positive in terms of supporting Hackney’s looked after children to remain close to home, wherever possible and safe, which minimises disruption, for example, in their education provision and key personal and professional relationships. After Hackney, our next most significant population of approved carers live in Redbridge (6.2%) and then Enfield (4.3%).

Location of Hackney Foster Carers' Homes



The Current Support Offer for Hackney Foster Carers

The support and wider offer for foster carers who work for Hackney are described in the following locations:

- <https://hackney.gov.uk/why-foster-for-hackney>
- <https://hackney.gov.uk/support-for-hackney-foster-carers>

Training

We provide training for prospective carers before they are assessed - this is a three-day 'skills to foster' training course where carers can get an understanding of the role, the support they can expect and the needs of the children they will be caring for. Hackney carers are also able to access training as part of the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium as well as the comprehensive in-house training from Hackney Children and Families.

Support

Foster carers have regular supervision with their supervising social worker and an out-of-hours telephone line in case they need support in an emergency. There are a number of support groups for carers including clinical support and a group for male carers. Carers are also supported by the Virtual School to ensure that children in their care are supported in their education.

We also provide our carers with a comprehensive [foster carer handbook](#) which covers the key elements of the foster carer role.

Our Ambition

Our ambition is to provide safe, nurturing and sustainable homes for all our looked after children and care leavers. Whilst we recognise at times some children may need different care arrangements for particular periods in their lives, we believe that the best long-term homes for

children and young people are in family settings, with foster carers, connected carers, supported lodgings hosts or staying put arrangements.

We want to help our children and young people to maintain connections with the most important support systems in their life, both friends and family and key professional relationships. We believe the most effective way to do this is to support children and young people to live in or around Hackney, as long as this is safe for them to do so.

We recognise that our care-experienced population come from a diverse range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds and have many different support needs, for example, in relation to their gender and sexuality, learning needs and physical and emotional health. We understand that our profile of in-house carers needs to reflect this diversity, for example, in relation to our carer's knowledge, skills, backgrounds, family composition and life experiences, in order to enable us to find the best possible home for each child and young person.

In order to support us to achieve these ambitions, we have set the following key priorities for the year ahead:

- 1. Continue to recruit a diverse range of high quality in-house foster carers;**
- 2. Increase the use of in-house carers over alternative care arrangements;**
- 3. Expand the use of Supported Lodgings hosts;**
- 4. Improve retention rates through high quality support and training.**

Priority 1: Continue to recruit a diverse range of foster carers

The changing landscape of fostering is being experienced across the country: there is a chronic shortage of foster carers; an exponential rise in costs of care arrangements; and a crisis in children's mental health exacerbated by the pandemic.

A recent [report](#) completed by Ofsted on Fostering in England, 2020 to 2021, found that although the number of initial enquiries into fostering has seen an increase, the number of applications are still relatively low, with only one in seven local authority enquiries translating into a fostering application.

Within Hackney there has been an increase in the complexity of the presenting needs of children in our care and a corresponding increase over time in the number of children being placed into residential children's homes, due to the lack of foster carers with the skills, knowledge and experience required to meet their needs.

The successful recruitment and retention of our in-house foster carers is central to our efforts to reduce the costs of our care arrangements and achieve the best possible outcomes for our looked after children and young people. The potential cost savings for caring for a child in-house are significant.

In-house foster care arrangement p/w	IFA foster care arrangement p/w
£433 - £573*	£850 - £1500

* NB this cost includes the average fees paid to foster carers (most receive £340-£480 p/w) plus the staffing costs related to supporting these carers.

The Fostering Service has maintained a strong recruitment record over recent years, despite a very challenging national context.

Form F	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Enquiries	352	228	327	272	222
Approvals	17	12	8	15	14

We remain ambitious for the year ahead, with a target of recruiting **15 more new** fostering households.

Delivering more fostering assessments in-house

Due to capacity constraints within the service, there has been an increasing need to commission high numbers of fostering assessments with independent assessors. This has raised concerns regarding:

- Costs (13 external assessments in 2021/22 cost in total £35,200);
- Issues with the quality of assessments delivered, which can contribute to delays in the approval of new foster carers;
- Unrealistic expectations provided by external assessors of the fostering role or the support that would be provided post assessment. In 2018 four fostering households assessed in this way resigned within a year because they felt ill-prepared for the reality of fostering.

In December 2021, social workers were offered the opportunity to express interest in carrying out Form F assessments as a paid overtime opportunity, as an alternative to external assessments. This resulted in six Form F assessments being allocated internally. To date, the results of this have been positive, with timely, high quality assessments being delivered.

Whilst there is scope to continue this approach to supplement our capacity where required, in the longer-term, the preferred option would be to reinstate a Fostering Recruitment Unit with the capacity to deliver all Form F and Supported Lodgings assessments within the Fostering Service, by workers who have the specialist knowledge and skills required.

Recruitment Activities

In recent years Hackney has been successful at engaging a diverse audience interested in becoming foster carers. This has been achieved using a mixed media approach and being open to exploring new ways of engagement, as well as a flexible way of working.

The 2020 and 2021 lockdowns highlighted the need for creative thinking within the service and a need to handhold applicants through the process, ensuring they are informed at every step and

thus able to make the right decisions about their own suitability for the role. As the world opens back up, the service must continue to be flexible in its approach, particularly with a view to nurture potential foster carers that can meet the needs of Hackney's children.

With a growing number of children coming into care displaying more challenging behaviours, it will be necessary to target potential foster carers who already have experience working with young people and have an awareness of therapeutic methods of managing and supporting them in the ways needed.

Social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram have proved successful in reaching a wide audience, whilst we are also targeting prospective carers to be targeted via platforms such as LinkedIn, as well as advertising through trade/specialist publications. To date we have used a range of specialist publications such as [SEN magazine](#), [QA Education](#), and [Metropolitan/Police Life](#), alongside local publications including the [Hackney Gazette](#), [Hackney Citizen](#), [Hackney Today](#) and the [South East Star](#). We will also continue to invest in community-specific advertising, such as the [Jewish Tribune](#) and [Hamodia](#) in order to reach the Jewish and Orthodox Jewish communities, as well as Gaydio radio and LGBTQI publications, in addition to having a presence at Pride events, including Black Pride. We recognise the need to ensure a diverse range of mediums are used in order to ensure we continue to reach a relevant and diverse audience. Therefore new outlets and approaches will remain under review.

There are some areas that we would particularly like to expand our portfolio of foster carers, including:

- Orthodox Jewish carers, particularly for older children;
- Parent and child carers;
- Carers for adolescents with complex needs;
- LGBTQ community carers.

However, our experience to date suggests that a broad range of recruitment activities has brought more success in terms of recruiting a diverse pool of carers, than recruitment initiatives with a narrow focus. We have found in campaigns that the prospect of fostering can particularly appeal to those:

- A. Thinking about changing their vocation;
- B. Considering retirement; and
- C. Who may have been out of work, but who were previously experienced in the fields of working with children and young people.

In order to ensure our fostering offer remains competitive with other local authorities, over the following year we are hoping to secure agreement for Council tax exemption for Hackney carers and to progress ideas for other benefits, such as discounts on local leisure activities.

Priority 2: Increase the use of in-house carers over alternative care arrangements

In April 2018 we introduced the role of Consultant Matching Officer, to address the high vacancy rates for our in-house carers, which was **37%** of our in-house carers. It is **now 7%**. At the end of 2021, we reflected that we could potentially use the same approach for out of hours matching. In

December 2021 we began a pilot to offer an out of hours matching service with in-house carers, for children who needed alternative homes in an emergency, with the Matching Consultant on call on weeknights between 5pm and 12am. Prior to this, none of our in-house carers had been willing to be on our Emergency Duty list for out of hour care arrangements. However, an analysis of 29 care arrangements made out of hours between January and September 2021 highlighted the following:

- Most requests for searches for alternative care arrangements took place in the early evenings on weekdays, generally between 5pm and 10pm, with very few being made in the early hours of the morning;
- Most of the children needing an alternative care arrangement in an emergency were not already in care, were a variety of ages and did not obviously present with complex needs;
- Ten of the 29 children placed in an emergency remained in the home they were placed in to the time of the review.

We project the total cost for this 3 month pilot is a maximum of **£3,000**. It would take **only 1 child to be placed in house** over an arrangement with an IFA for a period of **4 weeks** to make this proposal cost effective. To date we have placed two children out of hours with inhouse foster carers and both children have been in the care arrangement for longer than 4 weeks. Feedback has been received from EDT practitioners that having a dedicated person to focus on matching with inhouse carers out of hours relieves pressure for them.

Priority 3: Expand the use of Supported Lodgings hosts

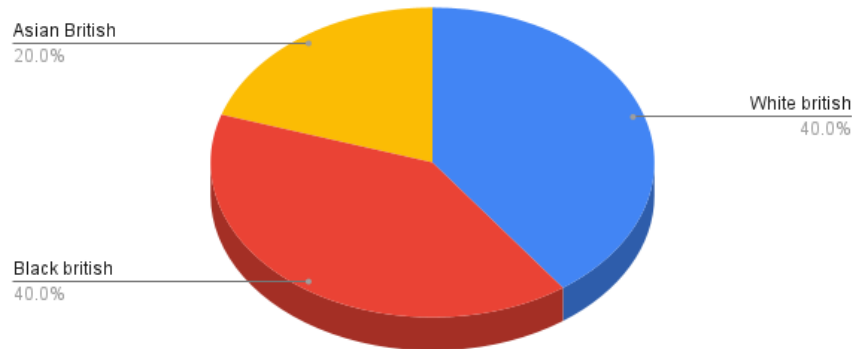
Hackney's Supported Lodgings Scheme launched in 2018 as an additional option for young people preparing to leave care. The aim of this scheme was to offer young people aged 16+ the opportunity to live in the home of an approved person who will help them prepare for independent living. This provides a safe and supportive environment where a young person can develop the practical skills and emotional maturity to move on and cope with living independently. Further details can be found in the [Supported Lodgings Policy](#).

Supported Lodgings	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Enquiries	13	106	68	11
Approvals	1	5	2	4
De-registrations	0	0	0	1

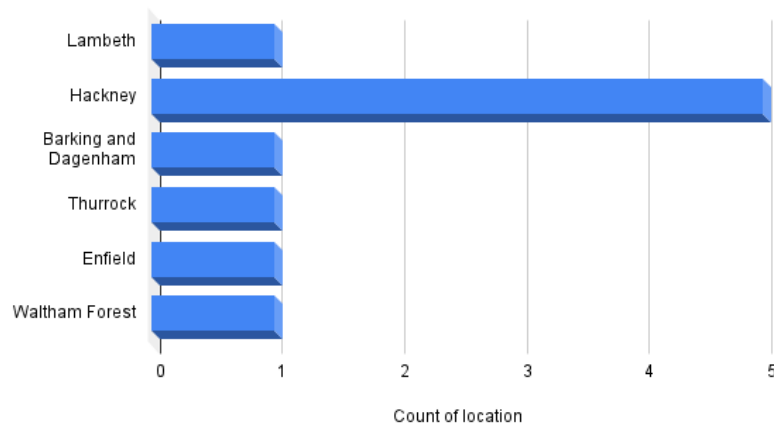
As of March 2022, we have 7 young people living in supported lodgings arrangements. At present Hackney has 12 households that provide supported lodgings, two of which were initially assessed as foster carers, but have since had their approval status changed to include the supported lodgings provision. The majority of supported lodgings hosts households are single female carers (80%) and 90% of these households are working professionals: mostly in the fields of law (30%)

and education (30%). The majority of the supported lodgings hosts are either White or Black British (40%) with 50% of hosts living in Hackney.

Ethnicity of Supported Lodgings Hosts



Location of Hackney Supported Lodgings Homes



Our target for the forthcoming year is to recruit a minimum of a further 3 Supported Lodgings hosts and continue to promote this as an alternative to supported accommodation, where appropriate.

As the need for Foster Carers exceeds that of supported lodgings hosts, adverts to promote supported lodgings will run occasionally throughout the year. The team will continue to promote it to candidates that contact the service about fostering, as an alternative option, where appropriate.

Priority 4: Improve the retention rates of our foster carers through high quality support and training

Our fostering support offer

We know that the role of a foster carer can be extremely challenging and sadly, each year, many foster carers nationally feel they can no longer continue. We have a range of support systems in place for foster carers, in addition to the individual statutory support and supervision they receive from their allocated fostering social worker. This includes:

- The Hackney Foster Carers' Forum, which is held every 3 months;
- The Hackney Foster Carer Council, which organises 4 support groups per year, as well as other trips and activities for our network of foster families;
- Membership of the North London Fostering Consortium, who provide a Parent and Child support group, run by Enfield Council;
- A Male Carers support group run by our fostering service every other month;
- A Foster Carers Therapeutic Support Group run by our fostering service fortnightly;
- The Fostering Network provides all our carers with a membership to access independent support as and when they need it;
- Reflective Fostering Programme, run by our fostering service, under the oversight of the Anna Freud Centre and University of Hertfordshire - run weekly over 12 weeks.
- Buddying support: All carers in assessment have the option to be allocated a buddy through Stage 2 of the assessment process. We have a commitment to offer newly approved carers further buddy support for the first 4 weeks of their first care arrangement, although work needs to be undertaken to further promote this offer;
- Receipt of a quarterly Hackney Foster Carers newsletter, which contains information on service updates, training, support groups, good news stories, celebration of achievements and a feature on culture and identity.

Feedback from carers is that they are not always clear about the wide range of potential support that is available to them from the start of their fostering journeys. Information on the fostering support offer has been updated on the Council website -

<https://hackney.gov.uk/support-for-hackney-foster-carers> - and we are continuing to explore ways to develop our web-based information available for foster carers, for example, through the Virtual School app.

The Mockingbird Model

The Mockingbird Model was also introduced in 2019. The Mockingbird Model originates in America. Within the model, between 6 and 10 foster families in a local area are brought together in what's called a 'constellation'. At the centre of each constellation there's a 'hub home', so it's a little like 'satellite' foster homes revolving around the centre. This 'hub home' is exactly what it says: a home that's lived in by a specially trained carer who's there to support other families in the constellation.

In October 2021 our second Mockingbird Constellation was launched, with the third Constellation launched in December 2021. The focus in 2022/23 will be to embed the two newest Constellations and, towards the end of the year, we hope to be in a position to launch our fourth Constellation. Long-term, our vision is that all Hackney foster carers will be a part of a Mockingbird Constellation.

Training and development opportunities

Our foster carers also benefit from a wide range of training, tailored to various levels of knowledge, skills and experience. All prospective carers must complete a mandatory programme

of 'skills to foster' courses during the recruitment process. Once carers have been approved, they become Level 1 carers, which again has a mandatory programme of training (see appendix for details). Once the mandatory training at Level 1 is complete and they have completed their Training Support and Development standards workbook, carers automatically become Level 2 carers. This is generally ratified at their First annual review. Additional training is then available at Level 2 (see appendix for details).

In order to become a Level 3 carer, carers must evidence the following:

- Ability to demonstrate a sound understanding of child development and attachment;
- Ability to recognise and appropriately respond to children who have challenging, complex emotional and behavioural needs; or ability to provide high quality care to children who are registered disabled;
- Ability to support planned and unplanned endings, working closely with professionals and clinical service;
- Ability to look after children known to have been sexually abused;
- Evidence of completion of a recognised training related to the care of children and young people, such as NCFE CACHE Level 3 Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce (or equivalent).

OR evidence of a practical route to level 3. This would include evidencing a significant contribution to the recruitment, support and retention of foster carers, including one or more of the following additional responsibilities for a minimum period of one year including:

- Mentoring, advising or supporting other foster or connected carers;
- Significant contribution to training and development of other foster or connected carers i.e. co-facilitating or leading a workshop or course and contributing to the "Skills to Foster" sessions;
- Significant activity in the recruitment of foster or connected carers;
- Contribution to the retention of foster carers through running events and support groups.

In response to feedback from our carers, at the beginning of 2022 we opened up the possibility of connected carers progressing to Level 3.

Each year we have ambitious targets for supporting our carers to move up through the levels, as we are committed to investing in their training and development. We hope to increase our numbers of Level 1 to Level 2 carers by at least 8% per year and Level 2 to Level 3 carers by at least 4 per cent per year.

Nurturing Attachments

All our carers are encouraged to book on to this 12 week course over time. The Nurturing Attachments is a programme that has been developed to help foster and adoptive parents strengthen their relationships with the child and support children who have experienced developmental traumas. The course is run by our in-house clinical service. The entry level of this

training course is also being adapted to support newly approved foster carers in understanding traumatised children and what they can do when working with trauma.

Our development priorities for rolling out training for carers this year are training on the following areas:

- **Anti-racist parenting:** As a service we have adopted a clear position in relation to what it means to deliver [anti-racist parenting](#) and recognise the importance of ensuring we have a shared understanding with our carers;
- **Trauma-informed practice:** We know that most of the children in our care have complex histories of trauma and that caring for this in this context can be challenging. We plan to work closely with our Foster Care Council in 2022/3 to think about what trauma-informed practice looks like in a fostering context and offer further training and support to carers and the fostering service on delivering this;
- **Education and Health Care Plans:** The processes related to Education and Health Care Plans can be complicated and we want to support our carers to understand these, so that they are well placed to advocate for the children in their care.
- **Gender identity:** We recognise that a small but significant proportion of our looked after children have questions about their gender identity and these can be complex for them - and their carers - to navigate. We are therefore keen to offer further specialist training and support to carers in this area.

Responding to feedback

In March 2022 we rolled out our first Annual Foster Carers Survey. Forty-three carers (or 25% of our 170 fostering households) responded. Through this survey, our carers gave us a sense of what they wanted us to prioritise in the year ahead.

Priority	How many indicated this?	What are we planning in response?
Champion the voice of foster carers in the professional network	81.4%	We are making ongoing efforts to include the voice of fostering in key forums e.g. inviting carers to events like staff Conferences and All Service Meetings.
Improve the support offer for carers outside of office hours	53.5%	As detailed above, our out of hours matching pilot is underway. We are also exploring the possibility of piloting an extended fostering duty line, to offer additional advice and support to foster carers where needed outside of standard officer hours.
Develop the training offer for foster carers	53.5%	Our training plans are detailed above.

Strengthen opportunities for peer support between foster carers.	44.2%	Ongoing plans to roll out the Mockingbird Model are detailed above, which offers strong peer support to those involved. From May 2022 the Matching Consultant will lead on coordinating buddying arrangements for new carers, to ensure these are consistently made.
Expand the Mockingbird Model	39.5%	This is planned.
Increase the level of supervision and support for carers	18.6%	All carers receive supervision and support in line with statutory guidance, but - as detailed above - we are keen to continue to promote and expand our additional offers of support, for example, through the therapeutic fostering group, the fathers group and the activities of HFCC.

In terms of other feedback:

- 94% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I understand the purpose of the foster carer's annual review and find the yearly meeting helpful to reflect on my fostering position'***, within only 1 carer who strongly disagreed with this;
- 81.4% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'Supervision helps me understand the child's care plan and my role in helping to achieve this'***, although 3 respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 81.4% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I feel the training offer for foster carers is relevant and supports me to do my job better'***, although 2 respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 79.1% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I feel happy with the level of support and supervision I receive from the fostering service'***, although 2 respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed with this;
- 79.1% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I feel well supported to understand and respond to the identity needs of the children and young people in my care, for example, in relation to their cultural heritage, religion, sexuality, gender identity, etc'***, although 2 respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 76.8% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'My experience of support in a time of crisis has been timely and meaningful'***, although 4 respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 76.7% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I feel my role as a foster carer is well respected and understood by the fostering service'***, although 2 respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed with this;

- 76.4% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I am well supported to understand and respond to the complex needs of children or young people in my care'***, although 2 respondents indicated that they strongly disagreed with this;
- 72.1% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I am well supported to have my voice heard in the decision-making for children and young people in my care'***, although 4 respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 72.1% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I understand the processes around managing allegations that might be made against me, or investigating standards of care issues and feel that I will be supported by the fostering service in the event of such'***, although 4 respondents indicated that they either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 69.8% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I feel my role as a foster carer is well respected and understood by other professionals'***, although 2 respondents indicated that either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;
- 60.4% indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: ***'I am given all available information about the histories of the children and young people that I care for, that enable me to care for them well'***, although 37.2% of respondents indicated that either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this;

Overall, the results indicated that there are high levels of satisfaction with the fostering service, although there is a small but significant minority who do not feel as well supported as they should, which needs to be addressed. Other specific areas highlighted that require further work are:

- **Ensuring carers have sufficient information about children's histories:** A new direct work tool has been developed for foster carers to complete prior to Looked After Child Reviews, which includes a specific question about whether they have had sufficient information about the child's history. We also plan to promote a greater focus on the sharing of chronologies at the point of a child moving into a new home.
- **Ensuring carers' voices are heard and their roles respected:** We are committed to offering ongoing opportunities for foster carers and practitioners to undertake joint training. Hackney Foster Carers Council are keen to develop training for children's social workers alongside the Fostering Service on their role as carers, to be rolled out this year. We are planning to hold further Open Space Events: historically, these have been very successful forums where carers and staff come together and do some blue sky thinking about the development of the service.
- **Ensuring carers understand the processes for managing allegations that might be made against them, or standards of care issues, and that they feel supported by the service in these circumstances:** The Fostering Service Manager and the Hackney Foster Carers Council are establishing a Working Group in May 2022 to review the existing Allegations Procedure and consider how it may be improved.
- **Ensuring that the support offered to carers in times of crisis is timely and robust:** Carers are keen to feel that their voices are heard and respected, particularly where they feel more support is needed for a child and care arrangement, to try and avoid

arrangements ending in an unplanned way, in situations where they are left to shoulder the blame. We are continuing to explore with both in-house clinical services the support offer to foster care arrangements, in order to clarify the remit of this, as well as the scope for strengthening the commissioning arrangements we have in place for putting in additional support to looked after children, for example, from youth workers, where needed.

Foster carers were also asked to comment in the survey on how they felt the needs of children and young people were being met by the networks around them. The results were as follows:

Area of children and young people's need	% of positive feedback	% of negative feedback
Maintaining positive relationships with loved ones	86.1%	4.6%
Physical health	76.7%	2.3%
Challenging any experiences of racism or discrimination	72.1%	4.6%
Mental health	69.4%	9.3%
Understanding their histories	68.7%	7%
Education	62.8%	9.3%

NB Carers were also given the opportunity to indicate that they neither agreed nor disagreed that children's needs in these areas were well met.

Learning from exit interviews

We are committed to learning from our foster carers about what we are doing well and what we can do better. This year, for every foster carer that is deregistered, the Fostering Service Manager will offer a formal exit interview, as an opportunity to gather feedback in order to support the ongoing development of our service.

Appendix 1: Fostering Training Offer

Skills to Foster Training

Over the course of the successive lockdowns the delivery of Skills to Foster Course was changed from a three day course to a two day course with the additional Bitesize sessions, requiring completion in advance of the two day course.

Bitesize sessions

- Bitesize day 1 - What do Foster carers Do?
- Bitesize day 2 - Life story work
- Bitesize day 3 - Attachment

Skills to Foster content

- Identity
- Equality & Diversity
- Children's experience in care
- Importance of words
- Team around the child
- Children and the Law
- Care plan and placements
- Meeting with care leavers
- Understanding difficult behaviours
- Promoting positive behaviours - PACE
- Safer caring
- Impact of abuse
- Placement stability

Foster Carers Training Offer

Level 1

- Safeguarding and understanding risk
- Record keeping and writing
- Safer caring and allegations
- First aid training
- Diversity training
- Understanding attachment (0–3)
- Understanding attachment (school-aged children)
- Understanding attachment (adolescents)
- TSD
- Looking after a family member
- The role of men in fostering

Level 2

- Facilitating and Supporting Contact

- Caring for a baby (new)
- Life story work
- Working with Black African Children in Foster Care
- Communicating with young people about sex and relationship
- Moving In Moving On
- Introduction to Restorative Practice
- The role of men in fostering
- Awareness & Understanding of Gangs and County Lines
- Preparing Young People for Independence
- Being a self aware foster carer
- Supporting children with loss and bereavement
- Managing sexualised behaviour
- Nurturing Attachments

Level 3

- Positive relationships and a sense of belonging
- Trauma informed training (new)
- Fostering refresher for level 3 carers
- The role of men in fostering
- Reflection & Complex Behaviour
- Supporting children with loss and bereavement

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Children and Families Service Response to the CYP Scrutiny Commission Recommendations in relation to foster carer recruitment and retention.

Please note that this document is an update to [the last report to CYP Scrutiny Commission on foster carer recruitment in October 2019](#).

Recommendation	Update
<p>Recommendation One</p> <p>It is recommended that when the local looked after children sufficiency strategy is updated, measures to ensure the retention of foster carers are included which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provide for individualised training programmes for in-house foster carers; (ii) Are informed by regular surveys and consultations with foster carers where such information will help to identify where the local support offer is sufficient and what could be improved; (iii) Are informed by systematic exit interviews conducted with all those foster carers who deregister from the in-house service, to help identify those trends or patterns which may impact on a decision to leave; (iv) Are underpinned by a package of remuneration which is regularly benchmarked against other neighbouring local authorities; (v) Ensure that foster carers are provided with training and development opportunities which enable them to progress through the foster carer banding system so that each year (at least): - 8 level 1 carers progress to level 2; and - 4 level 2 carers progress to level 3 	<p>A new 3 year Sufficiency Strategy for 2023-2025 is in the planning process. Measures to recruit and retain our in-house foster carers will be a strong focus of this strategy.</p> <p>There is a robust training offer in place for our foster carers, which is reviewed annually in response to feedback from carers, information about their training and support needs highlighted in their annual review process and in response to the emerging needs of our children. Our in-house training programme is supplemented by additional training offered through the North London Consortium. During lockdown training was delivered virtually and whilst this enhanced accessibility for some carers, from September 2022 we will be reintroducing in person training following feedback from our carers, with a plan to take a hybrid approach going forward. The training offer continues to support carers to move through our 3 skills levels, which is linked to their rates of pay. We currently have 64 Level 2 foster carers and 17 Level 3 carers.</p> <p>We carry out an annual survey with our foster carers to gain their feedback on the service and to help inform our priorities for the year ahead. The last survey was completed in January 2022. Joint foster carer / fostering service forums also take place on a regular basis, to exchange information and ideas about service development, in addition to monitoring meetings with the Hackney Foster Carers Council Committee. Exit interviews are taking place for all carers that leave the service through resignation or deregistration. The fostering service continues to work closely with the North London</p>

<p>(vi) Set out how to increase the number of in-house foster carers that are trained to become Foster Carer Ambassadors from 6 to 12.</p> <p>(vii) Ensure that foster carers who are the subject of allegations or concerns about their practice or standards of care should have access to independent support to assist them to clarify the stages of the procedure and help them to represent their point of view;</p> <p>(viii) Ensure that there is sufficient respite (in respect of duration and quality) for foster carers.</p>	<p>Consortium to ensure that our package of remuneration is in line with our neighbouring boroughs. This is looked at on an annual basis.</p> <p>Our fostering ambassador number has remained consistent and 6 out of the 13 ambassadors are also now trained to deliver the Skills to Foster bitesize training sessions. These are 2-hour online introductory sessions delivered to prospective foster carers.</p> <p>The service and the Hackney Foster Carer Council (HFCC) have been working together to review our policies and have just looked again at the allegations policy to make improvements. Foster Carers who are subject to allegations are offered access to independent advice through the Fostering Network, as well as peer support through the HFCC.</p> <p>There have been no changes in relation to respite since the last update in October 2019. Each carer is offered 14 days respite per year, please refer to the previous update for further information. Where carers are caring for particularly complex children, for example, those with multiple health needs, we will always consider whether bespoke arrangements for additional help (including respite) need to be put in place to support both the care arrangement and the health and well-being of our carers. The level of respite on offer has not been an issue that has been raised by carers with us as a cause for concern in recent years.</p>
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<p>Recommendation Two</p> <p>It is recommended that the Fostering Service should develop a new, ambitious and long-term local foster carer recruitment strategy. This strategy should:</p>	<p>We have a Fostering Recruitment and Retention Strategy 2022/3 that has been shared with the Committee and forms the basis of the report provided to Scrutiny, with additional information added as requested by the Chairs. This strategy explores the areas outlined here. The strategy is reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Unlikely the overall picture nationally and in comparison to many of our London neighbours, our fostering recruitment figures continue to be strong. We currently have 170 in-house fostering</p>
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- (i) Be informed by a local needs analysis of its population of looked after children to determine the types of care placements required and the skills and experience required of foster carers (e.g. those looking after teenagers, complex needs and SEND);
- (ii) Set ambitious targets for the recruitment of in-house foster carers in the short, medium and long term: 23 new recruits per year should be the new target.
- (iii) Adopt an 'Always Be Recruiting' approach, which seeks to maximise Hackney Fostering Service presence, engagement and recruitment at all council and other local events;
- (iv) Seek to encompass and target under-represented groups, who may not traditionally associate themselves with fostering or do not feel that they have the right skills or experience (e.g. the childless, under 35s, single people, men and the LGBTQi community);
- (v) Develop recruitment campaigns which focus on the specific needs of looked after children and the required skills of foster carers (e.g. teenagers, complex needs, parent and child);
- (vi) Maximise the use of word of mouth interventions, such as through the Foster Carer Ambassadors scheme;
- (vii) Ensure that there is a dedicated and high profile on-line foster carer recruitment presence (given the importance of this and the limited local resource, it should be explored whether this function could be provided jointly across participating boroughs in the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium);

households, which is a significant increase from 128 when the Scrutiny met on this issue in 2018. We have also recruited 13 Supported Lodgings host and continue to have regular inquiries from those interested in becoming both foster carers and supported lodgings hosts. The most common barrier to progressing inquiries are the available space in potential carers homes for fostering: potential carers must have at least one spare room.

The Fostering Recruitment team continues to explore new opportunities to promote fostering opportunities in Hackney, with recent examples including a presence at the Anti-Racist Practice Conference events, London Pride and a recent Hackney Museum event focusing on the stories of some of our unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people.

We have an online fostering recruitment presence - <https://hackney.gov.uk/fostering> - and continue to use Facebook and Instagram as platforms for advertising, as well as other online resources such as QA Education, Education for Everyone, SEN magazine, Premier Radio, South East Lifestyle Gaydio Radio and What's On. We have recently spoken with Archant Media to explore their new online provisions and how this may be utilised to support recruitment. We continue to explore opportunities to engage with new platforms that would help us target under-represented groups in our fostering cohort, for example, advertising in the Orthodox Jewish press. Overall we have found that maintaining a commitment to promoting fostering in Hackney in a diverse range of platforms has enabled us to continue to recruit carers from different backgrounds and life experiences. Specific cohorts of carers we continue to be particularly keen to recruit are those from the Orthodox Jewish community, parent and child carers, carers able to look after adolescents with complex presenting needs and carers from the LGBTQI community.

- (viii) Ensure that recruitment campaigns are responsive and enquiries for in-house foster carers are dealt with promptly (at the latest, the next day).
- (ix) Seek to refocus recruitment across a broader range of housing tenures, seeking potential recruits in both the privately owned and privately rented sector (where there may be greater housing capacity).

We have continued to engage in online advertising with the North London Consortium and have an advert on the New Family Social website. Our Regional Adoption Agency - Adopt London North - have very positive feedback on their experiences of improving marketing and recruitment when pooling resources in the Adopt London family. There is potential considerable scope to learn lessons from this model in fostering and Josh McAllistair's recent review recommended further exploration of the scope for a more regional fostering approach by local authorities.

Recommendation Three

The Commission understands that the Council has been running a pilot scheme offering up to 4 larger properties to experienced foster carers to enable them to take on additional placements of looked after children. It would be beneficial if this scheme was formalised and agreed, reflecting approaches taken in the neighbouring boroughs of Camden and Islington.

It is therefore recommended that the Council:

- (a) Allocate 4 larger (2-4 bedroom) properties to the Fostering Service each year to enable experienced, long term foster carers to provide additional placements, particularly for teenagers (as per the Camden model);
- (b) Give priority to adult children in foster carer households in local social housing allocation policies, to enable foster carers to take on additional placements for looked after children (as per the Islington model).

In 2022, we have had one carer be offered a 4 bedroom council property by Housing colleagues, which enables her to offer a home to more foster children. Her home is in a new build scheme. It is a challenge to find carers that are appropriate for the scheme due to the specific criteria. However, with all carers who do meet the criteria, this scheme is reviewed with them periodically. The scheme is only available for carers that meet the following criteria, who are in the minority:

- The foster family must be Hackney residents and have lived continuously in Hackney for 3 or more years.
- Tenants must be living in Council or Registered Provider (RP) properties and paying a social rent. The RP must reciprocate the property vacated by the tenant to Hackney Council and agree to the reciprocal, in writing, to Hackney Lettings Department, prior to the tenant being accepted onto the scheme. The scheme is not open to owner-occupiers or those living in private rented accommodation.

Last year we also successfully negotiated with housing colleagues that connected carers who were Hackney tenants and overcrowded because of their willingness to take on the care of a Hackney looked after child, would receive priority status for a move to a larger Council home. We believe this will help improve the stability of these care arrangements, particularly in adolescence, when we know from experience overcrowding can cause significant tension in family relationships.

There has not been any change since the October 2019 update in relation to any agreement around priority housing being given to adult children in the foster carer households. Given the significant pressures on the current social housing provision, discussions with housing colleagues suggest it is not feasible to take this suggestion forward at this time.

Recommendation Four

To bring the Hackney offer into line with other north east London boroughs (e.g. Waltham Forest, Redbridge), the Council should consider the introduction of a Council Tax reduction scheme for foster carers. Such a scheme should:

- (a) Reflect a level of discount commensurate to the experience and longevity of foster carers (e.g. in alignment with the current banding system e.g. 33% for level 1, 66% for level 2 and 100% for level 3);
- (b) Provide greater discounts for the care of looked after children who are difficult to match to suitable placements (e.g. children aged 13-17, or parent and child placements);
- (c) Acknowledge that not all foster carers live within Hackney and will not be eligible to benefit from such a scheme, and therefore provide them with an annual retainer payment (also based on experience).

There have been ongoing discussions over the past year about how we can move this recommendation forward and we are aware this is a key ask from our Foster Carers Council. A commitment to this in principle has been agreed by CLT and we are currently working with our Council Tax colleagues to design a system to offer Council Tax exemption for Hackney foster carers living in Hackney, along the lines of the current Council Tax exemption for Hackney care leavers living in Hackney. This would require a change to the Council's Council Tax policy (under Section 13(A)) that would need to be ratified at Cabinet and therefore discussed there before the end of the year, in order to be included in the Annual Report in early 2023 and rolled out from the new financial year.

We are conscious of issues of fairness and equity in relation to the carers who do not live in Hackney (currently only 93 of our 170 fostering households live within Hackney). In discussion with finance colleagues, we are exploring an additional payment that could be added to the weekly fees as a set contribution to their out of borough Council Tax bills, as the most simple, straightforward and equitable way of making an offer to them to support them with their Council Tax bills. Again, our plan is to include this proposal in a report to Cabinet before the end of the year.

Recommendation Five

The Commission understands that Hackney foster carers already have access to cultural, leisure and other opportunities to support their role. The Commission recommends that the Fostering Service reviews these and explores other opportunities that might be available for foster carers through other services of the Council and local community and voluntary sector (and consult with current foster carers about what would be helpful or appealing to them).

Following discussions with HFCC over recent months about the impact on them of the cost of living crisis, we have been exploring ways to offer additional support to carers. The service is in the process of looking at two options for discount cards for carers (the Blue Light card <https://www.bluelightcard.co.uk/> and the Carers First card <https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/get-support/>) to ensure all approved carers have access to additional resources and a wide range of discount offers in light of the rise in the cost of living. Our plan is to purchase a card for each approved carer, once we have reached a decision about the best option to go for in the next month or so.

We continue to send out a quarterly newsletter to our foster and connected carers where current events and support organisations in the borough are advertised to carers. We continue to have a close working relationship with the Hackney Foster Carer Council (HFCC) to ascertain what would be helpful and appealing to carers.

Recommendation Six

Whilst the vacancy rate in Hackney is on a par with, if not better than, the national average, evidence given to the Commission from foster carers would suggest that foster carers are not being utilised as much as they would like, and was a factor in some carers' decisions to de-register. Thus, as well as recruiting more in-house foster carers, it was evident that better use could be made of the existing pool of foster carers. It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) Consider the implementation of the 'Step Up Step Down' programme - which seeks to utilise in-house foster carers

We continue to seek new opportunities to make the most of the skills, knowledge and experience of our in-house foster carers, for example, offering outreach support for children in residential homes, as part of their preparation to move back to foster care, or to offer additional support to foster carers who are struggling with a care arrangement. In line with our commitment to anti-racist parenting, we have also drawn more heavily in recent months on in-house carers to offer mentoring and support to Black and Global Majority children who are living at a distance from Hackney, to support them around their cultural and identity needs.

As discussed in recommendation 1 our ambassadors have remained consistent and 6 out of the 13 ambassadors are also now trained to deliver the skills to foster bitesize sessions. We also now have 3

<p>to provide additional preventative support to those children on the edge of the care system;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) As per the Islington model, consider whether in-house foster carer vacancies can be used to support placements in other boroughs, such as within the NL Consortium or further afield; (iii) Increase the number of Foster Carer Ambassadors in Hackney to extend the capacity for targeted outreach recruitment and to support newly appointed foster carers (increase from current 6 to 12); (iv) Consider further ways in which peer support mechanisms can be used to support fostering practice and increase the skills and knowledge base of local in-house foster carers and their ability to provide a wider range of foster placements; (v) Develop the skill base of the existing pool of foster carers to better enable them to support the needs of looked after children in Hackney, particularly those looking after young adolescents aged 13 and above and parent and child placements. 	<p>Mockingbird constellations that have provided a strong community of support for carers and children that are a part of the model. We continue to pair newly approved carers with more experienced carers to offer them additional mentoring support.</p> <p>Each year the training offer is reviewed and developed in line with the needs of Looked After Children in Hackney, feedback from carers and through the fostering Annual Review process.</p> <p>We have introduced out of hours support with matching to our EDT service, via our Matching Consultant. This has had some very successful results so far in terms of successful emergency matches with in-house carers being made in the evenings. Previously, no carers were willing to consider taking on a new care arrangement out of hours, which meant all children needing an alternative care arrangement in an emergency situation out of hours ended up moving to IFA carers or semi-independent accommodation. When children come into care, being placed with an in-house carer, who we can work closely with around their needs and is much more likely to be in or around Hackney, means that we can help minimise the disruption to them (for example, in terms of their educational provision or contact with friends and family) and levels of anxiety, whilst longer-term plans for their care are being explored.</p>
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<p>Recommendation Seven</p> <p>It is recommended that the Council develop a joint working protocol with partner IFAs which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Addresses issues around the quality and cost of foster care placements; 	<p>We are aware of our dependency on IFAs to care for our children on a regular basis and our Placement Management Unit (PMU) invests in the relationships with IFAs e.g. through regular information sharing and feedback, particularly those we tend to have more children living with or we know have carers living in and around Hackney. Wherever we have a choice of potential care arrangements, we will prioritise foster homes with those IFAs we know and trust. When issues are identified with the</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (ii) Seeks to develop usage of foster carers in the IFA sector in a planned way which enables both IFAs and the LA to plan more effectively; (iii) Allows for more effective commissioning and contract management (quality and outcomes of placements); (iv) Enables IFAs and the LA to work cooperatively in line with the Leeds model which seeks to increase the number of 'local solutions for looked after children' by seeking to maximise the use of foster care placements in Hackney (irrespective of which sector foster carers may work for) to help develop and maintain strong support networks for children and their carers. 	<p>care provided by an IFA carer, Senior Managers from the Fostering Service and/or PMU will support the child's Social Work Unit in addressing these with the IFA. Where a training or development need is identified for an IFA carer that their agency cannot meet and we are committed to the plan of a child remaining with them long-term, we may open up our in-house training opportunities to these carers, for example, our Nurturing Attachments Training. There have been a number of IFA carers who we have offered the opportunity to become part of a Mockingbird Constellation, as we feel this will enhance the care experience they offer to our children.</p> <p>Our PMU previously ran a very successful provider forum, which was well attended by IFA partners, in order to share information about us and our children and the care arrangements we are looking for, whilst building relationships with other fostering agencies. We are planning a further forum in the new year, with a focus on our commitment to anti-racist practice and what this looks like for us in the context of our expectations about the anti-racist parenting experiences we expect all our commissioned care arrangements to deliver.</p>
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<p>Recommendation Eight</p> <p>It is recommended that the Council and Fostering Service continue to engage and further develop its relationship with the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium (NLAFC) and identify additional opportunities for collaborative partnerships, particularly in relation to:</p>	<p>We remain part of the North London Consortium alongside Camden, Islington, Haringey, Barnet and Enfield. As a Consortium, we work closely together, for example, to regularly review our policies in order to share best practice and to ensure our positions are aligned as much as possible. There are ongoing discussions within the Consortium about the cost of living crisis and the impact on foster carers, for example, as well as with challenges in care arrangements and how best we can support carers to meet the complex needs of our children in care. For carers who care for babies whose plan is adoption, carers</p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Effective commissioning of services to support the training and development of foster carers, particularly specialist support; (ii) Increased capacity (finance and expertise) for the recruitment of foster carers particularly those with specialist skills or experience (e.g. looking after teenagers, SEND, parent and child etc.); (iii) Identify ways in which it can work collaboratively with the IFA sector. 	<p>and their supervising social workers also benefit from additional support around adoption transitions from Adopt London North.</p> <p>The Consortium is supported by a jointly commissioned Consortium Manager, who is very experienced and knowledgeable about the sector. In addition to offering training to staff and carers across consortium boroughs himself, he also manages a commissioning budget for specialist training made available to carers from across the 6 boroughs, such as The Great Behaviour Breakdown, which is a particular parenting approach for children with complex needs. Carers from Hackney also get to meet regularly with other carers across the consortium in forums where they are able to share advice and ideas.</p> <p>We continue to have joint advertising campaigns with the North London Consortium. This has been a positive way to also recruit across neighbouring boroughs. We have engaged in online advertising with the Consortium with an advert on the New Family Social website.</p>
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<p>Recommendation Nine</p> <p>The Education Select Committee at the Houses of Parliament conducted a review of Fostering Services in 2017 and has published its report in January 2018 (House of Commons, 2018). This report has in turn contributed to the Government's fostering stocktake, which has been undertaken by Sir Martin Narey on behalf of the Department of Education (Narey & Overs, 2018).</p>	<p>An update of the Fostering Service's response to the Narey report (the Fostering Stocktake), the Education Select Committee report on fostering, and the Government's response was shared at the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission meeting in March 2019.</p>
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The report of the Education Select Committee makes a number of recommendations, including the establishment of a national foster carer recruitment campaign.

It is recommend that when the Fostering Service report back to the Commission in 6 months, it also includes a response to those recommendations contained within both the Education Select Committee and Department of Education national stocktake reports, particularly those relating to recruitment and retention of foster carers.

Recommendation Ten

The Commission took evidence from both local officers and national bodies on the Mockingbird Scheme, a hub and spoke approach to establish a network of support to local foster carers. Evidence presented to the review suggested that this model can offer more support to foster carers, maintain and engage local foster carers and improve the nature and level of care provided to looked after children. The Fostering Network is working with a number of areas to pilot the Mockingbird approach.

It is recommended that the Fostering Service should actively engage with the Fostering Network to identify if Hackney can be included within the existing pilot scheme or within any planned future roll-out of this approach to foster care.

We launched our first Mockingbird Constellation in August 2019. We now have a further 2 Mockingbird Constellations, launched at the end of 2021 and early 2022. Our three hub carers (the carers who coordinate the activities of each constellation and offer regular planned sleepovers for children within their constellations) live in Hackney, Barnet and South Woodford. The Barnet hub was the first hub and has 6 households attached to the hub, the South Woodford hub was the second constellation and includes 7 households. The third constellation is the Hackney hub and there are 9 households involved.

The South Woodford hub have been on a number of trips together, most recently they have been to Paradise Park and Aqua Bounce. The Hackney hub took a recent trip to the south of France for a short break to the holiday home of the Hub carers, and they are already looking forward to going again with more of the constellation members. The Barnet hub took advantage of the recent hot weather to hold their

annual BBQ and have also been on a caravan holiday together this summer.

Feedback from children and carers involved in a consultation is that the sense of community and support within these networks is experienced as invaluable. We hope to launch a further consultation in 2023. Our vision for the future is that in time all Hackney Foster Carers will be part of a Mockingbird constellation.



<p>Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission</p> <p>September 8th 2022</p> <p>Item 5 - GCSE and A Level Exam Results 2022</p>	<p>Item No</p> <p>5</p>
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Outline

In the height of the pandemic (2020/21), teacher-based assessments were used to grade students for their GCSE and A Levels examination results. The return to public examinations in 2022 has raised a number of uncertainties around the expected differences in grading of students for this system compared to teacher based assessments. The introduction of public examinations have also precipitated concerns around pupil welfare and the impact that these may have on their emotional health and mental wellbeing.

In this context, the Commission has requested a brief verbal update from the Director of Education on the overall performance of Hackney students at GCSE and A Level in 2022. The Commission has also requested that the update include an outline of the emotional and mental health support structures which have been put in place by schools and Hackney Education to help students leading up to them obtaining their results and onward education and or training pathway.

A national overview of results has been provided by FFT Education DataLab:

[GCSE Results - National Overview](#)

[A Level Results - National Overview](#)

Attending:

Annie Gammon, Director of Education
 Anton Francic, Principal Secondary Advisor, School Improvement Secondary

Action:

Members of the Commission are asked to note the verbal briefing provided by the Director of Education.

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<p>Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission</p> <p>September 8th 2022</p> <p>Item 6 - Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) Demographic Analysis</p>	<p>Item No</p> <p>6</p>
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Outline

Following work programme discussions on 11th July 2022, it was clear that SEND services would figure prominently within Commissions work for 2022/23 not only in relation to national developments (the Green Paper) but also changes to local policy and practice (the emerging local SEND Strategy, SEND restructure, Better Value review).

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. The Commission has requested the following data for the past 3 years (age group, ethnic group, originating setting (inc those not in education):

- 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.

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 later in their education.

Attending:

Annie Gammon, Director of Education
 Joe Wilson, Head of SEND

Action:

Members of the Commission are asked to note the report and direct questions to officers present.

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Overview & Scrutiny

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

Date of meeting: 8th September 2022
Title of report: Education, Health and Care Plans
Report author: Joe Wilson
Authorised by: Nick Wilson and Annie Gammon
Brief: This report details the current demographics of children and young people with SEND in Hackney in comparison to local and national data. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The increase in EHC Plans since 2014.• The increase in requests for a statutory assessment since 2014 and the outcome of assessment requests• Demographic data relating to children and young people at SEND Support and with an EHC Plan

Report to the Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission

Report title: SEND and EHC Plans

Meeting date: 8th September 2022

Report originator: Joe Wilson, Head of SEND.

1. Purpose of the Report

This paper details the current distribution of children and young people with EHC Plans in Hackney and set out the following:

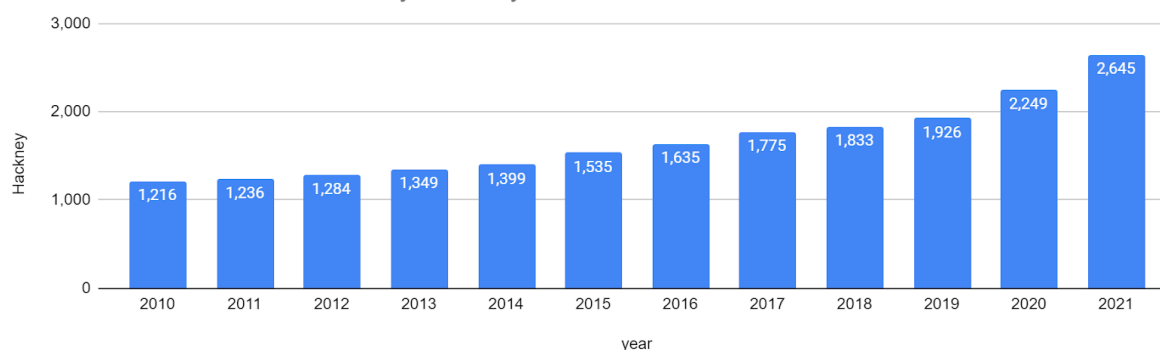
- The increase in EHC Plans since 2014.
- The increase in requests for a statutory assessment since 2014 and the outcome of assessment requests
- Demographic data relating to children and young people at SEND Support and with an EHC Plan

2. Recommendations

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

3. EHC Plans

Statements/EHCPs maintained by Hackney



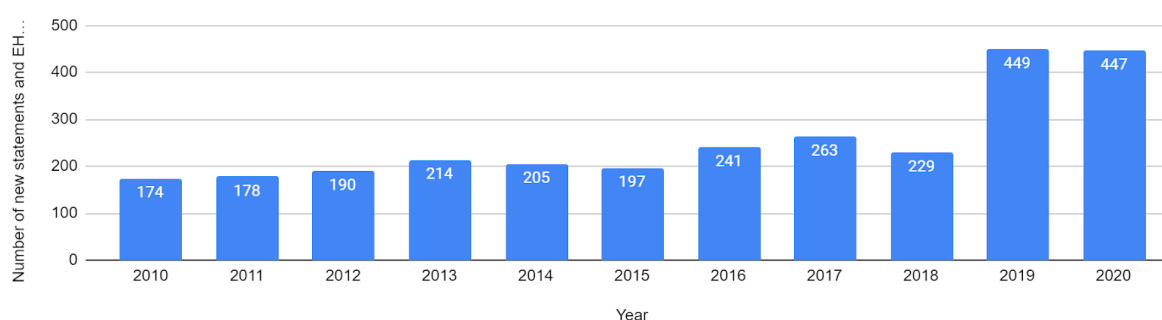
EHC Plans in Hackney have continued to rise significantly since 2014. Hackney has the 12th largest percentage of 0 to 24 year olds with an EHCP in England. 3.59% of Hackney's child population has an EHC Plan, this is in comparison to 2.82% nationally.

The percentage of all Hackney school pupils with an EHCP has continued to increase year on year, reaching 4.9% in 2022. This equates to approximately one in every twenty pupils and places Hackney in the top 15 local authorities in England

The proportion of both primary and secondary school pupils in state-funded mainstream schools with an EHCP is high in Hackney. This is particularly striking for primary pupils and at 4.4%, the proportion of these pupils with an EHCP is the second highest of any England local authority, and just under twice the England figure of 2.3%

The table below shows the number of new EHC Plans by year to 2020.

Number of new statements and EHCPs combined



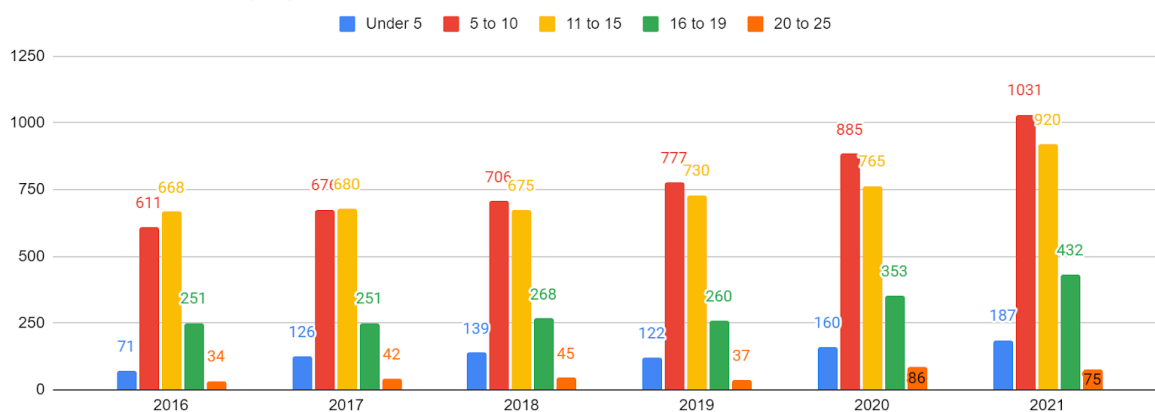
In 2021, 345 new EHCPs were issued to Hackney residents, equivalent to 0.40% of all 0-24 year olds. This was a fall from 2020 and brings Hackney closer to the statistical neighbour average of 0.39% and the England average of 0.37%

The age distribution of residents with EHCPs is broadly in line with statistical neighbour averages, varying by no more than 0.5% points. However, of those children with an EHCP, the proportion who are aged between 11 and 15 – secondary school aged, is 33.2% slightly lower than the England average of 35.4% and places Hackney in the bottom quartile of England local authorities.

EHC Plans by age

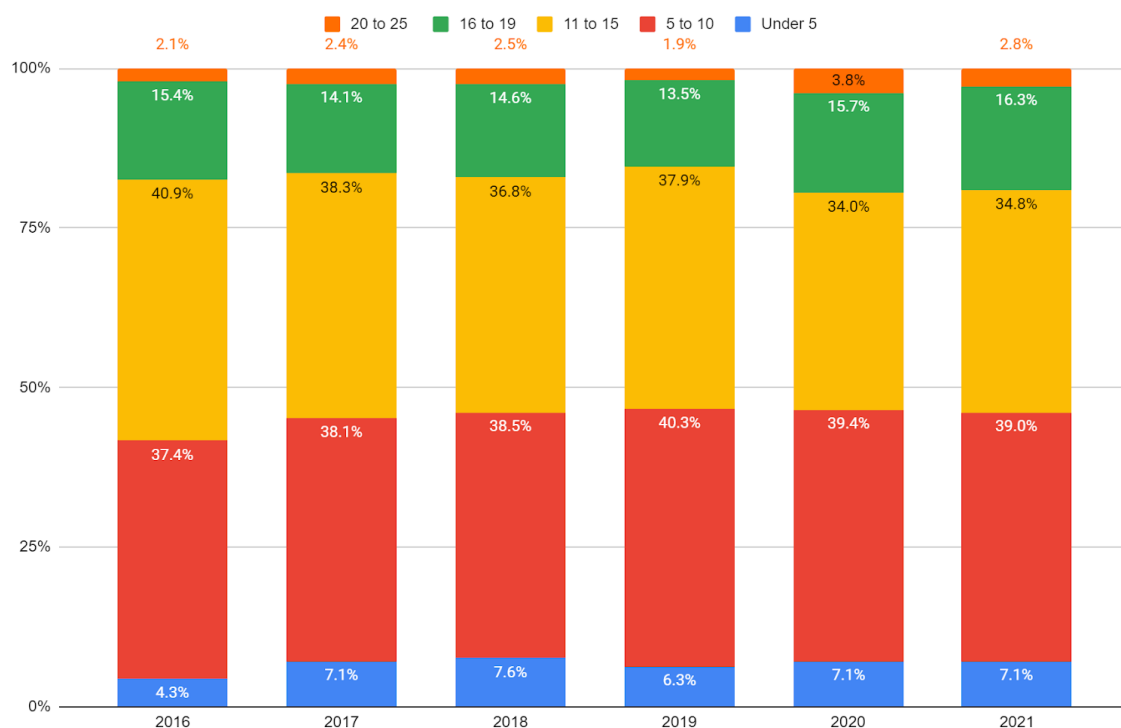
The table below shows the number of EHC Plans by age

Number of EHCPs by age



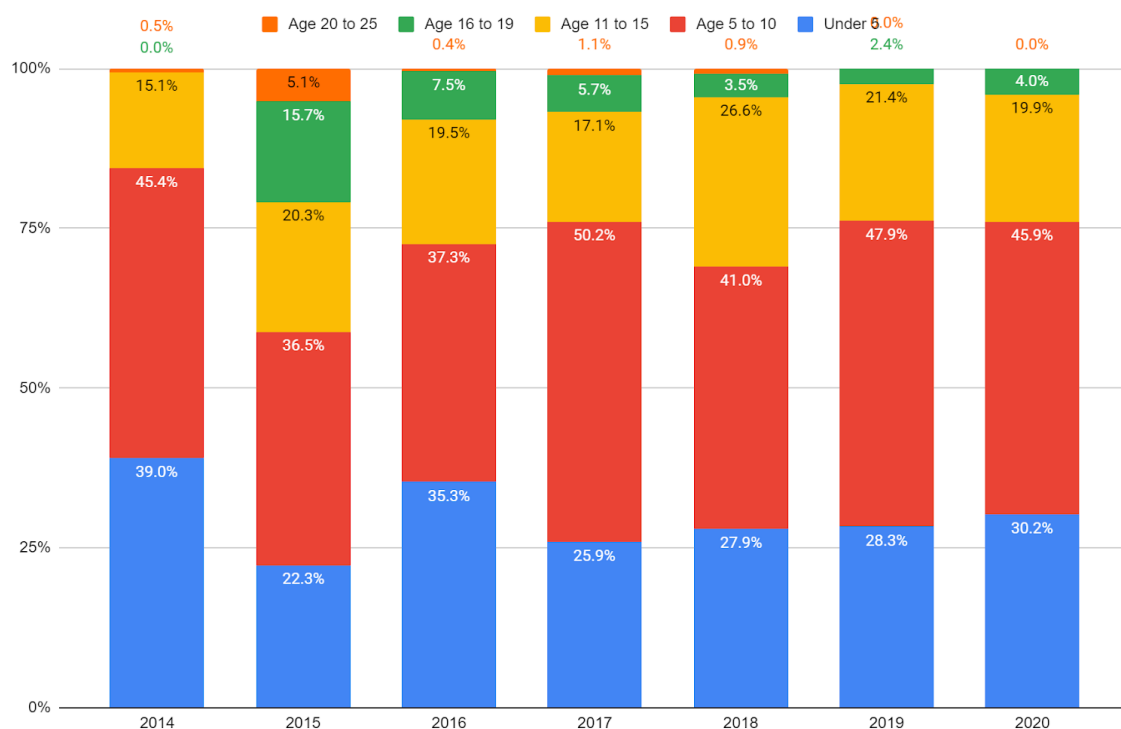
And as a percentage by age:

Percentage of EHCPs by age



New Requests for EHC Assessments by age

New EHCPs by age group



Requests for EHC Plans

	Hackney					Statistical Neighbours			England							
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Trend	Latest Avg.	LA vs Stat. Neigh. Rank	Latest Diff.	2018	2019	2020	2021	Rank	Latest Diff.	Trend	
							-5% 0% +5%		-5% 0% +5%							
Assessments																
Initial requests for assessment made - number	478	559	478	498												
Initial requests for assessment made - % of 0-24 pop'n	0.56%	0.66%	0.56%	0.58%		0.57%	7th	+0.01%	0.43%	0.49%	0.45%	0.56%	67th	+0.02%		
Initial requests for assessment refused - number	159	71	93	153												
Initial requests for assessment refused - % of requests	33.3%	12.7%	19.5%	30.7%		18.9%	3rd	+1.8%	24.7%	22.8%	21.6%	22.3%	33rd	+0.4%		
Assessments with decision not to issue EHCP - number	1	2	2	0												
Assessments with decision not to issue EHCP - % of assmnts	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.0%		4.2%	10th	-4.2%	5.2%	5.9%	4.9%	5.9%	145th	-5.9%		
Children still being assessed for an EHCP (in January)	5	72	130	143												
EHCP discontinued - transferred to other LA	17	51	42	57												
EHCP discontinued - SEN met without EHCP	4	0	1	0												
EHCP discontinued - other reason	0	0	2	283												

The above data shows that Hackney has consistently received a high level of new requests for EHC Assessments since 2014.

Hackney currently refuses more EHC Assessment requests than the national average, currently refusing 30.7% of requests in 2021 (in comparison to a national average of 22.3%). Hackney has recently launched its graduated response for SEND. The Graduated Response details the type of special educational needs support that should be available to all pupils before seeking a statutory assessment. We expect that, once the graduated response is embedded, the refusal rate in Hackney will become more in line with statistical neighbours and national data.

In 2021, there were 498 requests for an EHCP assessment, equivalent to 0.58% of 0-24 year olds in Hackney. This was in line with both statistical neighbours and England averages.

Placement of Pupils in Hackney

In 2022, 16.0% of Hackney’s EHCP pupils were attending a state-funded special school. This was the lowest proportion of all statistical neighbours (average 25.2%) and was around half the England average of 29.6%, placing Hackney in the bottom quartile of England local authorities.

In contrast, 13.1% of EHCP pupils were attending an independent or non-maintained school, more than double the England average of 6.2% and the 5th highest proportion of all England local authorities

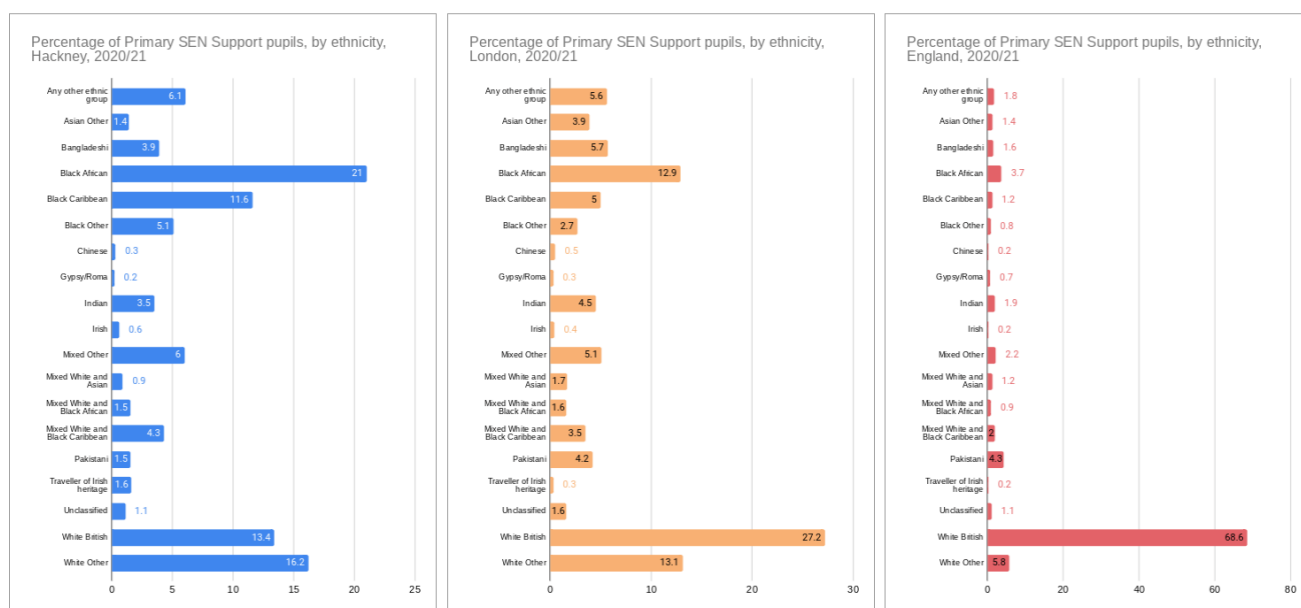
Despite a fall from 2021 to 2022, at 45.7% the proportion of EHCP pupils in state-funded mainstream (not resourced/unit) schools was above both England and statistical neighbour (41.6%) averages and places Hackney in the top quartile of England local authorities.

The school estates strategy has a key aim of providing more state-funded specialist places in Hackney, via additional resourced provisions and potentially more special school places.

3. SEND and Ethnicity

Primary Phase

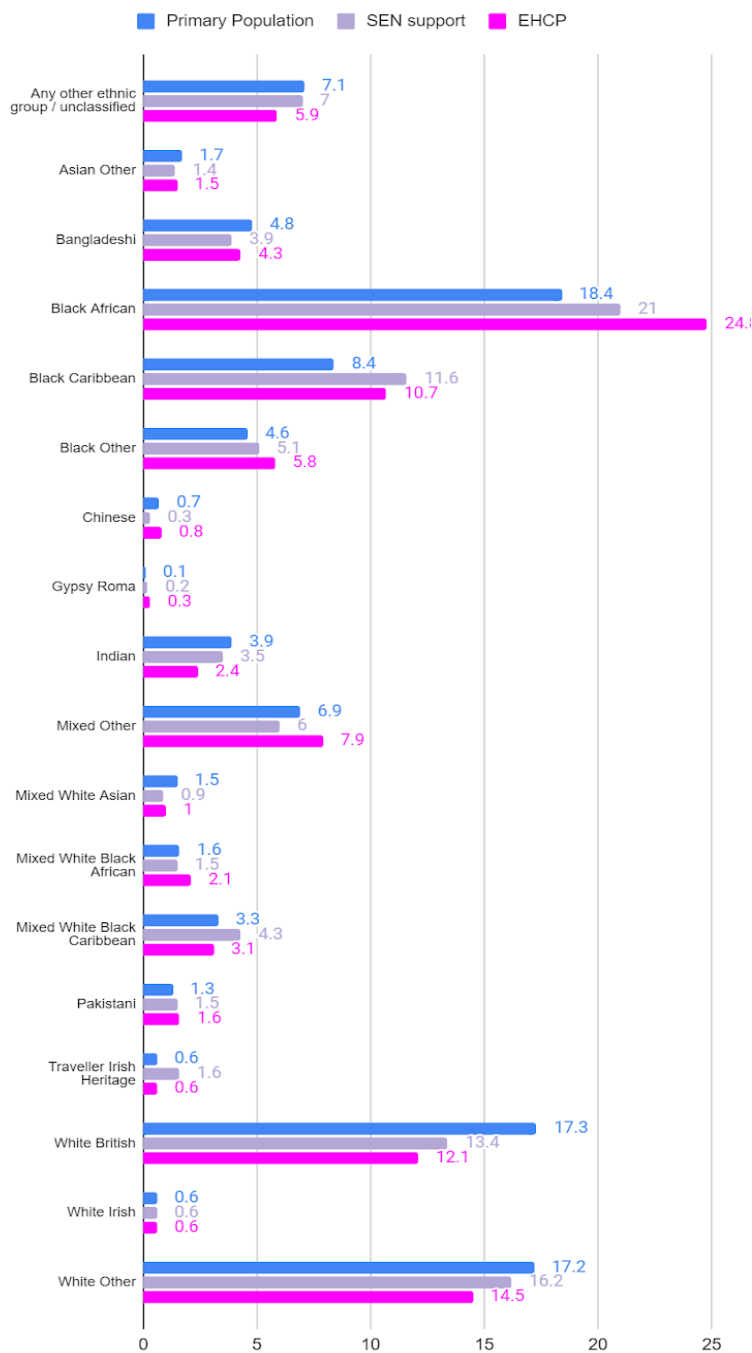
The below table shows the ethnic distribution of SEND Support pupils in comparison to both London and national data. Local data shows that the highest proportion of pupils at SEN Support are Black African. This is higher than both London and national averages.



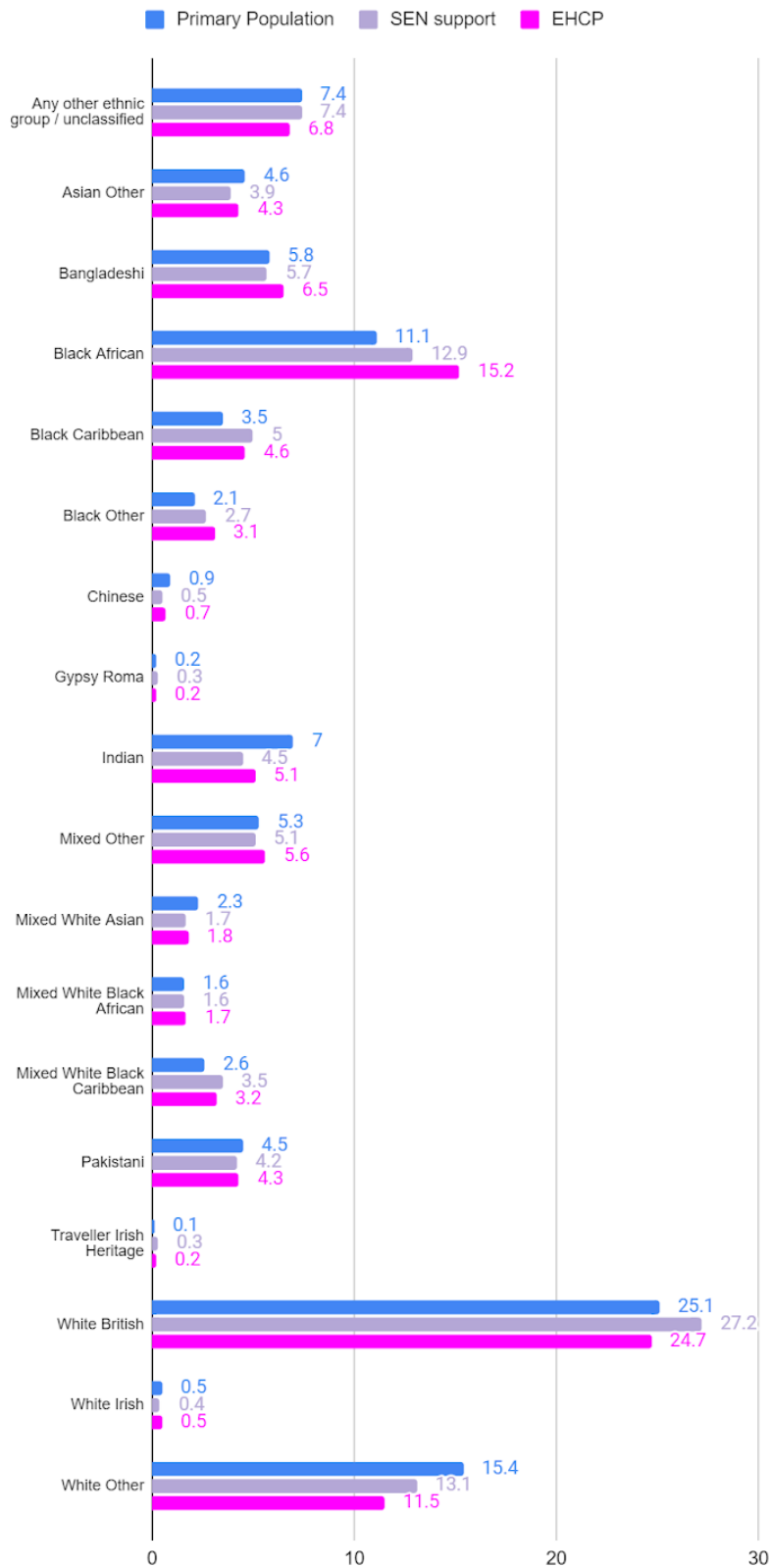
When considered in the context of whole school population data, the below chart demonstrates that ethnicity broadly follows primary population by ethnicity both at SEN Support and EHC Plan level. Black African and Black Caribbean pupils are slightly more likely to be diagnosed as having SEND support or being assessed with an EHCP than other ethnic groups. Black African children make up 18.4% of the

primary population, 21% of the SEND support primary population and 24.1% of the EHCP primary age population; Black Caribbean pupils make up 8.4% of the primary population, 11.6% of the primary population on SEND support and 10.7% of the primary population with EHCPs. This pattern is echoed in the London picture.

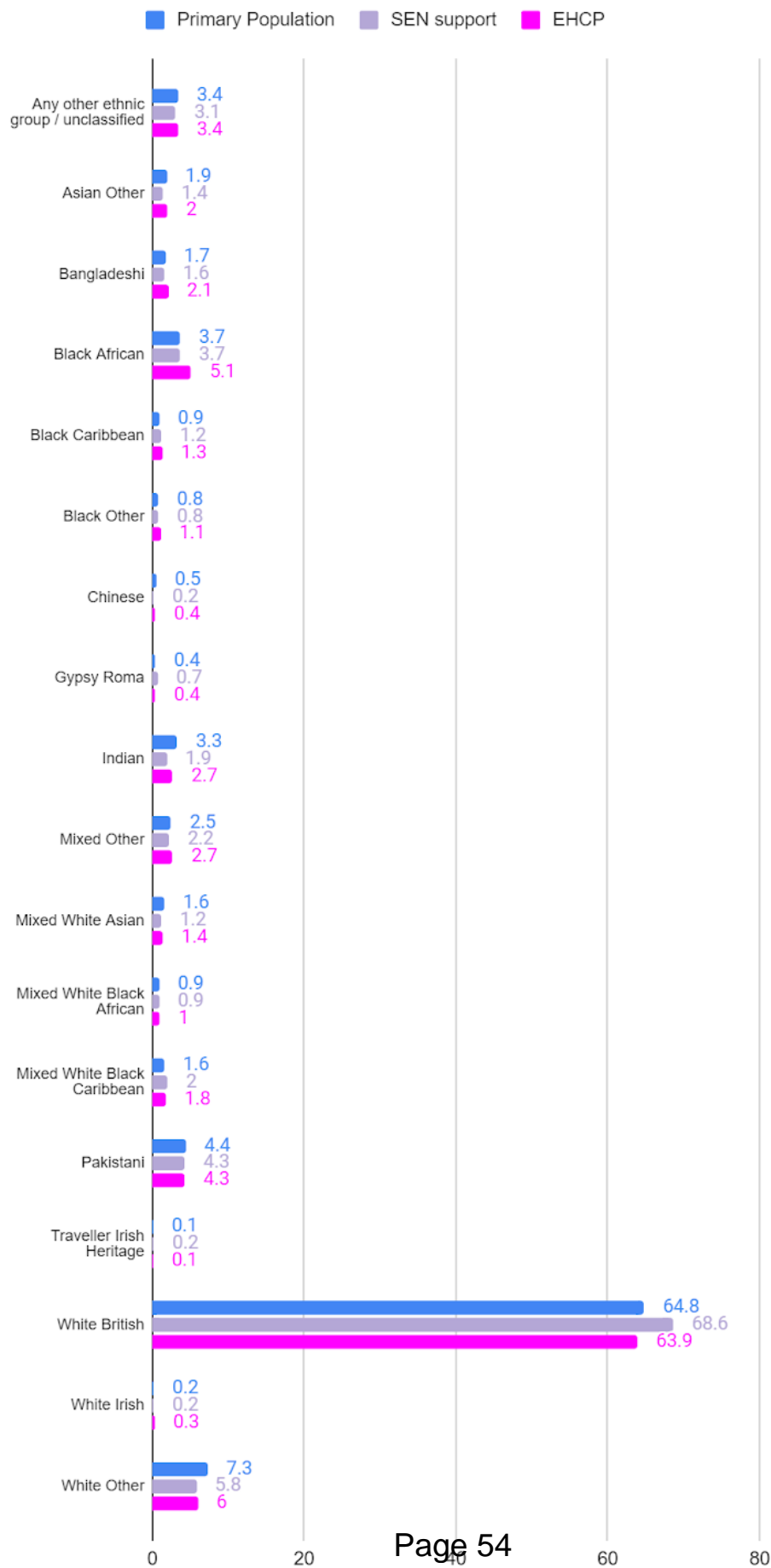
Percentage of primary population, percentage of SEN support pupils and percentage of EHCP pupils, by ethnicity, Hackney, 2020/21



Percentage of primary population, percentage of SEN support pupils and percentage of EHCP pupils, by ethnicity, London, 2020/21

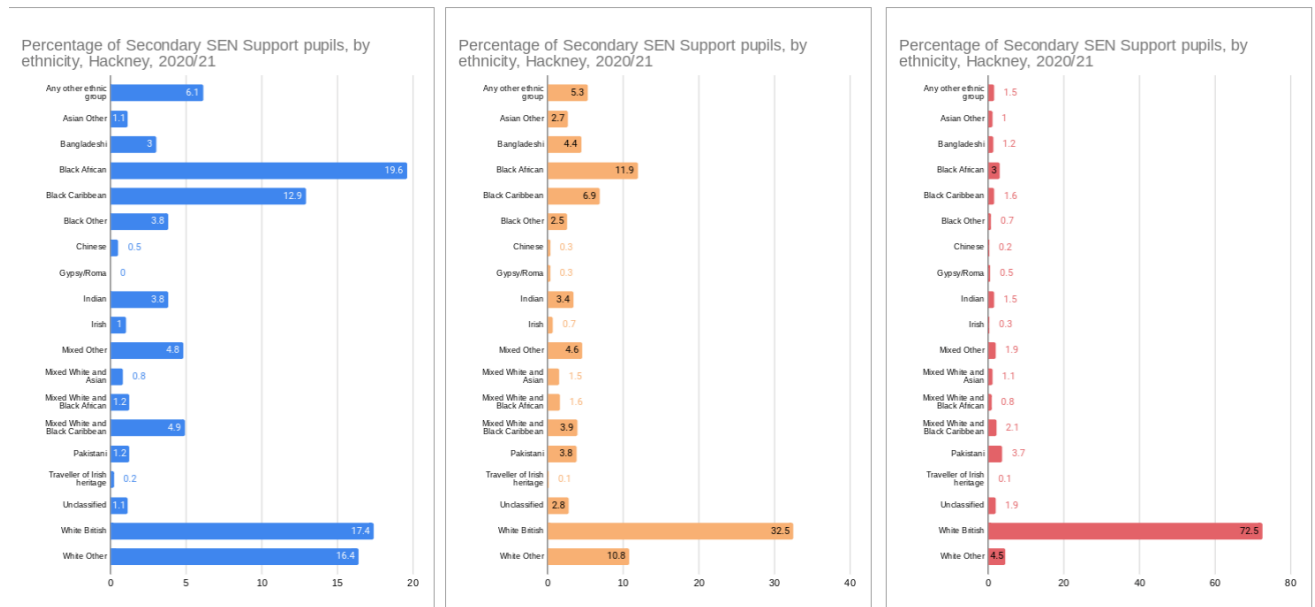


Percentage of primary population, percentage of SEN support pupils and percentage of EHCP pupils, by ethnicity, England, 2020/21



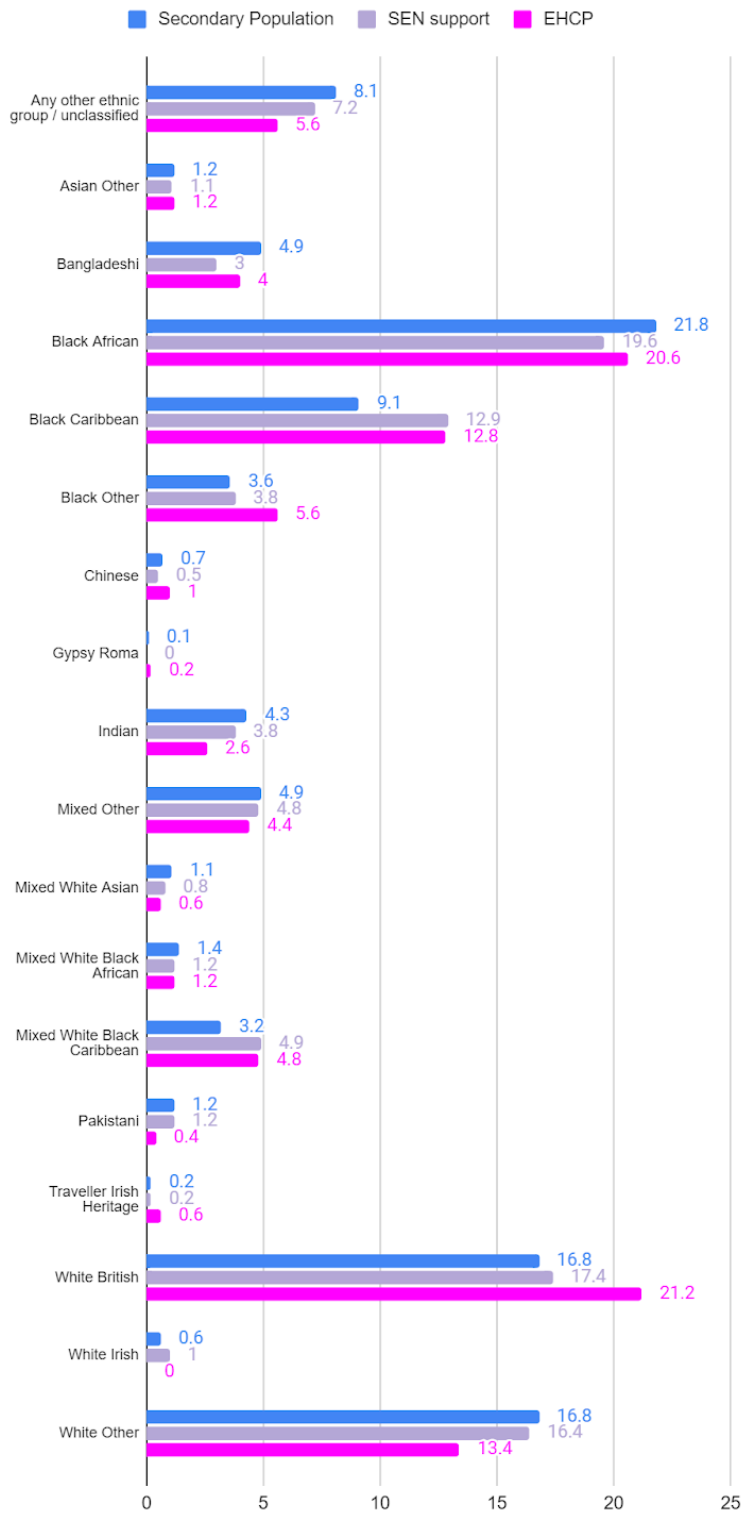
Secondary phase

SEN Support, secondary

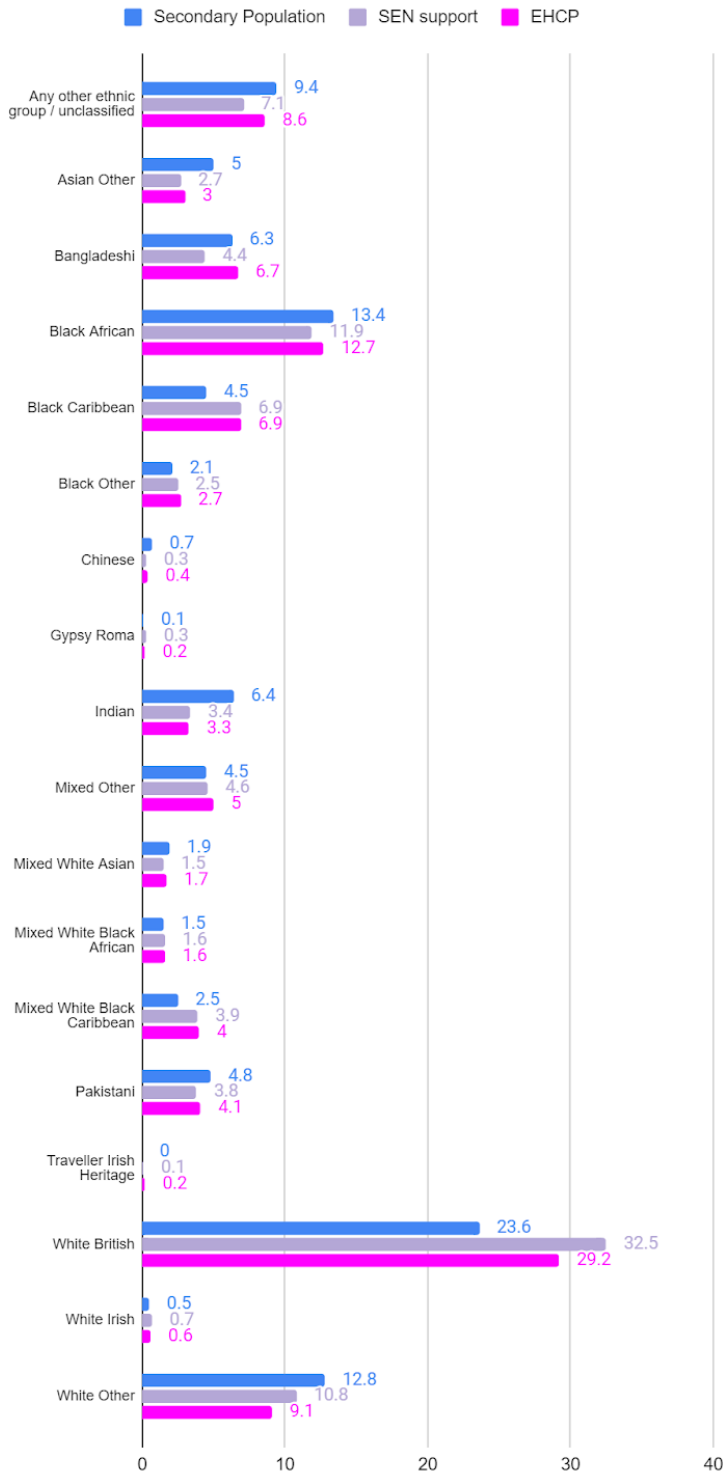


The ethnicity of pupils at secondary level follows a similar pattern as at primary, and generally in proportion to population, including when compared to the whole school population for both at SEND Support at EHC Plan level. Black Caribbean pupils have a slightly higher proportion of SEND support diagnoses (12.7%) and EHCs (12.8%) than their proportion of the school population (9.1%). White British pupils have a slightly higher proportion of EHCs (21.2%) than their population (16.8%), this is in line with London ratios. White other pupils have a slightly lower proportion of EHCs (13.4%) than their population (16.8%).

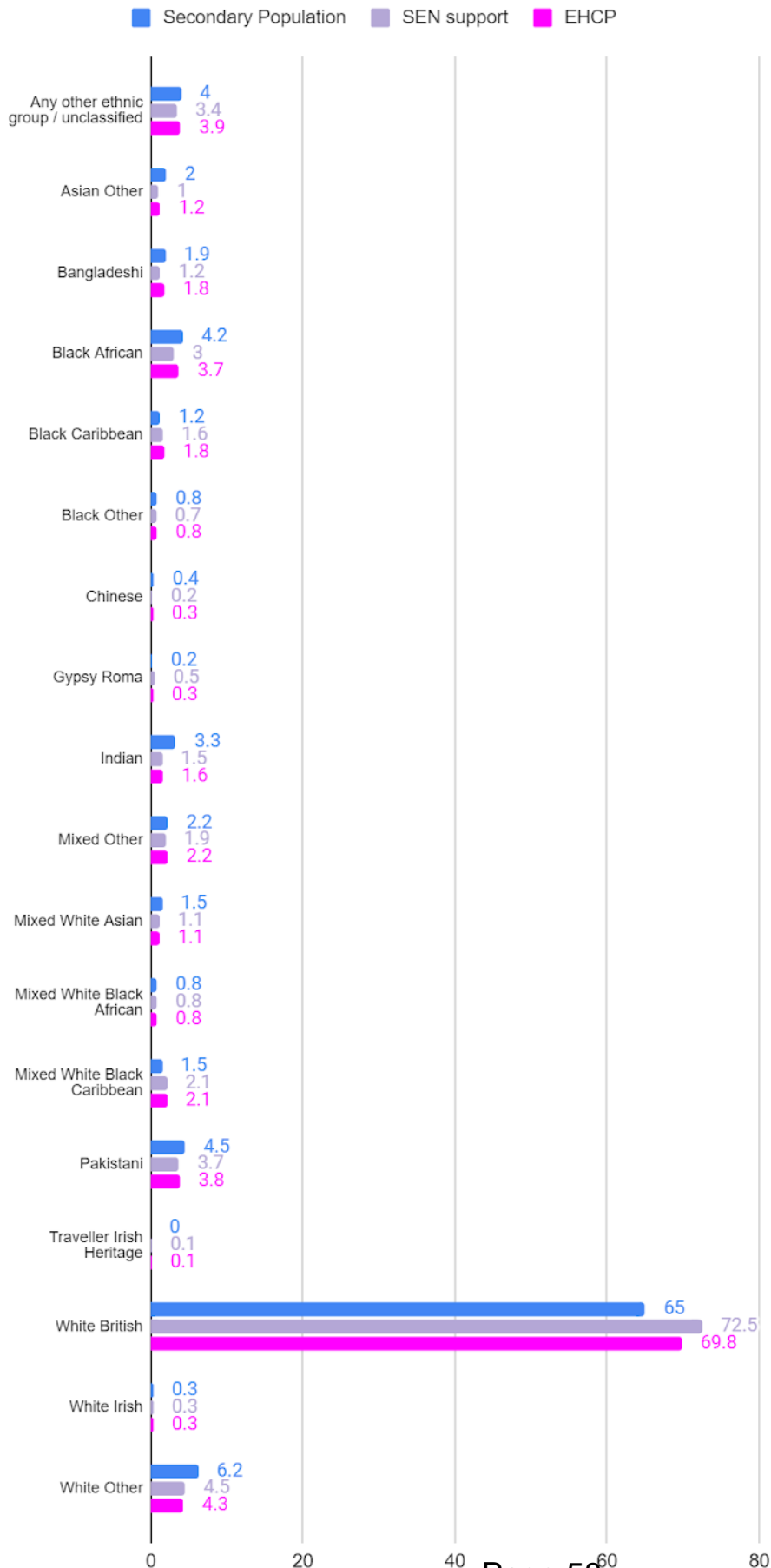
Percentage of secondary population, percentage of SEN support pupils and percentage of EHCP pupils, by ethnicity, Hackney, 2020/21



Percentage of secondary population, percentage of SEN support pupils and percentage of EHCP pupils, by ethnicity, London, 2020/21



Percentage of secondary population, percentage of SEN support pupils and percentage of EHCP pupils, by ethnicity, England, 2020/21



Each decision about a child being placed on SEND support or being put forward for assessment for an EHCP is careful, nuanced and based on detailed evidence. The overviews in this report show the patterns across Hackney - some of which have been outlined in previous papers. The overviews will also be shared with headteachers, governors and SENCOs in schools.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 8th 2022 Item 7 - Work Programme 2022/23	Item No 7
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Outline

Following the publication of suggestions for the work programme for 2022/23 at the July meeting, these have been collated in a report setting out individual policy areas with possible options as to how these can be included as specific items within the work programme.

The work programme for 2022/23 as agreed thus far (the inclusion of standing items) is also attached for members to note, and to illustrate capacity (as yet undefined items) at future meetings.

Reports

- Collated suggestions into policy areas
- Work Programme 2022/23

Action:

Members of the Commission are asked to note both reports and to discuss and agree further work items to be included.

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Collated Suggestions for Work Programme

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITY (SEND)

1.	SEND Green paper (HORIZON SCANNING)	- SEND Green paper published in March 2022 entitled The Right Support Right Place Right Time	
2.	SEND Inspection (HORIZON SCANNING)	An inspection of SEND services by Ofsted is expected within the next 12 months. Spring/summer 2023.	
3.	SEND Restructure and Better Value Review (EXECUTIVE MEETINGS)	Local SEND services in Hackney and across London continue to face acute demand which is generating significant local authority cost pressures (in Hackney £7m 2021/22). A SEND Restructure and Better Value review is forthcoming locally and it was suggested that it might be helpful if the Commission has oversight of this. (The emerging SEND strategy is expected at Cabinet for approval by autumn).	
4.	School Estates Strategy (Issue from 21/22)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Commission received a report on the planned School Estates Strategy during 2021/22 which sets out the Council's approach for the best use of school estate in relation to falling school rolls, growing SEND needs, and the need to provide more in borough and maintained SEND provision. The formal strategy and business case was approved by the Cabinet in early 2022. - Areas of interest to the Commission were the Additional Resource Provisions (ARP) in schools and the introduction of the graduated response of schools to supporting children with SEND. 	

5.	Autism services and support for girls (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	Lack of adequate support and training in identifying and helping Autistic children and young people engage in both mainstream and specialist education within Hackney. In particular- lack of targeted provision for the increasing number of anxious, late-diagnosis autistic girls (without LDs) who often have a very different presentation and needs from ASD boys. Many of these girls are now seriously isolated out of school and in need of mental health support In particular many autistic girls are diagnosed late and not until after secondary transfer. There are increasing numbers of girls in the borough who have quietly dropped out of school due to high levels of social anxiety & sensory issues associated with Autism. The staff at my daughter's 1st school, including the SENCO, we're inadequately trained and did not recognise or understand her condition.	
6.	Support for children with Autism (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	A programme to support activities for young/juniors with a disability/Autism to help protect them from loneliness.	
7.	Graduated response for SEND support in schools (Hackney Independent Forum Parents)	Graduated Response to SEND. This strategy is the cornerstone of the SEND Restructure and therefore central to the provision of services and support to SEND children and their families. The effectiveness or otherwise of the Graduated Response will impact on the experience and outcomes of all within the SEND community; therefore it is imperative it meets the actual needs of families effectively and efficiently. The attention of the CYP Scrutiny Committee would enable families and professionals to review this strategy and	

		explore its strengths and weaknesses, building a better service for future families.	
8.	SEND Restructure (Hackney Independent Forum Parents)	The SEND Restructure: Implementation and effects. Both families and professionals report that the current state of SEND at HE is chaotic. It is therefore imperative that the restructure in its entirety is examined by an external body able to make assessments and recommendations, evaluating elements that are having a positive and effective impact on the SEND community compared to those aspects that need review and improvement.	
9.	Need to improve specialist education provision (Hackney Independent Forum Parents)	Increased Education Provision for SEND children. The promise of increased SEND educational provision has been a constant element of HE's SEND planning. Whilst we welcome the increased post 16 provision at The Garden and additional primary units, there remain outstanding areas of need. There is a serious discrepancy between the levels of specialist provision available between primary and secondary, which is exacerbated as many of social and emotional needs become apparent as children enter the teenage years, currently this area in particular is being failed by Hackney Schools. Therefore the promised increase in SEND provision needs to be mapped out, presented and reviewed to ensure that it meets the most urgent needs of the SEND community.	
10.	SEND Restructure (Member of the Commission)	SEND service restructure. What are the new accountability lines within the new structure? It would be good to evaluate the impact.	
11.	ARP provision within schools (Member of the Commission)	New educational provision for SEND children in schools. What is planned for ARP units and will these meet local needs? What work has been done to properly evaluate what is needed - has there been any consultation with parents about what they feel is needed (schools themselves don't always have the same	

		views or as full a picture as parents). At the moment there is much more provision at primary level versus secondary level. This is a particular issue as social and emotional needs often come to a head after transition to secondary and there is currently a gap in provision for much of this cohort.	
12.	Uptake of EHCP and demographic analysis (MEETINGS WITH EXECUTIVE)	(Related to above) The number of children with SEND and in need of an EHCP has continued to increase both locally and nationally. EHCP data shows that there has been a 25% increase in the 12 months to 2021 . Whilst these may be increasing, the work of the Commission in relation to exclusions indicated that the additional or special educational needs of some groups of children may be being missed or diagnosed late (at secondary). In relation to (2) it might be helpful to undertake a further analysis of EHCP Plans - which children are being assessed and in receipt of educational support - and those young people that may be missing out (or incorrectly diagnosed).	To be taken on 8th September 2022.
13.	Underdiagnosis of SEND (Member of the Commission)	How to improve education services for disadvantaged school children, in particular those children with SEND. Why are children with SEND accessing secondary provision without this being formally diagnosed and /or without an EHCP?	Addressed in part at through data on 8th September 2022.
14.	Independent Provision of SEND (Issue from 2021/22)	In 2021/22 the Commission assessed how Independent SEND provision was commissioned. The Commission has indicated that it would like to follow up this work particularly in relation to the quality of provision, location of provision and value for money provided from these services.	

Notes:

- **SEND Strategy is due to be agreed by the Cabinet in autumn of 2022. An action plan covering the strategy commitments, restructure, and finance (Better Value) is being developed.**

MENTAL HEALTH

15.	Access to CAMHS services (Issue from 2021/22)	At the last meeting of 2021/22, the Cabinet member was questioned on increased demand for CAMHS services, waiting lists for CAMHS and efforts to improve access (e.g. single point of entry). This was highlighted by members of the 2021/22 COMmission as a priority for 2022/23.	
16.	Access to CAMHS (Hackney Youth Parliament)	CAMHS: Waiting lists for mental health services were too long - young people experienced many issues through the pandemic which resulted in the need for more support. Some people who were not actually in school (but in Elective Home Education) were waiting a long time to be seen by CAMHS.	
17.	Mental health of Young People post pandemic (Member of the Commission)	CYP mental and physical health, especially in the wake of pandemic measures and other contributory factors (including social media and advertising)	
18.	Mental health impact of stop and search (Member of the Commission)	Review the impact of Stop & Search on children and young people's mental health including but not limited to: a. Conducting a borough-wide consultation on young people's development and future prospects post stop & search (es) b. Conducting a consultation on family members, siblings, carers, and parents on the emotional impact on themselves post stop & search on their child/sibling/family member	
20.	Mental health in schools (Member of the)	Stress at school - Is the curriculum and standards of education in Hackney offering a safe, secure and thriving space for young people and one that supports healthy mental health and builds confidence in their skills and future prospects?	

	Commission)	<p>a. Conduct a Hackney school-wide consultation to ask students to give their opinion on the teaching methods, share their views on what stresses students and their idea of solutions for these problems</p> <p>b. Ask students across Hackney, say biannually, on their views on what they would like to see added to their school curriculum as life skills, sexual education, decolonisation, politics, workers rights, housing, credit rating etc</p>	
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21.	Mental health of young people (Member of the Commission)	Mental health of young people and to consult with Members Champion for Mental Health)	
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CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

22.	Independent (McAlister) Review of Children's Social Care (HORIZON SCANNING)	Children's Social Care Review (McAlister review). The review of children's social care began in January 2021 and recently published its FINAL REPORT . The review will have implications for local children's social care which needs to be unpacked and addressed.	
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23.	Ofsted Action Plan (Issue from 2021/22)	Children and Families were last inspected by Ofsted in July 2021. The Commission continues to monitor and track progress of the services in response to the suggested areas for improvement to ensure that the service reaches its stated ambition to be good or outstanding in future full inspections.	
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24.	Impact of the Cyber Attack (Issue from	The Cyber Attack on the Council precipitated the loss of the children's social care database (MOSAIC) and case records that it held. Given the practice and safeguarding risks, the Commission has maintained oversight of recovery and	
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	2021/22)	improvement plans. The interim database was assessed by Ofsted to be in need of improvement at the last inspection and a full systems restoration (to Mosaic) was expected on 4th April 2022.	
25.	Ofsted Inspection (HORIZON SCANNING)	A further Focused Visit by Ofsted is expected in 2022/23.	
26.	Children's Social Care Annual Report (STANDING ITEM)	Children and Families Service to report on full year activity across children's social care (April to March) - generally taken in Autumn.	Standing Item to be taken November 30th 2022
27.	Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers (REVIEW UPDATE)	The Commission retains periodic oversight of this work. Hackney Foster Carers Council to report back on progress 2022.	To be taken on 8th September 2022
28.	Foster Care (Member of the Commission)	The council's approach to foster care and the financial and quality of life costs of outsourced services.	Incorporated on 8/9/22?
29.	Adoption (Member of the Commission)	Focus on adoption and implementation of Adoption UK recommendations for a personalised pathway of care for each adoptive family based on the report Adoption Barometer: Adoption Stocktake 2022 . Which include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide an assessment of need and support plan for every child - A full therapeutic assessment for every child with a permanence plan, to be 	

		<p>carried out before placement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The assessment should inform a clear and specific written support plan, distinct from the placement plan, anticipating future as well as current support needs, agreed with the adopters before placement and linked to a commitment to provide the support that is needed. 	
30.	Looked after Children and Fostering (Member of the Commission)	Continuation of work on looked after children (LAC) and other issues relating to fostering.	
31.	Migrant children (Member of the Commission)	Support for migrant children.	
32.	Young carers (Member of the Commission)	Support available for young carers.	
33.	Looked after children (Director of Public Health)	The health of looked after children in Hackney.	
34.	Race, racism and children's social care (EXECUTIVE MEETINGS)	Building on the work of the Commission and Children Families Service in relation to anti-racist practice, it may be beneficial to undertake work to assess the demographic profile of children on a Child Protection Plan, Children in Need and those who become looked after - where there are known	

		disparities (ethnicity, gender). This work may help to understand the social work principles and practices which underpin such social care assessments and and contribute to local disparities.	
35.	Young Parents Offer (EXECUTIVE MEETINGS)	Given that the outcomes of young parents are much lower than for other parent groups (postnatal depression, mental health) and the disproportionalities that exist further work should be considered on what role local authority can play in better supporting this parent group and their children. The Local Government Association and Public Health England have produced supporting guidance on the role of local authorities in supporting young parents.	
36.	Sufficiency of children's Social Care (HORIZON SCANNING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient children's social care to meet local needs. The current strategy expires in 2022. - The Competition & Markets Authority has reviewed the children's social care market with a full report published with recommendations. - What Works in Social Care has also undertaken a review to assess whether local authorities are undertaking their stewardship of local children's social care services effectively. 	

SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS

37.	Exclusions and all school moves (STANDING ITEM)	Hackney Education to report on the number of permanent exclusions, school moves, children moving to Elective Home Education and the process of off-rolling challenge to schools.	Standing item to be taken on 31st October 2023
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38.	School Exclusions (REVIEW UPDATE)	The Commission produced a report on the outcome of school exclusions in December 2021, to which the Cabinet response was made in March 2022. The Commission to decide when to take follow-up to monitor implementation of recommendations (July 2022).	Review follow up to be taken 9 months after approval - January 2023
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39.	School Exclusions (Member of the Commission)	Measures to address the root causes of school exclusions, inequality and child poverty	
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PUPIL ATTAINMENT

40	Pupil attainment (STANDING ITEM)	Hackney Education to provide annual assessment of children's attainment at Reception, KS2 and GCSE level (likely to be just GCSE 2022). Analysis of attainment gaps within and between pupil groups. (After January 2023)	To be taken on 27th February 2023
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41.	Attainment Gap (EXECUTIVE MEETINGS)	<p>2022 will be the first year that GCSE /A Level exams have been sat formally in person since 2019. Assessments at Early Years (Good Level of Development) and KS2 will continue to not take place / be published. Given data around the unequal impact of lockdown and disproportionality of those who have missed education, it is expected that analysis of this years results will result in the widening attainment gap for different cohorts of children and young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - role of catch up progs - tutoring scheme locally? 	
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BUDGET MONITORING

42.	Budget Monitoring (STANDING ITEM)	Children and Families Service to present in year budget monitoring (around 6 months in October/December). To be taken alongside Children's Social Care Annual Report.	November 30th 2022
43.	Budget Monitoring (STANDING ITEM)	Hackney Education to present in-year budget monitoring (around 6 months in - October to December)	November 30th 2022

Notes:

- **Budget monitoring reports best taken mid-year to assess trends and any action taken to address overspends and review progress against savings targets for the year**
- **It is possible to focus on a particular area of the budget to reflect ongoing or new priorities e.g:**
 - **Hackney Education: Commissioning of External SEND Provision / Children's Centres**
 - **Children & Families: Commissioning of residential children's social care placements / care leavers accommodation.**

CHILDCARE & EARLY YEARS EDUCATION/EARLY HELP

44.	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (STANDING ITEM)	Hackney Education to report on the sufficiency of childcare provision across Hackney.	To be taken on 11th July 2022
45.	Financial sustainability of childcare providers (Member of the Commission)	Situation of youth workers, nursery staff and teachers in challenging financial circumstances and with declining school admissions.	
46.	Family Hubs	DfE announced that LB Hackney is among 78 Local Authorities which have	

	(HORIZON SCANNING	been successful in securing additional funding to set up Family Hubs. Funding of £302m to be divided among successful LA's, with £100m earmarked to roll out bespoke parent-infant relationship and perinatal mental health support. The Family Hubs model may inform the redesign of local children's centres (expected 2022)	
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47.	Early Years Strategy (Issues from 2021/22)	Early years strategy was approved by Cabinet in October 2021 and was presented at CYP Scrutiny thereafter. - How will Family Hubs be incorporated into the children centre network of provision? - What will be the role of the cost of childcare commission?	
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48.	Early Help Strategy (Issues from 2021/22)	The formative Early Help Strategy was presented to the Commission in 2020/21 and agreed by Cabinet in early 2022. The strategy to date is council focused which establishes corporate principles (e.g. early help is more effective, addressing disproportionality) and a single council-wide assessment framework. The development of the Early Help Strategy is ongoing as this now needs to be rolled out to key partners (statutory and voluntary) to ensure that there is a consistent and coordinated early help offer across Hackney.	
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SCHOOL BEHAVIOUR POLICIES

49.	School behaviour policies (Hackney Youth Parliament)	School behaviour policies: Members felt that restrictive school behaviour policies were having a negative impact on students - there were problems getting students to talk openly and freely with each other (student forum) and that some students would find it difficult to transfer to other - more open	
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		settings with more relaxed behaviour codes. What is the role of student forums - are these effective?	
50.	Behaviour Management in Schools (EXECUTIVE MEETINGS)	The Commission's review of school exclusions highlighted the disproportionate impact that behaviour management strategies were having on children, particularly children from Black and Global Majority communities and those with SEND. These concerns have also been raised in relation to the outcomes of the Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review. Further work needs to be undertaken around how these are developed (in consultation with parents and children), have these are overseen (by governing bodies) and assessed in relation to equalities impact.	

SCHOOLS GENERAL

51.	Education and Schools White Paper. (HORIZON SCANNING)	- The Education White Paper, Opportunity for All was published in April 2022. Schools Bill currently going through parliament.	
52.	School Places - School Place Planning (STANDING ITEM)	Hackney Education to provide annual review of school place allocation (at reception and secondary entry) for September 2022 and wider school place planning.	To be taken on 11th July 2022
53.	Unregistered Educational Settings (REVIEW UPDATE)	The Commission continues to maintain oversight of this work (completed in 2018) as progress has been difficult to achieve. Taken alongside CHSCP annual report.	To be taken January 16th 2023

54.	Improving quality of schools (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	Improving the quality of schools in Hackney with fairer distribution of funding according to needs/size of different communities.	
55.	Children missing education (Member of the Commission)	Connected to the above would be a look at the extent of 'Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) across Hackney. Much is being made of new policies relating to school attendance by the Secretary of State for Education and we know that this is a problem that is growing nationally, as well as in Hackney. There doesn't seem to be accurate data collection by Hackney Education on the number of children missing in the education system. They are often 'hidden' by being on roll, but are not being provided with any, or a vastly reduced education. What is HE's strategy to deal with this in a joined up way? Where is the early help for this group of vulnerable students?	
56.	Unregistered schools (HORIZON SCANNING)	- Reports indicate that legislation is likely to be forthcoming which will tighten regulation around unregistered school settings. This will likely impact the ongoing review work of the Commission.	To be taken at the January 2023 meeting.
57.	Children missing education (HORIZON SCANNING)	Following the pandemic, there are national and local concerns about the number of children who may be missing education (persistent non attendance). It was not clear if there were local disproportionalities and the degree to which these linked to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mental Health needs - Links to specific communities (e.g. Roma /Traveller communities - SEND Data does suggest that persistent absence is much greater amongst vulnerable children which may be contributing to a growing attainment gap (Education data lab).	

CHILD SAFEGUARDING

58.	City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report (STANDING ITEM)	CHSCP produces an annual report which is presented to the Commission to support oversight of child safeguarding across Hackney.	To be taken at the 16th January 2023 meeting.
59.	Child Safeguarding (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	Children and families safeguarding. Families are being failed. A new structure and staff training is required	
60.	Child safeguarding out of school settings (Member of the Commission)	Ensuring effective safeguarding children from sexual abuse and or exploitation particularly where oversight may not be as robust such as sports clubs and other out of school settings. Do all such settings have clear safeguarding policies and practices and how is assurance determined?	

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ADOLESCENTS ENTERING CARE

61.	Adolescents Entering Care	The scope of this review was approved by the Commission. The Commission has conducted a meeting with officers to assess local policy and practice with remaining sessions to assess comparative provision to be agreed. These evidence sessions will need to be reported back and the final report produced for approval by the Commission.	
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Notes:

- This is the review carried over from 2021/22 and the agreed scope can be viewed [here](#).

- Two further evidence sessions to be scheduled with other LA's and adolescent support projects - these can be scheduled outside of the main meeting.
- To feed in data from Foster Carer consultation.

CHILDHOOD FOOD POVERTY/ ACCESS TO FREE SCHOOL MEALS

62.	Free School Meals (HACKNEY YOUTH PARLIAMENT)	Cost of living crisis: children and their families were feeling the impact of this locally (rent, council tax, food costs). It was suggested that eligibility and access to free school meals could be looked at.	
63.	Child poverty (Member of the Commission)	Measures to address the root causes of school exclusions, inequality and child poverty	
64.	Childhood food poverty / healthy start (Member of the Commission)	The take up of healthy start vouchers by families with young children in Hackney (improving nutrition, reducing health inequalities).	
65.	Child food poverty (Member of the Commission)	Child food poverty in Hackney - take up of holiday lunch clubs, household support fund, how accessible the information is (especially for those with ESOL needs). Raising awareness of cultural needs when providing food provisions through some of these services.	

CHILD Q

66.	Outcomes of Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review (HORIZON	- The City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership undertook a serious case review (SCR) in respect of strip-search of Child Q which have implications for local CYP and safeguarding:	
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	SCANNING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policing in schools - role of SSO - Expectations of the community in relation to outcomes of SR - Authentic voice of the child - ensuring that needs of the child comes first in decision making - Behaviour policies in schools - do these result in disproportionate outcomes for certain groups e.g. Black and global majority children/ children with SEND - Parental engagement - good models of parental involvement - The importance of an inclusive school. <p>- The Joint LiH and CYP Commissions will also report recommendations which may impact on the work of individual commissions.</p>	
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67.	Disproportionate policing of children (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	<p>‘The policing in Hackney has been shown to be discriminatory towards black people, and black children. What happened with Child Q was an unacceptable breach of her rights and dignity. The fact that it took over two years for the police to apologise for Child Q publicly is unacceptable. Hackney council needs to figure out a way to hold the police to account for their egregiously racist and violent actions. The safety of black people and black children, in particular, should be absolutely paramount. It should be self-evident also that when the police use their powers in violent and disproportionate ways that community trust is eroded or destroyed. The police are meant to protect, but they don't. How are we meant to tackle our social issues if we can't rely on the police to act appropriately?’</p>	
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68.	Addressing racism (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	More services for children and young people to tackle racism / discrimination.	
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69	Impact of stop and search (Member of the Commission)	Review the impact of Stop & Search on children and young people's mental health including but not limited to: a. Conducting a borough-wide consultation on young people's development and future prospects post stop & search (es) b. Conducting a consultation on family members, siblings, carers, and parents on the emotional impact on themselves post stop & search on their child/sibling/family member	Would need to be with Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission
70	Police Officers within Schools (Member of the Commission)	Review the need for the presence of blue officers in Hackney schools, including understanding the rationale for blue officers allocation per school in the borough	Would need to be with Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission

PSHE/ PHYSICAL HEALTH

71.	PSHE in Schools (Hackney Youth Parliament)	PSHE: There was broad agreement that this aspect of the curriculum was not diverse or inclusive or well taught in local schools. There was very little discussion of LGBT issues or broader relationship aspects to PSHE. The message was of tolerance rather than a positive choice.	
72.	Sexual Assault and Harrassment in Schools (Hackney Youth Parliament)	Sexual assault /harassment; members noted that there had been a number of sexual assault cases in local education settings which young people felt had not been dealt with effectively by the school, police or other authorities. Other sexual harraassment incidents were dealth with inappropriately by schools, with both vicitim and perpretrator being placed in isolation (together) and very little after care or support for young people exposed to such incidents. It was noted that in some instances, young people leave school as the situation was too difficult/ embarrassing to deal with.	

73.	Physical Health (PUBLIC SUGGESTION)	More funding for provision of activities for physical health for children.	
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74.	Vaping (Hackney Youth Parliament)	Public Health: There were concerns around the level of vaping and alcohol use among young people locally. Concerns around the level of nicotine in the former and how this was being addressed in PSHE - an absolutist approach: one cigarette leads to drink and addiction rather than harm reduction.	
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75.	Substance misuse (Director of Public Health)	Young people's substance misuse services.	
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VOICE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

76.	Advocacy for children and young people (Public Suggestion)	More effective advocacy for children.	
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77.	Community engagement for young people (Public Suggestion)	How to get activities for young people in our community halls.	
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YOUTH SERVICES/ YOUTH OFFENDING

78.	Youth Centres (Member of the Commission)	Youth centre provision and opportunities across the borough.	
79.	Youth Violence (Member of the Commission)	Community based and community led solutions to youth violence.	
80.	Youth engagement (Member of the Commission)	Meeting with youth workers and young people at their youth clubs outside of the meetings.	
81.	Youth Justice (Director of Public Health)	Youth justice health provision.	
82.	Hackney Youth Justice (HORIZON SCANNING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hackney Youth Justice Plan - The current Youth Justice Plan expires in 2022 and a new plan is being developed for the period 2022-2025. 	
83	HMIP Inspection (HORIZON SCANNING)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inspection expected of Youth Justice services in 2022/23 	

OTHER

84.	Anti-racist Action Plan (Issue from 2021/22)	- The Commission has maintained oversight of the development of a joint Anti-Racist Action in recent work programmes. It has indicated that it wishes to maintain this going forward.	
85.	Homeless young people (Member of the Commission)	Provision for homeless young people in Hackney - in particular the extent of hidden homeless in Hackney where young people sofa surf with friends and family and which increases vulnerability.	
86.	LGBTQ children and young people (Member of the Commission)	Provision for young people within the LGBTQ community.	
87.	Families and Wellbeing Framework (Director of Public Health)	To review the Joint Children and Families Health and Wellbeing Framework for City and Hackney (the working group is putting further detail on the framework so it would be better if this came later in the calendar).	

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Appendix D - Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Bold= confirmed Normal text = Unconformed

July 11th 2022	September 8th 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)	Budget Monitoring - Children & Families Service (30-45)
Cabinet Q & A - Cllr Woodley (Early Years, SEND, Parks and Play (45)	Children & Families Annual Report (45)
	Budget Monitoring - Hackney Education (30-45)
January 16th 2023	February 27th 2023
City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (45)	Cabinet Q & A - Cllr Bramble (Children, Education & Children's Social Care) (45)
Unregistered Educational Settings (15)	Pupil Attainment - Attainment Gap (45)
Outcome of School Exclusions - Progress of Recommendations (45)	
March 20th 2023	April 17th 2023

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Appendix D - 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><u>School Admissions</u></p> <p>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><u>Childcare Sufficiency</u></p> <p>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><u>Outcome of School Exclusions</u></p> <p>The note and review the Cabinet response to the Commission's review of the Outcome of School Exclusions.</p>	Members of the Commission	
	<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

Appendix D - 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 8th September</p> <p>Papers deadline: 30/8/22</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 31/8/22</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 	

Appendix D - 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
Meeting Date: Monday October 31st 2022	School Exclusions and School Moves: 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).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	
Papers deadline: 18/10/22			
Agenda dispatch: 21/10/22			

Appendix D - Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2022/23

Meeting 4	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Officers	Preparatory Work
<p>Meeting Date: November 23rd 2022</p> <p>Papers deadline: 10th November 2022</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 15th November 2022</p>	<p>Children and Families Annual Report: This is a standing item on the agenda which provides a year end summary of children’s social care activity for the period 2021/22.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care 	

Appendix D - 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 Papers deadline: 4th January 2023 Agenda dispatch: 6th January 2023	Outcome of Schools Exclusions: The Commission to follow up the recommendations made in its review (approved by Cabinet March 2022).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris Roberts, Head of Wellbeing and Education Safeguarding Annie Gammon, Director of Education 	

Appendix D - 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 2022			
Papers deadline:			
14th February 2023			
Agenda dispatch:			
17th February 2023			

Appendix D - 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
Meeting Date: 20th March 2023 Papers deadline: 7th March 2023 Agenda dispatch: 10th March 2023			

Appendix D - 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
Meeting Date: 17th April 2023			
Papers deadline: 31st March 2023			
Agenda dispatch: 5th April 2023			

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 8th 2022 Item 8 - Minutes	Item No 8
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Outline

The minutes of the last meeting held on 11th July 2022 are attached for members to note and agree.

There are a number of actions arising from the meeting:

- 1) The Commission to write to the Group Director for Children & Education for a more detailed response on the difficulties and waiting times to access specialist services and partnership plans to improve access;
- 2) Hackney Education to investigate whether further financial support can be provided to childcare providers;
- 3) The Commission to write to Cabinet Members for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play setting out the outcomes and recommendations from its consultation with child care providers;
- 4) The Commission to produce a short summary of the outcomes of School Exclusions Report;
- 5) The Commission to write to the Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding to request that SEND status be included in the Exclusions monitoring report which is due October 31st 2022;
- 6) Commission to confirm with Hackney Education that the follow up to its recommendations for School Exclusions will be taken at the January 2023 meeting;
- 7) The Commission to produce a short summary of suggestions by topic area, and develop more detailed agenda item proposals for inclusion within the work programme which would be circulated to members.

Action:

Members of the Commission are asked to note and agree the minutes review actions taken from the last meeting.

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Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission **DRAFT** Minutes of 11th July 2022

Official Attendees present for the record

Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair)
Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott
Cllr Anya Sizer
Cllr Lynne Troughton
Cllr Claudia Turbet Delof
Andy English (Coopted Member)
Monique Pink (Co-opted member)
Jo Macleod (Co-opted member)

Connected Virtually

Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice Chair)
Cllr Caroline Selman
Steven Olalere (Co-opted member)

In attendance (present or virtually)

- 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.
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- David Court, Head of School Organisation and Commissioning
- Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager
- Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years and Early Help

A recording of the meeting is available here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MgS2yx5DnU>

Scrutiny Officer in the Chair

1. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

- 1.1 As this was the first meeting of the Commission in the new municipal year, it was necessary to elect a Chair and Vice Chair.
- 1.2 Cllr Sophie Conway was nominated for the position of Chair by Cllr Lynne Troughton and this was seconded by Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge. There being no other nominations Cllr Sophie Conway was elected as Chair.

Cllr Sophie Conway in the Chair

- 1.3 Cllr Margaret Gordon was nominated for the position of Vice Chair by Cllr Sophie Conway and was seconded by Cllr Lynne Troughton. There being no other nominations, Cllr Margaret Gordon was elected as the Vice Chair.

2. Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following members of the Commission:
- Richard Brown

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- Salmah Kansara
- Cllr Midnight Ross

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 Lee Luadat-Scott was a governor of a local school and member of Hackney Schools Forum
- Cllr Anya Sizer was a parent of a child with SEND;
- Monique Pink was a governor at a school in Hackney;
- Steven Olalere was a governor at a school in Hackney.

4. Urgent Items / Order of Business

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

5. Terms of Reference

5.1 This being the first meeting of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission, members were required to note the terms of reference for scrutiny and this Commission which is set out in the Constitution. Excerpts from the Constitution for arrangements and procedures rules for scrutiny and this Commission were enclosed in the report pack.

5.2 Members noted the terms of reference.

6. Childcare Sufficiency Report

6.1 Each Local Authority has a childcare sufficiency duty to ensure that there are sufficient childcare places to meet the needs of local parents and carers. Local Authorities are required to undertake a childcare sufficiency audit not only in relation to the number of childcare places available, but also on the quality and cost of local provision. Full audits are undertaken every two years and presented to local Councillors and this year's audit was enclosed in the agenda pack. This is a standing item on the Commission's agenda.

6.2 To support this item, the Chair noted that ahead of the meeting the Commission had held a focus group with local childcare providers to better understand the issues and challenges providers faced across the sector. Issues arising from the consultation were used to inform member questioning. The Chair also wished to publicly thank all those childcare providers who participated in this consultation.

6.3 The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years Parks introduced the report. Although the report provided a snapshot of local services, at this time the sufficiency report demonstrated that there was enough childcare provision across the borough for all age groups. The Cabinet member was also encouraged that high levels of quality childcare provision were being maintained across Hackney. The new administration had a number of commitments in relation to childcare services:

- To continue to support local Children's Centres and ensure that they continue to provide a wide range of services and that these linked to new Family Hubs;
- Accessibility of childcare would be assessed through the establishment of a local affordable childcare commission.

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- 6.4 Officers made a short presentation to the Commission highlighting key issues from the report. A summary of key issues is provided below:
- There are two types of free entitlement: 30 hours of free childcare for 3 and 4 year olds (if both parents are working) and 15 hours free childcare for 2 year olds (for low earning families).
 - Free childcare provision in Hackney is provided through: 163 childminders, 108 private/voluntary nurseries (inc children's centres and playgroups), 21 independent schools and 54 nurseries in maintained primary schools and 2 maintained nurseries.
 - To support the sufficiency report, audit data was provided by child care providers - 50% of childminders responded and 90% of PVI sector and 100% of schools responded - which suggests that data in the report is an accurate reflection of local provision.
 - Whilst there was sufficient provision, it was noted that the cost of provision had increased over the past two years. The average cost was not £323 for a child under 2 years of age.

Questions from the Commission

- 6.5 From the consultation with providers, it was clear that there is a recruitment crisis in which childcare providers are struggling to find appropriately qualified staff. Providers noted problems with the training of potential staff recruits where there was a possible 'mismatch' in the training and curriculums of local colleges and what was appropriate for the local childcare sector. This has resulted in fewer recruits having Early years Foundation Stage qualification or them having practical experience in childcare settings. In its role as an education and training provider/ commissioner what can Council do to increase the number of suitably qualified staff for childcare providers in Hackney?
- It was acknowledged that some local settings were experiencing challenges around recruitment at present, but different types of settings were experiencing different problems. Thus whilst childminders and the independent and maintained sectors may not be experiencing the same recruitment problems as private and voluntary sector providers, they were experiencing other problems (such as not having enough children). Recruitment and retention was an issue across the sector because childcare professionals were finding better paid employment with less responsibility elsewhere. Childcare was also a difficult and demanding job and Covid had added to these pressures, therefore workers were leaving for better paid jobs with less pressures.
 - Hackney Education was supporting a volunteering strategy with local childcare settings to help parents and other adults gain appropriate training and qualifications as a means into work and further employment. In addition, HE is seeking to work with Hackney College to develop a placement strategy as it had been identified that people were leaving college without the necessary practical childcare experience.
 - Whilst funding to support Level 4 funding for early years has now ceased, the Department for Education (DfE) was looking to develop a new qualification offer. It was suggested that whilst private sector providers were training and developing new staff, many had moved to schools and the maintained sector upon qualification as the pay and hours were better.

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- It was acknowledged that there was a perfect storm of recruitment problems emerging for providers and in response, HE was looking to develop a strategy to support providers.

6.6 Were all early years providers routinely included in all dedicated early years training available and other universal training offers (e.g. unconscious bias etc)?

- HE offers a universal training programme available to all child care providers. This is available on-line and is routinely sent to all settings, this covers health and safety, paediatric first aid, food hygiene, safeguarding as well as early years learning and childhood development.
- Bespoke training is also available to all settings on a wide range of issues which might be needed.
- HE has a core belief that all settings should understand childhood attachment and trauma and how these issues impact on children's behaviour, learning and development. This training is also free of charge to all settings.
- Dedicated training was also provided for the Charedi community run from Interlink offices.

6.7 What engagement has there been around the SEND Green Paper and the implications for local services supporting children with additional needs?

- The Cabinet member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play noted that two professional engagement sessions had been held for local settings to discuss the implications of the Green Paper. A SEND Inclusion Conference would also be held, and part of this day would be dedicated to the Green Paper. The Cabinet member indicated that the Council would be happy to stage further events for other sectors if needed.

6.8 From the Commission's consultation with childcare providers it was evident that there were significant problems in getting early help to children with SEND in an effective and timely manner.

- Providers reported a 10 month waiting list for Portage (home support children with SEND to enable them to access childcare);
- Providers reported significant delays in getting assessment appointments at Speech and Language Therapist (SLT) or other paediatric assessments to support EHCP application process;
- EHCP assessment processes were reported to be complex, lengthy and time consuming process which can take up to 12 months to get support and for which providers are not compensated;
- Final packages of support did not fully recognising the staffing costs and resources required in supporting children with SEND in childcare settings;
- Childcare settings supporting local vulnerable children with high needs (e.g on a Child Protection Plan or Children in Need) were doing so with limited access to additional resources.
- It was noted that there was an annual early years conference and next years focus would be on anti-racist practice.

From the above the Commission had a number of questions:

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- (i) The Inclusion Fund is used to support children with SEND in childcare settings. Given the scale of SEND needs in early years settings can officers set out. What is the current total budget for the Inclusion Fund and has this been increased to reflect demand?
- Officers noted that this was a fund to support children to access their early years educational entitlements where there is an emerging special educational need (but not a diagnosis). The setting is required to gather evidence to support the application and submit this to a SEND Panel. If successful additional funding is provided to help resource additional staffing or training to support the child to access early years education. Applications are collated termly and financial allocations to settings are also termly. The setting can progress the application to an EHCP if required.
 - It was noted whilst there is support available through the Area SENCO, it was acknowledged that this was a very small team. It was reiterated that it was the responsibility of settings (alongside parents) to make applications.
 - Funding has increased year on year as more applications for the Inclusion Fund are received.
 - It was noted that the level of resource provided to settings through the Inclusion Fund was above that provided by other neighbouring authorities and greater than grant funding through the EHCP itself. A review of funding levels was in progress to ensure greater consistency.
 - The budget for the Inclusion Fund was just under £1m which is up from £900k from 2 years ago. Officers noted that all applications, providing they are sufficiently evidenced, are funded.
- (ii) What can the Council do to develop and improve access to local childcare specialists (e.g. SLT, education psychologists) to help speed up assessment processes for EHCPs and other SEND assessments? Does the service have any data on the delays and the length of time that parents are needing to wait and what actions have been taken to minimise such waiting times?
- It was acknowledged that post pandemic, considerable delays were being experienced by families needing to access services including CAMHS, SLT, OT and other therapeutic support. Whilst waiting lists were minimal before Covid, there were now waiting lists of between 18-24 months for some of these services. This issue is being discussed across the strategic partnership. It was also noted that Covid continued to impact staffing and broader service provision. Services recognised that delays in accessing services was having an impact on children and families and were developing strategies to reduce the backlog, including 'no-meeting days' where practitioners focused solely on meeting, assessing and supporting children and families.
- (iii) The Area SENCO role plays a key role in supporting the SEND needs of children in local childcare settings. How many area SENCO support local childcare settings? What can be done to increase capacity and support provided to childcare settings?
- Officers noted that questions (ii) and (iii) should also be picked up with Inclusion and SEND service directly.

ACTION: The Commission to write to the Hackney Education team for a more detailed response to (ii) and (iii) above and strategic plan to reduce waiting lists.

- (iv) It was noted that in other local authorities, childcare providers are compensated for the time it takes to complete SEND assessments and monitoring? Could such a similar scheme be developed in Hackney?
- HE was not aware of any part of the budget which could be used to offset the costs of providers in making applications for the Inclusion Fund or an EHCP. Officers would look into this however, to see what additional support might be provided to help settings make applications on behalf of children and families.

Action: Hackney Education to investigate whether any financial compensation could be provided to offset settings costs in the preparation and evidencing of SEND support applications.

- (v) Childcare providers, many in the voluntary sector and operating from very limited budgets are supporting numerous vulnerable and disadvantaged children. What additional funding can be made available to support vulnerable children in these settings (above the childcare funding rate)?
- There was an Early Years Children in Need Panel chaired by a local provider. It was hoped that every child with a social worker in Hackney was supported to access early years provision. The early help service will work with settings to support the needs of these children in local settings, but it was acknowledged that in many cases the needs of these children exceeded what could be supported by those settings. In this context, parents were encouraged to place children with local children's centres which had additional resources to support them.
- (vi) The Commission noted that the Let's Get Hackney Talking initiative to improve access to SLT was moved to an appointment only basis from a drop-in service during the pandemic. Are there plans to restore the drop-in, and if not, why not?
- This service did move on-line during Covid, but is now moving back to face to face drop-in sessions again. These sessions were not all back as yet, but the intention was that these would all eventually be restored to drop-in services. It was pointed out that the recruitment crisis faced by early years and childcare providers was also being experienced across the entire system of children's services.

- 6.9 The consultation with providers highlighted the severe financial constraints on childcare providers which were impacting on the sustainability and viability of many of their businesses. Providers noted that free childcare funding did not cover their costs, and that paid for childcare was used to subsidise 'free' provision. Providers also noted delays in notification of funding levels from the Council. What more can the Council do to support struggling childcare providers?
- Officers apologised for the late notice in which providers were notified of their funding rate for free childcare this year. Prior to Covid, the funding rate for providers was calculated annually for providers, but during the pandemic the DfE moved to termly calculations. This had impacted on the accounting

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workloads of local authorities as more time was needed to close-off and restart new accounts to adjust to new funding levels.

- It should be noted that the base rate for providers in Hackney was £4.99 per/hour per child, but this could rise up to £7.49 with the application of qualifying allowances (area of deprivation where child lives, staff qualifications, children in receipt of free school meals (FSM)). Officers indicated that other adjacent local authorities had a 'protected funding' rate which resulted in higher childcare funding. This issue was being challenged with the DfE.
- Sustainability of childcare settings is being challenged by the financial crisis. The problem of financial sustainability was made worse by the fact that some settings would not take children wishing to take up their free entitlement, which meant that in other settings up to 80% of children were those accessing their free entitlement and this was financially challenging.

6.10 Understanding that this is a very challenging working environment (work demands and levels of remuneration) what mental health advice, help and support is available for early years staff? The Commission noted that there was a significant staff turnover in some early care settings, what impact does this have on children in their care?

- The Early Years Service recognised the mental health issues and other challenges that settings were facing, and there were a range of meetings and other support mechanisms across each locality cluster to support staff. These meetings provided an opportunity for local childcare managers to meet, discuss and share issues of concern and help to identify solutions. It was important to ensure that managers felt adequately supported across all these settings so that they can in turn support their own staff.
- The government was intending to lower the staffing ratio from 1:4 to 1:5 as a way of easing cost pressures in childcare settings. It was noted that this proposal was not welcomed across the sector as this would impact on the quality of childcare services which could be provided.
- High staff turnover does impact on children, particularly where agency staff were being used. The turnover does not provide a stable care and support which is important for child development.

6.11 Hackney has recorded a decline in the uptake of this free funded 2-year-old childcare (15hrs) - which is directed at children who are most in need. Accepting that this is part of a wider regional and national trend, what more can Hackney Education and the wider council do to effectively target and support this cohort of families to increase uptake? Is there any analysis of the barriers to local uptake? It was concerning to note that the number of childcare settings which offer the funded free childcare for 2 year olds has reduced from 134 to 120 - does Hackney Education understand what the reasons might be for this? Is there any possibility of extending free childcare to 2 year-olds?

- There has been a decline in the number of eligible children for free childcare for 2 year olds as notified by the Department of Work and Pensions. Eligibility is set by the DfE and funding allocations of approximately £6.60 p/h is passported directly to providers. 2022 census data had just been released which demonstrated that there were 1,766 2 year olds eligible for free childcare which was substantially less than 2018, where there were 2,300

eligible children. This has an impact on settings with fewer children accessing services which leads to a reduced income from this cohort. This was part of a national trend. The take up of free childcare by those eligible had increased to 66%, which was amongst the highest in inner London. It was acknowledged however that 34% of 2 year olds were not accessing their free entitlement and the service was developing more innovative ways to reach these children and families. From 2021, DWP provided telephone numbers of children eligible for free entitlement which enabled the families of every child not taking up their free entitlement to be contacted and for officers to assess what support might be needed to help them access childcare.

- 6.12 The Commission thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from the Commission. It was agreed that the Commission would write to the Cabinet Member and Service with some of the suggestions and recommendations which came out of its consultation with childcare providers.

ACTION: The Commission to write to Cabinet Members for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play setting out the outcomes and recommendations from its consultation with child care providers.

7. Admissions and School Places

- 7.1 Each year the Commission reviews local admission processes for both reception and secondary school level entry and the wider school place planning role of the Council. This helps the Commission maintain oversight of school places across and ensure that there is sufficient local capacity. Hackney Education provided a report on school admissions outcomes and school place planning
- 7.2 The Cabinet member introduced this item noting that for the overwhelming majority of parents, a Hackney school was their first preference for their child. A majority of parents also secured a place for their child at either their first or second preference school which was in line with regional averages. The report highlighted the ongoing issue with falling school numbers in primary settings which would eventually feed into secondary school numbers. This was a regional issue being felt across schools in London.
- 7.3 The Director of Education noted that the School Estates Strategy was agreed earlier this year by Cabinet which would respond to the issues raised by falling school rolls and the need to increase in-borough SEND Provision. The Head of School Organisation and Commissioning noted the following from the report:
- There was a 1.8% decrease in the number of children applying for reception places in Hackney in 2022 compared to 2021. This was part of a longer trend which has seen a decrease of 18% of applications for reception places since 2017. Whilst London figures demonstrated a similar pattern of admission, this was more pronounced in Hackney (there being only a 9.4% fall across London since 2017);
 - Local Schools remain popular with over 9/10 parents choosing a Hackney school at their first preference.
 - In terms of the 36 families who were not given any preferred primary schools, they were offered a place in the nearest school with vacancies. Given the

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number of vacancies across the sector, most were offered places reasonably close to where they lived.

- Secondary admissions showed a similar pattern to that recorded for reception, with a 3.4% reduction in applications from 2021 to 2022 and a reduction of 8.7% since 2017. It was noted that the decline in the number of applications to Hackney schools since 2017 runs counter to London wide data where there has been a 4.2% increase since 2017. It was not clear as to why this was the case, though there had been a recent trend for families to move from inner to outer London boroughs and further beyond.
- 86.5% expressed a first preference for a Hackney secondary school and 89% were allocated a school from one of their three preferred choices which corresponded to London wide data.
- 151 families (6.6%) were not offered a place at any of their preferred schools which was just above the London average.

Questions from the Commission

7.4 In respect of school place planning, a significant fall in the demand for reception places is anticipated for 2023 and beyond? Are any further reductions in the PAN envisaged for 2023/24? Are there any patterns or trends among those schools noticing the most fall in demand for places? How are schools required to reduce their numbers identified? Is this linked to areas of social disadvantage?

- The PAN listed are permanent and need to be consulted upon with the local community at least 20 months in advance. Some schools do ask for a temporary PAN to help them through short-term dips in pupil numbers and applications. In many cases the schools themselves request PANs to assist them in budget planning. Hackney Education did however initiate a number of discussions with schools where falling numbers were recorded. It was noted that this was a joint discussion and agreement between the school and Hackney Education.
- It was emphasised that parents have a legal right to choose the school which they would prefer to send their child, and in this context, it can be difficult to reduce numbers at schools which are popular or oversubscribed. The overall distribution of schools and number of vacancies across the borough was skewed, with greater capacity noted in the south-west of the borough. The Estates Strategy would help manage this issue.

7.5 For those children without a secondary place, can the Council explain its policy and approach to place allocations? It was noted that in some areas of the borough, children may have to pass up to 4 other schools to attend a secondary school place which has been allocated which does have vacancies? This issue was exemplified in the report at Table 3 which demonstrated that 52 children from E5 were not offered a place on admissions day, yet Mossbourne Academy which was in E5 admitted 24 children from outside the borough. Similar situations were noted for children located in E9 postcode wards (on the Kingsmead Estate).

- The Cabinet member noted that they were aware of this issue and were working with officers and local schools to develop a response.
- Officers noted that the Council does have the power to change the admissions criteria for community secondary schools (Stoke Newington and Haggston) but admissions criteria for the other remaining 10+ secondary schools are set by voluntary aided bodies (as in faith schools) individual

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governing bodies or Multi-Academy Trusts (for academies). Thus the Council's position for the majority of these schools was that of *seeking to influence* admissions criteria.

- Central government sets out statutory criteria (such as LAC) and other issues which can be considered by the school in determining admissions criteria e.g. presence of siblings and distance lived from the school. This was the position for children living on the Kingsmead Estate who wanted to attend City Academy. This Academy has a standard admissions procedure, but given the demand for the service, there is little scope for local admissions from 'black spots' once places have been allocated to LAC and children with siblings. A longer term approach would be needed for Hackney Education to engage and consult with local secondary schools to highlight those areas where access is difficult, and to encourage them to change admissions policies. It should be noted that the Council cannot impose any changes.

7.6 In other boroughs, schools have been closed or required to merge. What is the position in Hackney, is the Council committed to keeping all schools open? How will falling school rolls impact on the local School Estates Strategy and the need to create additional resources to meet growing demand for SEND services (specialist provision and in-house provision in maintained schools)?

- The Council is committed to ensuring that children receive the best quality of education and that every child has access to a good local school. The School Estates Strategy is fundamental to the delivery of these objectives. The impact of falling rolls does require the Council to look at options however, including Additional Resource Provisions in schools. There were currently two empty educational sites (one at Nightingale site at Harrington Hill) and the Council was exploring whether additional specialist education provision on these sites. Longer term trends do however predict rising populations in Hackney and the Council would be reluctant to take any action which closes future options to respond to this.
- Schools have merged in the past, but there were no plans for this course of action in Hackney at present. All options must be considered, however, to ensure that schools remain sustainable.
- The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play noted that there had been an increase of £13m of additional funding had been agreed by DfE over the next two years which will support ½ of the new SEND places planned in the School Estates Strategy. It would however, be too simplistic to assume that schools with declining school rolls can be used to increase SEND provision as there were many assessments needed to make this decision (e.g. building suitability, location etc.). Phase 1A was agreed in January and a Cabinet paper for next proposals would be brought forward later in 2022/ early 2023.

7.7 What financial support is being put in place by Hackney Education and the wider Council to ensure the sustainability of local schools?

- It was very difficult to provide additional financial support to school as funding was determined by the numbers of children, and declining school rolls was creating financial challenges. Schools Forum has agreed additional support for those schools which do have to reduce their staffing numbers.

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- 7.8 What evidence is there that popular local schools in more affluent areas are accepting students above their allocated PAN? If this is happening, this can exacerbate the problem of falling school rolls elsewhere.
- In relation to schools offering above PAN, whilst this was not common practice in other areas, it was noted that a number of local secondary schools do over-offer between 1st March and school census day in October (which counts to their funding). Schools indicated over-offering (by between 6-12 places) was warranted because of the school appeals process and evidence which suggested that numbers fell back before the start of term. It was acknowledged that this did have an impact on other local secondary schools, and that this year that impact was greater because of the declining size of this cohort overall. Over-offering can be beneficial however, as it can help the local authority to place children it is statutorily required to do so. If the cohort continues to decline, the Council would need to reconsider this situation.
- 7.9 The Commission is aware that Hackney is hosting a number of Ukrainian refugee children as part of a number of national schemes. Have all re-settling Ukrainian children been given timely access to local education services?
- There have been sufficient places to allow all new arrivals and refugees to take up places in local primary and secondary schools. The government has been very clear how admissions must operate, therefore Ukrainian children cannot be prioritised over other children who may be waiting for school places and schools must stick to the school admissions code. The service was not aware of Ukrainian children experiencing long delays, but it was not always able to offer places nearest to their host's home.
- 7.10 At page 66 of the report pack, the admissions arrangements for children with an EHCP for reception entry notes that 32 children were under assessment as of 15/2/22. Will all EHCP assessments be completed for children in readiness for September 2022 entry? Is there a substantial backlog in the service given the number of children waiting to be assessed?
- Officers noted that children's additional needs are only beginning to be identified at around 3 and 4 years of age and it is not uncommon for children to have their EHCP completed after they have started reception.
- 7.11 Planning for school places for children in the Orthodox Jewish Community remains a significant concern which has been set out in the Stamford Hill Area Action Plan. Can officers update the Commission on work taking place to work with the Orthodox Jewish Community to help develop in-borough provision (recognising that many will prefer to attend schools in the independent sector).
- Around 70-75% of Orthodox Jewish Children aged 5-16 are educated in Independent Schools which are inspected by Ofsted. Hackney Education is working closely with the Independent Sector to help improve the quality of teaching and Ofsted inspection outcomes. Additional support provided would have to be on a traded basis. The two maintained schools (Lubovich and Yesoda Hatora) have made progress but it would be difficult to secure a 'good' rating for these schools whilst the curriculum is so narrow.
 - Children who attend Yeshiva are likely to experience significant change in the coming years as the White Paper makes provisions for such settings to be registered and therefore included within the inspection framework of Ofsted.

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It should be noted that the Orthodox Jewish community remains opposed to these new provisions.

7.12 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. The session has highlighted the importance of the following issues which the Commission would wish to maintain oversight of:

- Importance of School Estate Strategy
- To ensure that further work with schools to remove 'admissions black spots';
- To continue to assess what support is provided to schools to ensure that all are sustainable.

8. Outcome from School Exclusions - Cabinet response

8.1 The Commission completed its in-depth review of school exclusions in December 2021. The Executive responses to the Commission's recommendations were considered and agreed by Cabinet at its meeting on March 14th 2022. The Cabinet response, including the detailed response to the recommendations reviewed by the Commission noting that Hackney Education agreed in-full to 17 of the 18 recommendations made.

8.2 The Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care reiterated that tackling school exclusions and the associated disproportionalities was a priority for the Council and welcomed the recommendations of the Commission. It was hoped that exclusions should be reduced to below national averages.

8.3 In relation to recommendation 10 (which was partially agreed) the Chair acknowledged the challenges of supporting what were independent (or free) schools. It was hoped that an expanded site and new role for the Pupil Referral Unit would reduce the need for children to be placed in other alternative provision (AP). The Chair noted that within the site visits to AP, it was noted that the standard of facilities at some of these settings fell well below what other secondary schools were offering pupils. The Commission wanted a commitment that whichever setting children were being placed, be it in maintained or alternative provision sites, that there were clear standards of provision. The Commission felt that greater assurance was needed in that existing facilities meet the needs of AP attendees.

- The Director of Education noted that a dedicated officer was working on developing much closer contact with the AP sector in relation to performance monitoring, quality assurance and support to ensure improvements are delivered. In response to children's rights and behaviour policies, the Director noted that a Diversity and Inclusion Systems Lead has been appointed to take forward the Diversity & Inclusion Charter.
- The Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play noted that the SEND Green Paper would provide additional status for AP which would assist developments in this area and that work of the Commission in this area had been welcomed.

8.4 Given the length and detail within the report it was agreed that it would be helpful to develop a summary of the report which could be circulated to more widely.

Agreed: That the Commission develop a short summary of the report which can be disseminated more widely across the Council.

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8.5 A member of the Commission suggested that Recommendation 1 (relating to exclusion data monitoring and oversight) might also include some reference to SEND status of children. It was also noted that UNICEF were operating an education programme in primary schools to ensure that children were more aware of their rights and to encourage schools to develop more inclusive and positive behaviours policies. The Chair responded by saying it was hoped that the Commission would be able to pick up some of this additional work in this year's work programme. The Commission would write to the Inclusion Team to ascertain if SEND status can be included within the monitoring report due in October 2022.

Action: To write to the Head of Wellbeing & Education Safeguarding to request that SEND status be included in the Exclusions monitoring report which is due October 31st 2022.

8.6 The recommendations are normally reviewed 6-9 months after agreement by Cabinet which would require the follow up report to come around the end of the year or the beginning of 2022.

Action: To write to Hackney Education to confirm that an update on the recommendations would be taken around December 2022 or January 2023 (depending on work programme commitments).

9. Work Programme 2021/22

9.1 The Commission develops a new work programme each year to ensure that it remains current and relevant to the needs and priorities of the community and other stakeholders. It builds a new work programme through three methods:

- **Standing Items** - those items which are of critical importance and which the Commission has a role to monitor and oversee. These are detailed in Appendix A
- **Public and stakeholder Consultation** - a wide ranging consultation to generate suggestions for consideration within the work programme. These are detailed in Appendix B
- **Horizon scanning** - emerging issues of national and local importance which may further inform work programming. These are detailed in Appendix C

9.2 The purpose of the work programme was threefold:

1. Publish all suggestions to ensure transparency and openness
2. To allow members to review and discuss suggested items/ topics
3. To allow members to agreeing to agree on and prioritise those items or issues which should be included in the work programme

9.3 Given the commitment to standing items and existing work of the Commission there was limited capacity for the number of new items which might be agreed for 2023. There were however a number of options to develop and extend the range of items included:

- Commission can factor in Cabinet Member Questions - when members may select up to three different topic areas.
- Review - the Commission is still completing Adolescents Entering Care but would be a further opportunity for more detailed review work once this was

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- completed (after November 2022) (possibly scrutiny in a day);
- The Commission can hold informal sessions with officers or undertake site visits to assist in its work.

9.4 The most important part of the session was to prioritise those issues to be included in the work programme. How and when items are taken forward in the scrutiny work programme can be decided and agreed upon later by the Commission. Important considerations for prioritising issues for inclusion within the work programme:

- 1) Does the issue or concern resonate with the local community?
- 2) Is it an area where scrutiny can potentially have a real impact?
- 3) Does this issue align with or contribute to meeting local priorities?

9.5 Depending on the nature of the topic selected, the level and nature of scrutiny required the item might take a number of different forms:

- A short report which can be taken at a Commission meeting
- More detailed analysis with other contributors - where a whole meeting dedicated to this issue
- More in depth analysis with other contributors and evidence gathering - through a scrutiny in a day exercise or longer review.

9.6 Members of the Commission discussed the suggestions put forward and highlighted policy or service areas that should be prioritised. It was noted that some issues may be joint pieces of work which require cooperation with other scrutiny Commissions:

- Cllr Binne Lubbock - could the issues be mapped out via topic area - this would assist members' decisions. It would also be useful to have an indication from Hackney Youth Parliament (HYP) of their priorities for consideration.
- The Chair highlighted two possible areas for consideration for in an in-depth review for the Commission
 - (i) From the outcomes of the Child Q scrutiny and the suggestions of HYP, there appeared to be some consensus around the need to look at school behaviour policies and their impact on children and education - here it was noted that HYP suggested that children often struggled to adapt outside strict behaviour codes in their school;
 - (ii) To undertake an exploratory analysis of children's social care to understand more about the demographics of those children assessed to be Children in Need, on a Child Protection Plan and who become looked after and to assess if there are disproportionalities within this data which need to be addressed.
- The Vice Chair supported the need for the Commission to investigate school behaviour policies as there was much public interest in this matter. The incident surrounding Child Q had highlighted the need to assess the impact of school behaviour policies and if these were disproportionality impacting on certain groups of students. It was suggested that it would be helpful if the Commission could include local schools and young people as well as reviewing current research and consult other boroughs.
- Cllr Suso-Runge suggested that the Commission incorporate the need to develop a Leaving Care Plan and Care Charter as part of its work on adolescents entering care. In relation to any work on fostering, it would also be helpful to investigate kinship caring and what happens when this breaks

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down.

- Cllr Sizer also supported an assessment of school behaviour policies and the need for schools to have a trauma informed approach to supporting children in their care. It was also suggested that when the Commission looks at Fostering, if it could also include some analysis of adoption and the process to support parents. Many of these issues might be considered in the context of mental health services and heightened needs of children and young people post pandemic.
- Jo Macleod also supported the need to investigate school behaviour policies, perhaps with an emotional wellbeing and mental health approach.
 - Mental health was also a significant issue for young people coming out of the pandemic with increasing waiting lists for CAMHS in response to rising incidence of eating disorders and self-harm. Many of these mental health issues were just emerging.
 - It was also suggested that the Commission should look into school avoidance and absence post pandemic and to assess what work is being undertaken to engage, involve and support affected children;
 - Given the increasing numbers of young people requiring an EHCPs, SEND provision is another priority for the Commission in terms of policy and practices to respond to these needs within schools and specialist settings. The Commission will need to monitor and review the implications of the SEND Green paper and track the progress of the School Estates Strategy.
- Cllr Turbet-Delof also supported the suggestion to review local school behaviour policies, exploring the different cultural impacts that these may have as well as the mental health impact of excessive policies. It was noted that some children experienced acute anxiety in relation to complying with school behaviour codes and were often fearful, lacking confidence and self-agency when they left settings where these were in operation.

9.7 The Chair summarised the following:

- Suggestions for the work programme straddled four key areas:
 - SEND;
 - Mental health
 - Behaviour Policies
 - Children's Social Care - demography, fostering and adoption

9.8 The Chair indicated that the Commission would work up and scope out suggestions into possible agenda items for inclusion within the work programme for 2022/23. The Commission would share this ahead of the next meeting for members input and further discussion. The Commission would also meet with officers to help scope prospective items. Items for September would need to be agreed early in the summer to ensure officers had sufficient time to prepare. It was noted that the recruitment and retention of foster carers was likely to be included on the 8th September agenda.

Action: The Commission agreed to map out suggestions by topic area, and develop more detailed agenda item proposals for inclusion within the work programme which would be circulated to members.

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10. Minutes

- 10.1 The minutes of January 19th 2022, February 28th 2022 and March 14th 2022 were noted and agreed by the Commission.

Agreed: the Commission agreed the minutes of previous meetings.

11. Any other business

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

Meeting closed at 9.40pm