

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 14 September 2023

7.00 pm

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

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

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

A back up link is provided below in case of technical difficulties:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k20RhZ6CVk>

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Mark Carroll

Chief Executive, London Borough of Hackney

Members: Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair), Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Eluzer Goldberg, Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott, Cllr Midnight Ross, Cllr Ifraax Samatar, Cllr Anya Sizer, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge, Cllr Lynne Troughton and Cllr Sarah Young

Co-optees: Andy English, Jo Macleod, Chanelle Paul, Marianne Chiromo and Mariya Bham

Agenda

ALL MEETINGS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Interest**
- 3 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

- 4 Sexual & Reproductive Health of Children and Young People (19.05)** (Pages 9 - 28)
- To assess future provision of sexual and reproductive health services in the context of the (Draft) City & Hackney Sexual Health Strategy and the discontinuation of the CHYPS Plus contract.
- 5 Childhood Food Poverty and Free School Meals (20.45)** (Pages 29 - 68)
- In response to Commission's work on Free School Meals and Food Poverty in schools to note the Hackney Education report '*Tackling Food Poverty In Education*' and agree any follow up scrutiny for this work.
- 6 Unregistered Educational Settings (20.55)** (Pages 69 - 72)
- To note the response from Claire Countinho MP (Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing) to the Commission's letter on safeguarding risks of unregistered educational settings.
- 7 School Estates Strategy (Falling School Rolls) - Informal Consultation (21.00)** (Pages 73 - 84)
- To note the response of the Commission to the informal consultation on the School Estates Strategy (Falling School Rolls) and proposals to close two and merge a further four primary schools.
- 8 Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers (21.10)** (Pages 85 - 86)
- To note and discuss the outline report and draft recommendations of the Commission.
- To Follow.*
- 9 Work Programme (21.20)** (Pages 87 - 92)
- To note draft work programme for the Commission for 2023/24.
- 10 Minutes of the Previous Meeting** (Pages 93 - 118)
- To note and agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th June 2023.
- 11 Any Other Business**
- To include updates on children and young people related issues from other scrutiny commissions

Access and Information

Public Involvement and Recording

Public Attendance at the Town Hall for Meetings

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

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

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

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

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Rights of Press and Public to Report on Meetings

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

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

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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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<p>Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission</p> <p>September 14th 2023</p> <p>Item 4 - Draft Sexual Health Strategy & Sexual Reproductive Health Services for Children & Young People</p>	<p>Item No</p> <p>4</p>
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Session Briefing

City & Hackney Public Health Service have produced a [Draft Sexual Health Strategy \(2023-28\)](#) which is out for [consultation](#) until September 20th 2023. This strategy sets out a number of overarching aims including supporting healthy and fulfilling sexual relationships for all residents, access to sexual and reproductive health services, effective prevention (including zero HIV transmission) and support to vulnerable populations. Young people have specific sexual and reproductive health needs which are reflected within the priorities and expected outcomes of the strategy and which are summarised below.*

[CHYPS Plus](#) was commissioned to provide a range of sexual and reproductive health services,¹ emotional support as well as referral to other support services² for children and young people aged 11-19 in Hackney. As this service has not been reaching contracted targets (service numbers, target age range and onward referrals) City & Hackney Public Health Service has decided to discontinue this service from 30/11/23.

At its next meeting on the 14th September, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission will therefore assess the sexual and reproductive health services for children and young people across Hackney. It will do so within the strategic and policy framework of the above Draft Sexual Health Strategy and the [Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022-23](#), the latter of which sets out local priorities for sexual and reproductive health services for young people aged under 30.

With the assistance of local stakeholders and other contributors, the Commission aims to assist local Public Health Services by:

- Contributing to feedback to City and Hackney Draft Sexual Health Strategy;
- Assessing the implications for of the discontinuation of the CHYPS Plus service and the impact that this may have on local services and on children and young people;
- Considering the alternative local provision to CHYPS services, and if any additional provision might be needed;

¹ Stop Smoking, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, contraception, pregnancy testing, Emotional Health and support, Hepatitis B screening, Immunisations and Condoms.

² Referrals to other services include termination of pregnancy services, dietician, psychology and counselling services.

- Determining what future models of provision of sexual and reproductive health services might look like (for example, through plans for a super youth hub).

More broadly, the scrutiny session will provide an opportunity for members to reflect on the sexual and reproductive health priorities and outcomes for young people, which can be reflected in a formal response to the consultation.

Contributors

A number of local stakeholders have been invited to contribute to discussions at this scrutiny session, which include the following:

- City & London Public Health: *Sandra Husbands, DPH; Chris Lovitt, Deputy Director; Carolyn Sharpe, Consultant in Public Health.*
- Homerton Hospital: *Mags Shaughnessy, Interim Divisional Director of Operations CCS Division; Dr Sarah Creighton, Consultant in Sexual Health and HIV*
- Young Hackney: *David Wright Health & Wellbeing Team Leader*
- Hackney Healthwatch: *Sally Beaven, Executive Director; Kanariya Yuseinova, Enter and View and Volunteer Manager*
- British Association of Sexual Health & HIV, Adolescent Sexual Health Interest Group, *Darren Tippets & Sarah McCarthy (Health Adviser and Safeguarding Lead, CNWL FT)*
- *Young Researchers - Hackney Super Youth Hub*

Format of the session

The scrutiny session will commence at 7.05 pm and is scheduled to last for 90-95 minutes. An outline of the session is as set out below:

7.05	<u>Introduction:</u> Chair, Cllr Sophie Conway
7.10-7.45	<u>Stakeholder summaries (5-6 mins ea.)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) City & Hackney Public Health b) Young Researchers (Super Youth Hub) c) Homerton Hospital d) Young Hackney e) Healthwatch f) BASHH
7.40-8.30	<u>Q & A with Members and Contributors</u> The session will aim to address the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The strategic priorities for sexual and reproductive health service provision for young people in City & Hackney? - What are young people's priorities for sexual and reproductive health services? - How will the discontinuation of CHYPS Plus impact on local sexual and reproductive health service provision for young people? - How will existing services meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of children and young people and will further provision be required? - How will specialist sexual and reproductive health needs and inequalities in access be addressed in the new configuration?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are sexual and reproductive health services provided in other boroughs and what is considered best practice? - What is the future vision for sexual and reproductive health service provision in City & Hackney?
8.30-8.35	<u>Summary and next steps:</u> Chair, Cllr Sophie Conway

Voice of Young People

It is important that members of the Commission speak to young people to help understand their views on sexual and reproductive health services. Ahead of the meeting therefore, the Commission will hold two focus groups with young people from Hackney Youth Parliament, Hackney Young Futures and Hackney of Tomorrow (Council for looked after children and care leavers).

The focus groups will ascertain young people's priorities and preferences for sexual and reproductive health service provision:

- Where do they currently (or would) go for information, advice or treatment?
- Do young people prefer dedicated services (only for young people), and do they prefer these in clinical or community settings?
- Do young people prefer open-access services (walk-in), or fixed appointments and when is the best time for these?
- What do young people think about using online services (such as Sexual Health London)?
- What should future services look like?

Emerging issues from the focus groups with young people will be circulated to members and participants ahead of the meeting for information.

Key Background documents

[Draft Sexual Health Strategy \(2023-28\)](#) City & Hackney Public Health Service

[Director of Public Health Annual Report 2022-23](#), (Priorities for sexual and reproductive health services for young people aged under 30) City & Hackney Public Health Service.

[City & Hackney Sexual Health Needs Assessment](#) City & Hackney Public Health Service, 2023

[National Guideline on the Management of Sexually Transmitted Infections and Related Conditions in Children and Young People](#) British Association of Sexual Health & HIV (2021)

[Access to Emergency Hormonal Contraception in Hackney](#), Hackney Healthwatch, 2023

[Clifden Centre \(Sexual Health Services at Homerton\) Enter and View Report](#) Hackney Healthwatch, 2022

***City & Hackney Draft Sexual Health Strategy - Priorities and key outcomes for children and young people.**

Priority 1- Healthy and fulfilling sexual relationships

- **Outcome 1:** Young people (YP) in City and Hackney have equitable access to good quality, comprehensive and inclusive relationship and sex education (RSE) in schools and settings of alternative provision.
- **Outcome 2:** Young people have access to appropriate and specialist sexual health services

Priority 2 - Good reproductive health across the life course

- **Outcome 1:** Reproductive health services consider the life course from adolescence to the post-menopausal stage

Priority 3 - STI prevention and treatment

- **Outcome 1:** Young people have access to accurate, inclusive and appropriate information and education on sexual health
- **Outcome 2:** Young people know where to source free condoms and STI tests and have no barriers to access and uptake
- **Outcome 3:** Young people have access to appropriate and specialist sexual health treatment services

Priority 4 - Getting to Zero HIV

Priority 5 - Vulnerable populations and those with complex needs

Report to: CYP Scrutiny Commission

Title: Young People's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Hackney and the City of London

Authors: Froeks Kamminga | Senior Public Health Specialist
Danny Turton | Public Health Specialty Registrar
Nicola Donnelly | Principal Public Health Specialist

Approvers: Carolyn Sharpe | Consultant in Public Health
Chris Lovitt | Deputy Director of Public Health

Date: 14 September 2023

Aim

This briefing provides an overview of:

- The Hackney and City of London draft Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health
- The 2022/23 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health which focuses on how to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people in the City of London and Hackney.
- The sex and reproductive health needs of young people in Hackney and the City of London and current service provision.
- Why the contract to provide Young People's Clinical Health and Wellbeing (CHYPS Plus) Service will end on the 30th November 2023
- How the Children and Young People (CYP) Scrutiny Commission can assist in improving sexual and reproductive health needs of young people in Hackney and the City of London.

Contents

1. Context	2
2. Hackney and City of London draft Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health	3
3. Director of Public Health Draft Annual Report: Healthy Sexually	4
4. Summary of the local commissioning and delivery landscape	6
5. CHYPS Plus contract expiry	6
7. Planning for a potential Super Youth Hub	9
8. Opportunities to better meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people	10
Appendix 1 - YP's activity data for the core sexual health service and online Sexual Health London portal	14

1. Context

- 1.1. The City of London Corporation and London Borough of Hackney have a statutory responsibility to protect and promote the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) of our local populations. This includes commissioning open access clinical sexual health services, health promotion and sex education with an annual investment of over £8m per year.
- 1.2. SRH is an important public health issue due to the impact on individuals of poor sexual health, very high local levels of poor sexual health and the high costs and wider societal impact of treating poor sexual health and unwanted pregnancies.
- 1.3. The 2022 [sexual health needs analysis](#) found inequalities in access and uptake of services, as well as outcomes, by age, ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender including:
 - Highest rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), especially Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea, are in young people and young adults.
 - Gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) have higher rates of STIs and they are much more likely to attend a sexual health clinic than heterosexual men.
 - Women of black ethnicity have both a higher uptake of emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) and termination of pregnancy (TOP).

- 1.4. The needs analysis informed the preparation of a draft strategy on sexual and reproductive health. This five-year strategy for City and Hackney will set out the approach to improving SRH including a more integrated approach that brings together commissioned services and provides a better join up with other services and providers, including the NHS and the voluntary sector.

2. Hackney and City of London draft Strategy for Sexual and Reproductive Health

- 2.1. The draft five-year [strategy](#) has five themes:

- Healthy and fulfilling sexual relationships
- Good reproductive health across the life course
- STI prevention and treatment
- Getting to Zero new HIV transmissions
- Vulnerable populations and those with complex needs

- 2.2. The first four themes are in line with a NEL-wide SRH strategy that is also currently in development.

- 2.3. Young people are central to the strategy with the first theme being a core foundation to ensure knowledge, awareness and education around sexual health and the importance of comprehensive and inclusive sex and relationship education. Ensuring young people feel confident and knowledgeable with regard to their sexual health and contraceptive choices, before and after their sexual debut, is an important starting point for healthy and informed choices across the life course. Resources and services must be young people friendly, appropriate, accessible and welcoming.

- 2.4. Young people in the City and Hackney have some of the highest rates of STI infections in the country, including reinfection within 12 months. To address this services need to increase access to condoms and condom use, increased testing, rapid effective treatment and high levels of partner notification with confirmed treatment.

- 2.5. Uptake of emergency hormonal contraception (EHC) is highest among 15-19 and 20-24 year olds. EHC is a crucial service provided by Community Pharmacists to prevent unplanned pregnancies but should also be used as an opportunity to promote and provide reliable contraception especially the combined hormonal contraceptive pill ("the pill") and long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) such as implants and coils.

- 2.6. The strategy is currently out for consultation with an [online survey](#), open until 20 September, and online and in-person [consultation sessions](#). The Health and Wellbeing Boards for City and Hackney will consider the 5 year strategy and an initial action plan, to be reviewed annually, for formal adoption later in 2023/ early 2024.

3. Director of Public Health Draft Annual Report: Healthy Sexually

- 3.1. This year's DPH report, [Healthy Sexually](#), focuses on young people's sexual and reproductive health (SRH).
- 3.2. The report highlights the importance that young people are aware of services, that services are young people friendly and are willing to access them. The report also highlights the importance of effective and comprehensive Relationship and Sex Education in schools and colleges.
- 3.3. The report makes five broad recommendations:
- **Community involvement is essential to providing high-quality services:** health providers and commissioners should reconfirm, and put into action, their commitment to collaborate with young people in the co-production of services.
 - **Services must be easily accessible to young people:** refine existing SRH services and explore new initiatives in collaboration with young people to make accessing services as easy as possible.
 - **Young people must be aware of when and how to access support:** improve young people's awareness of services and their willingness to access them.
 - **Focus on enhancing collaboration and partnership working:** continue to develop collaborative working practices across SRH and beyond to mitigate pressures on services and improve user experiences.
 - **Continue to identify and address inequalities in SRH:** ongoing research and audit, undertaken in collaboration with communities, is recommended to identify inequalities and communicate findings to all concerned partners. Such research should be coupled with a commitment to address inequalities that are identified.

4. Summary of local commissioning and services

- 4.1. SRH commissioning is not solely the remit of local authorities. The NHS and Integrated Care Boards (ICB, formerly CCG) are responsible for elements such as termination of pregnancy, fertility and assisted conception and HIV treatment.. Services are provided by the NHS, local authorities as well local voluntary community services (VCS) organisations.
- 4.2. NHS sexual health clinics are legally required to be free and open-access. This means anyone regardless of residency or, immigration status can make an appointment at any specialist sexual health clinic throughout England. There is no need for a referral from a GP nor to prove residency and the cost of the treatment will be rebilled to their local authority of residence.
- 4.3. City and Hackney Public Health directly commission the NHS Homerton Sexual Health Services (SHS) both for our local populations and for those across London. The Homerton now provide a walk in service for anyone under 19 at the [Clifden Centre](#) for contraception (including condoms and emergency hormonal contraception), sexual health advice, pregnancy tests and STI screening and treatment. YP can also access other sexual health services across London.
- 4.4. For those aged 16 years and over, home STI testing kits, routine oral contraception and EHC) can be accessed online at [Sexual Health London](#).
- 4.5. Sexual health services are also available locally through enhanced services commissioned from primary care. Community pharmacies provide free access to EHC, condoms, and chlamydia screening and treatment. All local GP practices provide STI and HIV testing with some practices also providing access to the full range of contraception choice including Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC).
- 4.6. Young Hackney is commissioned to provide sexual health resources, training and signposting (through their education and outreach services to schools, colleges and youth centres) as well as a free [condom distribution](#) service to young people.

5. CHYPS Plus contract expiry

5.1. Overview of CHYPS Plus

- The Young People's Clinical Health and Wellbeing Service (CHYPS Plus) was commissioned to provide a clinical and treatment service for young people aged 11-19 (up to 24 with particular vulnerabilities) to support with sexual health, emotional health and wellbeing, smoking cessation and provide a gateway to specialist weight management and mental health services. This included a dedicated clinical health service for children known to the Youth Justice Service.
- The annual contract value is £540,146. The previous contract expired on 31 August 2023. Following a decision at CPIC in December 2021, the option to extend for a further one-year to 31 August 2024 was granted.
- Public Health decided not to grant the full one-year contract extension to the provider due to significant ongoing concerns relating to the performance and uptake of the service. A three-month extension (until 30 November 2023) was granted to facilitate a smooth termination of the service.

6. Potential gaps for young people

- 6.1. Many young people face additional barriers and healthcare provision is not often "young people friendly". Young people may have additional additional needs, including safeguarding, mental health and addiction issues, vulnerability assessments, or other health and social care needs.
- 6.2. All sexual health services should be 'youth friendly' and ensure that staff are trained to deliver the appropriate care to young people and onward referrals.
- 6.3. As part of the Homerton Sexual Health Service, the City & Hackney Public Health team commissions an outreach service that targets several priority groups including young people. Outreach tends to be provided at youth locations including schools and colleges, halls of residence and leisure centres¹.
- 6.4. In line with the recommendations from the DPH report services are being asked to undertake the following:
 - Improve young people's visibility of and facilitate access to existing sexual services and resources

¹ This includes: B6 College, Guildhall School of Music, Hackney Quest, King's Hall Leisure Centre, Clissold Leisure Centre, Britannia Leisure Centre, London Fields Lido.

- Ensure additional vulnerability factors of young people accessing existing sexual health services are recognised and appropriate support is provided
 - Improve referral pathways to and from existing sexual health services
 - Provide services for individuals unable to access mainstream services, particularly those who are vulnerable
- 6.5. All services need to simplify service provision, enhance collaboration and partnership working, improve user experience and access, and, ultimately, improve outcomes.
- 6.6. Additionally, the City & Hackney Public Health Team, as well as the wider Council, are required to identify substantial savings over the medium term. Therefore the focus for existing (and any additional) SRH services needs to be on increasing cost effectiveness, increasing access/reach, and improving effectiveness through better integration and collaboration.

7. Planning for a potential Super Youth Hub

- 7.1. The 'Super Youth Hub' project aims to integrate health and wellbeing services and to improve young people's autonomy over their own health and wellbeing needs. We anticipate this may look like a holistic, 'one-stop-shop' type hub, navigating across services we currently commission, and delivering a range of health provisions - mental health, primary care, sexual health and others - in a more coordinated way.
- 7.2. Participatory Action Research is being used to engage with young people and the young researchers have now spoken to over 200 young people in City and Hackney in over 24 diverse settings. The report from this research will be available from 14.09.23. Early key findings are that young people want to be able to access services in spaces they already feel comfortable within, with support from consistent professionals who they can build a relationship with and trust.
- 7.3. From this work, a proposal for a 2-year pilot for the 'Super Youth Hub' is being developed, which focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the integrated health offer within one of the neighbourhood quadrants of City and Hackney.
- 7.4. While non-recurrent funding was secured for the design of the Super Youth Hub, there is currently no funding identified for the pilot or delivery of the Super Youth Hub. Potential pilot funding sources are being explored.

- 7.5. For SRH, a dedicated outreach service for young people is being considered to be delivered out of youth hubs alongside youth workers (and other health and wellbeing professionals), with additional training for sexual health nurses in working with young people.

8. Opportunities to better meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people

- 8.1. The table below summarises the key sexual and reproductive health needs of young people in Hackney and the City of London identified through the draft strategy and DPH report. These have been mapped to a set of aspirations and possible opportunities to better meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of young people locally.

Table 1: Summary of young people’s SRH needs across City & Hackney mapped to aspirations and future work plans

Summary of SRH needs	Aspirations to meet needs	Future work plans
<p>1. Very high levels of STIs among young people and poor sexual health</p>	<p>Increase young people’s knowledge, awareness and education around sexual health including comprehensive and inclusive relationship and sex education.</p> <p>1st contact with services is fully utilised to discuss prevention, contraception and safe sexual behaviours, such as consistent condom use and frequent testing.</p> <p>Ensure services are culturally appropriate and equitable in terms of access and outcomes for all young people in City and Hackney.</p>	<p>Review/audit Young Hackney RSE activities to support increased uptake/reach within schools/colleges.</p> <p>Increase collaboration between Young Hackney’s Health & Wellbeing Team, Young Hackney’s Condom Distribution Service (CDS), Homerton Sexual Health Services and Positive East.</p> <p>Promote awareness around the free CDS for young people and the availability of sexual health services (including free condoms and STI testing) at pharmacies & Clifden Centre as a low-barrier service (no appointment needed).</p> <p>Review the support provided by Homerton Sexual Health Services to young people, including training needs, to ensure the specific needs of young people are met.</p> <p>Carry out ongoing reviews/audits, in collaboration with communities, to identify and address inequalities in service access and outcomes.</p>
<p>2. The SRH service delivery landscape is complex. Young people - especially those who are vulnerable - face additional barriers to accessing/navigating services. Closure of the CHYPS</p>	<p>All young people in City and Hackney are both aware of and able to access the services available to them to support their sexual and reproductive health.</p>	<p>Leverage opportunities within existing contracts and/or build improved service promotion, communication and navigation support into the Super Youth Hub Pilot.</p> <p>Focus current outreach services or commission</p>

<p>service may exacerbate this issue for the small number of young Hackney residents who accessed the service</p>	<p>Communications and engagement channels are improved to reach a greater proportion of the young population for example, using web chat, developing a social media strategy/presence, and having a single point of contact for service access.</p> <p>Outreach sexual health services attend a wide range of locations frequented by young people and also reach those who face the greatest barriers to accessing services (including places of alternative provision, young people with learning disabilities, and care leavers)</p>	<p>additional, youth-focused outreach sexual health services, to attend locations frequented by young people.</p> <p>Review/audit Young Hackney RSE activities in schools/colleges including the provision of information regarding available services. Coordinate Young Hackney RSE with Homerton Sexual Health Services and Positive East.</p>
<p>3. Siloed working between existing actors in the SRH field</p>	<p>Achieve coordination and collaboration between commissioners as well as existing (and any additional) services in order to minimise duplication, increase access/reach and improve effectiveness (improved user experience and outcomes)</p>	<p>Leverage the Super Youth Hub pilot as an opportunity to increase both commissioner and provider collaboration and integration.</p> <p>Better cooperation between primary and secondary care build on women's health hub model)</p>
<p>4. Services are not co-produced with young people</p>	<p>Providers and commissioners are committed to collaborating with young people to ensure existing/new services meet their needs.</p>	<p>Use insights developed through the Participatory Action Research as part of the Super Youth Hub project, when available, to inform any service changes / identify recommendations.</p> <p>Gather feedback from young people on their experience of existing services to facilitate continuous improvement.</p> <p>Explore new initiatives and service changes/ideas in collaboration with young people.</p>

Appendix 1 - YP's activity data for the sexual health clinics and online Sexual Health London

Sexual Health Clinic Service usage

Table 2: Individual using specialist sexual health clinic services inside, and outside the borough by financial year and age group

Financial year	Age group	C&H residents using HSHS	C&H Residents using out of area services	Non-residents using HSHS
2018/19	<18	432	78	342
2018/19	18 - 24	5389	1661	6957
2018/19	25+	18844	8494	17241
2019/20	<18	385	136	283
2019/20	18 - 24	5056	1960	6376
2019/20	25+	17984	7372	17058
2020/21	<18	126	55	92
2020/21	18 - 24	2187	806	2013
2020/21	25+	8453	4234	5608
2021/22	<18	170	47	86
2021/22	18 - 24	2705	963	2667
2021/22	25+	12499	5464	9343
2022/23	<18	140	28	76
2022/23	18 - 24	2382	923	2229
2022/23	25+	12823	5733	9886

Sources: Pathway Analytics.

Notes: *Local Authority (LA). Financial year (April to March). A person will only appear once per year.

- Across all age groups, there has been a general decreasing trend in the use of clinic SRH services. Individuals aged under 18 and those ages 18-24 accounted for 1% and 16% of the total attendances respectively.
- Across all years and all age groups, non-residents used HSHS more frequently than residents used out of area sexual health providers. This implies that HSHS is a more appealing option compared to alternative providers in other local authorities areas. Factors such as accessibility, service quality, and the specific services offered by HSHS may play a role in driving this trend.
- However, there has been an overall increase in the proportion of local residents using out of area services.. Although, this increase has not been consistent across all years with those aged 25 and over were the most likely age group to choose out of areas services over any other age group

STI testing among CYP in Hackney and the City of London

Table 3: Number of individual City and Hackney residents that obtained STI testing from local and online sexual health services in 2021/22 and 2022/23 by age group

Year	Age	Core services		E-service	Local (%)	Online (%)
		HSHS	Out of area providers			
2021/22	<18	38	11	46	52%	48%
2021/22	18 - 24	1245	397	3593	31%	69%
2021/22	25+	7311	3569	19125	36%	64%
2022/23	<18	42	5	25	65%	35%
2022/23	18 - 24	1209	521	3123	36%	64%
2022/23	25+	8265	4599	19237	40%	60%

Sources: Pathway Analytics; PreventX.

Notes: *Out of area providers are mostly Barts, ChelWest, GST, CNWL. Years presented run from May to April. A person will only appear once per year within each service category. However, a person can have one entry in both the 'local' and 'online' categories within the same year.

- The proportion of residents using local services to access STI testing increased between 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- This increase was most pronounced among individuals under 18 years old.
- Under 18 year olds also had the highest utilisation of local services compared to online services in both years
- Residents under the age of 25 were more likely to use HSHS than out of area services over the two year period: between May 2021 and April 2023, 83% of residents age under 18 years old that accessed STI testing via the local service did so through HSHS, compared to 73% of those aged 18 to 24, and 66% of residents aged 25 and over.

Emergency Hormonal Contraception use among CYP in Hackney and the City of London

Table 4: Total number of EHC distributed among residents of Hackney and the City of London by different access routes, year, and age group

Year	Age	Core services		E-service	Pharmacies
		HSHS	Other core providers		
2021/22	<25	65	31	618	649
2021/22	25+	149	50	733	1018
2022/23	<25	64	43	680	867
2022/23	25+	158	50	875	1109

Sources: Pathway Analytics; Preventx; Pharmoutcomes.

Notes: Years presented run from May to April. For confidentiality purposes, individuals under 25 years old have been grouped. The presented data shows the total number of EHC supplies, which means that a person may appear multiple times in each age/year/service combination. Please note that, due to the unavailability of full postcodes, some non-residents are likely included in pharmacy figures.

Table 5: Percentage of the total EHC distributed among residents of Hackney and the City of London by different access routes, year, and age group

Year	Age	Sexual Health clinics		E-service	Pharmacies
		HSHS	Out of area providers		
2021/22	<25	5%	2%	45%	48%
2021/22	25+	8%	3%	38%	52%
2022/23	<25	4%	3%	41%	52%
2022/23	25+	7%	2%	40%	51%

Sources: Pathway Analytics; Preventx; Pharmoutcomes.

Notes: Years presented run from May to April. For confidentiality purposes, individuals under 25 years old have been grouped. The presented data shows the total number of EHC supplies, which means that a person may appear multiple times in each age/year/service combination. Please note that, due to the unavailability of full postcodes, some non-residents are likely included in pharmacy figures.

- The demand for Emergency Hormonal Contraception (EHC) among residents of Hackney and the City of London increased between 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- Pharmacies were the most popular choice for obtaining EHC among residents of Hackney and the City of London, both for individuals under 25 and those aged 25 or older, across both years.
- Between May 2022 and April 2023, there was a 4 percentage-point increase in the use of pharmacies for obtaining EHC among individuals under 25 years old.

Table 6: Average number of EHC supplied to each individual by age and providers, May 2021 to April 2023, City and Hackney residents:

Age	Sexual Health Clinics		Pharmacies
	HSHS	Out of area providers	
<25	1.17	1.21	1.63
25+	1.07	1.11	1.33

Sources: Pathway Analytics; Pharmoutcomes.

Notes: For confidentiality purposes, individuals under 25 years old have been grouped. Please note that, due to the unavailability of full postcodes, some non-residents are likely included in pharmacy figures.

- On average, the younger population group (under 25-year-olds) recorded a higher number of repeat EHC usages compared to the older group.
- The average number of repeat EHC usages varies by provider, with residents being less likely to repeatedly obtain EHC from core providers than from pharmacies.

- Additionally, there was a higher average number of repeat EHC usages among 'other' core providers (i.e., providers outside the borough) compared to HSHS

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 14th 2023 Item 5 - Free School Meals and Tackling Food Poverty in Schools	Item No 5
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Outline

In October 2022, the Commission discussed Free School Meal provision and how schools were helping to address childhood food poverty in Hackney. From this meeting the Commission agreed on a number of recommendations sent in a [letter](#) to the Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care to inform the planned summit and task force to address childhood food poverty.

On the 1st August 2023, the Council published the outcomes of the childhood food poverty summit, including the publication of a [report](#) which sets out local priorities and plans to address this issue across Hackney.

In February 2023, the [Mayor of London announced](#) that £130m of funding would be provided to allow all primary school children in London to receive free school meals for a one year period from September 2024.

Members of the Commission are asked to note the Hackney Council report *Tackling Food Poverty in Education*, and agree how they may wish to follow up this work in the current work programme in light of the Mayor of London's announcement.

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TACKLING FOOD POVERTY IN EDUCATION

Commission Report
and Recommendations
July 2023





FOREWORD

Foreword by Philip Glanville, Mayor of Hackney and Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care

Hackney has, in recent years, had much to celebrate. Our young and diverse population continues to grow, employment is rising, the performance of our schools, colleges and education settings continues to excel, and our school children continue to achieve record-breaking exam results and educational outcomes. The globally recognised success of the work of Hackney's education settings continues to change and shape lives for the better. 10 years on we have reflected on the educational success of the borough, but we know that there is still a lot to do to be a world class educational offer, which we know is within our reach.

Despite these positive developments, we are acutely aware that for a significant number of our fellow residents in some parts of our community, Hackney remains one of the most deprived areas of the country. For some in our community the problems are severe, with some facing even greater levels of poverty and inequality, and barriers that prevent them from fulfilling their potential.

No child should ever go hungry. But tragically, in Britain - one of the world's richest countries - millions do, every single day. It's a national outrage and perhaps the strongest symptom of a country at breaking point. That's why we are absolutely delighted that the Mayor of London will fund universal free school meals for all primary school children in the capital for one academic year from September.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan's, recent announcement to fund free school meals for all primary-age children across the capital this coming year is welcome news for Hackney. An estimated 40 percent of children live in poverty in our borough and we know there are thousands more local families struggling to eat and heat their homes during the deepening cost of living crisis. Eating cannot be a choice, and eating well should not be a choice, especially when new research shows that when children are fed well, their life chances grow. By investing in feeding our children with the best possible foods, we are literally fueling the future.

We want our children to grow up in the best place possible. This includes ensuring that all children have their rights respected and upheld. Under Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to healthy food. It is important in a fair and equal society that all children have access to the healthy, nutritious food they need to grow, learn, and play. We know that families on low incomes can find it harder to provide the kind of healthy food that they want for their children because of limited household budgets. This can mean having access to fewer options for buying and preparing food and facing higher costs as a result. Access to free school meals supports many families and helps unlock opportunities for children. Despite this, not every child who is entitled to a free school meal gets one. There can be a range of reasons for this, for example, family immigration status (though in Hackney we do fund free school meals for families with no recourse to public funds), or families may not be aware they can qualify for free school meals, and unfortunately, in some instances, there can still be stigma attached to getting a free school meal.

We understand the importance of providing our residents with targeted support in areas such as this; that's why Hackney joined other local authorities in successfully campaigning for poverty-related funding from the government. That brought £5.6m into Hackney over the last year - and will bring the same in for next year. This has helped us reach those most affected by poverty, including supporting low-income families of more than 20,000 children with help to buy food during the school holidays. This national funding injection is on top of more than £4m the Council is investing in reducing poverty and in direct financial assistance to the borough's households most in need.

Feeding our borough, and especially our children with affordable, healthy and sustainable meals has long been a priority for Hackney Council, and this one-year funding from the Mayor of London will give us welcome space to look at how we can ensure we do that while finding long-term and lasting solutions to food poverty. We recognised this when, earlier in the year, the Council passed the 'Right to Food Motion' and our Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission looked into this issue. In the motion, we pledged to campaign for protection from food poverty to be adopted at the national level and called on the Government to be held formally accountable for violations. As part of that drive, we want to see a national network of community-use kitchens, access to public land suitable for community food growing, as well as a country-wide policy of universal free school meals. In the meantime, and in the absence of direct government support, we know the Council has a part to play. This year, we are setting aside a further £250k to help reduce poverty, including to develop long-term access to affordable food, to end hunger in Hackney, and ensure there is emergency support when needed, while also promoting access to good, nutritious food.

In the autumn of 2022, we established the Tackling Food Poverty in Education task force, aimed at providing a hot, healthy, more sustainable meal to as many children in poverty as possible. The key objectives of the taskforce was to explore scope for the local school meals system to be able to provide more affordable, nutritious meals and also more sustainable meals underpinned by principles such as shopping local and as much as you can. The aims of the task group are available in the terms of reference for the programme which is available [here](#).

We have backed this programme with a £300k investment. This report describes some of the excellent practice in Hackney Schools and the learning from neighbouring local authority areas with a focus on providing access to universal free school meals and also highly nutritional meals for our children and young people. The report makes a number of recommendations for the Council, along with schools and education settings looking to increase their free school meal uptake, in addition to improving the quality and range of meals available to Hackney's learners.

We have some amazing examples in Hackney of schools already working with us on this, including investing in kitchen staff, and we will continue partnering with them and organisations like [Chefs in Schools](#) and [Bite Back 2030](#). This longer-term thinking will help us ensure that if the Mayor of London's funding stops, affordable and nutritious school meals do not. Our focus is about edging out low-quality meals sometimes produced by more profit-focused private companies and instead getting more insourced production, staffed by local people into our school kitchens - and taking a seat at the top tables of school

leadership - to cook food they love for the children they care about, while also reducing avoidable food waste. And we know this can work. We only have to look at The Hackney School of Food, backed by Chefs in Schools - the multi-award-winning food education hub and gardens - in Mandeville School in Clapton, which teaches children how to cook accessible, in-season meals at low cost.

Anyone with children up to the age of 18 can find out whether they are eligible and apply for free school meals [here](#). Free School Meals offer a saving of about £560 per child annually. Schools also attract more funding for each child registered as eligible for free school meals. We know too many Hackney families are missing out on other benefits that are owed to them - funded childcare, healthy start vouchers, disability benefits, and more. To find out what you're entitled to, and to get help applying, contact our team of specialist advisers by searching [Hackney Money Hub](#) or calling 020 8356 3111. To find out what help and support is available both locally and nationally, you can read the Council's [Here to Help booklet](#) - also being distributed across the borough and available in all libraries.

The Tackling Food Poverty in Education Task Force finished its work in March 2023 and made a series of recommendations they believe will help the Council and local schools and partner agencies to be better positioned to address the issues of food poverty in education across our borough. We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the education management, school leaders, partner organisations, and school-based catering staff who contributed to this report. We would like to thank everyone on the Taskforce for their input, scrutiny and the voluntary sector for their contributions on our response to food justice and their commitment to continue to fight for food justice in the future. Our administration is ambitious and committed to doing all that we can to deliver services and outcomes for our residents that reduce inequality and create a fairer borough. The journey to addressing the issues presented by the cost of living crisis will not be straightforward and the challenge is great; but we firmly believe we have the resolve and vision to create a lifetime of prosperity and opportunity for everyone in Hackney.



Philip Glanville
Mayor of Hackney



Cllr Antoinette Bramble
Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for
Education, Young People & Children's Social Care

Acknowledgements from the Tackling Food Poverty in Education Task Group Chair

In compiling this report I would like to formally acknowledge the valuable support and input of Sajeed Patni (Education Finance Lead), Silvi Shrestha (Senior Programme Manager) and Laura Oni (Executive Support to the Director of Education) who formed the Tackling Food Poverty in Education (FPIE) Programme team, with contributions from members of the commission (referenced at appendix A). On behalf of the Programme team I also wish to formally acknowledge the support and shared expertise of the headteachers who supported the working group activity - Richard Brown, Andy English, Louise Nicholls and Jenna Clark. These headteachers were kind enough to share the approaches and experiences of their respective schools in this area of focus, which added considerable value to the work of the programme.

The membership of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee also played an invaluable role in undertaking a programme of research and review with a focus on tackling food poverty for children and young people locally. The report from this interface served as a very helpful pre- cursor to the work of the Tackling Food Poverty in Education task group. **The Scrutiny Committee report is available [here](#)** and provided very helpful insights which informed this work programme.

Additional support for the programme came from members of the London Borough of Hackney, including the Public Health team, with a focus on the Healthy Schools Programme, with input also from organisations such as Chefs in Schools and the Hackney School of Food. As part of the programme's discovery phase I was able to also cross reference with the policy lead for Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) for the Welsh Government, as they progress the intended roll out of UFSM from September 2024, in addition to meetings with members of the Scottish Government, where UFSM for primary age children has been in place for a number of years.

It is in everyone's interests to eliminate the risk of food poverty in education, which has been accelerated by the cost of living crisis being faced by local families. I am hugely grateful to the members of the Tackling Food Poverty in Education Task Group Commission members who have generously shared their experiences, their expertise and their stories, all of which enriched our insights and shaped our recommendations. Thank you. Herein the Commission presents its findings and recommendations. The hard work to implement them must now begin.

Paul Senior

Director of Education and Inclusion

Hackney Council

CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction	8
Methodologies of the Tackling Food Poverty in Education Commission.....	9
Key Findings	10
1. Food poverty in education - what does the data and evidence tell us?	10
2. What impact does food poverty have on a child’s learning and education?.....	11
3. Universal Free School Meals for Primary age children in London for 2023/24	11
4. Rising levels of need and food insecurity	12
5. Increasing FSM uptake within the Orthodox Jewish Community.....	12
6. Easing the financial pressure for parents and carers	13
7. Diet and nutrition	13
8. Learning and attainment	14
9. School meals and nutritional value	14
10. Encouraging Families to apply for free school meals.....	15
FSM eligibility and Pupil Premium Grant (PPG).....	16
11. Barriers to families applying for and pupils taking free school meals.....	17
12. Catering Framework and support to schools	17
13. Chefs in School.....	17
14. The Hackney School of Food	17
15. Breakfast Club Provision	17
Key messages and considerations:.....	18
16. Holiday Activities Fund Programme (HAF).....	19
17. School Meals and Procurement.....	19
18. Climate friendly meals.....	19
19. Healthy Schools Programme - Hackney Education and Public Health Joint working (an approach to test and learn).....	23
Learning from neighbouring Local Authority (LA) areas and Hackney School Case Studies	24
Urswick School (Secondary)	24
Mandeville School (Primary).....	24
Gainsborough School (Primary).....	25
Chefs in School	25
Opportunities explored.....	25
Other London Boroughs that provide Free School Meals for All Pupils	26
London Borough of Newham.....	26
London Borough of Southwark	26
Westminster City Council.....	26
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	27
London Borough of Islington	27
Tackling Food Poverty in Education Programme - Recommendations	29
Recommendations and actions for London Borough of Hackney	29
Recommendations for Schools and Education Settings (advisory)	31
Measuring Impact	33
Appendices	34
Appendix A: Task Group Membership and Associate Members	34
Appendix B: Financial implications for free school meals - all schools.....	35
Appendix C: Helpful resources	36

INTRODUCTION

Addressing food poverty and supporting residents during the cost of living crisis is a key priority for Hackney Council and our partners. Therefore, it is important to view our ambitions to tackle food poverty in education as being part of a broader package of approaches and policies designed to support children and families during these times.. This plan has to work in tandem with other local policies designed to reduce or mitigate the impact of these challenges and ensure that all children have the best start in life.

In line with the key messages presented in the [Barnardo's report on child poverty](#) in urging for universal free school meals to all pupils, we firmly believe that every Hackney child should have the opportunity to be healthy, no matter their background. This includes access to a nutritious diet, which is critical to growing children. Unfortunately families experiencing forms of disadvantage are more likely to face challenges in providing their children with meals that are optimally nutritious, which can lead to poorer outcomes in their physical and mental health.

For many children and young people, free school meals are their main source of hot, nutritious food. The Task Group considered a range of local, regional and national data as part of the discovery process for this programme of work, in addition to considering the key messages from a range of health impact reports such as the PWC conducted [research](#) on the impact of free school meals on health. This study provides compelling evidence that expanding free school meals to all school children would return £1.71 in economic benefit for every £1 spent.

Our recommendations provide tangible starting points for the Borough in our long-term task to reduce levels of poverty and increase prosperity and aspiration amongst our children, young people and families. Our recommendations are ambitious, but they are eminently achievable - and will have a significant and positive impact on the children and young people in the borough who are currently living in or at risk of facing food poverty.

The Hackney Tackling Food Poverty in Education Commission was established in November 2022 to identify potential local solutions to the challenges of food poverty being felt by families in the current cost of living crisis, with a focus on school meals within the Borough. Data from a recent programme of work led by the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee team told us that a free school meals (FSM) eligibility rate of 38.8% for Hackney as a whole masks wide variations of eligibility among local schools and other educational settings. The Commission's research noted that:

- Among primary schools, FSM eligibility ranged from 6% through to 68%, and in 14 schools the FSM eligibility rate was 50% or higher;
- Among secondary schools FSM eligibility ranged from 3% to 68% and in 11 of the 17 local schools was 40% or higher;
- In local special schools and the pupil referral unit (PRU), 63% and 47% of children were respectively entitled to FSM.

METHODOLOGIES OF THE TACKLING FOOD POVERTY IN EDUCATION COMMISSION

The Hackney Tackling Food Poverty in Education Commission (also referred to as task force and task group) carried out a range of activities as part of its process of taking evidence, developing recommendations and producing its report. This included:

- A number of key stakeholder meetings,
- Benchmarking with neighbouring local authority areas,
- Convening a dedicated summit with a focus on tackling food poverty in education,
- Engagement with local and national system leaders, and
- Capturing the views of children, young people and families.

There was extensive discussion amongst Commission members about innovative ways of providing free or low cost school meals to children that were nutritious and healthy. Local Headteachers advised on ways they fund free school meals for all their pupils, such as using income raised from lettings. Other areas explored included;

- The financial implications of providing FSM for all pupils.
- How other local authorities fund free school meals for children in their schools.
- The barriers to families accessing or applying for FSM.
- What the local authority can do to promote the take up of FSM.
- The offer of free breakfast clubs to tackle food poverty.
- Schools getting more value for money on food through group purchasing.
- The work of the Chefs in School charity.
- Help available through the Council to support residents with the cost of living crisis.

The Commission considered a range of written and oral evidence received from organisations and individuals from Hackney and elsewhere. It looked at what works locally already in this area of focus and furthermore what people thought would work to help tackle food poverty in education across the Borough.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Food poverty in education - what does the data and evidence tell us?

All children attending maintained schools, academies and free schools receive the government funded Universal Free School Meals (UFSM) in Reception up to Year 2. From Year 3 onwards, only families eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) receive this support and parents have to apply. Eligibility is dependent on the families' economic background and whether they are in receipt of any benefits like the Universal Credit. In 2022, there were 13,352 pupils eligible for FSM in Hackney, or 38% of all state funded pupils.

The current rate of funding for FSM is £2.41 per pupil meal. The funding rate (set by central government) for FSM has failed to keep pace with price inflation which has led to pressures on school catering services (and their contractors).

Publicly available data tells us about the impact of hunger in the classroom, its effects on learning and the long-term implications for our children. The following are compelling reasons for us to collectively work together to find solutions in response to this critical issue.

01. One in seven children go to school without breakfast (and this is on the increase), significantly impacting on the learning ability of children who lack the basic fuel required to concentrate and learn.
02. 2.4 pupils in every class in England and Wales will arrive at school hungry at least once a week.
03. Around 8,370 schools in England have children arriving hungry or thirsty every morning.
04. If a child arrives at school hungry, teachers say they lose one hour of learning time a day.
05. If a child arrived at school hungry once a week they would lose 8.4 weeks of learning time (70 percent of a term) over the whole of their primary school life.
06. 31 percent of teachers say they have to spend a disproportionately higher amount of teaching time with children who arrive at school hungry, than with those who don't.
07. The grip of hunger could potentially cost the English economy millions of pounds each year through teachers losing teaching hours to cope with the needs of hungry children.

2. WHAT IMPACT DOES FOOD POVERTY HAVE ON A CHILD'S LEARNING AND EDUCATION?

Common themes and points of reference from our research:

01. Hungry children are less able to cope with the challenges of each day and more likely to struggle emotionally. Hunger and malnutrition affect a child's ability to concentrate, to take in and retain new information, and to make good progress in their learning.
02. A study by the Centre for Educational Neuroscience called [Diet makes a difference to learning](#) found that 14% of UK school children skip breakfast, with this being more likely to be the case in secondary school children and children living in areas of deprivation. The study shows that when a child misses breakfast, performance is most clearly affected when tasks are more mentally demanding and when they involve working memory (storing and manipulating information in the short term).
03. Expanding Free School Meals would generate up to £41.3 billion for the economy | Food Foundation: see research [here](#).
04. An evaluation of the Universal free school meals programme in Scotland can be seen [here](#).

3. UNIVERSAL FREE SCHOOL MEALS FOR PRIMARY AGE CHILDREN IN LONDON FOR 2023/24

In February 2023, the Mayor of London announced his plans to provide funding for free school meals for all Primary school pupils in London for an academic year, from September 2023 to August 2024. In light of this announcement, the DfE has had to rethink how to distribute the funding for the best outcome and to avoid duplication. This is a welcome development for Hackney's children, however, it is important to stress that this is a one-off £130m payment for one academic year (2023-24) in response to the cost of living crisis, and longer term solutions must still be developed.

The work of the Hackney Tackling Food Poverty in Education task force was already at an advanced stage with regards to its programme of work, having been commissioned by the Hackney Council Mayor several months before the London Mayor's announcement. This meant that we were already looking at opportunities for learning what works locally in this space, building on the good practice in Hackney and seeking to find longer term sustainable solutions in response to local needs.

Unfortunately, the proposed funding from the London Mayor's Office is currently earmarked for children attending state funded provision and at the time of writing this report we are unlikely to receive anything for the independent sector, which is a significant issue for a number of our communities in Hackney. The latest data tells us that approximately 30% of children of primary school age in Hackney are from the Orthodox Charedi Community.

4. RISING LEVELS OF NEED AND FOOD INSECURITY

Rising numbers of children eligible for FSM is a clear indicator of the level of poverty and food insecurity within the local community. FSM eligibility in Hackney has grown significantly over the past 5 years where the proportion of children in state funded education eligible for FSM has risen from 27.7% in 2017/18 to 38.8% in 2021/22. These most recent figures indicate that over 13,300 local children are now entitled to free daily lunchtime meals in school. The rate of FSM eligibility in Hackney is also far higher than both national (22.5%) and regional (24.6%) averages, and is the 7th highest among all English local authorities.

School meals are provided free of charge to all children in years 1 and 2 in state funded primary education. Pupils are entitled to FSM beyond years 1 and 2 if their parents meet the [set eligibility criteria](#), which is now predominantly centred upon Universal Credit entitlement with an income threshold £7,400 per annum.

5. INCREASING FSM UPTAKE WITHIN THE ORTHODOX JEWISH COMMUNITY

Children from the Charedi Community make up a large percentage of the children population in Hackney. Many of them attend independent settings, which means that even if they live in low income households, they are not eligible for the government funded FSM support.

As part of this programme, Hackney Education Officers convened to discuss the issues of food poverty that persists in the Charedi Community and what Hackney Council and Hackney Education could do within their remit to support the Charedi Community;

- Establish the scale of need in Hackney for a clearer picture of food poverty within the Charedi community.
- Use established channels of communication with the central government about getting important messages and local context across.
- Find out what Haringey Council is doing to support its Charedi community who are not eligible for government support.

In replacement of free school meals, the Household Support Fund 3 (September to March 2023) has supported 11 Charedi organisations with a total of £426,000 for food, reaching approximately 9,000 children under 19 and 1800 households. The funding will be renewed for the coming financial year for HSF 4 (April 2023 to March 2024), and will be £852,000 for the whole year (as opposed to 6 months for HSF 3).

Findings from the work of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission looking at food poverty locally highlighted further concerns around accessibility and uptake of FSM within the Orthodox Jewish community in Hackney. Local data indicates that FSM eligibility in maintained Orthodox Jewish schools was approximately 6% compared to a borough wide average of 38%.

On the assumption that parents within the orthodox Jewish community are likely to be experiencing similar levels of food poverty and insecurity as the broader Hackney population, this would suggest that there may be specific barriers to the uptake of FSM and that children from this community may be missing out on possible entitlements.

Understanding this and the low uptake of FSM in the maintained school sector, it is clear that further engagement is needed with local Orthodox Jewish schools and community leaders to further understand the barriers to FSM uptake and to ensure that local food poverty networks and programmes continue to connect to and reach into the Orthodox Jewish Community.

6. EASING THE FINANCIAL PRESSURE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

For families, supporting children to grow up has never been cheap. However, awareness of today's cost of bringing up children has increased in importance because of the influence it has on parental abilities to meet children's needs. Where children are at risk of food poverty, especially those who live in low income families, parents will frequently cut back on fruit and vegetable intake, cut back on food shopping, and reduce the amount they eat to protect their children.

In 2013, Ipsos MORI conducted a survey of child hunger for the Greater London Authority. The findings showed that 55% of parents across income groups reported their ability to afford food has gotten a lot or a little worse over the past year; 49% of parents in full-time work also reported this experience. We can only assume that this has gotten worse given the cost of living crisis and the financial pressures of the last few years. Similarly, the 2018 Child Poverty Action Group report, *Cost of A Child*, highlights that most parents would do everything in their power to avoid their children having to grow up below a minimum acceptable standard of living. There are several benefits for parents related to easing the pressure on supporting their children. The 2018 national evaluation of UFSM reported that parents who no longer had to make packed lunches reported a median weekly saving of £10, removed the stigma in claiming free meals, assisted with household budgets and allowed parents more time to support and spend with their children.

7. DIET AND NUTRITION

Good nutrition from an early age is important. As children grow, muscles and bones are being built and the brain is developing. This requires good nutritious food every day. Findings from recent local Health Related Behaviours Questionnaires tell us that a low percentage of Year 6 pupils ate at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables on the day before the survey compared with 29% nationally. For primary school pupils, 6% said they didn't eat any portions of fruit or vegetables on the day before the survey, compared with 9% nationally.

Informed by learning from other local areas currently providing access to universal free school meals (UFSM), it can be suggested that UFSM has been a catalyst for efforts to improve healthy eating in school. In Hackney, a school meal is supposed to provide a third of the nutrient requirement of the day. This means that school meals only make up 17% of the overall diet of a child across the whole school year which makes it challenging to reflect health outcomes related to FSM. However, there is strong evidence that increasing the take up of school meals improves the nutritional balance of food eaten during the day.

School meals are required to meet nationally agreed **standards** to ensure that children are provided with lunchtime meals which are balanced (in terms of starches and proteins) and nutritious. Whilst the local authority (and partners) clearly has an interest in ensuring that schools meet school food standards (diet and general well being) and has the relevant corporate experience to be able to support this (e.g. Public Health, Food Hygiene) it nonetheless has no responsibility in this matter. Accountability of nutritional standards of school meals is now devolved to local school governing bodies, and many schools have now commissioned independent assessments to support this.

The Commission also noted the positive relationships that a number of schools had developed with not-for-profit organisations to support compliance to nutritional standards. These organisations provided the expertise to ensure that school food was nutritious, balanced and complied with required standards.

8. LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT

Food insecurity has major adverse impacts on schoolchildren such as concentration, social participation and aspirations. Public Health England concludes that there are promising associations between diet and academic attainment. However, it is difficult to attribute a causal link between diet and attainment because of the range of other factors in the school environment that also affect academic attainment. It also points to evidence that a whole-school approach to healthy school meals, universally implemented for all pupils, has shown improvements in academic attainment at Key Stages 1 and 2, especially for pupils with lower prior attainment. Between 2009 and 2012, pupils in the UFSM pilots in Newham and Durham were found to be up to two months ahead in maths and english.

9. SCHOOL MEALS AND NUTRITIONAL VALUE

The focus on the nutritional composition of foods for school aged children should be oriented towards supporting their growth and educational attainment at school. Consumption of unhealthy food at this life stage could compromise their nutritional status and thereby their growth and development. These unhealthy foods can have a negative impact on weight management in children, leading to further weight gain as adults. Therefore, special attention must be placed on the nutritional quality of each meal in order to ensure children obtain the nutrients they need for optimal health. School lunch is a pivotal meal in every child's day. It presents an opportunity for children to receive part of their daily nutritional requirements and may also serve as an opportunity to receive a nutritious meal that will enhance their learning.

Due to the rising levels of obesity, it is also important for children to eat healthy food at school and to learn about healthy eating in order to make informed choices at home and in their communities. Schools play an important role in providing nutritious food to their pupils. In England, there has been notable progress in school meal provision.

In the last two decades, the type and quality of the food offered in schools has undergone dramatic changes and now reflects a more varied diet to support children's nutritional requirements. Several initiatives, such as Jamie Oliver's 2004 'Feed Me Better' campaign and the Channel 4 documentary 'Jamie's School Food', have promoted positive changes by shifting focus to the quality of food provided in schools. This heightened public awareness was transformed into action by significant government funding and political will at the time.

10. ENCOURAGING FAMILIES TO APPLY FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

Families are actively encouraged to register for FSM as this supports school access to the Pupil Premium Grant (see below). This is promoted through a variety of methods including:

- The use of biometric systems in schools (mainly secondary) so that FSM eligible pupils / students are not identifiable and therefore reduce any stigma. Hackney Council encourages schools to use the FSM eligibility checking system (through the Catering Support Team) so that families do not have to produce benefits related paperwork and take this to admin within a school.
- Schools share clear and simple information on their websites, through text messaging and newsletters about the benefits of FSM / Healthy Start vouchers and how to apply.
- Extending the lunchtime period in secondary schools so that students can use their FSM entitlement for mid-morning break, this especially benefits pupils that may not have had breakfast.
- Linking with other services/partners to encourage FSM applications and uptake from families facing financial difficulties .
- Promoting FSM criteria and how to apply on London Borough of Hackney website - Schools introducing a 'free' breakfast for any FSM pupil are to encourage pupils and families to apply for FSM.
- Encouraging families to apply for FSM so they can access support for winter clothing and shoes from the Benevolent Fund and other educational activities such as school trips, music tuition etc.

FSM eligibility and Pupil Premium Grant (PPG)

The Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) provides additional funding that publicly funded schools in England use to support disadvantaged pupils and is triggered by a child's eligibility for FSM. The Pupil Premium Grant provides funding to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils of all abilities to reach their potential and to support children and young people with parents in the regular armed forces. It is in a school's best interest to register as many FSM pupils as possible, as for some schools this can make a significant difference to their overall budget. Most schools actively encourage families to register for FSM when pupils are starting school and have robust systems in place to monitor ongoing FSM eligibility. Support should be given to FSM eligible families when their children are not in school such as during school holidays or periods of absence.

In this scheme, schools receive an annual Pupil Premium payment of £1,385 for primary school aged children and £985 for secondary school aged children. Therefore, ensuring that children and families who are entitled to FSM are encouraged to apply is not only important to ensure that children have access to healthy and nutritious food each day, it can also provide an important contribution to school budgets through Pupil Premium funding.

The financial contribution of Pupil Premium funding (through FSM eligibility) for the local education sector is significant. Based on the current number of pupils eligible for FSM in Hackney (13,352), local primary schools benefit to the value of an additional £9.7m of funding through the Pupil Premium funding and secondary schools a further £6.2m. Given the scale of such contributions to local education, there is clearly a need for a more strategic view of FSM eligibility and the need to share learning across the sector on those strategies which are effective in supporting parental applications and uptake.

11. BARRIERS TO FAMILIES APPLYING FOR AND PUPILS TAKING FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The financial circumstances for some families eligible for free school meals can change over time. Under the current criteria, families eligible for FSM remain 'protected' until 2023 even if their financial circumstances change. Several families report that despite remaining eligible they no longer wish their child to take a FSM.

Perceived or enacted stigma is considered by headteachers to be one of the biggest barriers to increasing take up of free school meals as some families have negative preconceptions of the FSM system, believing that school staff would have access to their financial information. Schools are encouraged to use the FSM eligibility checking system to reduce the need for school staff to check benefits related paperwork.

Pupils and families choosing not to take a FSM do so for several reasons including food preferences, pupils choosing to do what friends and peers do, the broader lunchtime experience e.g., having to queue, menu choices etc. Schools are encouraged to regularly review their FSM take up and where relevant put an action plan in place.

12. CATERING FRAMEWORK AND SUPPORT TO SCHOOLS

Schools engaged in supporting the work of the taskforce and also those who spoke to the Scrutiny Committee members as part of their review process, reported being keen to develop more collaborative ways of working to help reduce costs associated with school meal provision, in particular the sourcing and purchase of seasonal produce and foodstuffs. In this respect, it was noted that it could be helpful for local schools to have access to a digital platform to help source and bulk-buy produce to help to reduce costs. It was noted here, that a local school food charity, **Chefs in School**, supports a similar such initiative to participating schools.

13. CHEFS IN SCHOOL

The Food Poverty Task & Finish Group heard from **Chefs in School**, which is a charity that is supporting schools to work with each other in the most effective way. Currently, the charity is looking to harness the collective purchasing power of schools - working to set up procurement systems to get bulk buying deals, with a focus on quality as well as buying locally. Chefs in Schools is in the process of setting up a network with the 70 schools they work with nationally. This would operate on a not-for-profit model, in contrast to many of the existing procurement networks, and would focus on purchasing quality food at lower prices. This would be available to all in-house schools.

14. THE HACKNEY SCHOOL OF FOOD

The Hackney School of Food (HSoF) is a vibrant cookery school established by the LEAP Federation of Schools (Gayhurst Community School, Mandeville Primary and Kingsmead Primary) in partnership with the charity Chefs in Schools. The Hackney School of Food is designed to be a cooking centre to inspire, support and develop a love of cooking in people of all ages and levels of experience from young children to experienced chefs. The HSoF offers schools and our community a broad range of cookery courses to teach children and their families to cook nourishing food from scratch.

15. BREAKFAST CLUB PROVISION

Findings from the work of this Commission and the review process carried out by the Scrutiny Committee tells us that most schools offer some form of breakfast club provision, though the scale, nature and focus of such clubs varied widely among local schools. Therefore, whilst some schools targeted support to vulnerable children and families, other schools had a more extensive school-wide offer. For a number of schools, breakfast club provision was seen as integral to the schools wraparound support offer for pupils, with additional play, learning and mentoring support also taking place alongside the provision of breakfast.

Schools that contributed to our work noted the importance of support they received from not-for-profit organisations in the delivery of their breakfast clubs, such as **Magic Breakfast**, who not only provided access to free or low cost breakfast foodstuffs (bagels, cereals, porridge, beans), but also supported access to wider regional food distribution programmes.

Given the increasing numbers of children who were reported to be accessing school without having had breakfast and hungry, schools emphasised the positive impact that breakfast clubs had on pupil engagement in subsequent lessons and classes. Equally important however, schools noted that the earlier start to the school day allowed by breakfast clubs was of great value to working parents or those parents whose children attended different schools. In this context, it is important to emphasise the role that Breakfast clubs play in the wraparound care and support of children.

Key messages and considerations:

01. Breakfast clubs can support nutritional, social and educational outcomes. Ensure free school meal eligible children can come for free, for example by using pupil premium or other funds where appropriate. Consider finding sponsorship from local businesses or charities.
02. The National School Breakfast programme in England is funded by the Department for Education. In partnership with **Family Action**, **Magic Breakfast** is a national charity that delivers free, nutritious breakfasts to 1775 schools in disadvantaged communities across the country (where at least 50% of pupils fall within IDACI bands A-F -the most disadvantaged categories in the Government's 'Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index').
03. Read the progress report: **Food for Thought**, where the evaluation found that supporting schools to run a free, universal breakfast club before school delivered an average of two months' additional progress for pupils.
04. The process by which eligible schools can apply for support for breakfast club provision - for more information visit the **Government's website**.
05. Evidence suggests that free holiday clubs such as the Holiday Activity Fund (HAF) can have a positive impact on children and young people. They work best when they are easily accessible and provide consistent enrichment activities, for more than just breakfast or lunch, and when they involve children (and parents) in food preparation.
06. Holiday Kitchen offers family learning, food and play opportunities during the school holidays to children in parts of the UK. The aim is to improve children's well-being, educational outcomes and life-chances through fun activities and experiences. The **evaluation report** includes useful learning on how to run a scheme that is enjoyable, non-stigmatising and adds value through educational and health activities.
07. **Make Lunch** is a national charity that partners churches with schools to open community kitchens in the holidays.

16. HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES FUND PROGRAMME (HAF)

In addition to the food/fuel vouchers children and young people have been able to access the holiday activities fund programme during each holiday period. Any child taking part is provided with nutritious and healthy food as part of the activity. The data tells us that the Holiday Activities & Food (HAF) programme, among others, have consistently made a difference to local families in making sure that children with the greatest level of need continue to have access to meals during the school holiday period.

17. SCHOOL MEALS AND PROCUREMENT

The LA Procurement service is working with Council partners to launch a project to tender a Dynamic Purchasing System or Framework for Catering Solutions in schools. The Council would create and manage the Framework/DPS which schools would then use to award their own individual contracts. This would allow the schools to benefit from economies of scale whilst also delivering on Council objectives in areas such as nutritional standards, sustainability and the London Living Wage.

The Service is currently in the early stages of stakeholder engagement, market testing and data gathering but the intention is to develop the tender documentation by the end of the year and work towards contract awards for the start of the school year in September 2024. This would be dependent on positive engagement from a sufficient number of schools with the appetite and resources to deliver this timetable. By offering a DPS/Framework approach applicants can be admitted at any time.

18. CLIMATE FRIENDLY MEALS

Nearly 10% of London's consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions come from food. Many of London's local authorities have pledged to achieve net-zero emissions in their operations by 2030, which is being pursued through One World Living (OWL). This objective represents a shared and minimum level of ambition for London's local authorities to enhance the health and environmental impacts of the food they provide, while also reducing the amount of food waste generated. At a local level Hackney has three policy frameworks to encourage more plant based meals, not only in schools but across the borough:

- **Hackney's Climate Action Plan:** The plan has five themes, and one of them is the Consumption theme. This theme includes a food goal that aims to ensure healthy, plant-based diets are widespread while also reducing rates of food poverty. The addition of these goals and the subsequent actions in the three year implementation plan has been recognised by Sustain.
- **The Hackney Mayor's Manifesto Commitments 2022-26** has two commitments that mention plant based meals, 1-Increase uptake of climate-friendly foods (180) and 2-Develop a Healthy Schools Charter including including plant-based schools meals (69);

- **OWL & London Councils:** Hackney is leading the food emissions theme on behalf of London boroughs, working closely with ReLondon and Sustain to deliver two main actions; 1-Pan London sustainable diet and food waste campaign, **Eat Like a Londoner**, launched on 27 March and 2-The London's Sustainable Food Purchasing Commitment to reduce carbon emissions in council catering contracts.

London's sustainable food purchasing **commitment** was launched by Hackney's Sustainability Team to all London boroughs on 27 March, alongside Sustain and ReLondon. The commitment is a common and minimum level of ambition for all London councils to commit to three objectives:

01. Reducing food emissions: Decrease the amount of emissions dioxide produced per plate by 38% by 2030 compared to the amount produced in 2023, or less than 1.04 kilograms of carbon dioxide per plate for children.
02. Reducing food waste: Measure food waste annually from 2023 and reduce food waste by 50% by 2030 based on this baseline.
03. Food provenance: Measure how much of the total ingredients is spent on food that supports fairer, sustainable, and farmer-focused production. This includes purchasing from SMEs or farmers within or close to the borough, through dynamic food procurement, organic produce, fairtrade, MSC certified fish and any free-range meat, dairy or eggs.

Hackney is working towards becoming one of the first signatory to this commitment, which will show dedication to implementing the actions for all food that is directly procured by our local authority, including school meals. Additionally, we will have a commitment to encourage other procurers and food providers in our borough and all of London, particularly schools, early year settings, and anchor institutions such as hospital trusts, to adopt similar catering arrangements in alignment with our established commitments.

Climate friendly meals must provide students with the necessary nutrients for their growth and development. By focusing on nutrition, schools can help to promote healthy eating habits and prevent obesity and other health issues. Additionally, serving healthy meals can help to reduce the carbon footprint of school meals by promoting plant-based diets and reducing the amount of meat and dairy that is served. Plant-based dishes constitute just over a quarter of the emissions of a meat-based dish, and about half of the amount of a veggie dish. It is worth noting that plant based meals have fewer allergens and they are more inclusive for different faiths eating specific diets. Some examples of climate friendly meal actions that schools can take include:

- Promoting plant-based diets and reducing the amount of meat and dairy served. An example of a weekly school menu could include two meat free days, one fish day, one meat day (chicken or pork, no beef) and one meat day blend with plant based.
- Removing beef and substituting for meats with a lower carbon impact such as chicken, pork or lamb.
- Adopting veggie days can reduce emissions with likely cost saving from buying less meat.
- Ensuring there is always a healthy, appetising, affordable vegan option available on the menu

encourages inclusivity for those with a vegan diet. Exciting plant based options encourage meat-eaters to diversify their diets.

- Sourcing local vegetables from small scale suppliers, likely to reduce emissions and for each £1 spent through direct supply chains delivers £3 to the local economy. This can be achieved via a dynamic procurement model which has been shown to reduce costs.
- Reducing the amount of meat in 'meat' dishes, by replacing them with pulses, legumes or vegetables also reduce emissions and reduce costs.
- Sourcing locally grown and seasonal ingredients.
- Reducing food waste through composting and recycling.

There is free support from ProVeg with their School plates guide and recipes with carbon labels, allergen, key nutrients and the average cost of main dishes (54 pence), which are considerably cheaper than most meat and dairy alternatives. They can also support schools and catering providers with reviewing school menus by removing negative language "meat-free" and replacing it with more positive language or moving the plant based dish to the top row of a menu, which gets picked more than the dishes underneath. Examples of low carbon, healthy, cheap and tasty meals include homemade cottage pie, toad-in-hole, golden Spanish paella and, courgetti with homemade cheesy croutons. The following are some examples of the nutritional value and cost per plate of plant based meals:

- Spaghetti bolognese: Costing 44p, 0.6 fat, 8.5 gram fibre, 16 grams protein, 1 kg CO2 per meal.
- Sri Lankan Sweet potato and coconut curry: Costing 49p per meal, 6.9 gr of fibre, 6.7 gr protein, low sugar, low salt, omega 3, calcium, iron, zinc and iodine with a 0.28kg CO2 per meal, well under the commitment target.

On 7 March 2023, the Mayor chaired an event bringing together representatives from the education sector and catering services. There were 35 attendees, 43 % (15) from a school or education setting, 31 % (11) from catering companies and 26 % (9) Council officers from sustainability, education and procurement. Speakers from ReLondon, ProVeg, the Council's Sustainability Team and Public Health addressed issues including:

- Highlighting the importance of healthy and climate friendly food diets in an education setting
- Encouraging schools to include sustainable food actions in current or future contracts, and
- Covering the health and environmental benefits, such as nutrition basics, useful ingredients people may not be familiar with and how to best use them

Following the session a survey was sent out to gather a baseline on sustainable food practices in schools. The survey results were encouraging: 70% of respondents supported introducing two meat-free days per week, supplemented by 'less but better meat' and increased plant-based meals, the aim of the London's Food Purchasing Commitment which Hackney is about to sign up to. Furthermore, 78% expressed readiness to sign up for London's Food Purchasing Commitment, it showed interest in obtaining more information. There was also a strong demand for support in areas like training, educational resources, menu development, and community engagement.

In response to this need, the Sustainability Team has partnered with various organisations to offer plant-based cooking training, the first session (during Climate Action Week) of which was fully booked. These partners will further assist schools and catering providers by providing plant-based school meal cooking guides, carbon-labelled recipes, and advice on allergens, key nutrients, and average dish costs. They can also help revise school menus to promote plant-based dishes, by replacing negative language like "meat-free" with positive language and positioning plant-based dishes prominently on menus, a strategy proven to encourage selection.

In conclusion, the adoption of climate-friendly meals in our schools is not just a climate friendly strategy to reduce environmental impact, it's a bold investment in the future of Hackney children and our planet. By embracing this initiative, the council is strongly demonstrating its commitment to sustainability, health, and community engagement. We're setting an example to other boroughs and regions to follow, challenging them to prioritise the well-being of our planet, and to create a brighter future for generations to come.

Primary and secondary schools play a pivotal role in helping children (and teachers/parents/wider community) to develop positive healthy behaviours and habits by raising awareness of healthy behaviours and by increasing children's exposure to fun and varied healthy activities, as well creating more active, healthy environments.

In Hackney, there are many great local schemes that can support schools to address this work (Holiday Activity Fund, School Streets, Daily Mile, healthy weight services, mental health provision, healthy catering support). There is also school based support commissioned through Public Health and delivered through Young Hackney around a range of public health issues, such as physical activity, sexual health and smoking cessation health promotion.

The Council is seeking to increase its understanding of the full range/extent of health and wellbeing initiatives that local schools deliver, and what support could help them (further) embed healthy school principles (improvements in physical activity, healthy eating/school menus, food poverty, emotional health, oral health, sexual health, drug and alcohol use, smoking cessation).

Some schools will already have programmes of work in place to support pupils' wellbeing. However, there would be a huge benefit to a wider school network of more consistently adopting approaches that embed wellbeing principles and having a joined up, whole school approach to health and wellbeing.

By supporting local schools in this way, we will help children and families in Hackney to live healthy lives, as well as meet relevant manifesto priorities.

19. HEALTHY SCHOOLS PROGRAMME - HACKNEY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH JOINT WORKING (AN APPROACH TO TEST AND LEARN)

A Healthy Schools Coordinator post has been created (for an initial period of 2 years) to support schools to embed healthy schools initiatives, in order to improve children and young people's and families' wellbeing. 1 x FTE post will not be enough to support all schools, but a prioritisation framework will be developed to consider which schools will be supported through the post.

The aim of the role will be to encourage schools to improve their health promoting environments through a local set of standards and suite of interventions, support pupils to develop healthy behaviours, reduce health inequalities, and improve educational achievement.

This proposed new post will offer much needed capacity to lead on a programme of work to strategically support schools to improve pupil wellbeing and healthy habits, incorporating relevant manifesto commitments, ensuring that school environments are health promoting places within the community. Some schools will already have programmes of work in place to support pupils' wellbeing. However, there would be a huge benefit to a wider school network that adopts approaches that embed wellbeing principles and have a joined up, whole school approach to health and wellbeing.

By supporting local schools in this way, we will help children and families in Hackney to live healthy lives.

The role is proposed to support schools with wellbeing plans, related to the following themes (where required):

- Physical activity (using Sports Premium funding to support the needs of all pupils to decrease inactivity levels)
- Healthy school environments (healthy catering, using Sports Premium funding, water only schools, healthy school meals, Daily Mile, active travel, Holiday Activity Fund support)
- Healthy weight support
- Food poverty (promotion of local support)
- Emotional wellbeing and mental health (working in partnership with WAHMS team)
- Oral health
- Sexual health
- Smoking cessation
- Alcohol and substance misuse

Learning from neighbouring Local Authority (LA) areas and Hackney School Case Studies

A number of schools in Hackney provide free school meals for all its pupils regardless of their families' economic background. The Commission heard from the following schools about their offer of free school meals to their pupils; Urswick Secondary School, Mandeville Primary School and Gainsborough Primary School. This offer for all pupils has meant that the stigma attached to receiving free school meals is reduced. In addition to providing free meals, the schools ensure the meals are healthy and environmentally sustainable.

All schools cited the potential loss of PPG as a negative impact of providing free school meals for all pupils. If universally available for all students, parents do not need to apply for the government funded FSM which results in the loss of the grant for schools.

The offer of FSM is important in supporting not just the outcomes of vulnerable children but is crucial for Hackney as it mitigates the risk of pupils opting for schools in the neighbouring boroughs who provide free school meals to all its pupils, amid falling pupil roll numbers.

Urswick School (Secondary)

- 65 -70 % of the School's pupils are eligible for the government funded FSM.
- The offer of free school meals for all pupils started in 2015 and costs the school £8000 to £10,000 annually. The school is able to provide free school meals for its pupils with income generated from lettings.
- This offer has been popular with parents. It has been positive in terms of increasing pupil numbers in the context of falling pupil roll in Hackney.
- Refurbished the school kitchen which is designed to match a high intensity model. Better provision and flexibility of equipment.
- The School encourages families to apply for FSM by providing administrative support; school staff check parents' eligibility and apply on their behalf.
- It is a priority for the school and Governors always support this work.

Mandeville School (Primary)

- 63 % of pupils in School receive PPG, therefore, receive the government funded free school meals. It costs the School £17k per year to ensure all the children at Mandeville get free meals.
- Drivers for this initiative were due to food poverty as well as health. The free meals provided are nutritious and the school's food education programme supports healthy eating.
- School also has a food growing programme. The School's kitchen staff understand the importance of seasonality.
- School has in house food management with highly trained kitchen staff. School also works closely with the charity Chefs in School.

- The School has incentivised parents to complete the FSM application by offering families a school sweatshirt. By providing FSM for all schools, admin costs and time is saved on chasing school meals debt.

Gainsborough School (Primary)

- School offers 3 meals to all its pupils. The initiative providing free school meals for all pupils has been running since 2018.
- School is focused on providing high quality and nutritious meals.
- Cooking is also linked to History and Geography.
- School checks National Insurance (NI) and eligibility as part of the admissions policy to ensure PPG is not lost.
- School works creatively to sustain the offer - understanding the costs, working with other organisations, looking at carbon reduction, growing your own food to sell (circular food project).
- Sustainability of the offer at Gainsborough - The School has saved money from administrative costs (around £1500) of having to chase parents for lunch money. The circular food project could potentially be income generating; growing and selling food should make the school self-sufficient.
- School has worked with the charity Chefs in School.

Other schools in Hackney, like Our Lady's Catholic Secondary School have not increased the cost for school meals for 5 to 7 years to keep prices affordable for young people. Universal Breakfast Club is also offered for free. The School provides after school snacks for after school provisions. The School is reliant on external partners for one-off support to fund their offer of subsidised meals; for example, the school received £11K from one company. School is constantly looking for new sponsors.

Chefs in School

The charity is supporting schools to work with each other in the most effective way. Currently, the charity is looking to harness the collective purchasing power of schools - working to set up procurement systems to get bulk buying deals, with focus on quality as well as buying locally.

Chefs in Schools is in the process of setting up a network with the 70 schools they work with nationally. This would operate on a not-for-profit model, in contrast to many of the existing procurement networks, and would focus on purchasing quality food at lower prices. This would be available to all in-house schools.

Opportunities explored

There are opportunities for forming stronger and reciprocal partnership networks with food partners. With regards to bulk buying, the big issue is space for storing food. There is a great opportunity to think on how to join up this work. Food partners were interested in finding storage space. This was a welcome opportunity to explore options for schools to work with food partners. Follow up with schools to broker conversation - matching interested partners with school.

Other London Boroughs that provide Free School Meals for All Pupils

London Borough of Newham

- Universal provision in Primary schools, years 3-6 funded (Eat for free scheme). Originally implemented in Newham as a pilot by DfE in 2009. Newham has funded it since 2012 at a cost of approximately £6m per year. Schools are funded at £2.42 per meal. Juniper Ventures, a LA trading company provides catering in around 75% of the Primary schools.
- Schools incentivise FSM applications through various methods. One Primary school in Newham offered the chance to enter a draw on completion of an application to win an iPad for example.
- Newham consulted on reducing the scheme to make savings in 2021 by either asking parents with children not eligible for a FSM for a contribution or/and asking out of borough children not eligible for a FSM to pay for their meals. This was in order to try and achieve a saving of up to £1.9m. After consultation, the **decision** was made not to take forward any of these proposals.

London Borough of Southwark

- Piloted in January 2011, free school meals were offered from September 2013 to all Primary school children. The offer was extended to children in maintained nurseries and nursery classes in primary schools in 2019.
- It was funded at £2.41 per meal from September 2022, up from £1.90 per meal. It costs £462k per year for nursery and just over £3m per year for Primary Y3-Y6. The initiative is funded from Public Health Grant.
- There is a 91% take-up rate assumed which is average attendance. Actual take-up closer to around 70-80% for KS2.
- Schools incentivise FSM applications by offering free breakfast club or after school club for a week if an application is completed, and by linking FSM application to free uniform application.
- Going forward, FHSM grant conditions introduced in September 2022, will support further monitoring and evaluation of the success of FHSM, to include universal school lunch, actual take up rate, value for money and nutrition standards monitoring. The Council previously relied on schools' own internal governance.
- Large contracts like primary and universal borough provision would have more leverage with suppliers. Looking at trying to centralise commissioning to secure more leverage with suppliers. Currently a mixture of in-house and contract provision and schools tender every 2 or 3 years which requires a lot of commissioning support.

Westminster City Council

- Westminster City Council implemented the free school meal offer for all primary school pupils for a fixed term, from January 2023 for an initial period up to the end of July 2024, by way of supporting families with the cost of living crisis. The funding for this will be met with the Council's earmarked reserves.

- The total estimated cost of the provision of a free school meal offer for primary aged pupils over term time from January 2023 to the end of the 2023/24 academic year is £2,781,784. The methodology used to determine the funding for each school will be £3 per pupil per day over 190 days in an academic year.
- A contingency of £100,000 has been included. The reasons for this are that the final Autumn 2022 census data will not be available until early December and to mitigate the potential risk that parents will stop applying for Free School Meals because the offer is free and universal, resulting in an increased cost to the borough.

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

- Since 2014 Council-funded Free School Meals extends provision above the government's Universal Infant Free School Meal scheme so it also covers those at KS2 who aren't eligible for government-funded FSM.
- The cost for this initiative in 2021/22 was £2.771m and the funding comes from £1m of Public Health Grant, remainder from 'Mayors Priority Budget' (General Fund). In previous years the amount of funding has exceeded £3m.
- Schools can sometimes generate a surplus from the programme, as funding is provided on an average meal price and at 100% take-up rate. Procedures to retrieve excess funding have had to be put in place and can take resources in terms of staff time to manage.
- Schools have to actively encourage parents to apply for FSM in primary schools, since FSM eligibility is required to secure Pupil Premium funding. This includes holding workshop mornings to assist parents in completing their application if they need help.
- Currently, schools are reimbursed by the Mayor's programme on the basis of the average number of school meals identified from the school census data. The MOU states that schools are to be reimbursed only for the actual number of meals served paid monthly in arrears. The financial saving (for the Council) will be the difference between census data and actual number of meals taken.

London Borough of Islington

- Since 2010, the Council has provided free school meals to all maintained nursery and primary school pupils in Islington, but you need to register.
- Entitled to free school meals if they are attending:
 - Islington Children's centres and early years centres
 - a children's centre in an Islington primary school
 - North Islington, Margaret McMillan or Kate Greenaway nurseries
- a primary school in Islington from the age of three, full time.

- The current annual operating cost is funded from GF (£1.1m) and PH grant contribution (of £727k), totalling approximately £1.8m.
- A high number of pupils in the borough are eligible for FSM compared to other boroughs. During the pandemic the FSM eligibility increased so costs have reduced. Meals are funded at £2.00 per meal, which hasn't changed for some time.
- To mitigate the risk of parents not applying for FSM, the Council has made it mandatory for all parents to register for FSM. As a result of this approach, there has been an increase in FSM eligibility and it has reduced any stigma attached to applying for a FSM as every parent has to apply in order to receive the Council funded meal.
- There was a significant increase in actual take-up of meals, from 55-65% to 85-90%. Capital investment was required to prepare kitchens to accommodate uptake increase. There were set-up fees and project management costs too. Ran a pilot initially, went ahead with 6 pilot schools. Went live in March 2010 across the borough. The pilot worked for them and helped to iron out some of the thinking and to review kitchens and assess the needs of each school.
- Procurement-wise there is a pooled arrangement for primary schools with the majority of schools buying into a contract with an external provider; there are 4 or 5 LA Primary schools that don't buy into the catering contract and some academies have their own arrangement.
- For the non-pooled arrangement (where a school has their own kitchen or their own provider) the school is asked to complete a monthly form, breaking down the number of meals taken on any given day for a monthly period and they are funded accordingly at £2 per meal for an ineligible child.

TACKLING FOOD POVERTY IN EDUCATION PROGRAMME - RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the London Borough of Hackney in line with a working Action Plan (timelines are advisory and may be subject to change)

01. **By October 2023**, to progress implementation of the recommendations and the key messages in this report, the Director of Education will lead the production of an associated draft action plan to be presented to the Cost of Living Board (or equivalent local governance/ oversight model).
02. **In the London Borough of Hackney**, the lead responsibility for developing the tackling food poverty in education action plan to respond to the cost of living crisis should sit with the Cost of Living Board (CLB) or equivalent governance forum.
03. **By October 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should explore the potential for establishing a local School Food Trust model (or equivalent) to oversee free school meals for all primary age school pupils with the ultimate aim of developing a programme to sustain the delivery of universal free school meals beyond the 2023/2024 commitment made by the London Mayor.
04. **By September 2023** - the development of the Tackling Food Poverty in Education action plan should gather inputs from all the Portfolios across the Council as well as the senior leadership team in relation to the key issues within their services and communities. The key overarching areas already identified for issues we need to focus on include:
 - a. Reviewing commissioning and funding arrangements and distribution
 - b. Education leadership
 - c. Procurement, Business development and support
 - d. Borough leadership and governance
 - e. The local authority will continue to monitor and support schools and educational settings regarding free school meal eligibility, applications and take-up.
05. **By July 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should have made initial 'one-off' investment commitments to the locally based organisations: Chef's in Schools and also the Hackney School of Food, to support the implementation of key parts of the supporting action plan for this programme. These targeted one-off investments will lead to ensuring all local schools will have some form of access to activity being led by these organisations as part of the 'local offer' for 2023/2024.
06. To further support the implementation of the recommendations from this report, the London Borough of Hackney, by **September 2023**, will have facilitated a process of inviting 'family of schools' consortia (minimum of one secondary and 4 primary schools per family of schools consortia to encourage cross phase working) to apply for targeted 'one off funding' grant allocations upon expressions of interest, making clear how they will implement recommendations set out in this plan. Grant allocations to be awarded to consortia setting out plans to implement most of the recommendations for schools in this report.

07. **By July 2023** - London Borough of Hackney Procurement should have mapped out the unit cost for local meals across the borough and shared data to inform potential joint working and/or contract renegotiation. Meal unit cost processes vary from £1.65 to just over £3 across local schools with considerable variability in quality.
08. **By September 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should, where there may be any system and process gaps, strengthen arrangements for assisting parents for whom English is a second language by enabling online applications in their native language.
09. **By October 2023**, London Borough of Hackney should have reviewed how improved data sharing processes could be used to automatically enrol children for free school meals in order to increase take up.
10. **By September 2023** - London Borough of Hackney through a commissioned provider arrangement should provide access to readily available school meals based information, guidance and advice for school lead professionals in the form of a telephone line contact and/ or a web-based solution approach.
11. **By December 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should lead on brokerage to enable Schools to partner with local housing estates/residents and cook produce from the housing estates' gardens. Some estates could offer space for local schools to grow food with the children. This should be considered as something to take forward with resident groups.
12. **By October 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should create and distribute printed promotional booklets to reach parents and carers who are not comfortable with online platforms.
13. **By November 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should establish a portal for parents and carers to check their eligibility without completing a full application. Access to this could be given to schools to assist parents.
14. **By September 2023** - actions should be undertaken by Council officers to allow automatic enrolment for free school meals to be introduced and eligibility expanded to include all children who meet the income criteria, regardless of their parents' circumstances. Automatic enrolling of school children who are eligible for free school meals and expanding its criteria were among the recommendations in the National Food Strategy, written by businessman and campaigner Henry Dimbleby,
15. **From September 2023** - potential sponsorship models should be explored. Local partnerships with food projects - collaborative funding could provide more options for schools. Work undertaken locally to develop partnerships in food provision, delivery and collective purchasing. Work could be done to look at the neighbourhood partners, rather than council wide level. If this is too big could schools group in smaller clusters geographically and then lead on making connections with smaller charity organisations. The council could develop a directory to support the connections. There is will and so much out there. However smaller groups would need to develop links with smaller organisations.
16. **By September 2023** - there should be a named Cabinet Member with responsibility for poverty, with oversight of tackling food poverty in education.
17. **By September 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should make available targeted continued professional development activity (CPD) for school business managers with a focus on strengthening skillset to negotiate with contracts/ providers of school meals.

18. **By September 2023** - London Borough of Hackney should make available (through targeted commissioning activity of well positioned local area provider organisations), an extended local offer of CPD to school based professionals and improving access for learning opportunities for more children and young people to develop skills and learning with regards to healthy food and nutrition.
19. **By September 2023** - London Borough of Hackney to lead on activity to enable voluntary sector organisations to act as a hub to support parents in their applications.
20. **By January 2024** - a planning restriction preventing new fast food outlets within 250 metres of schools and education settings should be explored.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SETTINGS (ADVISORY)

21. Schools and education settings should explore the scope for deploying learning from this report's case studies and where possible foster local working together innovation from clustering or partnership arrangements. Each of the school based case studies in this report demonstrates that local actions and working together can be impactful. A diverse range of interventions are reported, from education and catering staff, working in a wide range of contexts. What is common across these case studies is that when local leaders are motivated to tackle challenges, local solutions are found.
22. Schools may wish to consider how their kitchens are something that communities could use, seeing school kitchens as a community asset and a way for schools, settings and food related organisations to work together.
23. Schools with space could set up a pantry or equivalent. Food based organisations are often looking for a stable arrangement with spaces that can store food. Schools could learn from successful models already operating, for e.g. in the South West. The Food Network can create a simple information sheet on how to get a pantry/ distribution project going. Projects and schools could work more closely together.
24. Schools should think creatively and actively encourage parents to apply for FSM using a variety of initiatives, such as the model used in Newham, where an Ipad is offered a prize. However, previous learning suggests that this approach would be more effective, in Early Years, where there is universality of FSM.
25. Where not already done so schools should support parents with online applications for access to FSM.
26. Schools and settings are encouraged to be different, to be bold, and to be innovative. New approaches can be impactful. An example of successful practice was the 'take-away' van in some schools being strategically located to take pressure off the dining rooms and give more dining options. This innovation also has the benefit of being outdoors and replicating a 'street' dining experience.
27. There is considerable divergence in experience across schools in Hackney. Although it would be

unhelpful to obsess over levels of uptake and 'league table positions', there is merit in reflecting on 'what works' in schools (within their authority and beyond) that find themselves in similar circumstances, and yet seem to report high levels of school meals uptake.

28. Ensure stakeholders are aware of the key role of free school meals in promoting social justice, improving health and tackling poverty. Understanding the contribution of free school meals to Hackney's efforts to eradicate child poverty should be used as a motivation to promote entitlement, tackle the stigma and shame that has been associated with it, and increase uptake.
29. Schools should explore the potential to partner with local housing estates/residents and cook produce from the housing estates' gardens. Some estates could offer space for local schools to grow food with the children. Learning from other LA areas nationally tells us that this approach has been taken forward with resident groups in some areas.
30. Explore the potential to link school meals provision with the school's pre-existing eco-awareness work has the potential to capitalise on pupils' interest in environmental issues.
31. Involving pupils and educating them on the whole process of school food production has the potential to heighten awareness of the quality of school meals and the wider benefits of school meals.
32. Strong leadership locally has proven to be impactful in leading to school meals transformation. The unity of parent groups and staff eases the introduction of new practice.
33. Preventing key stage three pupils from leaving school grounds at lunchtime increases school meal uptake.
34. Maintaining a responsive school meals service – one which listens to pupils and adapts quickly to challenge and change – is key to maintaining success.
35. Upskilling catering staff through targeted CPD activity to enable them to prepare higher quality, fresher homemade meals can prove to be hugely effective.
36. Explore scope for emulating local fast-food chains - in terms of both food style and service layout - where delivered most effectively this has improved the ability to compete.
37. Ensuring pupils are well informed on the importance of healthy eating and fully engaged in the work of the school meals service helps sustain success.
38. Educating teachers on school meals at the start of their careers establishes the importance of school catering for the wider education service.
39. Strengthening the link between eating at home and eating in schools reinforces the value of school food among parents and pupils.
40. Enabling and empowering local Catering Leads has resulted in improved performance for the service as a whole.
41. Parents are more likely to register for free school meals if they have personal help to assist them through the registration process.

42. Social media platforms (Twitter) can be used to sustain interest and to foster links with the wider community and interest groups.
43. Changing the timing of the school's lunch hours, can reduce the attractiveness of visiting high-street fast-food outlets, which can greatly improve school meals uptake.
44. Explore the potential for continuity of dishes offered from primary school at the Secondary School which encourages pupils to use the school meals service.

MEASURING IMPACT

During the 2023/2024 academic year, we will be analysing the Council's key performance data to help us better understand the impact our initiatives are having on tackling food poverty in education. We will include this analysis and future targets related to the recommendations in our action plan. We will also be working in partnership with colleagues from Loughborough University, who will be our programme evaluation partners. An evaluation process will be lead by a team from the University and further information pertaining to process and timescales will be shared in the near future.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Task Group Membership and Associate Members

Organisation	Name
Headteachers	Jenna Clark - Gainsborough Primary School
	Louise Nicholls - Executive Head of Kingsmead, Mandeville and Gayhurst
	Richard Brown - Urswick Secondary School
	Andy English - Our Lady's Catholic Secondary School
Strategic Lead (Hackney Council)	Jenny Zienau
Youth Representatives	Peter Algacs of Hackney Youth Parliament
Chair of Governors	Justin Madubuko (Secondary)
	Shekeila Scarlet (Secondary)
	Saga Wilkinson (Nursery School)
	Punam Mehta (Primary School)
Hackney Council	Sajeed Patni - Head of Finance, Hackney Education
	Ophelia Carter - Head of Schools Finance, Hackney Education
	David Court - Head of Admissions and Pupil Benefits
	Jenny Zienau, Strategic Lead (Change and Transformation), Policy and Strategic Delivery
	Peter Algacs, Engagement, Learning & Prog Team Leader (Hackney Youth Parliament)
	Donna Doherty-Kelly, Principal Public Health Specialist
	Marcela Leite, Community Engagement and Projects Officer
Programme Management	Silvi Shrestha - Programme Manager, Hackney Education
	Laura Oni - Executive Assistant to the Director of Education
	Paul Senior, Director of Education, Hackney Education

Appendix B: Financial implications for free school meals - all schools

This spreadsheet includes costing for all of the settings based on recent census data

Summary (Jan 2022 Census data)				Per meal	£1.50	£2.00	£2.41	£3.00
		Unfunded Meals	Days		Full take-up	Full take-up	Full take-up	Full take-up
Nursery in a Primary School	Maintained	1,594	190		£454,290	£605,720	£729,893	£908,580
Nursery in a Primary School	Academy	97	190		£27,645	£36,860	£44,416	£55,290
Nursery - standalone	Maintained	213	190		£60,705	£80,940	£97,533	£121,410
		1,904			£542,640	£723,520	£871,842	£1,085,280
Primary Schools (Years 3-6)								
Primary (Years 3-6)	Maintained	4,829	190		£1,376,265			£2,752,530
Primary (Years 3-6)	Academy	890	190		£253,650	£338,200	£407,531	£507,300
		5,719	190		£1,629,915			£3,259,830
Secondary Schools								
Secondary	Maintained	2,721	190		£775,485			£1,550,970
Secondary	Academy	4,304	190		£1,226,640			£2,453,280
		7,025	190		£2,002,125			£4,004,250
Other Provision								
Special	Maintained	126	190		£35,910	£47,880	£57,695	£71,820
PRU	Maintained	47	190		£13,395	£17,860	£21,521	£26,790
AP and Free School	Academy	13	190		£3,705	£4,940	£5,953	£7,410
		186			£53,010	£70,680	£85,169	£106,020
Total		14,834			£4,227,690			£8,455,380

APPENDIX C: HELPFUL RESOURCES

- By region: number of children in poverty not eligible for free school meals - <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/region-number-children-poverty-not-eligible-free-school-meals>
- Child poverty in your area – <https://endchildpoverty.org.uk/child-poverty/>
- Circular food (Waste/Carbon) - <https://relondon.gov.uk/circular-food-procurement>
- Trussell Trust (end of year stats) - <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>
- Trussell Trust (New hunger in UK report) - <https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/research-advocacy/hunger-in-the-uk/>
- Trussell Trust - <https://www.trusselltrust.org/oxford-university-report/>
- The Broken Plate 2023 - <https://www.foodfoundation.org.uk/publication/broken-plate-2023>
- Updated State of London Report - State of London - London Datastore
- Felix Project Impact Report - https://thefelixproject.org/uploads/files/Felix-Project-Impact-Report-2022_23.pdf
- LACA - UIFSM funding increase ‘nowhere near enough’ says LACA chair | LACA, the school food people
- Research on cost of school - https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/files/policypost/Minimum_cost_of_education_Final.pdf
- Evaluation of the Free School Meals Pilot (2010) - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/184047/DFE-RR227.pdf
- Diet-related health inequalities - <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/POST-PN-0686/POST-PN-0686.pdf>
- Mental Health in Children - <https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/mental-health-of-children-and-young-people-in-england/2022-follow-up-to-the-2017-survey>
- Relationship between poverty and school absence - <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/118122/pdf/>
- Qualitative insights from young people about the benefits of free school meals - [https://www.biteback2030.com/sites/default/files/2022-09/Bite % 20Back % 202030 % 20- % 20More % 20Than % 20A % 20Meal % 20- % 20Final.pdf](https://www.biteback2030.com/sites/default/files/2022-09/Bite%20Back%202030%20-%20More%20Than%20A%20Meal%20-%20Final.pdf)

Hackney Family Information Service



We offer advice, information and support on:

- local children centres, early years nurseries, pre-schools, childminders
- local schools
- before and after school clubs and holiday playschemes
- childcare funding options

Contact us by:

- Telephone: **020 8820 7000 (option 6)**, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
- Email: **fis@hackneygovuk**
- Visit our social media channels:
Facebook: **facebookcom/hackneyfis**
Instagram: **@hackneyfis**

Hackney Education

Hackney Service Centre
1 Hillman Street, London E8 1DY

020 8820 7000

Our call opening times are as follows:

Monday - 9am to 5pm
Tuesday - 1pm to 5pm
Wednesday - Closed
Thursday - 9am to 1pm
Friday - 9am to 5pm

You can visit us at the Hackney Service Centre at the following times:

Tuesday - 9am to 12pm
Thursday - 1pm to 4pm



Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 14th 2023 Item 6 - Unregistered Educational Settings	Item No 6
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Outline

Following further scrutiny of the Commission's review of unregistered educational settings in January 2023, members agreed to write to the Secretary of State setting out their ongoing education and safeguarding concerns around their operation in Hackney.

A [letter](#) setting out these concerns was sent to the Secretary of State in March 2023. The response from Claire Coutinho MP, Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing was received on 26th June 2023 and is attached for members to note.

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2023-0015560CCPO

Claire Coutinho MP

Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/contactus/dfe

Cllr Sophie Conway
Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
London Borough of Hackney

Cllr Margaret Gordon
Vice Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
London Borough of Hackney

By email: martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

26 June 2023

Dear Cllr Conway and Cllr Gordon,

Thank you for your letter of 14 April, addressed to the Secretary of State, about legislative requirements to bring unregistered educational settings within regulatory oversight to reduce associated safeguarding risks. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area and apologise for the delayed response.

May I begin by thanking you for drawing my attention to the risks posed to children being educated in unregistered educational settings. Many of the points you raise were raised separately with me in a letter of 10 March from Philip Glanville and Antoinette Bramble.

In my response to Philip and Antionette I reiterated that it remains the department's intention to legislate on the safeguarding measures that were in the discontinued 2022 Schools Bill when parliamentary time allows. This includes the children not in schools register, extending the independent schools registration requirement and powers to investigate unregistered schools).

Given that local authorities (LAs) are legally responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in their areas, regardless of the educational setting they attend, it is crucial to explore what more can be done with the existing powers available to LAs. The department and Ofsted are to intervene and ensure that all children receive a safe and suitable education which equips children for life in modern Britain. Practical steps can be taken at present, and we should not wait for new legislation in this area before acting. In particular, I am keen to explore with LAs, such as Hackney, whether a more effective use of School Attendance Orders may drive a behaviour change in those communities you have concerns about or have otherwise positive impacts.

I concluded my letter to Philip and Antionette by suggesting, as a first step, that they facilitate an official-level meeting to examine what more can be done under existing powers. Such a meeting would further help inform departmental thinking ahead of any future legislation. That suggestion remains.

Thank you for writing on this important matter. I hope you will find this reply useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Coutinho', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Claire Coutinho MP
Minister for Children, Families and Wellbeing



Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 14th 2023 Item 7 - School Estates Strategy (Falling School Rolls)	Item No 7
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Outline

On June 26th 2023, the Commission scrutinised proposals from the School Estates Strategy to close two schools and merge a further 4 schools as part of an informal local consultation which closed on 16th July 2023.

The Commission's response to the consultation is attached for members to note.

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**Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission**

Room 118, 2nd Floor
Hackney Town Hall
Mare Street
London, E8 1EA

15th July 2023

martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Cllr Anntionette Bramble,
Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education,
Young People and Children's Social Care
London Borough of Hackney.

Dear Cllr Bramble

School Estates Strategy (Falling School Rolls) - Informal Consultation Response

At its recent meeting on the 27th June 2023, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission scrutinised proposals emerging from the School Estates Strategy to close two primary schools (De Beauvoir and Randal Cremer) and to merge a further four (Baden-Powell with Nightingale and Colvestone with Princess May). At this meeting, members of the Commission agreed to submit a short summary of its conclusions which were to be submitted to the informal consultation on these proposals (ending 16th July 2023).

The Commission is grateful for the support and contributions from local parents representatives (from Colvestone Primary School and Baden Powell Primary School) as well as those officers that attended the meeting and who responded to questions raised by members. All these contributions have helped to shape and inform the Commission's response to the informal consultation which is attached to this letter. A full record of this meeting is provided through the [audio visual recording](#) and the [draft minutes](#).

Schools are anchors within local communities. As well as being a hub for learning, creativity and inclusion schools are also commonly the centre of community and social networks of local children, families. Children over multiple generations have often attended these same local schools which help to create long-standing bonds and ties to the community, therefore changes to the local school establishment undoubtedly raises concerns among local children and families, school staff and among the wider community. With a 20% pupil vacancy rate across local primary schools the Commission acknowledges that the current position is not sustainable

Overview & Scrutiny

and there is a need for the Council to act to preserve the integrity and quality of local educational systems.

The Commission understands the difficulties and challenges of falling school rolls and accepts that there are no easy pathways ahead in making such difficult decisions about the future of our local schools. The existing legal framework for education provision by the local authority compounds the difficulty of such decisions, which whilst placing a duty on local authorities to ensure that there is sufficient education does not give them jurisdiction to effect *direct change* equally across *all* educational settings. Furthermore, the Commission is all too aware that any decision to close a locally maintained school now is likely to be final as any future increase in local demand for education provision will need to be met through the academy or free school sector (*the academy and free school presumption* as set out in the Education Act 2011).

Scrutiny can play a positive and constructive role in local decision making, particularly where decisions might be difficult and challenging. Engaging and bringing local stakeholders together helps to bring a shared understanding of the issues and challenges at hand and can help to identify a common way forward. Scrutiny, where proposals are challenged and tested in public can also provide assurance to both local decision makers and the local community that subsequent decisions are taken in the public interest.

Attached is the submission of the Commission to the informal consultation to the School Estates Strategy (Falling Rolls) and the proposal to close two primary schools and merge a further four which we hope will prove helpful. As the focus of scrutiny is strategic it has necessarily avoided commenting on individual proposals for specific schools but has sought to draw together issues which can positively inform current and future decision making in this area.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Sophie Conway

Chair, Children and Young People Scrutiny
Commission

Cllr Margaret Gordon

Vice Chair, Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission

Cc:

- Jacquie Burke, Group Director Children and Education
- Paul Senior, Director of Education and Inclusion
- school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission Submission to the Informal Consultation on the Proposals to Close Two Primary Schools and Merge a Further Four

Consultation

1. The Commission welcomes the ambitions of the informal consultation as an opportunity to engage and involve a wide range of local stakeholders ahead of any statutory consultation and formal decision making process on the future of local schools. Given that the consultation is likely to cause concern and anxiety among children and families likely to be impacted by the proposals to close or merge local schools however, it is important that there are clear and unambiguous expectations of the information which is required from contributors in this consultation.

The [consultation documentation](#) sets out just one question (whether contributors agree or disagree with the proposals) and one open-ended invitation to comment on the proposals more broadly. Alongside some stakeholders, the Commission wish to highlight a number of concerns with this approach:

- a) The agree/ disagree questioning infers that there is some form of ballot on the proposals which may inflate expectations arising from this consultation.
- b) Whilst understanding there is genuine desire to garner wide ranging feedback on the proposals, with little guidance as to what information is being sought through this open-ended questioning, stakeholders may be confused as to what practical, useful or meaningful information might be required which may influence or provide mitigation for the proposals or future subsequent plans.

In relation to above, given the volume and wide ranging nature of contributions likely to be received through the consultation, it was not clear to members of the Commission as to how this information would be analysed and used in developing proposals for the next stage of this process. In this context, further clarification was needed.

2. GLA modelling forecasts that school rolls will continue to decline in Hackney over the medium to long-term with rolls not expected to stabilise until the earliest in 2029/30. Given that the impact of falling rolls is a long term policy issue and likely to impact on a growing number of schools across the borough, the Commission suggests that this might be the basis for broader borough wide public conversation on the *implementation* of the School Estates Strategy. Such a process with broader stakeholder and public engagement may help to further develop overarching principles and guidance which can inform future proposals in relation to school place planning. Equally importantly, this would also be a further opportunity for the Council to clearly again set out its duties and obligations in respect of school place planning and in maintaining high quality education for all young people across Hackney, but to also highlight the limitations and the legal framework in which it can act to reduce provision, which is perhaps less widely understood.

Falling School Rolls - Impact and Evidence

3. The Commission acknowledges the financial impact that falling school rolls is having across the local education system and indeed the wider community. In Hackney Education's own estimate, falling school rolls has meant that local schools are missing out on up to £30m of central government funding due to places going unfilled in local primary schools. In making the case for proposed primary school closures and mergers, the Commission would have welcomed further evidence to illustrate how falling school rolls have begun to impact on the delivery of local education. In particular further evidence would have been welcome in respect of the following:
 - The number of teaching and other support staff (classroom assistants) lost in the local educational system;
 - Impact on extra -curricular activities on local schools (visits and after school clubs etc);
 - Impact on building maintenance and other physical investments.

A more detailed narrative from schools themselves would help stakeholders and the wider community to fully understand how falling school rolls impacts on schools, teachers and of course the educational support and development provided to children themselves. Such data would help stakeholders understand the impact of falling school rolls and assist the case for change.

4. Officers presented evidence to the Commission that local proposals to close or merge schools were delayed to ensure that the impact of those local interventions to help maintain the viability of local schools were fully tested and evaluated. Whilst officers noted that a number of actions that local schools had taken to help improve financial viability and long-term sustainability (e.g. shared leadership, vertical classes, clustering/ Federation) the Commission felt it would have been useful to share further evidence of the impact of these interventions.

Understanding that the issue of falling school rolls is likely to be an ongoing issue for the medium to long-term in Hackney and other central London boroughs, it is important that there is a open and transparent evidence base about what actions are effective, not only to inform future policy and decision making but to also ensure that there is greater community awareness and understanding of the reasonings behind future decision making.

5. Recognising that falling rolls is a London wide issue where a number of other boroughs are having to make similar difficult choices about the future of local schools, the Commission believe that in future decision making, it would be helpful to understand more about the different approaches taken across these authorities (for example, why Lambeth has adopted an approach which is more focused mergers rather than closure of schools under its jurisdiction). This underlines the importance

Overview & Scrutiny

of the need for London boroughs to work collectively and to develop and share local innovations and solutions to the challenges of falling school rolls which can help develop and extend best practice across London. The work of London Council's on this issue is noted by the Commission as this can provide a conduit for such intelligence and information sharing.

Objectives of the Proposals and Possible Alternatives

6. Whilst the need to remove surplus places in the primary sector has been made clear to the stakeholders, further clarification was perhaps needed as to the *numbers of places* that are needed to be removed to ensure the ongoing sustainability of local education systems. Whilst assessment criteria used to assess and identify which schools fall into scope (based on financial viability, falling school rolls etc) it is not apparent if there is a 'target' figure which the planned closures or mergers aimed to achieve in reducing school places through this process.
7. The Commission would also welcome further clarification as to possible alternative models and options to reduce vacancies in the local school system. In particular, the Commission is keen to understand why it may be preferable to close rather than merge schools and why (for example) [other authorities](#) have opted for a predominantly school merger approach rather than a mixed model of closures and mergers. Given the possible liabilities to the Council, it would also be helpful to have financial assessment of the different options (noting that London wide documentation suggest that school mergers may be preferred by some authorities as the liabilities to the Council could be minimised (particularly in relation to staff redundancy costs).

Going forward therefore, the Commission felt it would be helpful in further delivery stages of the School Estates Strategy to have a clearer understanding of the number of places that need to be removed (for sustainability) and a more detailed appraisal (with costs) of the different options which may deliver the required reduction in places.

Coordinating a cross-department local response

8. Falling school rolls is a clearly systemic issue in which a range of national and regional issues (e.g. falling birth rates, Brexit and the housing crisis) have interacted to precipitate widespread migration of families from inner city areas. Whilst the Commission accepts that there is no easy solution which will resolve this problem at either national or local level, it does believe that a more coordinated and consistent local approach which seeks to utilise and align those levers over which the local authority does have control, may help to *mitigate* some of the impact of falling school rolls.

The Commission suggests that there are a number of local processes over which the Council does exert some control, which albeit on their own may appear to have

Overview & Scrutiny

limited impact, but if aligned to this purpose may have some cumulative impact.

Examples noted by the Commission include:

- Further promotion of inclusive schools and education to ensure that more children are supported in mainstream local education settings;
- Minimise the loss of pupils through cross-border flows where neighbouring authorities may have comparatively better borough wide offers (e.g. FSM provision, wraparound school provision or holiday programme activities);¹
- Ensure that there is effective, regular and ongoing engagement with parents whose children are receiving Elective Home Education and that they are aware of the pathways back to mainstream education;²
- Further assurance that Housing and Education services are working closely together so that where possible, families can be supported to stay within the borough (e.g. particularly in relation to placements of Temporary Accommodation)
- Ensuring local development plans and other planning policies reflect the need to develop family accommodation.³

In this same vein, the Commission wishes to emphasise that falling school rolls is not an issue solely for local education and children services as the impact and repercussions of such closures and mergers are likely to be felt much more widely across the community and across the wider family of council services. Falling school rolls is an indicator of the loss of children and families from local communities which will need the local authority to maximise the use of all those levers at its disposal if it is to deliver on broader local ambitions for genuinely diverse and sustainable communities.

Plans to Support Local Secondary Schools Against Falling School Rolls

9. Falling school rolls in the primary sector will inevitably soon impact on secondary education. With demand for primary places peaking in 2019 it is likely that demand for secondary schools will peak this or next academic year. The Commission notes that there have already been recent reports of secondary school closures in other parts of London - 2 of these in Lambeth.

[Local admissions data](#) suggests that, without any reductions in PAN, surplus places in the secondary will begin to accumulate in Hackney from 2022/23. This data estimates that surplus places will increase year on year, so that in 2028 there will be an estimated 367 surplus places in secondary schools across Hackney (which is the equivalent of 12 Form Entry).

¹ 2022 [admissions data](#) suggest that **135** children were offered reception places outside of Hackney.

² Currently over **200** children (excluding those from the Charedi community) are in EHE.

³ Data submitted to the Cabinet report suggests that 70% of planned new homes for the borough comprise 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation.

Overview & Scrutiny

The authority's ability to act to address growing numbers of pupil vacancies in the secondary sector will however be more limited, as the majority of schools in the secondary sector in Hackney are academies, free schools or faith schools (16 out of 18 schools) over which the Council has no direct jurisdiction (in terms of reduce PANs or decision to close). In this context, the Commission is concerned that measures to reduce local places may fall disproportionately on the small number of local maintained secondary schools. The Commission would therefore welcome further assurance on how local secondary schools are being engaged in preparation for prospective falling school rolls and how the authority intends to protect the local diversity of provision in secondary settings.

Managing school deficits

10. Financial viability is clearly a key determinant in the future of local schools facing challenges from falling school rolls. Data submitted as part of the Cabinet report suggests that this is a complex and varied picture however, where some schools in the scope for closure or merger have managed to maintain a significant budget surplus whilst others have accumulated substantial deficits. Whilst wishing to avoid comment on any singular schools financial situation it was not clear to the Commission how the authority had allowed a school to have an ongoing budget deficit of around £500k for the past three financial years and what support had been provided to turn around this position. This clearly presents a financial risk / exposure to the wider DSG budget if proposals are confirmed.
11. The scale of the financial challenges facing schools is clear. The most recent data published at Schools Forum suggest a deteriorating financial position across local community schools which indicate that the number of schools carrying forward a deficit revenue balance at end 2022/23 has risen from 11 to 13 local schools and where the total budget deficit across these schools has risen from £2,254,228 in 2021/22 to £3,463,813 in 2022/23 (a 53% increase). Nine of these schools will carry forward a revenue budget deficit in excess of £200k.

In the context of the above, the Commission welcomes the establishment of a dedicated schools strategy team to support schools in face of ongoing falling rolls and make sure schools are making appropriate plans to mitigate against falling rolls, and working together to minimise disruption and for the continuation of education. In addition however, the Commission is seeking further assurance as to what specific business planning and financial support will be made available to local schools to help contain and manage budgets, and there are effective plans in place to reduce budget deficits. The Commission is also keen to understand if there will be any additional capacity within the existing business support/financial planning function in Hackney Education, given that demands upon this service are likely to increase.

Overview & Scrutiny

Budget impact for Hackney Education and Council (General Fund)

12. Should the proposals to close two schools and merge a further four be confirmed by Cabinet later this year, it is estimated that this will result in an estimated £3.4m cost of which £1m will be recurring (for security of vacant sites). There are a number of uncertainties about the projections and accountabilities within this budget for which the Commission would like further reassurance:
- a) How confident are officers that the projected costs and financial liabilities in administering the proposed closures and mergers are realistic given the i) expected deteriorating financial positions of schools in scope as roll numbers may decline ii) the unknown contracted liabilities of the schools in scope?
 - b) Further clarity is also needed as to the financial responsibility of these costs and which local budgets will be accountable for any occurring losses/liabilities (e.g. which will be met by Direct Schools Grant and those by the Hackney Council General Fund).
 - c) The Commission is particularly concerned about those liabilities from the proposed closure and mergers which may fall within the Council General Fund, not only in the context of the broader pressures this budget is under, but also if this may impact on the Hackney Education budget (where discretionary spending is limited and budget savings adversely impact a small number of services).

Mitigations - SEND

13. Accepting that what has been presented thus far are just proposals for school closures and mergers, along with other stakeholders, the Commission would welcome further details in respect of the possible mitigations which *may* be put in place to support affected children, families and schools should these be approved.

The impact of prospective school closures and amalgamations on children with SEND has been a key feature in many of the consultation responses, with many parents anxious about the upheaval that a school move would have on their child. In particular, parents were concerned that they would be required to move their child with SEND from a one form entry school (which had been their preferred choice) to a larger two form entry school which may be a more challenging experience.

At present, documentation proposing the closure and merger of schools notes that 'additional provision' will be provided to support children with SEND, with no illustrative examples of what that might look like. In the context of the above, further details of the mitigations which might be put in place to support transition of children with SEND to new schools may provide some reassurance to parents impacted by this change.

Impact on the diversity of schools

14. A long-standing area of interest to the Commission has been diversity of children within local schools. The Commission believes that a key aim of local education provision is not only to ensure that there is diversity of schools in terms of range and type of settings available for parents to choose from, but also to ensure that there is diversity of children within local schools which reflect the rich and vibrant social, economic and cultural mix of local communities in Hackney. [For example the Commission notes that with the exception of one school in scope for proposals for closure or amalgamation, all have significantly higher rates of Free School Meal entitlement than the Hackney average (36%) for primary schools.]

Accepting the supremacy of parental choice in this matter, the Commission is keen to understand what assurance can be provided that current and future school place planning (or admissions processes) can protect and promote ambitions for diversity *within* and across local schools.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 14th 2023 Item 8 - Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers	Item No 8
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Outline

The Commission received an update on its recommendations to improve the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers in 2022. To supplement this session, the Commission undertook a survey of all in-house foster carers (mainstream and connected carers) and a focus group.

The Commission has produced a draft report and recommendations for the Commission to consider before these are sent to stakeholders.

To follow

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 14th 2023 Item 9 - Work Programme	Item No 9
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Outline

To ensure that it remains current and relevant, the Commission develops a new work programme each year in consultation with members of the public and other key stakeholders.

The [full list of suggestions](#) for the work programme derived from the consultation was published at the June 2023 meeting and members were invited to prioritise those issues to take forward into the work programme for 2023/24.

The Chair and Vice Chair have been meeting with Senior Officers and Cabinet members to scope and agree topics prioritised by the Commission and are still being finalised. A draft programme is attached for members to review.

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2023/24 - **OUTLINE**

Confirmed **To be Confirmed and prioritised (some to be carried over to next municipal year)**

June 27th 2023	September 14th 2023
School Estates Strategy - School Closures and Mergers (HE)	Sexual Health Services for CYP (PH)
Childcare Sufficiency Strategy (HE)	Recruitment & Retention of Foster Carers - draft report
Work Programme - Consultation Reporting 2022/23	
October 30th 2023	November 30th 2023
School Exclusions and School Moves? (HE)	Cllr Caroline Woodley - Cabinet Q & A
Update on School Exclusions report recommendations? (HE)	Future of Children's Centres?
	ASD
December 18th 2023	January 15th 2024
Children and Families Annual Report	CHSCP Annual Report
Joint Budget Monitoring Session - Children & Families and Hackney Education	Unregistered Settings
Cllr Antionnette Bramble - Cabinet Q & A	SEND Joint Area Action Plan
Children Missing Education?	Health of Looked after children
February 19th 2024	March 11th 2023
Disabled Children Service	Access to Sports and Physical Activity
Attainment - Attainment Gap	Vaping and Substance Misuse
Super youth hub	FSM Childhood Food Poverty

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2023/24 - **OUTLINE**

Meeting 1	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: Tuesday 27th June</p> <p>Deadline for reports: 16th June 2023</p>	<p>School Estates Strategy To review the School Estates Strategy proposal to informally consult on the closure of two primary schools (De Beauvoir and Randal Cremer) and the merger of a further four primary schools (Baden Powell with Nightingale and Colvestone with Princess May). To inform a response to the informal consultation which closes on the 16th July 2023.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Paul Senior, Director of Education and Inclusion ● David Court, Head of School Organisation and Commissioning ● Laura Stagg, Parent Carer Engagement System Leader ● Parents Groups - to be confirmed ● Hackney NEU - to be confirmed 	<p>-</p>
<p>Publication 19th June 2023</p>	<p>Childcare Sufficiency It is a statutory requirement for members to review local childcare sufficiency reports which are produced bi-annually. The Commission reviewed the full assessment report in 2022 and will therefore review an update in 2023.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being ● Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager ● Paul Senior, Interim Director of Education and Inclusion 	
	<p>Development of new CYP Work Programme for 2022/23</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commission/ Scrutiny officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To consult local stakeholders ● Meet with service Directors ● Collate topic suggestions ● Informal meeting with Commission

Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2023/24 - **OUTLINE**

Meeting 2	Item title and scrutiny objective	Directorate – Division – Officer Responsibility	Preparatory work to support item
<p>Meeting Date: Thursday 14th September 2023</p> <p>Papers deadline: 4th September 2023</p> <p>Agenda dispatch: 6th September 2023</p>	<p><u>Sexual and Reproductive Health of Children & Young People</u> To review sexual and reproductive health provision in context of draft sexual health strategy and the discontinuation of CHYPs Plus service.</p>	<p>Public Health as service commissioners with contributions from: Homerton Hospital, Young Hackney, British Association of Sexual Health & HIV, Healthwatch.</p>	<p>Focus groups with children and young people: -Hackney Youth Parliament -Care Council -Young Futures</p>
	<p><u>Recruitment and Retention of Foster Carers</u> Update on Commissions report - draft report with draft recommendations and proposals for consultation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commission ● Scrutiny Officer 	
	<p><u>School Estates Strategy</u> To note the Commission's consultation response to proposals to close 2 schools and merge 4 others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commission ● Scrutiny Officer 	
	<p>To note responses to the Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FSM and Childhood Food Poverty (LBH) - Unregistered Settings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commission ● Scrutiny Officer 	
	<p>Work programme 2023/24 To continue discussions on future work programme items for 2023/24</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commission ● Scrutiny Officer 	

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Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission September 14th 2023 Item 10 - Minutes	Item No 10
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Outline

To note and agree the minutes of the last meeting held on June 26th 2023.

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London Borough of Hackney
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2023/24
Date of Meeting Tuesday 27 June 2023

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

Chair	Councillor Sophie Conway
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr Lee Laudat-Scott, Cllr Midnight Ross, Cllr Ifraax Samatar, Cllr Lynne Troughton and Cllr Sarah Young
Co-optees	Andy English, Sudenaz Top and Mia Arthur
Apologies:	Jo Macleod
Officers In Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children’s Social Care• Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play• Paul Senior, Director of Education and Inclusion• David Court, Head of School Organisation and Commissioning• Laura Stagg, Parent Carer Engagement System Leader• Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help & Well-being; and• Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager.
Other People in Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Representatives from Save Colvestone Primary School• Parents from Baden Powell Primary School
Members of the Public:	1 and representatives from the press.
Officer Contact:	Martin Bradford (martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk)  020 8356 3315  martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

Scrutiny Officer in the Chair

1 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission

1.1 The positions of Chair and Vice Chair were confirmed by Cabinet on 17th May 2023 as thus:

- Chair- Cllr Sophie Conway
- Vice Chair - Cllr Margaret Gordon

1.2 This was noted by members present.

Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair

2 Apologies for Absence

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

- Jo Macleod, co-opted representative

3 Urgent Items / Order of Business

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

4 Declarations of Interest

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5 Terms of Reference

5.1 At the start of each municipal year, members are required to note and agree the terms of reference for the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission as set out in Article 7 and Section 4.5 of the Constitution.

5.2 Members noted the terms of reference.

6 Childcare Sufficiency (19.10)

6.1 Each year the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission reviews the sufficiency of local childcare ahead of autumn 2024 entry. A full sufficiency review was undertaken in 2022, therefore officers from the Early Years' Service produced a brief update for members to review.

Questions from the Commission.

6.2 What evidence is there locally on the impact of the cost of living crisis on children and families' access to and uptake of early years childcare and education and on providers in being able to deliver services effectively? Are impacts being felt equally across all settings (e.g. in children's centres, nurseries)?

- The impact of the cost of living crisis was being felt across the early years system particularly in relation to demand for services. Parents were using childcare services more flexibly post Covid, where there was now greater demand for part-time places as parents continued to work from home. Financial pressures also meant that parents were also maximising the use of free childcare entitlements to which they were entitled.
- Cost of living pressures were also impacting on child care settings with many facing increased cost pressures in terms of staffing, utilities and cleaning. The

- number of providers operating across the sector in Hackney had remained stable however, as settings which closed were often replaced by new ones.
- An Independent Child Care Commission had been established in Hackney to review those factors which were impacting on the provision of childcare in Hackney and what the authority can do to further support provision.
 - The childcare element of the Children's Centres was also currently being reviewed to further understand the factors which were affecting delivery.
 - The greatest impact had been within the playgroups which offer sessional childcare for 15 hours and 30 hours which is of concern. Occupancy at children's centres was currently running at 88% which is of also a concern as these were subsidised places and the impact that it has on private nurseries. There was a mixed picture across the PVI sector, where some settings are doing very well whilst others have had to re-evaluate their financial model.

6.3 Staff retention and recruitment was still widely recognised as the number one challenge for many local early years settings. Is there a clear strategy to support local providers? What work was being undertaken with Hackney College to provide more qualified staff to local settings?

- Staff retention was a national issue. Like most people, early years staff continue to be impacted by cost of living pressures. Early years and childcare could be a difficult and challenging role (especially during Covid) and it was clear that there were retention issues as staff left to seek better paid employment, predominantly in the retail sector.
- Given the lack of demand for places, there were currently sufficient numbers of staff to meet local childcare and early years settings needs. Recruiting staff with appropriate qualifications still remained problematic however, as staff continued to leave for other opportunities. HE was supporting settings through the delivery of NVQ Level 3 training at Hackney College and the development of a wellbeing offer to early years staff. It was anticipated that additional staff would be needed across the sector in response to the extension of free childcare from April 2024.
- In terms of the NVQ course at Hackney College a course will be running in the autumn of this year. Recruitment to the course had been difficult however, as trainees needed to be employed by a local early years setting and be allowed one day a week study leave. To date registrations were around 14-15 in total, but a further recruiting drive was planned to bring numbers up further.

6.4 Ofsted have reported that the high quality local apprenticeships could play a significant role in responding to local recruitment and retention issues in the early years sector. Have there been any developments in creating more apprenticeships in the early years sector in Hackney? Hackney Council is a significant provider through its Children's Centres - do local Children's Centres support local apprenticeships schemes? Is there any data on the number of childcare apprentices there are in Hackney?

- Some settings did have apprenticeships but no data was available on this at present. This could be included in the next sufficiency survey which would allow a much fuller picture to be obtained.

6.5 Supporting vulnerable children to access the 2 year old free childcare offer is a priority as this can deliver real benefits to children and their families. What does Hackney know about the 33% of children who are entitled are not taking up this offer: has there been any formal analysis of this cohort, for example where they are located, if they are in temporary accommodation?

- The names of low income families eligible for 2 year old free childcare are released to Hackney Education, and local Children's Centre then attempt to make contact with these families to support their pathway into local childcare services. GDPR regulations mean that this data has to be destroyed after 2 weeks, so only those parents whose children enter child care as a result can be tracked.

6.6 In terms of the 1,122 vulnerable 2 year olds currently receiving free childcare in Hackney, are these equally distributed across all types of settings (independent, nursery, child-minders and children's centres)? Is there also a sufficient take up of this offer within the Orthodox Jewish Community?

- It is very difficult to tell what the take up is as the DWP just supply a list of names and postcodes of eligible children for free 2 year old childcare entitlement. Playgroups and Children's Centres support many of the children accessing the free 2 year old childcare offer for vulnerable children as many Private, Voluntary and Independent settings choose not to do so.
- Officers reported that there was a significant take up of the free childcare offer for 2 year olds in the Orthodox Jewish Community, but it was difficult to determine what proportion of the community were represented as the authority did not have access to the data of those not taking up the offer. For those children it was aware of, there was significant uptake in child-minding settings who were supporting over 120 children from the Charedi community.
- A number of two year olds who are entitled but not officially taking up provision may be utilising free open access provision at local children's centres until a vacancy becomes available at the children centre or until provision becomes available at a setting closer to them.

Agreed: That Hackney Education would include data in the next childcare sufficiency on the number of children receiving two year old free childcare across early years settings.

6.7 Although access to specialist support services is out of the control of early years staff, what can officers report back in terms of waiting times for SLT and other specialist support services for children in early years settings? Are waiting times improving?

- Hackney Education can only provide anecdotal evidence on this as these waiting lists are controlled by health partners. It was noted that whilst some children were being seen quite quickly, others may have to wait significantly longer. More detailed data would be available from the Homerton Hospital which operates these services.

6.8 The number of children accessing support under the SEND Inclusion fund has increased. Last year it was reported that the total fund available was just under £1m. Has there been any uplift in funding available for 2023/24?

- The inclusion fund is developed by top-slicing Early Years funding for 2,3 and 4 year olds which is then used to support children (not settings) with additional needs. Any funds not used have to be passported back to local settings and for the last few years, the allocated sum has been sufficient to meet local demands and the fund has not been overspent. If demand does increase, proposals will go to School Forum to get authorisation for an increase in funds.

6.9 An additional £204m is being provided to provide an uplift to childcare funding for 2023/24. Is there any estimate as to what this extra funding will mean in terms of the increases in the hourly rates payable to providers for the provision of 2 year olds and 3 and 4 year free childcare? How was the Council planning to engage and involve parents in these reforms?

- The Chancellor set out plans to gradually extend free childcare provision from April 2024 through to September 2025, in which free 30 hour childcare would be provided to children aged 9 months and above whose parents were working (16 hours). It was not clear what impact the additional funding would have on the hourly rate provided to childcare providers at this stage, but an increase was expected in September 2023. It was difficult for the authority to plan for these developments at the moment as much of the information was not available (e.g. if there will be a national advertising campaign, additional funding to LA's to administer the scheme, whether children aged 9 months+ would be eligible for funding within the Inclusion Fund). It was also not clear at this stage what impact

that proposed developments would have on demands for childcare and the availability of places locally.

- Hackney Education was waiting for news of any central government promotional campaign and if there would be any additional funding for local initiatives to promote parental awareness. HE had numerous promotional platforms at its disposal which would be used to promote parental awareness, but ensuring that local settings were fully aware would be key to reaching local parents.

6.10 Can you briefly update the Commission on vacancy and uptake of childcare places across local children's centres? Are there waiting lists for childcare provision at Children's Centres?

- The occupancy rate at local children's centres was 88% which does not appear to have changed since last year's full assessment (noting a review of Children Centre usage was under way). Vacancy rates were however higher at local playgroups and child-minders (c.60%). This demonstrates that there were vacancies across the sector.

6.11 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to members questions.

7 School Estates Strategy (Falling School Rolls) (19.30)

7.1 An update on the School Estates Strategy was taken at Cabinet on 22nd May 2023, which, due to falling school rolls, proposed to informally consult on the closure of two primary schools (De Beauvoir and Randal Cremer) and the merger of a further four primary schools (Baden Powell with Nightingale and Colvestone with Princess May). The informal consultation will take place from 5th June to 16th July 2023. The Children and Young people Scrutiny Commission has agreed to scrutinise the proposals put forward by Cabinet and to make a submission to the informal consultation.

7.2 To inform the scrutiny process, the Commission has made a number of approaches to include representation from parent groups from the most impacted schools (Randal Cremer, De Beauvoir, Colvestone and Baden Powel) and from Hackney National Education Union. The Commission managed to secure representation from parents at Colvestone Primary School and Baden Powell school and the chair thanked parents for attending the meeting.

7.3 After this meeting the Commission would submit a response to the informal consultation, and for transparency, this will be published in the next agenda of the Commission (14th September 2023).

Hackney Education

7.4 A short presentation was made from Director of Education and Inclusion which highlighted the following from the report:

- Falling school rolls was a London wide problem with 29 of the 32 London boroughs experiencing reduced demand for primary school places.
- There were a number of factors driving this which included lower birth rates, exit of families from London due to Brexit and the Covid pandemic.
- DfE recommended that local education systems should not operate at a surplus of places greater than 5%, but in Hackney this was in excess of 20%.
- HE had engaged local stakeholders from January to April 2022, and with the assistance of a range of criteria, developed a number of proposals to close and amalgamate 6 local primary schools. Cabinet agreed to informally consult on these proposals in May 2023 ahead of any statutory consultation.
- It was acknowledged that the proposals were difficult for all parties involved, but HE had sought to avoid these actions through support to schools to change their model of operation and the restrictions of local Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) at a number of local schools.

- 97% of local schools were good or outstanding, but schools would face pressures to maintain such high standards with increasing budget pressures which would result from falling school rolls (e.g. cuts to teachers and support staff, extracurricular activities).
- The informal consultation would be open to all local stakeholders and local residents. All schools and parents impacted would be visited by HE setting out the proposals and to gauge their responses. HE would then consider all these views together with the consultation responses and would update proposals for Cabinet to consider for statutory consultation in the autumn.

Save Colvestone Primary School (SCPS)

7.5 Parents from Save Colvestone Primary School (SCPS) made a presentation to the Commission highlighting a number of key issues which are summarised below. A full transcript of the submission was circulated to all members and is also attached to these minutes with further detail of the issues raised.

- Representatives of SCPC had already made a detailed submission to Cabinet setting out their challenge to the proposals to merge Colvestone Primary School with Princess May School (which is included within Cabinet Papers for 22nd May 2023). The SCPC representatives noted that there has not been any response from HE to any of the issues thus far raised by their group in the pre-consultation or official submission to Cabinet.
- SCPC raised a number of concerns around the assessment of financial viability, including that the school had now returned to surplus since joining the Blossom Federation and had continued to reduce its outstanding deficit.
- There were outstanding questions about the consultation process, particularly in respect of the information that it was seeking from local schools, parents and other local stakeholders. The lack of clarity on the consultation criteria gave concerns as to the authenticity of the consultation.
- A number of schools had already lost children as a result of them being named within the proposals, which was further jeopardising their financial position. It was not clear how those schools would be compensated if they are not closed or merged?
- Representatives suggested that plans for the school merger did not recognise the Dalston Development Plan which noted that 600 new homes would be built in the vicinity of Colvestone, 200 of which would be affordable and family homes.
- Merger proposals did not also support parental choice as Colvestone Primary (a one form entry school) was preferred by many parents over the larger Princess May (two form entry). Surveys among parents at Colvestone indicated that Princess May did not figure in any of the 6 preferred choices of parents and that a majority would not send their children to Princess May if Colvestone was merged with that school.
- 24% of children accessing Colvestone have SEND and parents have chosen this school as they have assessed that this school would better suit their needs, especially as this is a smaller school.
- It was suggested that different metrics have been applied to faith schools compared to maintained schools in assessing future viability and inclusion within these proposals (i.e. applications over registrations) and the use of different pupil number viability thresholds (60% and 80% respectively). Whilst the local authority has no authority to close faith schools, this has occurred in other boroughs.

7.6 No further time was available for SCPS representatives to present, but the Chair noted that the presentation had been circulated to members in advance. Representatives from SCPS raised a number of questions in the presentation for which they had as yet not received a response.

Baden Powell Parents

7.7 A number of parents and children from Baden Powell Primary School attended and made the following comments:

- Baden Powell School had specifically been selected by parents as it met the needs of parents of children with SEND; it was a smaller school with good SEND provision.
- Parents were anxious as to how the transfer to another school would impact on children with SEND, particularly these children may find it more challenging to adjust and adapt to different environments, other children and new staff. It had taken a number of years for children with SEND to settle into Baden Powell School, but now staff understood their child's needs and they were receiving the support they needed. Parents were anxious that this relationship would be jeopardised in the transfer to a new school.
- There were also issues raised around the use of SATS scores determined during the pandemic to determine school place admissions in year 6 transfer to secondary.
- Nightingale Primary School did not have a large play area compared to Baden Powell school.

Questions from the Commission

7.8 Can officers set out the key aims and objectives of the informal consultation process? Can Officers also set out what dialogue there has been so far with stakeholders?

- The consultation documentation asks a number of questions of stakeholders which will contribute to an evaluation report. The aim of the consultation is to capture as much information as possible to inform the next stage of reporting and decision making. Officers will advise Cabinet and who will then make a decision. The informal process aims to maximise the contributions from as many stakeholders as possible.

7.9 The informal consultation survey asks whether respondents agree or disagree with the proposals being put forward? What if there are clear majorities of respondents who disagree with the specific proposals put forward?

- Officers will review all the information from the consultation and on that basis will make recommendations to Cabinet. Cabinet will ultimately decide on the proposals put forward.

7.10 What key areas of information are officers looking to receive from the informal consultation process? Is there any specific information which might inform or influence subsequent proposals put forward by Hackney Education or any of the mitigations put in place? The Commission referred to the submission by Save Colvestone Primary School about the lack of clarity of what was expected from the consultation process.

- The School Estates Strategy set out the criteria for assessing schools and how that brings the 6 schools named in the proposals into scope for closure or amalgamation. Financial viability and school numbers are important in this assessment, as well as the voice of parents and carers. In terms of the process and what information is needed to remove a school from this scope or to end the process overall is a demonstration that schools are sustainable against the criteria set out in the report - can a school sustain itself financially in the long term?

7.11 The Chair noted that there was not time to scrutinise the consultation further, but it was clear that members of the Commission were not satisfied with the fullness of the answers set out above. Further clarity was needed in respect of what the council aimed to achieve from the consultation and what it intended to do with the information collected.

- The Group Director responded that the council did not want to presuppose any information it might get from the consultation process and that it was genuinely interested in all responses it might receive. It would take into account all these

contributions when developing recommendations to Cabinet. The GD reiterated that the council was compelled to act as 20% vacancy factor in primary schools was not sustainable and the council must act to protect education quality across Hackney. The Council was genuinely open in respect of the information it was looking for from the consultation and would produce evidence based recommendations.

7.12 The proposals put forward for the school mergers assume that parents will choose to move their child to the merged school (i.e. from Baden Powell to Nightingale and from Colvestone to Princess May). How confident is Hackney Education that parents in merged schools will move to suggested schools? What has been the feedback from parents at Colvestone and Baden Powell on their intentions? If parents do not choose to move children as assumed, will this not jeopardise the stability of host schools (Princess May and Nightingale)? Data produced by Colvestone Primary School suggests that the majority of parents would not send their children to Princess May. Is the council verifying this data and what mitigations are in place for Princess May should the numbers of expected children switching from Colvestone do not materialise?

- Parental choice is important and HE did not want to undermine any due process by pre-empting any findings that might emerge from the consultation. It was reiterated that Cabinet would not take any decisions on this issue until December 2023. No local authority had the jurisdiction to order parents to send their children to any specific school, this remained the choice of parents themselves. Using the best data available and applying detailed modelling, officers have presented options for merged schools based on best local fit (walking distances to school, availability of alternatives etc.). These are recommendations and not mandatory. This would be a guaranteed offer to parents, should they wish to take it up, but they were not obliged.
- It was reiterated that there were in excess of 20% surplus places in primary care settings in Hackney and that tough decisions have to be taken to reduce this surplus as this is a burden on the whole educational system and is not sustainable. A number of schools were currently experiencing financial difficulties and others were likely to run into financial difficulties in the year ahead, so action was needed to be taken and surplus places needed to be taken out of the system.

7.13 Although Brexit and the pandemic have been cited as factors which are contributing to falling school rolls, it is also clear that local academies and free schools had also been a factor in drawing children away from maintained local schools. Why are children moving away from maintained sector schools if they are good and outstanding?

- It was inaccurate to say that children were moving from maintained schools to academies and free schools locally, as the key issues were Brexit and pandemic and broader migration of families outside of inner city areas. It was acknowledged that competition from free schools had impacted on local places but a free school has not opened for a number of years in Hackney. There were recent concerns that a further free school would open in the borough but this has not materialised. It was noted that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had recently written to the Secretary of State setting out their concerns around the emergence of free schools and its impact on local school place planning.

7.14 Why was a merger between the two schools proposed for closure (Randal Cremer and De Beauvoir) not considered?

- The modelling had shown that these two schools were too far apart in distance to be considered for a merger.

7.15 After the announcement of schools in scope, will parents not begin to move their children from the schools now, across all year groups even before the consultation has closed and a final decision taken. Will this not compound the financial problems of schools in scope? What mitigation measures will be put in place? Why has there been

significant recent capital investment in Colvestone school for this school now to be considered for merger off site?

- This was not an easy issue to deal with and it was a risk to all those schools concerned. It was noted that a school in Islington had recently closed soon after consultation on merger and closures were announced as there was a significant number of parents who chose to move their child almost immediately. This is unfortunately out of the control of officers and all that the council can do is to reassure parents and staff that the school remains open and no final decision has been taken. This is a national issue and the Council has looked at how other boroughs have taken on this process, and unfortunately, there are few if any options to do this differently without risk to schools as you cannot dictate to parents what they can and cannot do.
- It is incumbent on the authority to make sure that all children receive education in good quality schools. No decision has been taken as yet, so the council will make sure that every school is fit for purpose and has the best quality buildings and infrastructure it is able to provide.

7.16 Why has the decision been taken to merge Colvestone with Princess May schools on the Princess May site and not the Colvestone site?

- Being a one form entry school, Colvestone Primary was too small a site to scale up and accept more children whereas Princess May is a two form entry. Both schools had great attributes but it was not physically possible to relocate to Colvestone.

7.17 In terms of assumptions and projections, the Council is talking about a number of schools which are currently in scope for closure and amalgamation. Clearly other schools will be facing financial difficulties in the near future on these projections, so what is being done to prepare schools in a possible next tranche of amalgamations or closures?

- It was acknowledged that this was a live situation in which it was likely that school rolls will be falling for a considerable time, until 2029/30 at the earliest. A dedicated School Estates Team was being set up to provide ongoing support to schools to ensure that engagement was taking place at an earlier time as possible. Many schools have already commenced efforts to improve financial efficiencies through a range of processes described in the report. It was impossible to say how many more schools or school places may need to be removed from the system in any further restructures, but the authority must ensure that the local education system is sustainable, has integrity and is delivering high quality education to children and young people.

7.18 As the local authority has no powers to reduce PANs or to close schools operated by London Church Diocese (Church of England and Roman Catholic schools) can officers set out how these respective organisations are engaged and involved in local school place planning particularly as these schools are also facing acute pressures from falling school rolls? The Commission also noted that 83% of parents in the Hackney Schools for All Consultation said that local schools should be non-denominational.

- Faith schools play an important role in the local education system not only in delivering quality education, but also through extending the choice of schools available to local parents. There has been strong engagement from both RC and CoE Diocese as well as the local Charedi community in the School Estates Strategy and they have all been assessing school numbers. It was not just about numbers however, these decisions also need look at location, accessibility and parental choice.
- It was acknowledged that a number of faith schools were in a vulnerable position and that discussions were in an advanced stage about future options which might include (for example) vertical grouping of classes or merged leaderships.

- All settings have a role to play in the local education system irrespective of whether these are faith schools, free schools, academies or maintained schools. It is important that the process is fair, open and transparent for all schools.

7.19 Colvestone School Representatives noted that similar information was submitted as part of the pre Cabinet decision to go to informal consultation but has not been responded to.

- Officers noted that the report from Colvestone was received too late for a formal response within its own documentation, but representatives were thanked for their detailed submission. This submission was included in the Cabinet reports and it will be assessed as part of the evidence base for the next stage of this process.

7.20 The Chair noted that as the local authority could only propose limiting numbers or the closure of maintained schools, it was seeking assurance that there had been consultative and engagement processes with other education settings and authorities to develop a fair and equitable range of proposals to respond to falling school rolls.

- Officers responded that consultation with a wide range of schools and stakeholders had been in process for many months prior to the publication of the Cabinet report in May. Details of these consultations were necessarily confidential to preserve the integrity of the process and that other schools (including faith schools) were in further dialogue about possible future interventions. No parts of the school system were exempt.

7.21 What reassurance can officers provide that planned new development across the borough has been sufficiently factored into local school place planning (e.g. Dalston Local Plan, London Legacy Development Corporations housing plans for the Olympic Park). The Commission noted that the report provided evidence that local planning documents suggest that 70% of planned new homes are for 1 and 2 bedroom accommodation which are not family accommodation. What assurance can officers provide that Hackney Education and Hackney Planning Authority are working together collaboratively across this issue and that there is sufficient family accommodation being planned for in Hackney?

- Hackney Education has worked closely with colleagues in Housing Services in producing these plans and proposals. It is the overarching assessment of housing colleagues that the amount of new development coming forward will not significantly impact pupil numbers and ultimately these plans. The GLA modelling data was well respected and used by all 32 London boroughs. If there were any further data which might influence these figures, it would be assessed and reflected in local plans.

7.22 Recent data submitted to this Commission indicates that in excess of 200 children were being Electively Home Educated (not including children from the Orthodox Jewish Community)? What is being done to engage and support parents, with a view to encouraging children to return to mainstream education?

- Parents who choose to home educate do so for a number of reasons. Even if all these children were encouraged to return to mainstream education it would have little impact on the overall surplus of school places.

7.23 What assurance can the officers provide to the Commission on the accuracy of projections given that Nightingale School was developed in response to expected increase in demand for new primary places which did not materialise?

- This decision was taken some years ago before the decision making process for this current assessment on school rolls. Officers would take this issue away to see what happened in this instance, but like this decision, officers were probably putting forward proposals based on the best evidence available at the time.

7.24 At 3.4.7.2 the report suggests that the cumulative balance of Randal Cremer schools is a £310K surplus accrued over 5 years. How is Randal Cremer school able to generate a financial surplus against falling school rolls? What happens to cumulative balances if the school is closed?

- The head is outstanding who has brought a wide range of expertise and experience to the school. The head is also a trained accountant which has contributed to such a good financial position that the school was in despite its ongoing pressures around falling rolls. The head holds multiple roles within the school which has helped to reduce staff costs and also restructured the school numerous times to reduce budgets. The numbers of pupils attending the school have continued to fall and there are few other options available.

7.25 The Cabinet report (at 5.3.2) notes that financial implications of the proposals if taken forward will result in a £3.4m cost (of which £1m will be annually recurring to protect vacant sites). Will all these costs be liable to the Council General Fund? Will any of these costs be absorbed in DSG funding? How confident are officers that the £3.4m financial cost to administer the proposals for closure and amalgamation are realistic given that the contracted liabilities of the schools in scope are not known/ documented and a number of schools in scope are experiencing a deteriorating financial position?

- Officers reassured the Commission that whilst not wanting to pre-empt the proposals, a number of council departments were looking at the implications in relation to contract management, capital and property teams and asset management. In terms of protecting school sites this would have to come from the Council General Fund as it would not be liable within the DSG.

7.26 A key aim of local education policy is to ensure that there is diversity of school provision, but also to ensure that there is diversity within local schools which reflect the rich and vibrant social, economic and cultural mix of local communities in Hackney. The Commission notes that the schools all in scope all have higher rates of children on FSM and with SEND - how can officers ensure that there is diversity of provision going forward?

- Parental choice is key here and the authority has jurisdiction over this.

7.27 The report highlights the number of children with an EHCP who will be impacted by the proposed school closures and mergers and indicates that 'further support' will be made available. Can officers clarify what might be included in this offer of 'further support' and what can be done to mitigate the impact?

- Parent carer voice has been an important part of the process and their concerns have been noted and recorded (e.g. around SEND, playgrounds and uniform costs). Whilst it was still too early to put in place any support as yet ahead of any decision, concerns had been noted and HE would be in a good position to respond once a decision has been taken.
- The head of SEND had also been part of the consultation process and had been present at a number of consultation meetings to provide further assurance on what could be put in place to support children with SEND. Transitional support would be key to help children adjust to new school environments which their parents chose. These children would be provided with bespoke transition plans.

7.28 How many staff will be impacted by the proposed school closures and amalgamations? Can officers set out the implications for staff at those schools proposed for closure and for amalgamation? Will staff at school proposed for closure be provided with redundancy? Will staff at both schools proposed for amalgamation be able to compete for jobs on the new singular site?

- There are 200 staff across all the schools in scope within these proposals. It is difficult to be precise about the possible impact at present as these are just proposals and no decision has been taken. The Council was doing all it could to minimise the impact that these proposals would have on staff and preserve as many jobs as possible. It is likely that staff at those schools hosting an

amalgamation will be in a better position than those who are vacating a site. Hackney Education was conducting dedicated consultation with staff groups across all the schools and when any final decision has been made, HE HR department will support staff further to transition to future staffing models.

- HE does not have all the answers at this stage, but it will learn from other areas and listen to all the stakeholders and develop and improve plans as needed.

7.29 The shortfall in the number of children accessing primary schools will eventually work through the system to local secondary schools in future years. Given that the majority of our schools are academies over which the Council has limited influence in terms of pupil numbers - how is the Council preparing for the likelihood of falling secondary schools rolls?

- Next term, officers will be sharing data with local secondary schools and help them to prepare for what is expected in terms of falling school rolls. Every tool available to the council will be used but what is expected is unprecedented.

7.30 The Chair noted that there will be a process off-line to pull together a submission to the informal consultation for the 16th July 2023. The chair emphasised that the role of the Commission was to scrutinise proposals and to act as a critical friend, to help improve decision making by providing challenge to the proposals put forward and holding decision makers to account in public. The Chair also noted that the Commission was not decision making and it cannot override decisions taken by Cabinet.

7.31 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members.

8 Unregistered Educational Settings (20.40)

8.1 Following further scrutiny in January 2023, the Commission agreed to write to the Secretary of State setting out its ongoing education and safeguarding concerns around the presence and unregistered educational settings in Hackney. The letter was circulated to members and sent to the Secretary of State in March 2023, and is included here for public record.

8.2 The Commission received a response from the Secretary of State on the day of this meeting (27/6/23) and will be sent to Commission members and published in a future agenda pack.

Action: Letter from Secretary of State to be sent to members of the Commission and published in the next agenda.

9 Housing Support for Care Leavers (20.45)

9.1 In March 2022, the Children and Young People and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission undertook an investigation into the nature and level of housing support for care leavers in Hackney. The Commission developed a report setting out 10 recommendations in October 2021.

9.2 The Cabinet response to the Commission's recommendations was published on June 16th 2023 and was considered (and approved) by Cabinet at its meeting last night (26th June 2023). The Chair thanked officers from across Corporate Parenting - Benefits and Housing Needs - Housing Policy and Strategy for their support for the Commission's in this work.

9.3 The Chair noted a number of key achievements from this work as recommended by members of the scrutiny commission's which included:

1. The housing needs of care leavers would now explicitly stated in the new Housing Strategy (due end of 2023);

2. Although the quota for care leavers has not been increased as recommended by the Commission, it is expected that the Housing Register will be amended so that all care leavers age 18 can register for social housing (previously 21, important for parity and help reduce 'cliff edges' of care and support);
3. There are now 2 new benefits and housing needs officers dedicated to supporting local care leavers.
4. Most care leavers will be required to find housing in the private rented sector and the Commission is pleased that additional support will be provided through Commissioning of voluntary sector support via Settle (this is again important for the parity of support). Also rent deposit support is now available to all care leavers who wish to move on to their own tenancies before the age of 21.
5. Accepted recommendation (8) to improve communication with care leavers through improved on-line offer AND establishment of a care leavers hub

9.4 The Chair noted that there is clearly further work needed to be done, for example, to make sure that our care leavers are exempt from council tax - wherever they are placed as they are in many other London boroughs. There were also a number of recommendations where there has been no response from Cabinet which the Commission will follow up, for example, in recommendation number 6 around the Housing Strategy. There has been no response in the report to recommendations around for example:

- Care Leavers being named as a priority in the Living Rent Scheme;
- How local Housing Associations would be engaged to support the needs of local care leavers.

9.5 The Chair emphasised that it was important that care leavers were named as a priority in the future Hackney Housing Strategy, but further help was needed at this strategic level to increase both housing capacity and options for care leavers. The Chair would meet with the Chair of Living in Hackney to arrange monitoring and review arrangements for this work.

9.6 Members noted the response from Cabinet.

10 Children and Family Hubs Consultation (20.55)

10.1 Hackney Education is consulting on proposals to develop some of its existing children's centres into four Children & Family Hubs. These hubs will offer support for families with children up to 19 years old (up to 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities – SEND). The Consultation will run from June 1st to July 13th 2023.

10.2 Due to timetabling pressures it has not been possible to include a full public scrutiny of the proposals for this to contribute to the planned consultation timeframe at this meeting (and the next meeting will be after the consultation has closed i.e. on the 14th September 2023). Therefore given the consultation timeline, the Commission is therefore asked to consider if it would like to develop a submission off-line - and publish this in the next available agenda.

10.3 If members wanted to provide a submission, it was requested that these should be provided to the scrutiny officer by June 29th, where these would be collated and submitted to the consultation by July 13th 2023. Alternatively, members can contribute personally towards the consultation online (up until July 13th).

11 New Work Programme 2023/24 (21.00)

11.1 The Commission develops a new work programme each year to ensure that it is relevant and aligns with the priorities of the community, the Council and other

stakeholders. The Commission consults with key stakeholders in developing the new work programme including:

- Members of the Commission
- Other non-executive councillors
- Members of the public
- Cabinet members and senior officers
- Local statutory partners and HCVS.

11.2 Attached in the report pack was the list of suggestions received which have been accumulated from 4 sources:

- Standing items which the Commission takes regularly within its work programme
- items identified from the 2022/23 work programme
- Horizon scanning - national and local policy developments (or events) which may necessitate the Commission to look at;
- Suggestions from key stakeholders.

11.3 Members were invited to review suggestions and prioritise issues for inclusion within the work programme for the year ahead. Noting:

- There are 7 remaining meetings;
- An in depth review could be undertaken in one singular - scrutiny in a day - session
- There will be opportunities to review multiple areas at Cabinet Q & A and through the budget scrutiny process.

11.4 In prioritising issues members should consider:

- Does the prospective issue align with corporate priorities?
- Does the prospective issue resonate with residents and the local community?
- Is this an area where scrutiny can have impact?

11.5 Members of the Commission noted the following priorities:

- Cllr Binne Lubbock - 1. Vaping 2. School Behaviour management. 3. FSM 4. FASD. 5. Play and Physical Activity. 6. Impact of school closures should they be agreed;
- Cllr Laudat Scott - 1. FSM provision follow-up particularly in relation to secondary school provision.
- Cllr Samatar - 1. FSM 2. Mental health and wellbeing for children in schools. 3. Language provision and support for refugee children in schools. 4. Cyberbullying
- Cllr Ross 1. Child safeguarding protection and the emotional and mental health impact of abuse on children.
- Cllr Gordon - 1. Behaviour management in relation to child Q outcomes and evidence base of these policies in local schools. 2. Kinship carers offer. 3. FSM
- Cllr Troughton - 1. Vaping and substance misuse items would be beneficial. 2. FASD - education and provision. 3. Sexual harassment in schools of girls and VAWAG would be useful.

11.6 Standing items were agreed by the Commission to come back every year, however, this is the decision of the Commission and they may chose not to do so, but perhaps defer for a year or absorb into another item.

11.7 The Chair, Vice Chair and Scrutiny Officers would develop a draft work programme for the year ahead and circulate to members for review. The Chair would then engage with relevant Cabinet members and Senior officers to scope and plan agreed items.

12 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

12.1 Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 17th April 2023 were noted and agreed by members.

13 Any Other Business

13.1 The next meeting of the Commission will be held on 14th September. There was no other business and the meeting concluded at 9.55pm.

Duration of the meeting: 2hr 55min

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Presentation: Save Colvestone Primary School
CYP Scrutiny Commission, Hackney Town Hall, 27th June 2023
Aim: 8 minute read

Thank you to the Chair, and to the members of the Commission for allowing us to speak today. Many other parents and staff from the school I know would wish to be here, but this meeting has been programmed at the same time as the Council's public consultation at the school.

As you will be aware, the parents group of Colvestone Primary School prepared a detailed submission for Hackney Education / Hackney Council during the pre-informal consultation phase of this process in response to the criteria outlined by the Council. It draws on school financial data, Council-produced statistics and projections, Council planning and policy documents, parent surveys and testimony and a wide range of historical and contemporary primary and secondary reference materials with the intention of clearly establishing the financial, political and academic case for removing Colvestone Primary School from the current phase of consultation on mergers and closures of Hackney Primary Schools. We are extremely disappointed that the main 'Education Sufficiency and Estates Strategy – falling rolls' briefing report fails to address the majority of our points – failing both to challenge them, to adjust the proposals in light of them, or even to acknowledge them in any substantive form. We are grateful for the opportunity to raise some of these points again now in the hope of a response. We will also take up the invitation to feedback on the process itself as it has so far been conducted.

Financial viability:

After a period of turmoil of major building works, a change in head, senior management and change in federation, Colvestone entered into a new and highly successful federation with the Blossom Federation under specific promises from Hackney Education that the school was not being considered for closure. Having returned the school to surplus, this consultation was announced barely 6 months into this new arrangement, and just as major works were being completed. Why was this new partnership, arrived at in consultation with the Council, not given time to prove itself?

In the pre-informal consultation period the school presented the council with a projected budget for the next two years based on current pupil numbers showing the school continuing to run a surplus, as it has this year. (Note also this was a conservative estimate - we believe that numbers will rise now that the fabric of the Grade 2 listed building is restored and accessible, the new leadership team has proven itself, and the school is benefitting from its new partnership – though, as I will return to later, inclusion in this consultation of course needlessly jeopardises this progress.

In the public consultation meeting at Colvestone in April, Interim Director of Education Paul Senior stressed that the decision could not be an emotional one – that it must be taken based

on 'the figures'. So, we requested them – specifically the financial modelling that contradicted the schools own regarding financial viability. We were told that the school would receive them at speed (this is recorded as an action point in the minutes of the meeting contained in the Consultation pack for the last Cabinet meeting, highlighted in red, on page 193.) The meeting was in April, and we still have not received them two months later. If these figures are central to the decision-making process, why has this modelling data not been released?

During the Cabinet meeting in which the Cabinet voted to put all six schools through to the next stage of the consultation Mayor Glanville said that this is a consultation on *whether* to close the schools, not *how* to close the schools. If this is the case, why has the Council thus far done no work with schools to develop alternatives to closure?

When asked what it would take for a school to be removed from the closure list, Cllr. Bramble said the key issue is financial viability. What exactly would a school have to demonstrate with regards to financial viability to be removed from the closure list?

More broadly: given that the consultation itself is potentially hugely damaging to the schools in scope, how does the consultation process help inform a decision whether to close a school?

How exactly will the consultation documents help inform this decision? What are they expecting to learn from the consultation that will help them decide whether to close a school?

If this is a consultation on whether to close the schools, the Council should be able to identify explicit criteria for the consultation process (in simple terms, "in order to determine whether to close a school we need to know X, Y and Z. The consultation will help us learn X which will then help inform our decision" etc.) What are these criteria and how will they be informed through the consultation process? This is particularly important as this question has bearing on whether the consultation is authentic, as is repeatedly claimed.

Having been given assurances from Blossom prior to the consultation that Colvestone would be running in surplus for at least the next two years, in the process reducing its historical deficit, what modelling has been done that shows the financial logic of closing Colvestone? Closing the school will not allow it to run down its historical deficit, forcing the Council to write off £560,000. The consultation documents suggest the cost of mothballing a school to be between 250 and 300 thousand pounds per year – and the multiple restrictions on the building suggest that it is an extremely difficult building to re-purpose (but an excellent building to be a school). Factoring in staff retention bonuses for the year 2023-24, the cost to close the school is close to £1 million pounds, even before the considerable costs of redundancies are factored in (note jobs at Princess May are protected by existing contracts) – a calculation it appears the Council has not made as the HR data has not been requested. So:

What modelling has been done (and why is it not public) to show that this proposal wouldn't be an egregious waste of public money?

Why is the Council suggesting that the school could be mothballed, at great expense to the taxpayer, and then re-opened as a school when the Council's own Strategic Guidance argues against such a strategy as the Council would lose control of both the school and the site under 'free school presumption'?

Why has no due diligence been done (as recommended in the Council's Strategic Document) to ensure that the restrictions on the Colvestone building do not specify (continuous) educational use, or forfeit the building to the charitable foundation from which it was acquired, under restriction from the Charities Commission, in 1906? (For precedent, see All Souls vs Brent Council, 2012).

If financial viability is the key issue, why is there no data regarding financial viability (as opposed to lost potential revenue) in the consultation document? Why has the Council not provided its own Colvestone-specific financial modelling two months after it said that it would?

Some of the schools in scope have already lost many of their students as a direct result of the consultation. If the decision has not been made, how will the council protect schools from the negative impact of the consultation on the financial viability of the school in the event that a decision is made not to close a school? How will it protect the school from the impact of losing pupils, teachers and other staff? Is the impact of the consultation being considered as part of a measure of a school's viability (in other words, when a decision about viability is made, are schools going to be penalized for losing students/staff due to the consultation)?

The Mayor has said that the council cannot 'do nothing' in the face of falling rolls. However, in the case of Colvestone, Hackney Education had already taken action, working with the governors to appoint a strong new senior leadership team, forming a partnership with an existing federation, which creates financial benefits of a larger scale, investing in the equipment in the school and in the improvement of the building. Not closing the school is not 'doing nothing'. There was already a plan in place. Why would the council not allow its first plan to address falling roll take effect before moving to close the school? Why go to plan B before you've given plan A a chance? Why close a genuinely diverse, financially-viable school with a recently much-improved parental offer and an academic record that out-performs Borough and National averages? Who would this decision serve?

Context: (Dalston Plan, modelling and timeframe)

Colvestone Primary School is in the centre of the Dalston Plan ('Hackney Plan', adopted July 2020) The plan commits to building 600 new homes in Dalston, with nearly 200 being affordable 3-bedroom family homes with more at market prices. The overwhelming majority of these will be built at Kingsland Shopping Centre, with a number of smaller development sites nearby. For almost all the new developments, Colvestone would be the closest school.

Clause 3.5 of the Briefing Report discusses the Plan in general terms but not in specific relation to Colvestone and its centrality to these developments. Further, the Report addresses the need to consider “school place demand in the short to medium term”; however both the Statutory Guidance and the Council’s own Strategy document that incorporates it (p.99) state that potential demand must be considered in the “mid- to long-term”. So:

Why does the Report under-estimate the impact on demand for places at Colvestone and its unique position in the middle of the Dalston Plan and its closest school provision? As a small school even a small rise in pupils is statistically significant. Whilst the Council Report suggests that there will be capacity for the families in the new developments in the Borough, this is not *local* capacity - particularly if you factor in the need for non-religious school provision.

Why is the impact on the Dalston Plan *itself* not considered, the current consultation proposing to remove the 161-year-old listed and recently-restored village school from the heart of a new development, reducing the parental offer and one major attraction to families returning to the area? Why is this not considered (in the risk assessment at least) as removing both local authority provision and a potentially significant selling point for the new homes?

Why does the Report continue to state the incorrect relevant timeframe for consideration of potential need for places (‘short to mid-’ as opposed to ‘mid- to long-term’) despite this error being repeatedly highlighted to Hackney Education and the Council in the pre-consultation period? Further, does this mean that the Council has not prepared modelling of places that addresses long term need, as required by the Statutory Guidance (and its own Education and Sufficiency Strategy document that these consultations fall under)?

Parental choice:

Hackney Education is proposing merging two schools that are very different. Princess May is a two-form entry school in an imposing Victorian building that sits on a busy main road. Colvestone is a one-form entry school in a small, intimate building that sits on a quiet side street. They are distinct parental choices. In our submission to Hackney Education we conducted our own consultation, reaching over two thirds of Colvestone families across the school. This consultation data showed that 95.7% of parents surveyed did not include Princess May in any of their six preferences when selecting a primary school. Further, 87% said they would not send their children to Princess May, with a further 6% undecided. Only four households stated that they would send their children to Princess May. Further reasons for preferring Colvestone were collected and are analysed in our report. The closure of Colvestone and nearby De Beauvoir Primary School would mean there would be no non-faith, one-form entry local authority schools within a mile of the Colvestone building.

Continuing with this strategy therefore will likely close both Colvestone *and* Princess May – an eventuality the Head of Education will not discount. Why is this data, and the question of parental choice, not reflected in Council documents that continue to assume all 120 pupils at Colvestone will move to Princess May - a number that also mysteriously includes year 6?

How has the Council prepared for the possible scenario where only a very small number of families (at best) transfer their children to Princess May - leaving it with a financially-debilitating 'just over' single form roll?

Why are there not more options included in the consultation that might allow for parental feedback and flexibility in the proposals (whilst also mitigating the potential damage to schools in scope of the consultation itself)?

SEND and parental choice:

24% of the children that attend Colvestone have special education needs. The main factor for parents for this very conscious choice is that Colvestone is a one form entry school. As research consistently shows, this is the best setting for autistics and children with ADHD, as both groups suffer greatly when placed in larger two form environments, consequentially not being able to access education due to overwhelm and overstimulation.

The school leadership team, the SEND parents and the save Colvestone campaigners, have been requesting for the council to consider the opening of an ARP unit within Colvestone – the Mayor responding favourably when this was suggested as a use for the currently under-exploited caretakers house teaching spaces on site. Given that the Council's Strategic document encourages the supporting the repurposing of unused buildings to financially support the school and specifically adjustment to SEND provision, why is this proposal not being looked at more closely – particularly given the Strategic need for SEND places in the Borough and Colvestone's excellent SEND track record and optimal one-form integrated teaching environment?

Faith / Voluntary Aided schools / Parental choice:

The Council briefing document appears to go to some length to mask the problem of falling rolls in the borough's faith schools, where the problems are substantially worse. In the Briefing document / 'falling rolls' Report produced by Hackney Education a brief section is given to address faith / voluntary aided schools (p.34/5). In it, the number of *applications* is given as the metric of evaluation, whereas for community schools *offers* are used as they more accurately represent student numbers. The report suggests that faith schools had slightly more applications than places: we might reasonably assume that they are operating at capacity. In fact, whilst community schools are operating at 80% capacity, faith schools are running at 60%. To put this in context, by the metric of applications, Colvestone was oversubscribed by almost 50%, and there are nine (9) faith schools in the borough that had fewer applications than Colvestone. The Report cites census figures that 30% of the borough identify as Christian. It should not be assumed that 30% of residents desire a Church of England or Catholic education for their children, however – indeed, Hackney's own research shows that 84% of respondents want a non-religious education for their children. So:

Why is the Council protecting faith schools in this manner (other boroughs, Lambeth and Southwark, for example have closed faith schools)? Why aren't these conversations (community and VA consultations) being run concurrently as part of a holistic approach?

Furthermore, if only community schools are considered for closure, what is to stop this, and the announcement of any subsequent consultations, causing flight from local authority schools that will be considered unsafe by parents in the borough, forcing families into a choice between religious education, for-profit education in the academy/free school sector, or flight from the borough altogether? Indeed, this implied risk in the local authority school sector would be further enforced if no schools in the current set of proposals remained open even when shown to be viable.

Pollution and health:

Air pollution is a major health issue that disproportionately affects the young, exposure to which permanently limits health and life expectancy and the capacity to learn. However 2021 figures show pollution levels 40% higher at the Princess May site than Colvestone. Whilst Hackney might be able to mitigate some of this exposure at Princess May, the site will always be on the main road (the A10). Whilst Colvestone is in a quiet back street, a key part of a fully funded re-greening project which will further improve air quality.

Colvestone Primary School is central to a pioneering proposal to turn Colvestone Crescent into 21st Century Street, Hackney's first permanent play street. A long tree-lined pedestrian walkway with lots of new plantings, ecology gardens, spaces for congregating and innovative play spaces. A key tenet of the 21st Century Street is that it is located next to a primary school. Explicitly, without Colvestone school, that plan makes less sense.

The Mayor has committed not to raise the levels of pollution pupils are subject to in the Borough. Why is it pursuing a proposed merger that will do exactly that? (A note on process: this is clearly a problem for the Council as when the Briefing Report was re-published subsequent to the Cabinet decision this pollution figure for Princess May had been drastically reduced – only being corrected after our complaints.)

Whilst Hackney states that all schools are at acceptable levels (the Council's limit is 4 times higher than WHO guidelines), why is the explicit raising of pollution levels experienced by pupils at the proposed new site at Princess May (not to mention a daily commute up the polluted A10) not considered in the Education Report or the risk assessment? How can they be justified?

Why is the lowering of pollution at the Colvestone site not accounted for in the consultation document? Or its centrality to the fully-funded 21st Century Street of which it is the heart?

Further points on process:

Why has the scope of the consultation been changed since it was published in the original Briefing document and reproduced in the Decision document to no longer include consultation with 'All Residents'? Given that community impact is a specific assessment criteria listed in the Council's Briefing Report, why has the local community, including future parents of school age children, been disenfranchised in this manner?

Why has the consultation been timed, and communications apparently phrased, to be as damaging as possible to the schools in scope? Contrary to Statutory Guidance the consultation proposals were made public two days before a school holiday (the Easter break); key decisions were made just after incoming parents had to accept (or reject) Reception places, and the consultation process runs into December such that no clarity is given prior to the start of the next academic year / further damaging 2024/25 intake school visits and applications?

As mentioned earlier, what mitigation or financial consideration has been put in place to protect schools damaged by the consultation process itself?

Nearby DeBeauvoir has already rapidly lost or has Part 2 transfer requests from many of its students, and the ones who remain now have no non-religious options in the vicinity for Key Stage 1. Keeping Colvestone open would give parents at DeBeauvoir an option that is close to them, is small and non-denominational like DeBeauvoir and has enough space to allow friend and family groups to remain together. Has the Council discussed with parents whether they would like to be able to attend Colvestone if it remains open? If not, why is that option not being considered? Why are there not more flexible options on the table to mitigate potential damage to the schools in scope?

Aside from reducing larger school PANs, how has the Council worked to protect the unique educational environment of the single form local authority schools in Hackney and enable them to compete against Academy and Free Schools? How has the Council worked with school staff and communities to ensure that as many schools as possible are financially viable?

In closing: we are aware that there is a problem with falling rolls, but we have been frustrated in our attempts to open a constructive dialogue with the Council with regards to creative, stakeholder-informed solutions and Colvestone's role in them. We appreciate this opportunity to raise our concerns in this forum.

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