



London Borough of Hackney
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2018/19
Date of Meeting Thursday, 15th November, 2018

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

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| Councillors in Attendance | Councillor Sophie Conway (Chair), Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr Ajay Chauhan, Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Clare Joseph and Cllr Caroline Woodley |
| Apologies: | Cllr Soraya Adejare, Cllr James Peters and Cllr Clare Potter |
| Co-optees | Jo Macleod, Ernell Watson, Shuja Shaikh and Sevdie Sali Ali |
| In Attendance | Councillor Christopher Kennedy, Cabinet Member for Early Years and Play Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust, Director of Education Sarah Wright, Director of Children and Families Service Lisa Aldridge, Head of Service, Safeguarding and Learning Pauline Adams, Principal Head of Service, Early Help and Prevention Deborah Ennis, Service Manager, Safeguarding and Learning |
| Members of the Public | There were 5 members of the public in attendance which included: Members of Hackney Independent Forum for Parents/Carers of Children with Disabilities (HIP), a Governor of a local school and a representative from Hackney Citizen. |
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Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following Members of the Commission:
- Soraya Adejare (Councillor)
 - James Peters (Councillor)

- Clare Potter (Councillor)
- Liz Bosanquet (Co-optee)
- Jane Heffernan (Co-optee)
- Graham Hunter (Co-optee)
- Jodine Clarke (Co-optee)
- Maariyah Patel (Co-optee)
- Aleigha Reeves (Co-optee)

1 Urgent Items / Order of Business

There were no new or urgent items and the agenda was as published.

3 Declarations of Interest

Cllr Garasia declared that she worked at a youth club held in a local community centre.

4 Annual Question Time with Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years and Play

4.1 The Chair welcomed Cllr Kennedy to the meeting. The Commission had previously identified three areas on which to focus questions for this session which were:

- Children's Centres and Nurseries;
- Making Hackney a Child Friendly Borough;
- Troubled Families Programme.

Children's Centres

4.2 The Cabinet Member reiterated the commitments made in the 2018 Hackney Labour Manifesto which indicated that the administration would continue to support a comprehensive network of Children's Centres linked to other council services (e.g. health and family support). In this context, the Cabinet Member reassured the Commission that the current offer of Children's Centres and nurseries was secure.

4.3 It was noted that Children's Centres were organised on a hub and spoke model, in which there are 6 strategic Children's Centre hubs that are networked to a number of other centres. Children's Centres offer a wide range of activities to assist the educational and welfare development of children and include a wide range of services including nursery provision, Stay and Play and crèche sessions. Children's Centres also provide a wide range of classes for parents (e.g. parenting, ESOL, ICT and Maths) as well as many specialist education and welfare services (e.g. educational psychology) which are provided through local hubs.

4.4 The Cabinet Member noted that Children's Centres had played an important role in helping to increase the proportion of children entering the school system that were assessed to have a good level of development (GLD). In 2004, just 40% of children in Hackney were assessed to have a GLD on entering the school system whereas the current figures indicate that this has increased to around 70%; very close to the national average.

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4.5 In terms of overall nursery provision in Hackney, it was noted that there were 14 nurseries run from local Children's Centres, 88 located in PVI (private, voluntary and independent) sector settings and 17 play groups. Whilst there had been a concern that the introduction of free 30 hour free childcare could impact on local capacity, the Cabinet Member reported that there was a net loss of just one setting (8 nurseries had closed, but 7 had opened) and that the occupancy rate was approximately 66% across all settings.

4.6 In relation to future service provision, the Cabinet Member noted that four budget task and finish groups had been established to examine an agreed priority area, one of which was to consider early years provision. The task and finish group would be comprised of local (non-executive) councillors, include representation from the CYP Scrutiny Commission and be tasked to undertake a strategic financial assessment of early years services. The task and finish group is expected to report in July 2019.

4.7 The Cabinet Member indicated that whilst the Council was committed to the Children's Centre network, a cast iron guarantee could not be given maintaining the full establishment for three years (as questioned) as this would depend on future central government funding which was as yet unknown. The Commission were also made aware that the Children Centre network faces a number of challenges, most notably, the poor physical condition of some buildings and over-capacity (under-utilisation) at some sites. It is hoped that the strategic financial review undertaken by the task and finish group would help shape future early years provision, in which continuity of service would be prioritised over any attachment to a specific site.

Response to questions from the Commission

4.8 In response to a question about the quality of service provision in the PVI nursery sector, it was noted that a rigorous inspection and reporting regime is overseen by Ofsted. All childcare providers are required to register with Ofsted and must ensure that the childcare service they provide conforms to agreed education and welfare standards. All childcare settings are required to comply with child safeguarding standards and there are also statutory requirements for child/carer ratios in such settings.

4.9 It was understood that childminders play an important role in childcare provision, particularly in relation to the provision of wraparound care to other forms of childcare provision (e.g. nurseries and schools). The Cabinet Member pointed out that there was an explicit commitment with the 2018 Manifesto to maintain a local network of childminders and that the council would continue to provide mentoring support as well as training and development opportunities.

4.10 In response to questions about the local uptake of the free childcare offer, the Commission noted that uptake for the free 30 hour entitlement among 3 and 4 year old was approximately 85%, which was considered good. The take-up for free childcare among 2 year olds however was substantially lower at about 60%. The take-up of free child care among two year olds was of concern, as this free childcare offer was targeted at the most vulnerable children and families. It was acknowledged that further work was needed to increase take-up to ensure that this group of children enjoy the education and welfare benefits that can be obtained from childcare. The Commission noted that this work is being undertaken.

4.11 In response to questioning as to the quality and capacity of SEND support available in childcare settings, it was noted that there are many examples of good and positive practice across the Children's Centre network. The Cabinet Member was also fairly confident that there was sufficient SEND capacity to meet local needs in childcare settings. It was accepted however, that more could be done, particularly in relation to improved staff training (as identified by the SEND deliberative consultation event) and the need to disseminate good SEND practice across the network of Children's Centres and other childcare settings.

Child Friendly Borough

4.12 Given its pioneering work with *Play Streets*, Hackney Council wanted to continue to work with the community to maximise the opportunities for children for safe play and outdoor activities on its streets, and in its estates, parks, adventure playgrounds, new developments and other open spaces. In this context, the objective of making Hackney a 'child friendly borough' would focus on what improvements could be made to the public realm to make them more accessible and ensure that they have greater amenity to children and young people.

4.13 The Commission noted that a pilot project was established on the De Beauvoir Estate which consulted children from the local primary school about their use of 5 different local play areas. The pilot project found that some sites were used much more than others, and that a range of factors other than what play equipment was provided on site, influenced their use of individual facilities. Factors which were positively associated with use included ease of access, how overlooked it was, how safe it was perceived to be and the degree to which adults also used the space.

4.14 As part of the Councils move to develop a seamless public realm offer, estates grounds and maintenance team and the parks team have merged and have integrated working arrangements. Pooled budgets have also facilitated improved strategic management and investment which has allowed the merged service to actively engage with young people to help the service better understand what children would like from existing green and open spaces.

4.15 The Council is planning to embed a 'child friendly approach' into public realm planning through the development further planning guidance. This guidance, which is still in development is entitled '*Neighbourhood Design – What can we learn from working with children?*' will probably take the form of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The guidance is expected to cover how existing spaces and new development can be reanimated /created to support child friendly space. If approved, the SPD will sit underneath the Local Plan (LP).

Response to questions from Commission

4.16 The Commission questioned how developments from the Councils work to become a child friendly borough could help to reduce crime, particularly the incidence of knife crime. The Cabinet Member suggested that that improved consultation and engagement arrangements with children and young people in the design phase of new development would help to create green and open spaces that were safer and contribute to efforts to reduce crime (e.g. improved visibility and lighting). It was noted that ensuring that such open spaces were

accessible and well used by the broader community would be a significant factor in reducing crime in those areas.

4.17 In relation to areas where drug taking may be taking place, the Cabinet Member indicated that local agencies were encouraged to report incidences (e.g. locating drug paraphernalia) to the police (via ASB teams). From this information, the police develop 'local heat spots' and will take action to prevent or deter drug use in identified hot spots. It was unclear if the arrangement to supply such information around local drug taking 'hot spots' was reciprocal, in that it was not clear if the police or community safety team notified local agencies in the identified 'hot spot' that drug taking was taking place.

Action: The Cabinet Member to verify if police or community safety teams notified local agencies of hot spot areas where drug paraphernalia was commonly found.

Troubled Families

4.18 The Troubled Families programme was established in 2012 and is due to run until 2020. This aim of this programme was to target and provide multiagency support to those families with multiple problems and to help them move into employment. The programme works with families where there is a child aged under the age of 18 in the household and where the family meet 2 of 6 eligibility criteria:

- Parents or children involved in crime or anti-social behaviour;
- Children who have not been attending school regularly;
- Children who need help (subject to a Child Protection Plan).
- Adult worklessness (or at risk of financial exclusion);
- Families affected by domestic violence and abuse;
- Parents or children with a range of health problems.

4.19 If families meet the eligibility criteria they are then 'attached' to the Troubled Families Programme and are allocated a link-worker. This dedicated support worker can make the necessary assessments and develop a multiagency plan to respond to the family's needs. It is hoped that such interventions will help to build resilience within the family.

4.20 The Troubled Families Programme is a payment by results (PBR) programme. In this context, payments are paid to the local authority to identify and attach families to the programme. Additional payments are made once there is evidence that the family has managed to overcome identified problems (e.g. improved school attendance, reduced worklessness) and have managed to sustain this for a period of 6 months.

4.21 Although the Council was already working with many of the troubled families through other support programmes, the establishment of the Troubled Families Programme helped local officers to look at local practices which helped to identify families in need support. The multiagency approach of the troubled families programme also reaffirmed the benefits of co-location and joint working in supporting the needs of local families.

4.22 It was not clear what would happen to the Troubled Families Programme after June 2020 when last payments will be made. It was noted that to date, there was no government guidance to indicate what would happen after June

2020. Locally, in anticipation of the closure of the programme, staff training had taken place to embed this work within CFS to ensure that there was continuity with families.

4.23 The Commission noted that there was no local evaluation to assess the success of the Troubled Families Programme. The programme was, however, required to provide wide ranging data to the central coordination team at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) which informs evaluation at a national level and contributes to the National Programme of Success and other best practice initiatives for this programme.

4.24 It was noted that Young Hackney within the Council was considering a bid for funding from the Supporting Families Against Youth Crime Fund. Young Hackney was currently running a programme where the in house CFS Clinical Services are working with Hackney Quest in which a prospective bid would develop opportunities to expand the operation of this programme by the inclusion of the voluntary and community sector.

Action: To confirm bid was submitted and nature of support required (8th December 2018).

Response to Questions from the Commission

4.25 It was noted that much of the work delivered by the Troubled Families Programme or indeed Family Support, Children's Centres and Young Hackney was through an early intervention and early help approach. Partnership work underpinned the Troubled Families Programme, and this collaborative approach could help to support early identification of families which may benefit from preventative support. The Cabinet Member noted that through Children's Centres alone, Hackney reaches 97% of the most deprived 10% children in the borough.

4.26 Given that a multiagency response was fundamental to the Troubled Families Programme, the Commission sought to understand what local buy-in there had been from other agencies, such as the police and the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). It was noted that there were three DWP workers attached to this project whose contribution was invaluable to one of the key objectives of the programme (reducing worklessness) and the general effectiveness of the programme.

4.27 The Commission sought to understand what proportion of troubled families the programme had reached locally? It was noted that the government set a target for the numbers of families that each authority should work with in each local authority area. The target for Hackney is that it must aim to work with 3,510 families over the lifetime of the programme (to 2020). It is noted that the Council already works with a larger number of families through its extensive range of family support services.

4.28 Given its work on exclusions, the Commission wanted to know if there was any overlap between the work of the Troubled Families Programme and those working with excluded children locally. It was noted that exclusion was an identifier for referral into the troubled families programme and that there were tough targets associated for children and families set within the programme to help prevent exclusion. The Cabinet member welcomed the Commission's

investigation into exclusion outcomes and hoped that it would contribute to a reduction in the rate of exclusions recorded locally.

4.29 The Commission sought to clarify whether families were ever readmitted to the Troubled Families Programme should their situation deteriorate again in the future. Officers reported that it is always the intention that at the end of an intervention through the programme, the family would have the resources and skills to self-manage future problems. In this context, troubled families were made aware of the range of universal support available which they could access. If the family came back within 6 months, the programme could not make any claim within the PBR system.

4.30 It was recorded that for a number of reasons some families may be reluctant to engage with the Troubled Families Programme or indeed, feel that this would not be of benefit. In this context, the Commission understood that the programme was voluntary and that identified families do not have to participate if they did not wish. The programme would however, seek to persuade families of the range of benefits and support that were available and encourage them to participate.

5 Children and Families Service - End of Year Report 2017/18

5.1 The Children's Social Care Annual Report is a standing item within the work programme of the Commission. The full annual report is provided to the Commission in October/ November each year and a mid-year update given the following March. In addition to a commentary on the report, the Commission had asked for additional information in respect of service pressures and the types of child abuse cases that are handled by the Children and Families Service (CFS).

5.2 It was noted that the report is in a new format, as it now also serves as part of the self-assessment process for the new Ofsted inspection regime. The local authority is now required to complete an annual self-evaluation to reflect on its performance which is then submitted to Ofsted. This self-evaluation would inform an inspection should one take place.

5.3 In terms of overall service performance for the CFS in 2017/18, a number of key issues were identified. These were:

- The number of referrals received by the service (4,563) increased 16% from 2016/17 figures and the rate of re-referrals also increased from 13.4% to 15.5% over the same period. Although the current figure for re-referrals is below the national average, the rate rise was of a concern to CFS and was being monitored closely;
- The number of children on Child Protection Plans (CPP) has fallen significantly (down 39% from 2016/17). In 2016/17 the number of children on CPPs rose sharply, and over the past year CFS has sought to understand what may lay behind this increase as the plans can be intrusive for families and the service does not want to include children on CPPs if the level of risk can be held on a Child in Need Plan. As a result of this review, a number of gatekeeping initiatives have been implemented to ensure that children placed on a CPP are done so appropriately;
- A modest increase (3%) in the number of looked after children (LAC) was recorded in the year to 2017/18 with 381 children in care at the end of March

2018. The mid-year figure (to end September) shows a further modest increase to 383 children in the care of the local authority. Whilst the number of 14-17 year olds entering care has fallen this year, this age cohort still represents 49% of those in care in Hackney. These trends are repeated across London;

- Placement stability is a key indicator of good outcomes for looked after children, so the service was pleased to record a substantial fall in the number of children that had three or more placements in 2017/18 (11%) when compared to 2016/17 (18%). Long term placement stability among under 16's however showed a decline (from 69% to 62%) and the CFS intends to investigate this further this year.

5.4 The report identified a number of key priorities for the CFS in the year ahead which were reiterated to the Commission, these included:

- To continue to invest in the children's social care workforce;
- To maintain a comprehensive range of early intervention and early help services;
- Embed the Contextual Safeguarding project;
- To recruit and retain the internal pool of foster carers, particular those with the skills to support children with complex needs;
- To improve placement stability of looked after children;
- To undertake further analysis to further understand the factors behind the ongoing rise in demand for children's social care services;
- Ensure that their care leavers continue to be well supported in their transition to independence;
- Further embed the Domestic Abuse service within CFS and to ensure that there is comprehensive support available to children that may be affected;
- Develop CFS understanding of the communities with which they work, to ensure that interventions are well targeted to respond to need and build on strengths and resources available with localities;
- Ensure that issues relating to identity, diversity, inequality and discrimination are considered and addressed in all aspects of the CFS work.

Response to Questions from the Commission

5.5 The Commission discussed the different factors which are assessed to determine children's social care needs. Officers noted that neglect was the most commonly identified factor in children's social care needs, although this covered a wide range of issues including the impact of poverty and poor housing. In the experience of the CFS, it was apparent that deprivation and the stresses this can cause, may be factor in a parent's ability to parent effectively. Parental relationships can also come under pressure in such challenging circumstances, which in part may explain why domestic abuse is increasingly being cited as a factor within children's social care assessments.

5.6 When a child is at risk of significant harm, they are placed on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) which provides multiagency support to reduce identified risks and support change within the family. CPPs have four categories: emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and physical abuse. In 2017/18, children who were at risk of emotional abuse made up the majority (51%) of those on a CPP in Hackney. Children who were at risk of neglect constituted 38% of children on a CPP whilst those at risk of sexual abuse and physical abuse made up 6.5% and 3.5% respectively.

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5.7 The Commission sought to ascertain how the service worked with local health services such as the CCG to help tackle issues like childhood obesity. It was understood that the CFS works very closely with local health services to support local children as, in most cases, there is a health component to the assessed needs of a child. Given the complexity of children's needs, a multiagency approach is a common response involving not only CFS, but health services, schools and other support services. In terms of childhood obesity specifically, the Commission noted that Young Hackney offers a range of services through its youth hubs to encourage children to be more active.

5.8 The Commission sought to understand how the CFS works with individual families and communities which may be reluctant to engage with statutory services. Local work is beginning to address those factors which may prevent some families from seeking help from local services, most notably the Young Black Men project. Similarly, CFS works closely with Interlink to help engage and involve local members and build trust within the Orthodox Jewish community. Building trust and developing relationships with all communities is a key part of the work of the CFS to help counter negative mythologies about the service which may be a deterrent to service use and wider engagement.

5.9 In respect of diversity, the Commission sought to clarify whether the CFS workforce mirrored the ethnic makeup of the local community? It was reported that there was a good diversity of front-line workers across the organisation, particularly in Young Hackney, which delivers the Council's youth offer. The CFS would also like to encourage and develop staff from a wider range of communities in to more senior and managerial positions. Diversity is important as members of the community must feel that they can relate to officers and that officers have a cultural understanding of their needs.

5.10 Members of the Commission noted that annual report data showed that social worker caseloads remains high within the CFS compared to other similar local authorities. It was noted that the Director meets with managers on a weekly basis to assess service pressures and review caseloads. It was noted that CFS utilises a unit model which means that social workers are provided with administrative and clinical support in Hackney, and this is not common in other local authorities. There has been some additional finance to support service pressures which has helped to increase the throughput of cases where this is appropriate. Hackney has a relatively stable workforce which it was suggested could be an indicator of keeping caseloads at a manageable level.

5.11 Given the large numbers of young adults leaving care each year, the caseloads of social workers in the leaving care team is relatively higher. The Commission sought to clarify if Hackney planned to continue to use social workers rather than personal advisers to support care leavers. It was noted that many other local authorities use personal advisers rather than social workers in their leaving care teams. The CFS noted that many young people do not lose their vulnerability when they turn 18 and would continue to use social workers to support service delivery. The CFS service is however looking at ways to develop further capacity within the service, and the recruitment of personal advisers would be an option through which to achieve this.

5.12 As many of looked after children are adolescents with complex needs, the Commission sought to understand how CFS had adapted services to support

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these needs. Officers noted that the contextual safeguarding project continued to help to identify situations outside the family home which may expose adolescents to risks and strategies which can help to reduce these risks (e.g. intervene with adolescent peer groups). The CFS is also part of the North London Adoption and Fostering Consortium with 5 other boroughs and the consortium has cooperated to recruit foster carers with specialist skills, such as being able to care for adolescents and other specialist needs. The CFS is also working with a number of east London boroughs to help improve the commissioning of residential placements for looked after children. CFS involvement in this consortium will enable it to shape service provision to local needs, but would also assist in a larger number of young people being cared for within London and closer to their family and friend networks.

5.13 The number of children subject to court proceedings but still present in the family home was discussed with officers. Although this was a London wide trend, CFS were keen to understand if there are any local issues behind this. Preliminary analysis would suggest that, in part, this was a result of the judiciary not agreeing with the principle of a Care Order being granted or disagreeing with the nature of the Care Order requested. Another factor was that in a small number of cases where the family has been difficult to engage, going to court has been the last recourse to facilitate engagement with CFS. It was not clear however if this issue is as a result of the views of a few individual judges, or reflected a wider cultural shift within the judiciary. Given that this is a London wide issue, it was agreed by Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) that it would be helpful to engage with the courts on a regional basis to better understand the nature of this issue and what can be done to resolve it.

5.14 In respect of looked after children, the Commission sought to understand whether educational attainment of children was monitored and whether schools were actively engaged in this process. In response, officers noted that educational attainment was given a high priority by CFS and Hackney invests a lot more than many other authorities in the education of looked after children, especially through a well-resourced Virtual School. This is supported by the educational outcomes recorded for looked after children in Hackney where the proportion of looked after children going to university was one of the highest among other London boroughs and where Hackney was among the highest performing authorities nationally in terms of GCSE results.

5.15 In a discussion of support for foster carers, the Commission sought to understand more about the Mockingbird Project. It was noted that this project was imported from the USA and has been trialled in the UK through the Fostering Network via grants from DfE; Tower Hamlets being one such pilot area. The Commission heard that initial results looked promising as this project appeared to extend the local network of support for foster carers which could deliver significant benefits to the way looked after children were supported and cared for within the community.

5.16 The Commission noted the importance and priority attached to early intervention and early help and were keen to understand how CFS monitor these services and assess how effective such services were and if there was any possibility that such services could be ring-fenced? CFS noted that it was always difficult to monitor outcomes as cases were often very complex and may

not demonstrate any immediate impact and require the use of proxy indicators (e.g. educational achievement). In many instances, interventions may be multiple and it can be difficult to attribute outcomes to one specific intervention.

5.17 The Commission welcomed the use of a Youth Panel to deliver safeguarding messages on the use of snapchat and enquired whether there were plans to develop this further and among other cohorts of children and young people. It was noted that the contextual safeguarding project was working to train and upskill professionals and other adults in social media to help them identify risks to young people and how best they can support them to reduce those risks. Young Hackney also offers training in local schools to support safer use of social media among young people. The service was currently reflecting whether such training was broad enough and if there was sufficient coverage across the borough.

5.18 It was clear that CFS had experienced a significant rise in demand for services during 2017/18 as demonstrated by the increase in the number of children referred for a social care assessment. The Commission were keen to understand what impact this had on the day to day delivery of children's services, particularly in the context of a forecast financial deficit for the Directorate. The Commission noted that the CFS constantly and rigorously assessed budgets to ensure that as much value could be derived from the resources available. In addition, the CFS constantly assessed new and innovative approaches in which social care services could be delivered to children in more efficient and cost effective ways. Investing in prevention and early help services can also be resource efficient, especially if this can prevent future need for more costly social care interventions. In this context, it was noted that CFS had invested in Oxfordshire which provides intensive family support for children on the edge of care. The Commission noted that the CFS also sought to deliver support to children in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies where there is a shared interest to do so. Collaborative working and pooled resources can often provide more effective and efficient ways to support service delivery.

6 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Commission agreed the minutes of the last meeting held on the 10th October 2018.

7 Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission - 2018/19 Work Programme

- 7.1 The Members of the Commission noted the current work programme for the municipal year 2018/19.
- 7.2 The Commission noted that there was a joint meeting with Health in Hackney Scrutiny Commission on the 19th November 2019 where the integrated commissioning of CYP and Maternity work-stream was being assessed. It was also noted that childhood immunizations would also be considered at this meeting which would be of interest to members of the Commission.
- 7.3 In respect of the Commission's review of exclusion outcomes, it was noted that two site visits had been arranged with New Regents College and The Garden

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School. To improve accessibility of site visits, members noted that it would be helpful if future visits could be scheduled for later in the week (Thursdays/Fridays).

Action: That members would be consulted on future availability on Thursdays and Fridays before Christmas to support site visits. Members would also be asked to suggest possible venues for site visits.

- 7.4 The Commission heard from representatives of Hackney Independent Forum for Parents on ways in which children who have been excluded or at risk of being excluded could be included and their parents within the review.

Action: Chair and officer to meet with representatives Hackney Independent Forum for Parents to identify ways in to facilitate the involvement of parents and young people in the review.

8 Any Other Business

There was no other business for the Commission.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Duration of the meeting: Times Not Specified