

Overview & Scrutiny

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Deputy Mayor & Cabinet Member
for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care
London Borough of Hackney

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Dear Anntoinette,

Support for LGBT+ pupils in school in Hackney.

At its meeting of the 25th February 2019, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission assessed the nature and level of support available for LGBT+ pupils in Hackney. The purpose of this item was four-fold:

- To identify the councils statutory and equality duties in respect of LGBT+ schoolchildren;
- To assess the needs of LGBT+ schoolchildren and how well these were being addressed locally;
- To highlight areas of good local practice and suggest ways in which this can be disseminated more widely;
- To determine key priorities and recommendations to inform a strategic approach to support LGBT+ children and young people in the school settings.

To support these objectives, the Commission took evidence from both internal (Hackney Learning Trust, Young Hackney and Integrated Commissioning) and external (Educate & Celebrate and Project Indigo) stakeholders, as well as a number of LGBT+ young people themselves. The Commission felt that the evidence presented and the ensuing discussion was both informative and positive (a full record of the meeting can be viewed [on-line](#)).

The Commission agreed that it would write to you to highlight key findings from the evidence it had received and to suggest a number of priorities which could support the work with LGBT+ young people in Hackney going forward.

The evidence highlighted that there were a number of examples of good practice locally for which there was positive work to support LGBT+ young people in Hackney, these included:

- A comprehensive and inclusive programme of relationship and sex education for young people aged 5-19 available to all schools free of charge (as commissioned by Public Health and delivered by Young Hackney);
- A range of forums supported by Hackney Learning Trust which helped to identify and extend good practice of supporting LGBT+ children in school;

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- The attainment of a national equalities award by New Regent's College after the successful introduction of comprehensive programme of training and development to tackle homophobia and promote inclusivity.
- Project Indigo, a youth group and counselling service for young LGBT+ people or for people who are questioning their sexual or gender identity.

Whilst it was clear that there was good local practice to support young LGBT+ young people, this was often dependent on the positive and proactive approaches of individual LGBT+ teachers or students themselves. The Commission noted that more robust LGBT+ policies and procedures (which were backed up by strong school leadership) were needed for more effective and widespread support for LGBT+ young people in schools in Hackney. In this context, Hackney Learning Trust could play a pivotal role in improving support for LGBT+ young people by developing a local repository for LGBT+ school policies and protocols which could help to extend good practice across Hackney.

The Department of Education has recently published [new guidance](#) for sex and relationship education which has reminded schools of their duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and to ensure that sex and relationship education is relevant to all its pupils, including those from protected characteristics. In light of recent events elsewhere across the country however, it is apparent that schools may require additional support and encouragement to enable them to deliver positive and inclusive sex and relationship education which meets the needs of all their pupils, irrespective of their identified gender or sexuality.

Through analysis of the evidence received by the Commission, a number of priorities for supporting LGBT+ young people in Hackney have emerged and are made within the recommendations made below.

1. There is a need to further develop the voice of LGBT+ young people so that their needs are better articulated and reflected in commissioning priorities and service planning across Hackney;
2. Ensure that there is appropriate training for teachers so that LGBT+ issues can be taught confidently and positively, equips teachers to respond to the needs of LGBT+ young people and supports them to deliver a cross-curricula approach to teaching LGBT+ issues (alongside other equality strands) in their school;
3. Continue to work with Headteachers, school governors and other school leaders to ensure that there is effective leadership and robust policies in place that enable schools to meet statutory equality duties, support LGBTQ+ inclusivity and have appropriate safeguards to monitor and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying or discrimination;
4. For schools to provide a safe and positive space for teachers to meet with children and young people who may be questioning their gender identity or raise concerns about homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying;
5. The need for integrated advice, guidance and support for LGBT+ children and young people across Hackney.

The Commission would welcome your response to the conclusions and recommendations as well as your thoughts on how this work should be taken forward locally, in particular those services which should lead and coordinate this work.

It is hoped that an update on this work can be scheduled within the work programme of the Commission for 2019/20.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Sophie Conway
Chair, Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission

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

Cc Mayor Philip Glanville
Annie Gammon, Director of Education
Anne, Canning, Group Director Children & Families
Matt Clack, Head of Public Health
Amy Wilkinson, Integrated Workstream Director, Children & Young People & Maternity