



London Borough of Hackney  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2018/19  
Date of Meeting Monday, 13th July, 2020

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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<b>Chair</b>	<b>Councillor Sophie Conway</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance</b>	<b>Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Sade Etti, Cllr Ajay Chauhan, Cllr Humaira Garasia, Cllr Katie Hanson, Cllr Sharon Patrick, Cllr James Peters and Cllr Clare Potter</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Clare Joseph</b>
<b>Co-optees</b>	<b>Justine McDonald, Luisa Dornela, Shabnum Hassan, Jo Macleod, Ernell Watson, Shuja Shaikh and Michael Lobenstein</b>
<b>In Attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children’s Social Care</b></li><li>▪ <b>Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Early Years, Families and Play</b></li><li>▪ <b>Anne Canning, Group Director, Children, Adults and Community Health</b></li><li>▪ <b>Sarah Wright, Director, Children and Families Service</b></li><li>▪ <b>Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education</b></li><li>▪ <b>Stephen Hall, Assistant Director, School Performance and Improvement</b></li><li>▪ <b>Anton Francic, Senior Secondary Adviser</b></li><li>▪ <b>Dr Rebecca Montacute, Research &amp; Policy Manager, The Sutton Trust</b></li><li>▪ <b>Chris Brown, Principal, The Bridge Academy</b></li><li>▪ <b>Richard Brown, Executive Head, Urswick Secondary School</b></li><li>▪ <b>Jane Heffernan, Executive Head, Cardinal Pole Secondary School</b></li><li>▪ <b>Donna Thomas, Head of Early Years, Early Help &amp; Wellbeing</b></li><li>▪ <b>Tim Wooldridge, Early Years Strategy Manager</b></li></ul>
<b>Members of the Public</b>	<b>Live streamed <a href="https://youtu.be/pLpwkSTgIOI">https://youtu.be/pLpwkSTgIOI</a></b>
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**Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from the following:

- Cllr Clare Joseph
- Graham Hunter (Co-opted member)

**2 Declarations of Interest**

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

- Cllr Peters was a governor at a special school in Hackney;
- Cllr Chauhan was a member of NEU and a teacher at a school outside of Hackney;
- Justine McDonald was a Headteacher at a school in Hackney;
- Jo Macleod was a governor at a school in Hackney;
- Shabnum Hassan was a governor at a school in Hackney.

**3 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

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

**4 Covid 19 - Service Update (19.05)**

4.1 The Commission continues to receive updates from both Children and Families Services and Hackney Learning Trust on how services were responding to Covid 19, and subsequent recovery plans. The Directors of the respective services highlighted key issues from the report as set out below.

**4.2 Children & Families Service**

- Referral levels continue to be lower than expected, though this had increased slightly as more children were returning to school. Numbers were expected to grow further and the service was preparing.
- Domestic abuse referrals remain higher than expected.
- It remains difficult to put interventions in place to support children and young people and their families and some 'bottlenecking' is being experienced.
- The courts still operate at below capacity, so a significant number of court cases were waiting to be heard in both youth justice and in the children's social care system. As a result there is a slight increase in the number of children on Child Protection Plans and in care.
- As lockdown restrictions have eased, more cases are seen face-to-face and high risk cases are now back to the usual frequency of visits. A blended approach of face-to-face visits with virtual meetings was being used for lower risk cases.
- Adventure playgrounds and youth hubs would be opening up for the summer but at reduced capacity to meet social distancing requirements.
- DfE devices have arrived and are being distributed via schools and social work teams.

**4.3 Hackney Learning Trust**

- The numbers of young people attending early years settings continues to increase. A number of childcare settings in the independent sector had recorded a significant drop in income from fees which has raised concerns about their future viability.
- Schools have continued to provide home learning and where possible have continued with assessments to understand where children were in their learning.

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- The number of children attending primary school had also increased, and some schools had taken in pupils outside of year 1 and year 6.
- The number of teaching staff attending school across both primary and secondary sectors was increasing in preparedness for a full school return in September.
- In relation to exam assessments, advice had been provided to schools to help avoid unconscious bias.
- The council had made £50k available to fund summer activities for more vulnerable children over the summer holidays and 17 schools were offering activities.
- Devices from DfE had been delivered to eligible children via schools. The Council also intended a phase 2 approach which would issue recycled laptops to local children and young people.
- Whilst children were expected back in school in September, it was clear that IT devices would be needed beyond then for continued on-line learning and in the eventuality of a school may be required to close.

### Questions

4.4 In respect of the distribution of digital devices, what work has been undertaken locally to increase the availability of wifi-hotspots around schools?

- This has been a challenge locally. Schools had been asked to audit access to IT and wifi access which found that around 10% did not have access to a device and a further 15% had limited wifi access (limited data or bandwidth). The council was developing a strategy to address the digital divide and as part of this was seeking to extend free wifi access across the borough.

4.5 The National Education Union has issued a five point check-list to enable children, staff and parents to return to school safely. How was the council working with schools to help meet these assessments where these could be influenced locally (e.g. an all school approach and the protection of the vulnerable)?

- Hackney Learning Trust (HLT) was following government guidelines to support extended school provision safely. HLT continued to meet colleagues in the Public Health and Unions to ensure that schools could reopen safely. Headteachers were also meeting with Union representatives and consulting them in risk assessment plans.

4.6 What impact had the Covid 19 response had on the budgets for both Children and Families Service and Hackney Learning Trust? What are the budget projections for year end 2021?

- CFS reported that it had been keeping a careful track of spending in relation to the Covid 19 response. Some cost pressures are difficult to pinpoint as being a result of Covid 19, particularly some of the more complex placements for children. There are more pressures in the market which have made some children social care placements more expensive. There have been additional payments for families who are in real hardship and to families of disabled children. CFS continued to work with Finance colleagues to track spending and help to project future spending.
- HLT reported that the most significant cost to date has been the loss of childcare fees to local children's centres. There was also a significant loss of traded income for HLT, for example, training and development. For schools themselves the cost of Covid may have been less significant as additional costs incurred by the Covid response have been offset by other reduced costs from children not being in school. Primary schools with an attached children's centre would also be facing the loss of income from childcare fees. Although some funding had been announced to help children catch-up, this would be a significant expense going forward for schools.
- One of the schools present noted whilst some of the costs for the Covid response had been met, others had not. For example, at the beginning of the crisis due to delays in the national voucher scheme for free school meals, the school had

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commissioned an alternative provider, but had since been notified that it would not be reimbursed. This was an additional cost of £70k.

4.7 What is the role of the Adapting Support and Services for Children and Young people workstream and is this a partnership group?

- This is a partnership approach to responding to Covid 19. There has been close working with partners in the community and voluntary sector in developing a youth offer. Many of the services pressures seen in Hackney are similar to what is experienced elsewhere across London, so this forum provides an opportunity to reflect and learn from good practice.

4.8 Understandably there has been some delay in getting devices to children ahead of the end of term, but has any guidance been issued as to how children may use the devices to help them catch up over the summer holidays?

- Advice has been provided on the HLT website to support children and parents over the summer holidays. Details of summer activities would also be provided on the website.
- CFS also noted that the distributed devices were not only for education purposes but also to help social workers stay in touch with children and young people.

4.9 Will children be offered tests before returning to school in September and is there an independent body monitoring schools to ensure that they follow national guidance?

- HLT responded that in terms of guidance for schools extending school provision to all pupils in September, all schools are required to update their risk assessments and these are checked by the Council. There was also clear guidance to children and families and staff, that if they exhibit symptoms they should get tested and self-isolate for the period required. The Government has indicated that schools will be issued with home tests to support this process.

4.10 The Chair thanked Directors for their briefings and responding to members' questions.

## **5 Impact of Covid 19 on Educational Attainment and Educational Inequality (19.15)**

5.1 Evidence from previous meetings had noted that the necessity to close schools to prevent the spread Covid 19 may be exacerbating local educational inequalities. The purpose of the item was therefore threefold:

- To assess how school closures have impacted on young people's education and contributed to the widening of the attainment gap;
- Set out the challenges faced by schools of extending in-school provision and the nature of support needed ahead of September 2020;
- To identify those priorities and strategies that can assist children to catch up on study programmes and counter growing educational inequalities.

5.2 In addition to officers from HLT, the Commission invited a number of external guests to help explore the above issues:

- Dr Rebecca Montacute, The Sutton Trust;
- Chris Brown, Principal, The Bridge Academy;
- Richard Brown, Executive Head, Urswick Secondary School
- Jane Heffernan, Executive Head, Cardinal Pole Secondary School

### The Sutton Trust

5.3 Dr Rebecca Montacute presented the report Covid 19 and Social Mobility - the Impact of School Closures. This report was part of a series of research publications which looked at the impact of Covid 19 throughout education, from early years through to University entry and on to the workplace. The schools shutdown report was the first

of this series. Although findings were based on polling from April 2020, the findings from this have been verified in subsequent research produced by other agencies

5.4 A number of key points were highlighted from the report, these included:

- Children have very different living situations which all impact on their ability to study and learn, this includes the availability of space in which to learn, the support provided by parents and the general living conditions of young people. When schools are closed the impact of these living conditions on a child's learning is more pronounced.
- The qualification levels of parents was a significant predictor of how confident parents felt in supporting their child's home education. Less than half of parents with 'A' levels or GCSE felt confident in teaching their children at home compared to over 60% of parents with a higher qualification. So the level of support that children have been getting depends (in part) on the educational qualification of their parents.
- Data analysis also underscored the digital divide among young people where children from more socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds were less likely to have adequate access to IT facilities (laptops and internet access).
- Survey data also demonstrated that a significant proportion of children do not have access to appropriate work space in the home environment to enable them to study. Again this was linked to socioeconomic status.
- The amount and quality of work produced by children has also varied during lockdown and school closures, this appeared to be related to the type of school that children attended (private, state funded etc.) and whether children were entitled to FSM.
- The research also found that teachers in poorer areas were less set-up and prepared to deliver on-line teaching in their school than teachers in more prosperous areas.

5.5 Research from the Education Endowment Foundation, a sister charity of the Sutton Trust, found that the cumulative impact of school closures on the attainment gap will be significant. It was suggested that the progress that has been made to close the attainment gap over the past 10 years will most likely have been reversed in the 6 months that children will have been away from school.

5.6 Whilst the provision of laptops for vulnerable children was to be welcomed, the level of IT need was more substantive and likely to be ongoing, especially as on-line teaching was likely to continue in some form for students beyond September. Whilst laptops may help students reconnect with their studies, additional interventions would be necessary to assist children to catch up and reduce the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers.

5.7 The Sutton Trust has been working with a number of other educational charities to set up the National Tuition Programme (NTP) to help identify the best ways to help children to catch up when they return to school.

#### Bridge Academy

5.8 The Principal from the Bridge Academy outlined the work undertaken by the school to support children to continue to learn from home. A number of key issues raised which are highlighted below:

- There was a high level of disadvantage among children attending where  $\frac{2}{3}$  of children attending are in receipt of pupil premium and almost  $\frac{1}{2}$  eligible for FSM.
- On-line lessons have been provided to years 10 to 12 from the beginning, and once clear protocols were established this was extended to younger year groups.
- It was evident that not all students would have IT access, and 200 laptops were provided for students to support on-line learning. The school has also provided 'dongles' and bought data to enable children to access the internet at home.
- It was important for teachers to maintain contact with students to help maintain continuity, and aside from any on-line teaching, each child has at least weekly

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contact with their teacher. Teachers have been in daily contact with more vulnerable students. This has meant that the school has been able to maintain high levels of support for children.

- Whilst the levels of student engagement was very high at the beginning of lockdown, there had been a noticeable drop-off after summer half-term.
- It was apparent that there were disparities in children's home education environment and experience (work space and parental support being two), and it was clear that some children had struggled. In this context, the school had sought to offer additional support where it could.
- Finding a quiet place to work has been very challenging for a number of students not only to study, but also to have 1-1 tutorials with their teachers. The school has also sought to provide counselling opportunities for children, but this has been hindered by the fact that many young people do not have access to private space within the home.
- It was also more difficult for teachers to teach on-line particularly as it is more challenging to provide encouragement and support as they may do in a classroom setting. Whilst some parents are happy to step into this role, other parents may be less confident in engaging and supporting their child in day to day school activities. This can be an issue for children's motivation and engagement.
- As children have been returning to school it is apparent that there are gaps in their learning and understanding. There are also differences in how children have responded to on-line learning, whilst some have engaged and feel positive about being back in school, others feel that they have fallen behind and are not so confident about being back in school. Many year 10 students, even the most able of students, were very worried about their study and exams for next year.

#### Urswick Secondary

5.9 The Executive Headteacher of Urswick Secondary School presented to the Commission and also highlighted a number of ways that the school continued to support children in their home environment and how they planned to help children transition back to the school.

- There was concern that the good work to reduce educational disadvantage over the past 10 years might potentially be lost through widespread closure of schools. Whilst engagement and uptake of work was lower amongst disadvantaged pupils was lower, it was much higher than reported nationally.
- The level of social isolation that children have experienced during lockdown should not be underestimated, and the work of schools to engage and involve students virtually has been very important.
- Year 10 have been attending school for a number of weeks and attendance was up to 85%. With additional assurance around safety and infection control procedures over the summer, the school was reasonably confident that most parents will allow their children to return in September.
- In terms of the predicted grades for students taking exams this year, the school was concerned that the examining bodies would use examination results of the school as well as teacher assessments to determine student grades. This would perpetuate the status quo, and would undermine the work of the school to ensure that students obtain grades that are fair, avoid unconscious bias and reflect the work of the student. Based on mock exam results and other independent assessments, Urswick was confident that exam results were going to be 10-15% higher than in previous years. The school had communicated its concerns to relevant examining boards.
- Whilst children will be offered the opportunity to retake exams in the autumn the grades achieved will most likely be suppressed as children will then be studying new subjects, will not have received any active teaching in these examination subjects or have even moved to another educational setting. There is a danger therefore that children across Hackney may not get the grades that they deserve.

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- The school had been open every day throughout the pandemic and had supported 35-40 vulnerable children and those whose parents were key workers. By staying open, the school has demonstrated that it can support safe operation of the school to both parents and teachers and there has not been any confirmed cases of Covid among staff or students since Easter.

#### Cardinal Pole Secondary

5.10 The Executive Head of Cardinal Pole Secondary school also presented to the Commission. A summary of the key issues are highlighted below:

- The school closed the week before lockdown to ensure that school staff were trained in remote teaching and learning techniques. Similarly, students were brought in before lockdown to help assess those who did not have access to IT and on-line facilities and how they could be supported through school resources.
- Staff have been divided into three groups: teaching and learning, engagement or attendance. Therefore the school has had very good levels of attendance and engagement among students which has been between 80-90% and children that did not attend were routinely followed up-phone calls home. It was made clear that if children did not attend classes remotely, then they would be brought into school. The engagement team not only assessed whether children were connecting to on-line resources, but that work was of an adequate standard.
- Year 12 has had an on-line programme of teaching for which attendance has been 97%. Mock exams have also been held throughout the school which has helped teachers to establish where individual children are within their learning.
- The school had also undertaken a lot of work to support teachers in making predictive assessments of children. Like Urswick, this school also had concerns that previous years grades might be used to determine pupil attainment.
- In relation to proposals for resources for catch-up tutoring, it was suggested in-house tutoring is far more effective than outsourcing as school staff knew and understood the needs of children far better. School staff may be more committed and driven to improving the needs of children in their care than external support agencies. It was also noted that the level of resources for individual schools would be insufficient given the level of need (the number of children on FSM or in receipt of Pupil Premium) in the school.
- The school has invested heavily in on-line resources and in providing physical resources to enable children to study and learn remotely. The school is now focused on September and opening the school to all pupils, in particular supporting those children transferring into the school from primary settings. A nurture group has been established for vulnerable children within this cohort.
- It is important for the children to experience continuity for their studies and for both them and their parents to be able to contact the school when needed. Teachers have been a very important link for children during lockdown, and additional support has been provided for staff not only in developing appropriate on-line resources and teaching methods, but also to help maintain their morale in very challenging circumstances. There have been a number of staff training days to help teachers adjust back into school.
- It was acknowledged that the reopening of the school to all pupils in September would be a challenge.

5.11 A member of the Commission, who is also a head teacher at a local secondary school made a number of additional observations:

- Concerns about the proposed use of external tutors for the NTP were echoed by the headteacher, as in school staff were best placed to know the knowledge gaps of their pupils and had developed relationships with them which recognised and understood their learning behaviours.
- It was also noted that disparities in children's learning were arising through their access to digital devices, access to parental support and the availability of physical space for learning. The detail of children's missed learning however would not be fully identifiable until children were back in school, where fuller and

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more rounded assessments of children could take place and only then can schools practically develop catch up plans for students. It was noted that some children would bounce back and catch up very quickly whilst others may require more intensive support.

5.12 The Cabinet member for Early Years, Families and Play noted that whilst parents may be reassured around health and safety measures to protect their children from Coronavirus, additional support may be needed for those parents of a child with SEND. It was reported that some schools would be relaxing behaviour policies for certain groups of young people to enable them to adapt back to the school.

5.13 The Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care noted that the voice of young people was very clear in this matter and that many wanted a return to school as soon as practicable. Children also had genuine concerns about the return back to school not only through having got behind in their studies, but also in adapting back to behaviour and exclusions policies and the wider school environment. Guidance had been issued by HLT to schools on these matters.

#### Hackney Learning Trust

5.14 HLT highlighted a number of issues in relation to secondary school provision:

- HLT was supporting schools to share good practice by holding borough wide forums for head teachers, where there was an opportunity to share the work they were undertaking in their respective schools. It was apparent that local schools and head teachers had been very resourceful and innovative and had developed new systems for on-line learning, pastoral support and providing reassurance to staff and parents.
- School Improvement Partners (SIP) have also supported schools during this period and are in regular contact with head teachers across both primary and secondary schools. Through this process SIPs have been able to identify and share good practice across local schools. There have also been a number of meetings with school governors for the same purpose.
- DfE also continues to release best practice guides and resources for schools on a range of policy areas including on-line teaching and supporting home learning environments. The HLT has held weekly meetings with a DfE contact which was an opportunity to highlight areas of concern to central policymakers.
- It was noted that proposals for the NTP were as yet underdeveloped and further detail was expected over the summer. As it stood a £1 billion fund to assist children to catch-up in their studies would be spent in two ways:  $\frac{1}{3}$  of this funding will support the NTP which would use external private tutoring companies to support the most vulnerable children and  $\frac{2}{3}$  of funding given direct to schools to spend on tutoring (or other interventions) for a more generalised pupil catch up.
- It was reported that among secondary schools, HLT had facilitated meetings of subject leads to meet and exchange ideas in delivery of home education and on-line learning in their curriculum areas. Similarly 6th form leaders had also met and developed a shared approach to the cancellation of exams and UCAS applications.
- HLT and Hackney schools were active contributors to a six borough 'Lost Learning' research project to identify ways in which children may have missed out on studies during lockdown and how curriculums need to adapt to address education gaps whilst continuing with new learning. An independent expert was commissioned to present to local schools (primary and secondary) on what a 'recovery curriculum' would look like and how to resume learning as quickly as possible.

#### Questions

5.15 What reassurance can HLT and schools provide to young people and their parents around measures to reduce unconscious bias in schools? What support is available for young people on results day and what can young people do if they are unhappy with their results?



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- HLT have been in contact with schools, issued guidance and provided training around unconscious bias in the teacher assessment process. HLT has also issued guidance in respect of the administration of results day and shared good practice. In order to maintain social distancing, it is likely that children would be given their results in a staggered process throughout the day. Whilst HLT was optimistic that young people would get the results that they deserve, as in previous years, there will always be a group of children who are unhappy with their results. Year 13 and Year 11 students generally have a number of options open to them and that advice and support for them is available at this juncture. There will be an option for children to appeal their exam results or retake them in the autumn of 2020.
- HLT would visit schools on the two results days (GCSE and A level). It was noted that if the exam boards do use 2019 results through which to moderate grades, as a borough, Hackney performed very well in the previous year. HLT would be meeting schools to discuss any variations in exam results this year.
- In relation to unconscious bias, HLT has provided guidance and training around cultural responsiveness of the whole school and helped to share good practice.
- Urswick reported that there were plans in place to support children on results day. In terms of 6th form admissions, the school intended to use its own internal grade predictions rather than final results even if these prove to be lower. For year 13 students and UCAS admissions, there is less of a concern as much of the preparatory work was completed before lockdown and many children had multiple or unconditional offers. Teachers would be in school over the summer supporting this process and results would be given out in a staggered way throughout the day. It was emphasised that it would be demotivating for young people if they received poorer results from their actual exams than in their mock exams. 2019 results were not as good as in previous years or had been anticipated for 2020, so modelling 2020 results on 2019 figures would be of significant concern which the school would challenge.
- Bridge Academy confirmed that it (and most other secondary heads) would adopt a similar approach to 6th form admissions, and base acceptances on work and performance of children in their 5 years of study at the school. In relation to inter school admissions, additional communication would be needed between schools to provide verification of their level of attainment and study. In terms of results day, like most other secondary schools, results would be staged throughout the day and there will be support and guidance on hand to help children navigate the next steps should they not get the results that they are happy with.

5.16 Through the shared practice forums, does HLT have any data on quality and quantity of on-line teaching provided to young people and the degree to which children have engaged with on-line learning?

- HLT have maintained weekly contact with every school and have been able to develop a good picture of what is being provided at each school. Each school was dealing with different circumstances however, and responses have varied across the sector. Three primary schools have remained closed throughout the lockdown period as they did not have enough staff (due to shielding and sickness). It was recognised whilst schools have all generally responded well to the provision of on-line teaching and support, there was some variation in response and that additional support would be needed at some schools to assist children returning to school in September to help them catch-up with their studies.
- School Improvement Partners are in regular contact with schools and as a result HLT has a good overview of provision and which schools need additional help or guidance to improve or maximise their support to children. It was emphasised that schools were in very different positions and their ability to provide resources and on-line teaching support varied. In relation to vulnerable children however, there have been explicit standards, and all schools have been expected to maintain regular contact and have effective communication with children's social care and other support services. There was considerable expertise amongst Hackney schools and headteachers in supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils, and HLT was

confident that learning gaps amongst this cohort would be identified and effective learning plans put in place when they return in September.

5.17 What support can be provided to schools to develop effective catch-up strategies over the summer and in the autumn? What will these programmes look like?

- HLT noted that additional interventions rather than longer hours would be the most probable route that schools would take in assisting children to catch-up on their return in September. Again, it was emphasised that schools should not make any assumptions about which children may have kept up with their studies and those who have fallen behind, but to avoid unconscious bias, catch up programmes should be informed by rigorous testing and evaluation when children return to school. It was suggested that teaching techniques would be central to learning recovery programmes as these would help to identify key learning and skills necessary for children to progress in the remainder of the curriculum rather than re-teach areas lost.
- Urswick noted that it did not intend to extend the school day to enable children to catch up, but were instead planning a Saturday school. Saturday school would help alleviate the pressures on space and pupil congestions from weekday provision. The school would also have phased opening which is extending the school day already, so it would be difficult to extend it further. Thus any additional resources would be used to extend Saturday provision.

5.18 What support will be provided to children and parents over the summer holiday?

- A wide ranging resource list has been developed for children and their parents to support them over the summer months. Schools would also be developing their own approach though it should be recognised that teaching staff had been working exceptionally hard over the past few months and would require time off and to help them prepare for the autumn term. Some schools will undoubtedly set some work over the summer, especially for year 10 children.

5.19 How are pupils in year 6 who are about to transition to secondary school being supported?

- HLT reported that it was initially hoped that face to face inductions would be taking place to support children moving from primary to secondary, but this has not been possible and contact has been virtual with one-to-one meetings with children and their families as well as virtual school tours in operation. Schools have put many resources on line including presentations by head teachers and other key staff about life at their school. Centrally there has been concern about those vulnerable children who would be transitioning to secondary in September and there has been dedicated support from HLT to schools to make sure that there was effective liaison and communication between primary and secondary school to support such children and their families. This has also been the case for children with SEND and those with an EHCP.

5.20 In the context of virtual teaching, how are teachers signposting children and their families to additional health and social care support that may be needed (e.g. counselling support).

- HLT noted that normally schools would see children every day and would be able make referrals on to other agencies such as Young Hackney, FAST or CAMHS where appropriate. A new working arrangement has been set up between HLT and CFS to support schools who are worried about children who they cannot make contact with or if they have other specific concerns. It is clear that there have been concerns for children around the lack of money or lack of food in the family home, and there has been effective signposting to council support services to help these children and families.
- Cardinal Pole reported that local schools were very familiar with dealing with the impact of social deprivation and all had sought to maintain contact with vulnerable children throughout the lockdown period. At Cardinal Pole, vulnerable children were

contacted 3 times a week, even during the school holidays and this would continue over the summer. The pandemic has heightened social, emotional and financial stresses on families and the school liaises with other statutory bodies where necessary to keep children safe and protected. Food poverty has been a real issue for local families with many more families needing help and support. In the past week there had been over 50 requests by families for additional support heading into the summer. This is particularly important for those families who have no recourse to public funds. The constant contact with the children has been important in this time, but there are lots of visible cues which can be used by teachers and the school to direct support to children who need it and therefore it was important for children to come back to school as soon as it was safe and practicable to do so.

5.21 Given that the majority of children with SEND are in mainstream settings, what additional support are schools putting in place to support this cohort of children back into school in September?

- Urswick noted that given that many children will have been out of school for 6 months by September, most will have some additional need at this point and there will be huge pressures within the system to meet these and existing SEND needs. The school had increased spending on SLT in anticipation of this level of need. A surge in demand for a whole range of support services was expected in September and the real challenge will be how this response is coordinated. There would also be a need to transition away from virtual support for some of these services which services should be planning for.

5.22 What was the Sutton Trusts view about the use of external tutoring within the NTP?

- The Sutton Trust shared the concerns of local headteachers about the use of external tutoring services rather than in school staff. Whilst the project is government funded, the NTP is being designed by a number of charities including the Sutton Trust. The programme is being designed on the evidence base and there will be two parts to the programme. In the 'Partners' programme, schools will be able to buy in tuition from independent tutoring providers who have been approved by the Education Endowment Foundation and should demonstrate that they already have good relationships with the school and are able to integrate tutoring into the school curriculum. The second option for schools, particularly where there is a high proportion of disadvantaged children is that they will be able to access a coach as a full-time member of staff who will be trained by an external agency but the post will be a tool for the school to use.
- The NTP would not fix the gap in children's learning caused by the Coronavirus, but it will be a small part of an overall response to help close this gap. The Sutton Trust were keen to hear from local teachers to understand what would be the most efficient use of this resource. A further £650m was being made available to schools for them to directly spend as they wished to support children to catch-up.

5.23 The government has issued over 300 guidelines for the reopening of schools, did schools anticipate further guidelines, some of which may affect existing plans for reopening?

- Bridge Academy indicated that it did expect new guidelines which would impact on plans to reopen in September. For example, if there were plans to change social distancing requirements this would have a significant impact on existing plans. Most schools in Hackney operate from a very small footprint therefore any changes to social distancing would have a wide ranging impact, as it will logistically be very difficult to deliver teaching on site as it stands.
- Cardinal Pole also reported that preparations for a September return had been a very complex process, translating all the government guidance into a workable teaching space. Although the school has a detailed plan, there was an anticipation that this would change. There was a strong resentment across the sector that there was very little involvement of schools in planning and preparing guidance and that new requirements were announced with little consultation and insufficient lead in

time. This was felt to be disrespectful to the teaching profession and did not acknowledge the work of school staff in maintaining education provision and in developing plans for full reopening of schools in September.

5.24 What plans were there to re-engage parents ahead of the September re-opening?

- Urswick school suggested that the worst option which has been floated nationally, was to serve fines on those parents who do not let their children return to school. This would be a last resort for the school. Some parents have genuine concerns and anxieties about their children returning to school, and effective communication strategies need to be in place to reassure them that schools are safe. Extending provision means having more children on site which is by extension, increasing the risk for those children and which requires really careful planning to minimise these. The school was also considering using alumni of the school who had recently completed University to support tutoring. The advantage of this approach is that alumni are representative of the school population with whom current pupils may more easily connect with.
- HLT noted that there would be specific challenges for year 7 and year 12 students returning to school as there will not be established relationships with the school and teaching staff at their new schools to help them transition into the new academic environment. The council was planning borough wide communications to emphasise that with the exception of a few students with underlying health conditions, all children were expected back into school in September. Those children in contact with CFS or Young Hackney would also be receiving support from these services to enable them to return.

5.25 What are schools priorities for helping children to catch up?

- The Bridge Academy reported that the recovery of young people's learning would be a marathon and not a sprint and that interventions would be made over the long term. Teaching staff would first need to assess what learning had been missed by children, and to identify critical learning skills and understanding which were necessary for them to access the remainder of the curriculum. In this context, subject leaders were currently identifying key aspects of the curriculum which are necessary for future learning and if these need to be re-taught. Year 11 will require more intensive teaching support to ready them for exams for next year. For a small number of pupils this may mean that they will need to study a smaller number of subjects to ensure that they reach the required standard in key subjects for 2021 exams to enable them to go on to the next level in their education.

5.26 In terms of the issues raised by the death of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests, what reassurance were schools providing to BAME children that they would be treated fairly in their assessments and general education provision?

- HLT noted that this issue has impacted on staff, students and their families across Hackney. The death of George Floyd took place after schools had begun to extend provision and HLT had developed a number of best practice sessions which could be used for school assemblies. This issue has been discussed at both headteacher meetings and governor meetings. With the involvement of the Cabinet Member for Education, Young People's and Children's Social Care a dedicated session was also held for staff across HLT to reflect on racial inequalities and cultural bias and a follow up meeting was planned. HLT is in the early stages of building a strategy that further develops the work of the Young Black Men's Programme, which would encompass issues around the curriculum, staff and families. The Hackney Schools Group Board has helped 6 local schools to pilot sessions with families so that parents can articulate their response to the issues raised.
- Urswick noted that teaching staff represented a huge resource locally because of the diversity of their cultural backgrounds, including the leadership teams of many schools. School closure had provided an opportunity for teaching staff to reflect on these issues with pupils, though it was acknowledged that it was difficult to deal with

this issue with young people virtually. It was clear that there was further work to do across schools to engage young people on the issues raised by the death of George Floyd.

5.27 Is there any additional support that can be provided by HLT and the wider council to support schools to re-open to their pupils ahead of September 2020, or can assist in the recovery of lost learning which has occurred through lockdown?

- The Bridge Academy indicated that it was very satisfied with the support and support provided through HLT. The ability of schools to share good practice would be critical going forward and there needs to be appropriate forums and clear lines of communication to support this. The complexity of magnitude of the issues that schools face requires a multi-agency approach and a partnership approach be developed to support schools.
- Urswick urged that there should be no further delay in reopening public libraries. Libraries were a key community resource which can help people connect and can play a key role in reducing local inequalities. Urswick urged that a safe, dedicated time and space be provided for young people to assist them in their studies and catch up on learning lost during school closures.
- Cardinal Pole noted that transition at year 11 post 18 was an area of particular concern, as the prospect of a recession may mean that there may be fewer opportunities for this group of young people and there was a real prospect of an increase in the number of young people who may be not in education, employment or training (NEET). The school suggested that a local partnership approach involving a wide range of local agencies could help to develop more opportunities for this cohort of young people.
- Our Lady's noted that further work needed to be done to engage parents, not only to support learners but also to help identify wider health and social care needs. Given the social distancing restrictions, face contact between parents and teacher will be difficult in the new term therefore new structures will need to be established so that wider needs of children can be communicated. It may be helpful if such infrastructure was borough wide so that parents can be made aware of the resources to help children catch up in their studies as well as signposting to other sources of education, health and social care.

5.28 The Commission noted that it would be useful to understand what additional resource schools would need to help young people catch up with their studies and how vulnerable and disadvantaged young people will be supported to prevent a further widening of the attainment gap. As this would be a longer term issue, it was suggested that this topic could be revisited later in the work Commissions work programme.

5.29 The Commission also highlighted the issues of year 11 transfers and the prospect of more limited opportunities for young people post 18. Ensuring that children do not become NEET is important for their long term development so it would be helpful to receive a further update on this when a more detailed picture emerges post September 2020.

5.30 The Chair thanked the Sutton Trust and all school heads for their time and participation in the meeting.

## **6 Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (20.30)**

6.1 The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is a standing item within the work programme to ensure that the Commission has oversight of the capacity, quality and uptake of local childcare services. Due to Covid 19 and the closure of many child care establishments a full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) has not been possible this year. A report providing a snapshot of the position in March, along with the current position was presented to the Commission by the Head of Early Years.

6.2 The Head of Early Years presented a summary of the childcare sufficiency report to the Commission highlighting the following key findings:

- The snapshot of childcare provision was undertaken in March 2020 which at that time indicated that there was sufficient capacity to meet the needs of local parents. Just a few weeks later, many of the childcare settings were required to close in response to the Covid 19 outbreak and many of these settings remained closed. Some settings have remained open throughout this time to support vulnerable children and the children of key workers.
- Payments for the provision of free childcare provision (15 hours and 30 hours) has continued which has helped sustain those settings who rely on this source of income. Those childcare settings which are dependent on income from parental fees have however faced significant financial challenges as parents have not been utilising their services over lockdown.
- Those settings which have reopened have done so at much reduced capacity (40-60%) to comply with social distancing requirements and the need to maintain children in 'bubbles'. This has affected the income of these settings.
- A number of settings remain closed because they do not have sufficient children wanting to attend to make operations viable.
- There is much uncertainty around future provision and availability of childcare for parents as the real picture will not be known until the autumn when schools and settings return and parents return to work. Additional business support has been provided by HLT to the sector to help them assess the viability of individual settings and claim government Covid-19 funding. Daily briefings have been provided to keep the sector up to date with government requirements and guidance.

6.3 The Cabinet member for Early Years, Family and Play thanked the Early Years team for providing oversight of childcare settings and the support they have continued to provide to parents throughout the lockdown period. The Early Years team has supported the private sector to get financial support available including the Discretionary and Business Grants. In terms of the next steps, the Early Help Review was ongoing and would consider the impact of Covid 19. The service was developing an Early Years Strategy which may extend its scope to include rates relief, fees and charges and take up targets for specific settings.

#### Questions

6.4 Given the fragility of the childcare sector and its impact on parents being able to return to work, is there any additional funding in the pipeline for settings to help them through this challenging time to September?

- Monitoring of attendance has shown that those parents who had previously wanted full-time place in a childcare setting now want a part-time place. Also parents who were offered a place in June have deferred take up until September. Informal data would suggest that demand has been lower because parents are now working from home, or they have been furloughed.
- Like many schools, childcare settings have continued to operate and where some have developed home learning resources, reading, toy libraries, food distribution packs.
- A survey to parents in April 2020 revealed a range of unmet needs including technologies, resources, food and financial resources. The service continues to provide direct support where it can and to signpost parents on to other agencies (e.g. benefits advice).
- The service is now moving into the recovery phase and is focusing support with both childcare providers and parents themselves to provide training, advice and guidance for September.

6.5 What support is available to engage and support parents who are anxious about returning their child to childcare, or who are especially vulnerable themselves or affected by Covid 19 (e.g. no access to IT facilities, in poverty or unemployed).

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- There were about 600 children attending early years settings during the lockdown, but this has grown substantially since 1st June and there are now over 4,000 children attending local childcare settings. The service has provided guidance on how to make settings safe and how to communicate with parents to reassure them that their child is safe to return. The council website has also been updated to reflect the help that parents may need to support their child returning to the childcare setting.
- Throughout this period referrals for early help in the early years sector have been maintained with approximately 59 referrals between March and June. The teams have worked hard to maintain contact with vulnerable families, through whatever means were safe to do so. Early years services and children's centres have remained open to support vulnerable children and those children of key workers. Food parcels have been provided for a wide range of families in need.
- The service had provided emotional support for vulnerable parents where key workers have made contact up to 3 times a week.

6.6 Child care is important for the development of an inclusive economy and helping parents back into work. What support is there from across the council to support working families?

- A recent DfE briefing suggested that new funding available for schools would not be available for Early Years. A further briefing was expected however detailing additional exceptional funding for the Early Years Sector.

6.7 What work is being done to improve awareness of the inclusion fund to support children with SEND in early years settings?

- The Inclusion Fund is a resource to allow 3 and 4 year olds to access early years provision who have emerging SEND. The fund is not intended for children with an EHCP.
- The fund is available to all settings and has been extensively promoted. Area SENCO's are linked to every setting in a geographical area and are aware of the fund and how to support the setting to access funds. It is encouraging to note that applications to the fund have risen, which would suggest increased awareness and uptake to support children in need to access childcare services.

6.8 The Commission was concerned about the financial impact of Covid 19 on the viability of local children's centres. What measures were being taken to mitigate the impact on this vital early years support service to help maintain the network of local provision?

- Children's Centres have lost over £1.1m of income since the start of lockdown and this has been tested to ensure that all such losses are Covid related (e.g. loss of income from fees). This has been shared among senior officers and political leaders. Those children centres operated by HLT will have losses treated the same way as other council services. Governors of School based children's centres have requested that Covid related loss of income is treated the same as for maintained children's centres. Whilst additional central government funding will be made available to the council to offset the loss of income from Covid 19, this will not be sufficient to meet all those losses. Senior officers have commissioned a debt recovery plan for the school based children centres to give those settings confidence that they can continue to operate without the level of debt as part of their schools' finances.

6.9 What business support is available through the early years service to help independent nurseries to survive the financial challenges presented by Covid 19?

- Independent childcare settings have been provided with regular support from the Early Years Business Support Officer.
- The Sutton Trust report suggested that in disadvantaged areas up to 35% of nurseries in the independent sector would close before the end of the year. The report also suggested that 69% of nurseries were expected to be running with a

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financial deficit by autumn of 2020. Whilst the Sutton Trust indicated that the outlook for the sector was challenging, the service has worked with settings to help them apply for grants. The service has also supported settings in trying to renegotiate rents which has had variable success. Those settings which have not managed to secure a rent reduction have had to maintain all the overheads of the childcare business without any income.

- To date settings have been funded for the children who were expected to attend which has provided them with a base income. From September 2020 it is expected that settings will only be funded for children that are actually attending as opposed to should be attending but have chosen not to take up their place due to Covid. Because of Covid 19, settings have not been able to recruit the number of children that they may have anticipated for September which may further exacerbate financial difficulties. Parental reassurance would be critical to effective marketing of childcare provision. This would require a council wide approach.

6.10 Given that the real impact of Covid 19 on childcare provision would not be known until September or October 2020, it was suggested that a further update be provided to the Commission later in the work programme.

**Agreed:** That a further update on childcare provision be taken later within the work programme in November or December.

## **7 Outcome of school exclusions - Update (21.00)**

7.1 There was insufficient time for this item and update on the recommendations being considered by the Commission. This update would be emailed to members of the Commission and included within the minutes of this meeting.

## **8 Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission - 2020/21 Work Programme (21.15)**

8.0 There was insufficient time for this item. Members of the Commission would be asked to suggest items for the work programme for 2020/21 via email.

## **9 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

9.1 The minutes of the previous meetings of the Commission held on the following dates were agreed by the Commission:

- January 27th 2020
- February 24th 2020
- March 11th 2020
- May 202th 2020
- June 15th 2020

9.2 There were a number of further information requests from the Commission from the 15th June meeting which were distributed to the Commission or contained within briefings elsewhere in the agenda.

## **10 Any Other Business**

10.1 There was no other business and the meeting closed at 9.30pm.



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Duration of the meeting: 2hr 30min

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