

This is a heavily abridged version of our **"Valuing The Future Through Young Voices"** report and only includes our main findings and recommendations.

For a full copy of the "Valuing The Future Through Young Voices" report, please visit www.hackneyyoungfutures.co.uk. This webpage also contains information about the Commission, including how you can get involved.

Keep up to date with the work of the Young Futures Commission on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.



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## Jermain Jackman, Co-Chair

I think we can all agree that Hackney has a very special place in all our hearts, not just because we were born and brought up here, but because of its rich history, culture and diversity - just some of the many things we all celebrate about this iconic borough. We are proud to say that Hackney Young Futures Commission can join the list of things to celebrate.

You can imagine how humbled and honoured both the Co-Chairs and Vice Chairs felt when asked to lead this Commission and use the voices of children and young people to help shape the borough's future.

We have to admit that this process was not "a walk in the park", far from it. Multiple incidents, protests and Covid-19 impacted the work we carried out. Despite this, it turned into an eye opening and heartwarming journey as we heard the unique, but connected lived experiences of our Hackney young people.

The report you are about to read is not the end of a process but the beginning of one. Over the last year we have empowered, encouraged and enabled spaces for children and young people to speak up and speak out on the issues they face, the things they love and what they wish would change if they were Mayor.

Now we hand it over to the Council to listen, learn and act on this and work to improve children and young people's future and also to create a future that children and young people can feel a part of.

On behalf of the Co-Chairs I would like to give a special thanks to the Vice-Chairs Georgina Appeagyei and Mishaque Jarrett for their personal support and outstanding dedication and contributions in shaping and leading the Commission's work.

It has been a tremendous honour for us all to lead this opportunity of change for Hackney.



## Message from Mayor Phil Glanville, Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor and Cllr Caroline Selman

Investing in and delivering the Hackney Young Futures Commission was a pledge in the Hackney Mayor's Manifesto in 2018, and two years later, it gives us all great pleasure to be able to launch this report.

Firstly, we would like to give our thanks to the Commission Chairs and Vice Chairs, Jermain Jackman, Shekeila Scarlett, Georgina Appeagyei and Mishague Jarrett. Each of these young adults volunteered to lead the Commission, with their own inspirational story to tell, and each of them has inspired hundreds of young people across Hackney to tell theirs. They have put so much of their time and energy into ensuring that Hackney young people can be heard and that this Commission has been far reaching and meaningful. We would also like to thank every one of the 2,500 young people who have given their time to the Commission, whether through attending an event, filling in a survey, or taking part in a meeting.

Our ambition for the Commission was that it would reach out to young people across Hackney and give them a space in which their voices could be heard. We didn't want to just hear from a sample of young people, or a few focus groups. We wanted to engage thousands of young people, right across the age spectrum, and from every background, and in that we have succeeded. The Commission has been the most comprehensive youth engagement exercise the borough has ever seen.

However, our success will truly be judged, and rightly so, on the change that comes out of this process. It is vital that the thousands of young people who gave us their time can see the impact that they have made, and that they have not just been listened to, but heard. The Council must respond positively to what we have learned from the Commission, and we would urge our Partners in Hackney to engage with the findings and work alongside us to deliver the recommendations.

The insight gained through the Commission is, of course, just a snapshot in time, a picture of young people's lives in Hackney in 2019/20. Since most of this work was carried out, the world has changed irrevocably through the Covid-19 pandemic, we are entering an unprecedented economic downturn, the murder of George Floyd in the USA has had a profound impact on our communities, and our young people face greater social, educational, and economic challenges than ever before.

As the Council, the Police, our schools, our Partners in the NHS, and our community Partners, take time to absorb what young people have told us through this piece of work, and to consider their recommendations, we must all commit to the most important legacy the Commission can have is that, working together, we find ways to permanently put the voice of young people at the heart of decision making and policy making in Hackney.





# Summary of Our Asks To The Council

## Background

This report focuses on the feedback from over 2,500 children and young people about their lived Hackney experience: their thoughts, concerns and ideas. The consultation was led by Hackney Young Futures Commission (referred to as "Commission"), which is an independent, youth-led Commission, established in February 2019.

Hackney Council asked the Commission to make recommendations in order to improve the lives and life chances of children and young people in the borough and enable Council Members to listen to and learn from young people's experiences of growing up in Hackney. The Commission urges Hackney Council and its Partners to use the insights to inform current and joint future strategic planning and service delivery.

## Our Asks to Hackney

Based on the findings from the consultation, the Commission identified 70 solutions (called 'Asks') co-produced and proposed by young people. These were grouped into 6 main themes; Secure Future, Healthy Future, Active Future, Inclusive Future, Safe Future and Bright Future.

Our Asks to the council, its partners and the community is for you all to listen, learn, act and improve the future of children and young people in Hackney. To create a future that they can feel a part of. To find ways to permanently put the voice of young people at the heart of decision making and policy making in Hackney.

The Commission's recommendations set out the first steps that are needed. Its now time for you to play your part.





## How We Engaged Young People

The Commission's aim was to gather evidence of the lived experiences of young people in Hackney aged between 10-25 years and to better understand how they view the borough, what challenges they face and how they feel about local services. Young people were asked to share their ideas on how to make the changes that would improve their lives and if they had the power to influence, what they would prioritise.

The consultation was conducted in two phases; "I've Been Heard" and "Have We You Heard You Right" led by trained, young peer researchers, supported by the Project Team. Peer Researchers directly engaged with students, young offenders, young carers, young people in care, and young people in specific community groups e.g. Charedi, LBGTQ, Turkish/Kurdish, Somali and Traveller communities. The original target was to consult 1,500 young people across the borough. However, the response was so positive that the Commission directly engaged with over 2,500 diverse young people.

Data insight was collected through a variety of methods e.g. focus groups, 1:1 interviews, online surveys, launch events, board meetings, filmed interviews, street-based outreach, teacher-led school classroom surveys and through discussions with local voluntary and charity organisations.



The first phase consultation involved asking the young people four key questions:

- What is your favourite thing or place in Hackney and why?
- What is the main issue affecting your life in Hackney today and how does this issue affect you?
- If you were the Mayor, what would be the main thing you would change for young people in Hackney? What would you do and how would you change it?

## **Any Other Comments?**

5,000 quotes were collected through asking these questions. They were categorised into 23 initial themes, which inturn were further reduced to 6 key emergent themes, each focussing on a key topic or issue;

- A Bright Future (Education, Training and Employment)
- A Secure Future (Housing and Advice)
- An Active Future (Spaces, Places and Activities)
- An Inclusive Future (Inclusive economy and Regeneration)
- A safe Future (Crime and Safety)
- A Healthy Future (Health and Well-Being)

During the second phase representatives from local organisations, Council services and Cabinet Leads were invited to participate in workshops regarding these thematic groups, each led by young people. The findings from the six working groups were later formulated into six key areas of 'Asks' which formed the basis of detailed proposed solutions.

## Theme One

## A Secure Future

Young people shared various issues relating to housing, such as the lack of affordable housing, inadequate housing and overcrowding.

Young people expressed a desire to eradicate homelessness. Rough sleepers and homelessness also causes young people anxiety. Children and young people share

that they do not like seeing people sleeping rough on the streets and that they always feel helpless and powerless to do anything about it.



## Theme One

# Our asks for a Secure Future

## We Ask Hackney to Reduce the Number of Rough Sleepers in the Borough by:

 Actively promoting services to young people to enable them to support rough sleepers locally

# We Ask Hackney to Improve the Quality of Social Housing and the local area through:

- Reviewing current Resident Participation (RP) structures to ensure young people's voices are formally embedded in them
- Establishing a dedicated RP budget for young people's projects, managed by young people
- Establishing dedicated Young People's Housing roles, funded through Resident Led Improvement Budget
- Establishing a Young People's Street Team to Support Council

## We Ask Hackney to Increase Access to Housing and Advice Services by:

- Developing a Young People's Housing Offer to include delivery of specialist housing advice, delivered in trusted places
- Creating a supportive housing advice service, tailored to 18-24yrs



## Theme Two

# A Healthy Future

In line with London and National data, young people said that many aspects of their lives cause stress, anxiety and other mental health issues, these include exam stress at school, loneliness, bullying,drug abuse and the physical environment of Hackney being polluted, dirty and unclean. Young people spoke at length about their fears of air pollution and climate change which causes anxiety and in some cases, has a negative impact on their physical health and wellbeing. Some young people were suffering from their mental health issues alone and in silence and they expressed not knowing where or who to go to for help.

'Mental health issues that teenagers don't know how to deal with' 'Pollution affects me because of my breathing and it's bad for our health'

'Mental health awareness, places to go to talk about mental health. Man up, don't cry'

'No counselling, long waiting lists, left with mental health on our own'

A Healthy Future

'It's not good on how we have lots of rubbish in the streets. It can get you ill and sick and affect your health'

## Theme Two

# Our asks for a Healthy Future

## We Ask the Council to Review Young People's Mental Health Services by:

- Improving young people's access to confidential mental health services
- Working with schools and colleges to review current mental health service delivery model
- Reviewing current school policies that impa young people's mental health
- Improving counselling services and referral pathways
- Increasing Young Hackney support services to those impacted by stress-related issues

## We Ask Hackney to Review Foster Care Placements to:

- Develop initiatives to increase CSW's and Foster Carers awareness and competencies in anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice
- Review current effectiveness of the Children in Care Council and its impact on children in care
- Review effectiveness of compliance with Confidentiality Protocols and Practice



## Theme Three

## An Active Future

We know about the importance of youth friendly places, spaces and activities, because young people talked at length about their positive experiences of using a wide range of facilities and activities in Hackney. The number one 'place' young people liked were parks and youth clubs. The top park mentioned was Victoria Park in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Queen Elizabeth Park, Clissold Park, Finsbury Park and Springfield Park were the next highest ranked parks.

Young people specifically mentioned areas of Hackney they liked which housed key shops and restaurants including Dalston (Ridley Road Market), Boxpark in Shoreditch and Mcdonalds in Hackney Central. They also

'Night clubs for SEND young people'

'I would increase awareness of youth provisions by speaking more about them in schools'

> 'My favourite thing about Hackney is all the youth programs and all the people in Hackney'

mentioned they liked places such as their "own homes, their nan's house and their church" and these were the places they felt most safe. Young people really enjoy cultural activities and specific events such as carnival and festivals, cinema, theatre and museums.

In some areas, young people talked about their immediate physical environment being dirty or noisy, with dog mess and litter in parks and on their streets.

> 'Youth club makes me feel safe, we aren't automatically stereotyped. There are always kids around so if there are other kids it makes you feel safer'

An Active Future

'I like the lido and the parks'

'Youth clubs open later for older young people and more youth clubs generally'

## Theme Three

# Our asks for an Active Future

# We Ask Hackney to Increase Access Opportunities to Places, Spaces and Activities through:

- Improving access to community halls and schools for community usage
- Undertaking a borough-wide wide audit of vacant premises and open spaces to assess their potential suitability as spaces for young people to develop interests, skills, and new businesses
- Developing a comprehensive 'Hackney Community Concessions Policy' for organisations delivering youth focused activities
- Establishing paid Young People's Ranger Service to support Parks Service

- Reviewing current Youth Offer to improve more locality-specific activities
- Reviewing the Council's grants eligibility criteria to allow funding for small ad-hoc community activities
- Increase Young Hackney Detached Outreach Programme to ensure young people have access to services and support
- Increase activities within Parks for young people aged 16 years and over



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## Theme Four

# An Inclusive Future

Young people talked about the pride they had for the borough they lived in and mentioned the diversity of people, cultures and reported many positive things about their communities, which is in line with the Community Life Survey

Young people spoke positively about wanting to learn from and share their experiences with the older generation. In particular their experiences of living in social housing, their fear of crime and how they are so often misunderstood by older people. Young people suggested a number of projects to encourage intergenerational dialogue such as crossmentoring projects e.g. to improve digital skills in older people and for older people to help develop life skills with and for young people.

In addition there is an opportunity for young people to explore personal and community resilience by exchanging views on historical perspectives and experiences of racism and exclusion. Gentrification was a recurring theme that young people spoke at length, feelings of no longer recognising parts of the borough they used to identify with. They believe in "regeneration rather than gentrification", meaning a Hackney that develops with the community at the centre.

# **Inclusive Futures**

'Dalston has changed over the last 5 years - not good - the shop I iused to go to has gone...'

'Gentrification
- I feel like I
don't recognise
parts of Hackney
anymore'

'More communication with young people in the places they look -Snapchat, Instagram'



## Theme Four

# Our asks for an Inclusive Future

## We Ask Hackney to Include Young People in the Regeneration of the Borough by:

- Establishing a Young People's Planning and Design Board to enable young people to understand and influence discussions
- Recruiting Young Advisors in paid roles, training and supporting them to become "experts" in planning and design
- Involving young people in planning approaches to improve social integration and equity in neighbourhood regeneration

## We Ask Hackney to Promote Intergenerational Dialogue by:

- Develop cross mentoring projects between young people and older residents
- Create funding opportunities for young people to explore personal and community resilience by exchanging views on historical perspectives and experiences of racism and exclusion

#### We Ask Hackney to Support Young People and the Night Time Economy by:

 Ensuring inclusive and fair access by developing local inclusion pilots to increase the visibility and participation of young people to access Night Time Economy (NTE)

## We Ask Hackney to Improve Communications to Young People by:

- Establishing a Young People's Communications and Consultation Strategy
- Creating an engaging, accessible single point of access and information for all services and events relevant to young people
- Promoting positive representation of young people in local media
- Reducing negative signage to create an inclusive environment



## Theme Five

## A Safe Future

Children and young people shared how unsafe their brothers. Exposure to serious youth they felt, describing their experiences of gun, knife and gang crime, acid attacks and fights they had witnessed, alongside anti-social behaviour of neighbours, robberies, burglaries and theft. Young people said they had either been a victim of or witnessed a crime.

Most experiences shared by young people about the effect that crime had on their lives centred around being scared either for themselves or the safety of their family members, especially their siblings, particularly violence has created a culture of fear and anxiety that was reported by all age groups, all demographics and all areas of the borough.

Young people also shared that they were not happy with the way the Police dealt with them or their community, with some saying "they racially profile us, especially young black men".

'Violence - knife crime and gangs. I've had

make my brothers stay home,

could never imagine a world

this affects me because I

without my brothers'

personal experience. I was walking with

my friends and a guy pulled out something 'People under that looked exactly like a knife and we all the influence of had to run' alcohol affects our safety 'Safety, can't go to certain areas at certain times' Safe Future 'Safety walking at night' 'Crime makes me worried to

## Theme Five

# Our asks for a Safe Future

## We ask Hackney to Reduce Serious Youth Violence and other forms of crime by:

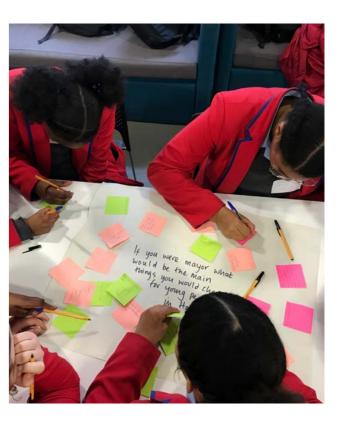
- Working with Partners and London's VRU to implement a Public Health Approach to reduce serious youth violence and understanding gang culture
- Developing more preventative services to provide a longer term and more sustainable approach to crime reduction
- Increasing the range of activities available to young people around 'lost hours 3pm-7pm"
- Working with Partners to increase transport safety, in particular bus safety
- Adopting a joint up approach with CVS and Partners to raise awareness around County Lines and its causes
- Develop a borough-wide campaign focused on educating and informing young people about hate crime and how we reduce it together

## Reducing the impact of the Fear of Crime on Young People by:

- Delivering trauma informed training to the Council and their Partners
- Providing advice and support to young people when they feel unsafe
- Providing access to free community based therapy for young people affected by the impacts of crime and related trauma
- Increasing Domestic Violence Support for young people
- Increasing visibility of Community Policing

## We Ask Hackney to Improve **Relationships Between Young People** and Police by:

- Ensuring and improving unconscious bias and cultural competence training for Police officers in Hackney
- Developing and supporting existing projects that bring young people and the Metropolitan Police together to increase trust
- Nominating young people onto Police Recruitment Strategy Board to support and advise on improving representation within the
- Opening Police Community Assessor roles to young people under 18
- Reviewing Police Complaints Procedure is fit for purpose, allowing young people to have confidence to report



## Theme Six

## A Bright Future

The Commission found that young people's experiences are consistent with other research, which has highlighted that young people typically have high aspirations but may face a number of barriers in realising them. Young people said the lack of opportunities available to get jobs, apprenticeships, work experience, training and support. Some young people spoke about having to travel out of the borough in order to secure opportunities. Some young people also shared the issues within their schools such as quality of teaching staff, lack of life skills training, facilities, transitions and choice of school to attend and for young people at college, fees.

With the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the future of children and young people, there is a need to double the efforts to ensure that the future remains bright for all children and young people.

In the earlier section on Health and Wellbeing we reported anxiety and stress that was associated with school exams, it is worth noting here that this was a key theme under Education.



## Theme Six

# Our asks for Bright Future

## We Ask Hackney to Increase Access to Employment Opportunities by:

- Establishing locally based Employment Forums, to identify local opportunities
- Developing meaningful work experience opportunities for school students
- Developing a range of employment projects, including for SEND young people, to improve access to jobs opportunities
- Reviewing Internships, apprenticeships and voluntary work opportunities, including for SEND young people,
- Establishing accredited learning opportunities for young people to support meaningful/non-academic qualifications
- Improving and expanding Careers Advice Service
- Reviewing support for entrepreneurial opportunities within the Borough
- Developing guidance and training for local businesses on the importance of diversifying their workforce with a specific focus on SEND young people

## We Ask Hackney to Provide Educational Support by:

- Encouraging schools and alternative provisions to create an inclusive ethos where every child feels a sense of belonging
- Reinstating Young Hackney delivery within Primary schools to support the transition from Primary to Secondary schools
- Improving opportunities for SEND young people by better understanding their needs

## We ask Hackney to Improve the Quality and Consistency of Alternative Provision for Excluded Young People by:

- Developing a School Exclusions training programme for School Governors, jointly facilitated by young people
- Increasing and prompting existing Advocacy

- Support Projects for parents whose young people are at risk or facing exclusion
- Extending the development of an anti-racism and unconscious bias training programme for School Governors and school leadership

# We ask Hackney to Reduce the Inequality in Educational Attainment and Number of School Exclusions by:

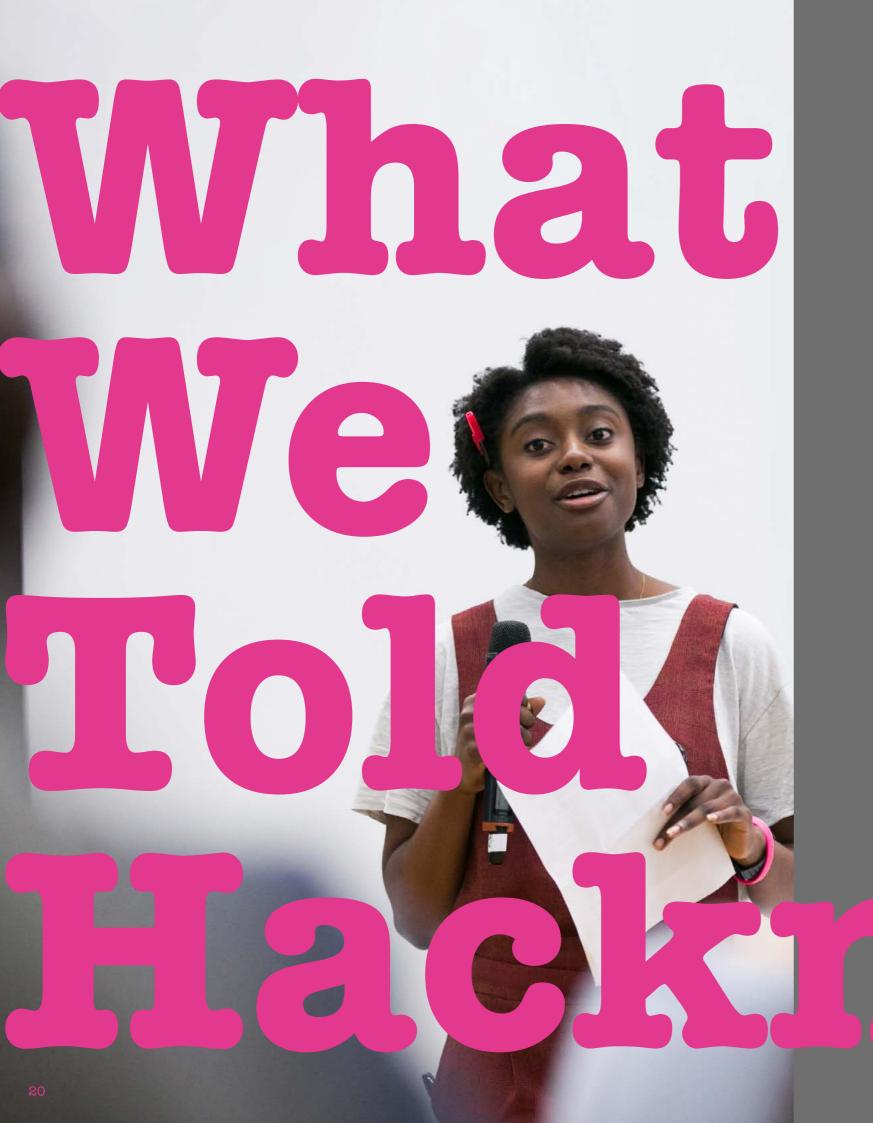
 Working with schools to reduce the number of exclusions by improving how they are held accountable for managing and monitoring exclusions

# We ask Hackney to Amplify and Include Student voices in Decision Making by:

- Encouraging and supporting schools to establish School Council structures that feed into the school leadership team
- Improving school culture and environment through increased student voice in decision-making processes
- Establishing Young School Governors on every Hackney School Governing Body
- Ensuring young people are actively involved in reviewing School Behavioural Policies

#### We ask Hackney to develop Young People's Skills for Adulthood and Life by:

- Developing and embedding Life Skills programmes within schools and youth clubs
- Promoting activities to develop skills and support SEND young people beyond qualifications
- Developing a "16-24 Skills for Independent Adulthood' programme for schools, colleges and youth clubs
- Developing a Support Care Leavers Transition Programme



The Commission delivered its report to Hackney Council in July 2020 and urged them to listen to, learn about, and commit to act on, the real experiences and aspirations of children and young people growing up in Hackney.

The Commission also stressed that it was crucial for Hackney to consciously and determinedly keep the needs of young people in the forefront of all its post-Covid planning, engagement, responses and decision-making. Young people feel this is a timely and unique opportunity to review and revitalise the commitment to the young people of Hackney. Going forward, young people in Hackney are one of the most important stakeholders in the borough's future.

The consultation also identified how the Council's style of engagement and response to issues is generally perceived by young people - regardless of the sincerity of the Council's intentions. Feedback consistently highlighted that young people perceive that:

There is a disconnect between what the Council says its is doing and the lived experience of young people

There is culture of defensiveness from the Council when ideas or services are challenged or alternatives are presented

That despite a stated desire to change, there is an underlying unwillingness to commit to real change

The Council needs to better understand what is being done, and or not being done, which creates these perceptions. It needs to reflect on these issues further as part of planning any future response.

There is already evidence of the value, impact and effectiveness of the work undertaken by the Commission to date, and which has informed various streams of work across the Council.

The Commission urged the Council to build on the legacy of the Commission and challenged Hackney Council and its Partners to be brave and bold and to deliver on the trust placed in Hackney Council by over two thousand of its young residents by;

Widely sharing all that has been learnt from this extensive and impressive consultation with young people

More explicitly and honestly defining what future success for young people's services will look like – from the Hackney's Council's and young people's perspectives and experiences

Sharing the evidence of changes – whether successful or not

Creating new youth structures to enable effective youth voice and youth value.

Act on the findings and recommendations, recognising that a phased approach and more work may be necessary to support detailed action planning

Shifting from the language of "listening to hearing" and from 'consultation and engagement' to 'conversations and dialogue for solutions'. These shifts would demonstrate the Council's commitment to moving from youth voice to youth value.

The Next Steps for the Commission are:

Hackney Council and its Partners to reflect on the findings and accept the "Asks" made by the Commission

Hackney Council, together with the Commission, provide feedback to young people in the borough about how the Council and its Partners are going to respond to this report in a timely way

Hackney Council to identify how they will continue to engage and involve young people in decision-making in the future, post-Commission.

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## To...

The Commission would first like to thank all the young people that participated in the consultation and the trust you placed in the Commission. It is your voices we wanted to hear and to share with the Council and its Partners. Your honest feedback, enthusiastic engagement, and creativity have made this report possible. We hope we have fairly reflected your views.

We also thank and want to give recognition to the huge and diverse range of community and voluntary organisations, delivering services that support children and young people in Hackney. Your commitment to supporting the needs and aspirations of young people is a vital resource. We hope that our findings and the responses from the Council to them, will continue to build on the positive Partnerships with you all.

Thank you to Fiona Meeks, Doctoral Researcher, Loughborough University London for the excellent support in helping analyse the enormous amount of data, and for her commitment to the principle of co-creation, by helping young people develop skills to share ownership of the 'so what?' generated from the data.

A special thanks must go to the Mouth That Roars for their exceptional and creative engagement with young people, which was very much welcomed and valued by them.

Finally, special thanks to Members and Council Officers, in particular Cllr Antoniette Bramble, Cllr Caroline Selman, Rohney Saggar-Malik, Project Lead and Emma Winch, Engagement Officer, for their valuable support in facilitating the work of the Commission.



## Get Involved

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