

Overview & Scrutiny

Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission

DRAFT Minutes of 28th February 2022

Official Attendees for the record

Cllr Sophie Conway (Chair)

Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice Chair)

Cllr James Peters

Cllr Sarah Young

Connected Virtually

Cllr Caroline Selman

Allr Anya Sizer

Jo Macleod

Salmah Kansara

Ernell Watson (Co-opted member)

In attendance:

- Cllr Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Children's Social Care
- Cllr Caroline Woodley, Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks & Play
- Jackie Burke, Group Director of Children and Education
- Annie Gammon, Head of Hackney Learning Trust and Director of Education
- Amy Wilkinson, Director of Integrated Commissioning for Children, Families
- Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care
- Shawn Bent, Substance Misuse Team Leader
- John Hart, Young Hackney Service Manager
- Jo Larkin, Head of HR, Hackney Education
- Lisa Aldridge, Head of Safeguarding & Learning
- Deborah Barnett, Diversity and Inclusion Lead
- Anton Francic, Principal Secondary Adviser
- Monica Imbert, Head of Education Operations
- Piers Henrique, Chief Executive, NACOA

Cllr Sophie Conway in the Chair

The Chair welcomed members and officers to the meeting and those members of the public who were viewing the livestream. The Chair reminded those attending that this was a hybrid meeting, with members of the Commission and officers attending both in person and connecting virtually and that the meeting was being broadcast live via the internet.

1. Apologies for absence

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

- Cllr Hanson
- Cllr Garasia
- Cllr Lynch
- Cllr Troughton
- Shabnum Hassan

2. Declarations of interest

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- 2.1 The following declarations were received by members of the Commission:
- Cllr Peters was a governor at a special school in Hackney;
 - Cllr Sizer was a parent of a child with SEND and child of an alcoholic (item 4).

3. Urgent Items / Order of Business

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

4. Parental Substance Misuse and Children in Need

- 4.1 The aim of this item is for the Commission to review the nature, level and impact of parental substance misuse on children and families and assess how local services support them. The Commission is also keen to understand what impact Covid 19 and successive lockdowns may have had on this situation. The Commission has also invited the National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACOA) to provide additional insight from a national perspective for this issue.

Officers Presentation

- 4.2 This part of Young Hackney is commissioned by Public Health and is embedded within the early help approach. The service works with a wide range of partners, most notably Turning Point which supports adults who have issues with drug or alcohol dependency issues. The service is voluntary and received 554 referrals in 2021.

- 4.3 The pandemic saw a reduction in the number of referrals into the service, particularly those originating from local schools. It was also more challenging for the service to support young people during this time as it was more difficult not only to engage them, but also their parents and other service providers.

NACOA

- 4.4 NACOA is a national charity supporting children and families where a connected adult has a drinking problem and offers a free helpline for children. The service also lobbies the central government to ensure that this issue is recognised in national policy processes. This is a public health issue, as those children who grow up with an adult with drinking problems are more likely to witness domestic violence, experience problems at school, develop mental health issues or be involved with the police. This cohort of young people were also three times more likely to develop a drinking problem themselves.

- 4.5 Data from social service departments suggest that alcohol is a factor in case work with children and families:

- 4 in 10 cases of domestic violence;
- 4 in 10 child protection cases;
- 7 in 10 cases of child maltreatment.

- 4.6 Children are reluctant to speak out about this issue for fear of repercussions for themselves and of course their families. In this sense, children with parents who have alcohol problems are sometimes hidden, or indeed, become informal carers for their parents and ensure that the family remains functional. Many children and families feel isolated and unsure where to turn.

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- 4.7 In 2015, as a result of a freedom of information request, NACOAnoted that no local authority had a dedicated strategy and support for children with parents of alcoholics. As a result of central government intervention, around 35-40% of local authorities now have a strategy and some level of support. There were 9 pilot areas which provided dedicated care and child focused support. The key takeout from the pilots was that such services should be open access and do not present barriers (e.g. referral, parental consent). The most important aspect of these services was to provide a safe and accessible space where young people could share their experiences and begin to define what help and support that they may need.

Questions from the Commission

- 4.8 The reports make clear that it is important that work is multifaceted and that there are multiple points of entry at which children and young people affected by substance misuse can access help and support. Is this the case locally, and if not what are the aims?
- YH service is in two parts; treatment service and a preventative service. There is an advice and referral service which is open 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday which is open to children and young people, their parents and professionals. The team undertakes outreach work in local schools and with other professionals which have contact with children and young people to promote awareness of the service.
 - It was noted that there has been a significant shift in the recognition and understanding of this issue by fellow practitioners who were now much more alert to the indicators and harm felt by young people.
- 4.9 It is clear that there are significant levels of 'hidden' dependence, particularly in relation to alcohol use. What does the authority understand about the local prevalence of these issues and the likely unmet needs?
- In part this relates to the response in 4.8, and the need to set up as many potential contact and referral points as possible to provide young people with a space to raise their concerns and a pathway to access support services. It was important that this service was embedded within the broader early help offer within the council as this sits alongside other services such as youth provision and other support services. It also provides an opportunity for the team to train and develop awareness of the work of the substance misuse team.
 - It was noted that there is strong evidence of how the 'hidden harm' of alcohol was impacting on children as this was surfacing in Child protection Plans and this was affecting children from a young age.
- 4.10 How does the service deal with transition to adult drug misuse and support services and to ensure that there is continuity and consistency of care?
- The service works with young people up to the age of 25 which assists with transition. PH have deliberately commissioned local services to overlap as it is recognised that young people may not feel comfortable accessing adult orientated services. This greatly assists transition locally.
- 4.11 Given that up to 80% of parents with alcohol problems were not receiving any help, how do local and national services reach out to parents to help them access care?

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- A dedicated worker supports the service from adult social care who provides perinatal support to young mothers who may have problems around drug misuse. The service works preventatively raising awareness among a diverse range of local services and settings to try and reach as many parents as possible. It was important to remember that not all parents with alcohol problems will want to engage with the service, or indeed recognise that there is a problem.
- NACOA noted the national backdrop to this was of increasing levels of needs and demand, where the number of adults with alcohol problems had increased from 6m to 8m and the number of alcohol based hospital admissions and alcohol related deaths has risen since 2019. Of the 30,000 calls the helpline receives each year, $\frac{1}{3}$ of children had not told anyone else of the problems they experienced as a result of an alcoholic dependent parent. It was important to support children independently, and that children were not a gateway for support to their parents.
- The Early help review will bring much closer working between the substance misuse team and multi-agency teams will help to widen the scope and reach of the service.

4.12 Member casework suggests that young people find it very difficult to access mental health services after the age of 18 as they move to adult services. If young people are in receipt of CAMHS support through the drug misuse team, does this carry on beyond 25?

- Mental health support is a challenge post 18. The advantage is that for young people being supported by the substance misuse team, they continue to have the support of their worker who can also advocate for them and assist in developing access to mental health support. Officers noted that there is work taking place across the directorate to improve transitional safeguarding of young people.

4.13 From the data submitted in the report, although referrals have been declining to YHSMT, the number of young people supported 'and held' by this service is growing. What are the underlying reasons for this? Are young people presenting with more complex issues which require more sustained / intensive support? Is this related to Covid?

- The number of referrals did fall over the pandemic, but the number of open cases, where young people continued to receive support did not reduce, partly as a result of the pandemic.
- NACOA noted that the increase in referrals coming forward was in some way positive, as this demonstrated that children and young people recognised their need for support and had begun that process to obtain it. It was also noted that there was an improved awareness of this issue when people call the helpline.

4.14 It was noted that NACOA undertook a general awareness raising campaign in Brighton which had a positive impact in the locality. What awareness raising on a borough wide level takes place?

- This has not been undertaken on any scale in the borough to date, and would be welcomed if this could be supported.

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- NACOA reported that there was a significant increase in the number of calls and referrals to the local partner (Oasis) that resulted from the campaign. It was a good working partnership in that it helped to develop a good level of awareness supported by access to generic help and information from the NACOA helpline, which was backed up by referral to local specialist services.

4.15 Which service or officer is responsible and leading the organisation response to this work?

- This work is led by Public Health but it was a partnership response involving a range of different agencies.

Chair Summary

4.16 The Chair welcomed this item and the opportunity to drill down into the data more and to explore those underlying issues which may precipitate referrals to children's social care services. Whilst there appears to be a good understanding and service response to the problem of parental alcohol misuse, it is clear that there are many more parents who may be in need of support who may not be aware, reluctant to engage or who do not see this as a problem.

5. Children's Social Care Annual Report

5.1 A report on the activity of the Children and Families Service is provided bi-annually to the Commission. This report in the agenda pack details activity for the 12 month period April 2020-March 2021, and for the 6 month period April 2021-Sept 2021

Cabinet Member introduction.

5.2 The Cabinet member wanted to commend staff across children's social care for their resilience and hard work in continuing to support children and families during the period of this reporting which encompassed the pandemic.

Questions from the Commission

5.3 Staff morale remains an issue of critical importance in times of services change and upheaval (e.g. Ofsted, Cyber Attack and Covid 19 response). How have these issues impacted on staffing levels and the service to maintain an effective response during the pandemic? What have recent staff surveys told us about morale in Children and Families Service? What support has been available to staff throughout this period?

- Staff welfare was a priority for the CFS throughout the pandemic and there was a wide range of support provided. The professionalism and dedication of staff over this period was exemplary, with many continuing to work from home even whilst they had covid. There has been a greater focus on mental health and emotional wellbeing of staff throughout the pandemic across the Council and there has been a programme of support which staff had utilised. The service was also in the process of reintegrating staff back into the office.

5.4 The Early Help Strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2022, but what outcomes do Children and Families expect from this and what measurable improvement is expected?

- An Early Help Review was undertaken from 2019-2021 and the Council is now implementing the recommendations contained within that. This was primarily implementing the Hackney Council early help offer, to ensure that practitioners and residents know about the service and can access it, that

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there is a common assessment process and a clear understanding of how the authority will measure outcomes and determine the success of the strategy. This was being developed further into a partnership wide strategy with the help of City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership, where a subgroup was leading in capturing and linking all the early help work that takes places in schools, health centres and other community settings. This will help develop a clear system for delivery and accountability for early help.

- The Local Government Association had conducted a peer review which highlighted the number of good quality early help services that the council funded, but noted that greater clarity of the the outcomes that these services achieved was needed.
- The Council was in the process of restoring Mosaic after the cyber attack which will not only be able to better track and monitor outcomes, but will also help to give a fuller picture of the quantum of asks of children's social care and support services. It is hoped that this system will link in Children Centres and SEND services in time.

5.5 It was noted that the number of children in care had reduced to just over 400. What are the reasons for this and what is the service doing differently to achieve this?

- There have been a number of factors which may be behind this reduction of the number of children in care. Firstly, the newly established Edge of Care service had been instrumental in providing additional support to children and families to help maintain these relationships and where possible, prevent children from becoming looked after. The clinical service plays an important supporting role to the Edge of Care Service by ensuring that children and families are provided with appropriate therapeutic support. Family Group Conferences were also working better to deliver more positive outcomes for children and families. It was important for the Children and Families Service to have a clear understanding how these different service elements were contributing to fewer children entering care.

5.6 Can you update the Commission on the impact of the cyber attack on the records system for children and families? Have concerns about the interim database system been resolved? When will Mosaic be fully restored? Will historical case files be fully recovered? What will be the due diligence process for recovered case files?

- In relation to the cyber attack an interim recording system was developed to replace the lost Mosaic system and records. From their inspection of July 2021, Ofsted noted that the interim system was not fit for purpose as a long-term case record system and the decision was taken to restart with Mosaic. Much of the information lost has now been recovered though a few issues remain with some documents. The Group Director oversees a recovery board for Mosaic which meets weekly. The Council is in close contact with DfE and Ofsted in respect of recording systems as currently, the authority is unable to submit statutory returns. The system will switch back to Mosaic recording across children's social care from April 4th 2022. The service may not be as fully operational as before, but it will be legally compliant. IT services are in the process of migrating all data from the interesting recording system over to Mosaic (currently only read only data). Children's Centres will also be able to record their work on Mosaic which was not the case before.

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- 5.7 What is the long-term plan for returning officers back into the office in relation to hybrid working (and working partly at home)?
- It was clear that children and families services were able to keep children safe whilst working from home during the pandemic, so a hybrid form of working is continuing with officers attending both in person and working from home. This recognises the ongoing risks to the workforce and of course to children and families they support. It was noted that social work was a relational occupation and that some social workers found it beneficial to work physically alongside colleagues, especially new staff and trainees. Numbers continue to be restricted in the office environment and the service planned attendance accordingly.
- 5.8 The report notes that about one third of Child Protection Plans are in place for 3 months or less, which as the report acknowledges was due to risk-averse assessments being made. To what degree is this a reaction to the Ofsted inspection? What actions have been taken to ensure appropriate thresholds are consistently applied and that children and young people are not placed on a Child Protection Plan unnecessarily? Also, is there sufficient management oversight of cases (as noted in previous inspections) to ensure appropriate decisions around care are taken?
- The service had really clear strategies in place to manage and support the service response to the Ofsted recommendations. There is an Improvement Plan with seven key objectives which has been published on the council website. The service has a clear understanding about what needs to be done and is embedding this in practice.
- 5.9 There have been significant changes to the Hackney model of children's social work over the past 18 months, including the abandonment of the Unit model (where cases were allocated to a social work unit rather than an individual social worker). Are we satisfied that individual allocation of cases has delivered the expected improvements to social work practice? How have staff reacted to this development? What has this meant to the number of caseloads that individual social workers hold?
- The Unit mode of social work has not been totally disregarded as some elements of this are retained. The service is developing a new model though this was at an embryonic stage.
- 5.10 How is the service performing in relation to the recruitment and retention of social workers in light of covid pandemic?
- It was clear that the pandemic had impacted on working patterns of many groups of staff, including social workers. Although most local authorities had adopted some form of hybrid working arrangements, these did vary from one authority to another. The service is looking at recruitment and retention and a strategy is in place to ensure that the service is recruiting the right calibre of staff to Hackney. Like many other authorities, there are times when it is difficult to recruit to social work positions.
- 5.11 In terms of early help, what is being done to measure outcomes of interventions which will take place across a wide range of services both internal and external to the Council?

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- Whilst there is a good system for collation of data and evaluation of statutory children's social care provision, evidence of early help interventions, which is non-statutory, remain underdeveloped locally. Hackney does have good quality assurance measures in place which it can draw upon to help measure the effectiveness of services, though this is still more challenging to apply from to early help settings. Other authorities would also be in a similar position in this respect. Hackney is grateful for CHSCP in supporting the extension of the early help offer, which will include evaluating the impact of such interventions.

- 5.12 The Chair noted the work of the Commission in respect of the housing support for care leavers. As part of this work, many young people from the Care Council (Hackney of Tomorrow) noted that they were not aware of the Children's Rights Officer and that this role should be promoted further amongst local children using children's social care.
- 5.13 It was agreed that in the future, the Children's Social Care Annual Report would be taken together at the same time as Budget Monitoring to ensure that policy and budget scrutiny functions were aligned.
- 5.14 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission.

6. Anti-Racist Action Plan for Children & Education Services

- 6.1 In October 2020, the Commission received presentations from Hackney Education and Children and Families Service on racial inequalities in services and plans to establish anti-racist action plans. For this year's work programme, the Commission has requested a singular update to review progress across both Hackney Education and Children and Families Service.

Introducing the Item

- 6.2 Group Director - commended the work of all officers who have been involved in developing the anti-racist action plan. All lead directors were leading in their respective directorates in developing anti-racist practice, but also in providing support and challenge across the whole of children's services in moving this work forward. Whilst work is progressing, the children's services were all too aware of the existing disproportionalities in relation to school exclusion, children coming into care and attainment but the workforce is committed to making a difference, with strong leadership from the Cabinet member. The Council and component services is a key agent of change with our own workforce, with our partners and in the wider community, but work is progressing.
- 6.3 Director of Education - work has been progressing in relation to Hackney Education staff and with schools. The diverse curriculum model developed by the council has been used by over 2,000 schools in the UK and beyond. Many local schools had gone beyond this to develop their resources which reflect young people in the classroom. HSGB had completed work in engaging parents to help schools understand more about the lived experience of Black and Global Majority parents, their experience of schools and how this has impacted their children's education. The School Governor Service was working to support more young people to become school governors, especially from Black and Global Majority communities. Schools

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were also being encouraged to be more inclusive through the provision of early help and support rather than excluding pupils.

- 6.4 Director of Children's Social Care - the directorate has an action plan which has had a number of achievements including anonymous recruitment, diverse interview panels, development of anti-racist corporate parenting guidance and creation of safe spaces to talk about race. Work was however in its early stages and impact had been limited thus far and there was more to be done. Future priorities were:
- Further developing and embedding anti-racist practice standards across CFS;
 - Developing 3 year programme of anti-racist action learning sets across CFS;
 - Engaging Black and Global Majority leaders to review progress and hold service to account;
 - Development of an anti-racist charter to inform practice across the wider partnership;
 - Extending adultification bias training.
- 6.5 Director CYP and Maternity Integrated Commissioning - there were 4 key areas of work for anti-racist practice:
- Ensuring the workforce are working to equalities framework informed by the work of Young Black Men's Project;
 - Mental health and wellbeing - commissioning and testing services for Black and Global Majority young people to improve access to services;
 - Perinatal, maternity and early years mental health - where there are strong disproportionalities and poorer outcomes for Black and Global Majority women.
 - Ensuring that there is Black and Global Majority staffing in higher staff grading and that there are effective pathways for progression.

Questions from the Commission

- 6.6 The Chair commented that the report did not read like a singular strategy, and that contributions from education and children and families directorates were different in terms of principles and approach. Which stage in the iterative process is the anti-racist action plan and when is a fully unified plan to be developed.
- Education, social care and health have all been working separately on anti-racist work and only in the last few months has there been a more collaborative approach developed in terms of developing a shared understanding, learning from different approaches and pooling resources. This will not be a pretty and neat plan as services are separate and distinct, but this issue is very much on the radar of all services. Officers noted that this work is evolving quickly and much work has already taken place and continues to happen which may not fit or be captured in the confines of a singular across-service strategy.
 - Recent collaboration on this topic has proved very beneficial with officers identifying numerous opportunities from their respective work. It will be a challenge to bring different professionals together and it would take time, but officers were confident that the current approach was having a positive impact.
- 6.7 The Commission applauded the work undertaken by officers to date, particularly the new and innovative approaches adopted by services. How is this work and

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messaging being conveyed to the public and wide community so that they get a sense of progress?

- No response.

6.8 Is it possible to record Jewish as an ethnicity?

- Children and Families use the DfE code which does not have an Jewish ethnicity code. When the Mosaic system is fully operational however, it was suggested that this may present additional opportunities to improve local ethnicity coding and a tool in addressing disproportionality.

6.9 Although the metrics are still being developed, how will the outcomes for this work be established, agreed and published?

- Services know where the disproportionalities occur and these can be tracked effectively. Again, it was positive that CHSCP were also developing an anti-racist charter which would encompass a broad range of agencies that work with children and families. The action plan is at its very early stages and consequently outcome planning and monitoring is consequently also under developed at present.

6.10 How quickly can progress be made in respect of staffing to ensure that this reflects the ethnic diversity of the profile of Hackney?

- The Director of Education reported that a number of local schools now had different recruitment strategies which were seeking to recruit staff from sources not previously identified.
- In Hackney Education, anonymous recruitment has been in place for some time and the directorate was now beginning to assess the impact and outcomes of that in terms of the make-up of long-lists, short-lists and final appointment. Hackney Education had also developed a shadowing system for Black and Global Majority staff and, following a staff survey, was working to develop and improve career pathways to enable Black and Global Majority staff to progress in the organisation. Hackney Schools Group Board had also identified very experienced and advanced practitioners in its work, and was seeking to nurture, develop and advance such individuals.

6.11 It was positive that the authority was committing time and resources to this issue given the systemic racism that persists in society. In terms of data in the report it would help if there was more detail on the disproportionality in Hackney and greater consistency in the identifying colours in the legends of the graphs.

6.12 How can Hackney Education ensure that the local curriculum is inclusive to Black and Global Majority children across local schools?

- The Diverse Curriculum is now being overseen by a dedicated and experienced systems leader and is seeking to draw in a wider range of input from curriculum development specialists. The diverse curriculum has been used in around 2,000 schools across the country and overseas, equally in primary and secondary settings. The team is encouraging feedback so that it can refine and redevelop supporting materials, resources and training. The diverse curriculum is intended to be a modular offer which schools can use and build their own approach. In Hackney schools, 35% of children are white,

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8% are Black African and 9% Black Caribbean and feedback is that users feel that Black British History component is very positive.

- 6.13 Language is important in how Black and Global Majority children are defined, how can services ensure that the language used does not offend or alienate Black and Global Majority children and young people further?
- In the Children and Families Service a language guide has been developed to support and guide professionals' interactions with children and young people from Black and Global Majority and other communities. This may help to reduce some of the problematic incidents that may occur.
 - In terms of the term 'black' this was the preferred usage based on a survey and focus groups with staff. It was also a positive, political and empowering statement rather than a singular reference to the colour of a person's skin.
- 6.14 The Chair noted that it would be helpful for future iterations of the anti-racist action plan to encompass children and young people of other ethnic origins, and not solely those from black African or Caribbean communities. It would also be beneficial to highlight what the disproportionalities are locally and the real challenges that services face and what the targets of respective services are. How this work is communicated to the public and how local residents can access this information is an important part in explaining how the work will impact on their children and families.
- 6.15 How have services sought to engage children and young people and ensure that their lived experiences are fully reflected in the anti-racist action plan?
- Officers recently met with Young Futures and ensured that this is reflected in the work.
 - The integrated commissioning team have recently developed a grants programme to facilitate the uptake of vaccinations. Within this work 5 groups from different community groups have been funded for development work including traveller, Orthodox Jewish, Turkish and Black and Global Majority communities.
 - In Hackney Education a new initiative has been developed to get young governors on to local school bodies. Hackney Education was also seeking to extend the role of local school councils to improve their role in decision making in those settings.
- 6.16 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission. The Chair suggested that this item should return to the Commission at a future date to ensure that progress is being made.

7. Adolescents Entering Care - Update

- 7.1 The Commission held its first meeting with officers on the 9th February 2022. At this meeting, Officers presented:
- Local data on young people on the edge of care
 - Details on plans to develop an edge of care service
- 7.2 A focus group with adolescents was planned for the 7th March.
- 7.3 Dates for the remaining meeting will be agreed and circulated shortly. The work will be completed with its recommendations before the end of April and the final report

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presented at the first meeting of the new municipal year.

8. Work Programme

8.1 The latest version of the work programme for the Commission was presented to the Commission. There were no changes since the last meeting and the final meeting will be on the 14th March 2022.

8.2 Members noted and agreed the work programme/

9. Minutes of the last meeting

9.1 The minutes of the 19th January were unavailable for this meeting and would be presented at the next meeting.

10. Any other business

10.1 There were no other items of business.

Meeting closed at 9.40pm