

Title of Report	Children and Families Service Full Year Update Report to Members 2022/23
Key Decision No	CE S288
For Consideration By	Cabinet and Council
Meeting Date	26 February 2024 And 28 February 2024
Cabinet Member	Councillor Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Education, Young People and Children's Social Care
Classification	Open
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Key Decision & Reason	No
Implementation Date if Not Called In	N/A
Group Director	Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Children and Education

1. Cabinet Member's introduction

- 1.1. One of the most important things we do as a Local Authority is look after the children in our care, who we have high aspirations for. I have requested this report from the Group Director for Children and Education. My role as Lead Member for Children's Services requires me to ensure that the Local Authority fulfils its legal responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in Hackney. As such, I wish to ensure that services with the important mandate of protecting Hackney's children and young people from risk of harm are understood across all areas of the Council.
- 1.2. In October 2023, the Children and Families Service took part in the council-wide month-long Anti-Racist Summit on the theme of 'Building Better Together'. I was proud to see the array of workshops, lectures and events available and enthused and inspired to see that the first day of the conference was sold out, with an additional 2,700 individual viewers joining us online! It is now for all of us, to continue to challenge our own practice

and behaviour and strive to build an anti-racist culture, for ourselves and for the children and families of Hackney.

- 1.3. It is over a year since the Child Safeguarding Practice Review for Child Q was published, and the City and Hackney Safeguarding Partnership have published a subsequent update report in June 2023. The importance of this Review cannot be overstated and we are seeing the repercussions of this work play out at a national level. In September 2023, the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) released the findings from their investigation into the treatment of Child Q calling for a 'substantial review of policing powers relating to strip searches of children' and confirming that four Metropolitan Police Service officers should face gross misconduct hearings. More than ever, we are certain that our continued focus on Anti-Racist Practice for our children and families is critical.
- 1.4. We are very proud that inspectors were impressed with our strong direct work and impactful practice when they came to jointly inspect our Youth Justice Services in Hackney at the beginning of this year, and rightly saw how advanced our Anti-Racist Practice is, and how deeply our practitioners care about the children we support. We are excited to work with our partners as we progress on our journey to deliver outstanding services.
- 1.5. The last twelve months have also seen progress in our work to improve the systems and tools available for our workforce. Having re-embedded Mosaic as our primary case recording system, and continuing to mature our data reporting capability to support leaders to oversee and understand practice.
- 1.6. This has also been supported by the embedding of our Improving Outcomes for Children Board, bringing together our data, performance and quality assurance learning. This means we are in a strong position as we navigate our services through the post-pandemic period. Our service is also working to co-create and roll out a STAR (Systemic, Trauma Informed and Anti-Racist) framework and transform how our internal services are set up for delivery, aligning with Hackney Education over the coming year.
- 1.7. I want to thank the Interim Chief Executive, Dawn Carter-McDonald for her input, and all staff for their hard work, commitment and dedication to the children and families of Hackney. I also want to acknowledge all of Cabinet, in particular Mayor Woodley, Cllr Etti, Cllr Fajana-Thomas and Cllr Williams, Corporate Parenting Board members and Councillors for their input and support over the past year.

2. **Group Director's introduction**

- 2.1. Children's services in Hackney work in partnership to protect children and keep them safe from harm and help them thrive. The Children and Families' Service is the key service designed to protect children by working with families to support safe and effective parenting where children are at risk of significant harm. Where it is not possible for children to be safely cared for

within their family network, the local authority will look after those children. This report provides Members with oversight of activities within the Children and Families' Service including performance updates and information about key service developments and information about vulnerable adolescents and adoption. The report also includes information on Young Hackney, the Council's early help, prevention and diversion service for children and young people aged 6-19 years old and up to 25 years if the young person has a special education need or disability. Information on the Service's work with children and young people through Hackney of Tomorrow (Hackney's Children in Care Council) is included in the report.

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1. **Cabinet and Council are recommended to note and endorse the content of the Children and Families Annual Report 2022/23 (Appendix 1).**

4. **Reason(s) for decision**

- 4.1. The report is for information and endorsement only

5. **Details of alternative options considered and rejected**

- 5.1. Not applicable.

6. **Background**

Policy Context

- 6.1. This report summarises progress against key areas for the service.

Equality impact assessment

- 6.2. There are no new decisions within the report that require an Equality Impact Assessment.

Sustainability and climate change

- 6.3. There are no issues within the report that impact on the physical and social environment.

Consultations

- 6.4. The report does not contain any issues or decisions that require consultation.

Risk assessment

- 6.5. There are no proposals for action that require a risk assessment.

7. Comments of the Interim Group Director, Finance

- 7.1. The outturn for 2022/23 for the Children and Families Service on a net budget of £64.9m was an overspend of £4.7m after use of grants and reserves of £12.4m including a drawdown on the commissioning reserve of £3.1m and £8.5m of Social Care Grant funding. There has been a requirement to draw down from the commissioning reserve since 2012/13 due to the increase in complexity and the number of children in care.
- 7.2. The financial position for 2023/24 is a net budget of £65.3m for the Children and Families Service, and the service is forecasting to overspend by £3.1m (as at September 2023) after use of reserves and drawdown of grants totalling £16.9m (including full use of the commissioning activity reserve of £2.7m and £13.0m of Social Care Grant funding). Within the current forecast, cost reduction proposals have been agreed by the service to reduce the overspend within the year, and these are tracked on a monthly basis.
- 7.3. The Children and Families Service has continued to make contributions to the efficiency agenda of the Council. Over the previous ten years the service has delivered £12.5m savings with a further £1.4m targeted to be delivered in 2023/24. The increase in commissioning costs has been driven by an increase in complexity and the number of looked after children since 2011/12. There is a continuation of a large proportion of children being placed with independent fostering agencies (IFAs) due to a lack of suitable in-house foster carers. The cost of an IFA placement is significantly greater than that of an in-house placement. The service continues to be proactive in recruiting in-house foster carers to meet demands across the service and the Council has incentivised this by providing Council Tax discounts to foster carers in the borough and a weekly allowance to those who live outside Hackney.
- 7.4. Hackney has also seen an increase in residential placements since 2015 adding considerable budget pressures with an average annual unit cost of circa £300k. There have been some improvements more recently in the number of residential placements, and the service is working proactively to reduce the level of placements. We are also seeing a rise in the number of under 18s in high-cost semi-independent placements. Where young people in their late teens are deemed to be vulnerable, and in many cases are transitioning from residential to semi-independent placements, they may still require a high-level of support and in extreme circumstances bespoke crisis packages. These pressures have been recognised by the Group Director of

Finance & Corporate Resources with a growth of £13.4m in total included in the budget across a number of financial years.

8. **VAT implications on land and property transactions**

8.1. There are no VAT implications in this report.

9. **Comments of the Acting Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services**

9.1. In line with Article 5.2 of the Council's Constitution, Cabinet will carry out all of the Council's Local Authority functions which are not the responsibility of any other part of the Council. The Elected Mayor may choose to delegate functions to be carried out by the Cabinet collectively that set priorities that contribute to the life and development of the Borough and those that improve the economic, social and environmental well being of Hackney and its inhabitants. As outlined in section 3 of this report, Cabinet is recommended to note the report and recommend it to Full Council which has the authority to agree the strategic direction of the Council.

9.2. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Children and Families Service 2022/23 Full Year Report to Members.

Background documents

None

Report Author	Diane Benjamin on behalf of: Jacquie Burke Group Director of Children and Education Tel: 020 8356 8677 jacquie.burke@hackney.gov.uk
Comments for the Interim Group Director, Finance prepared by	Sajeed Patni Head of Finance (CEAH&I) Tel: 020 8356 3032 sajeed.patni@hackney.gov.uk
Comments for the Acting Director of Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services prepared by	Juliet Babb Acting Head of Legal Tel: 020 8356 6183 juliet.babb@hackney.gov.uk