

Report Title:	Improving Outcomes for Black Children and Young People - Systems Change in Hackney
Meeting for:	Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission
Date:	12th January 2026
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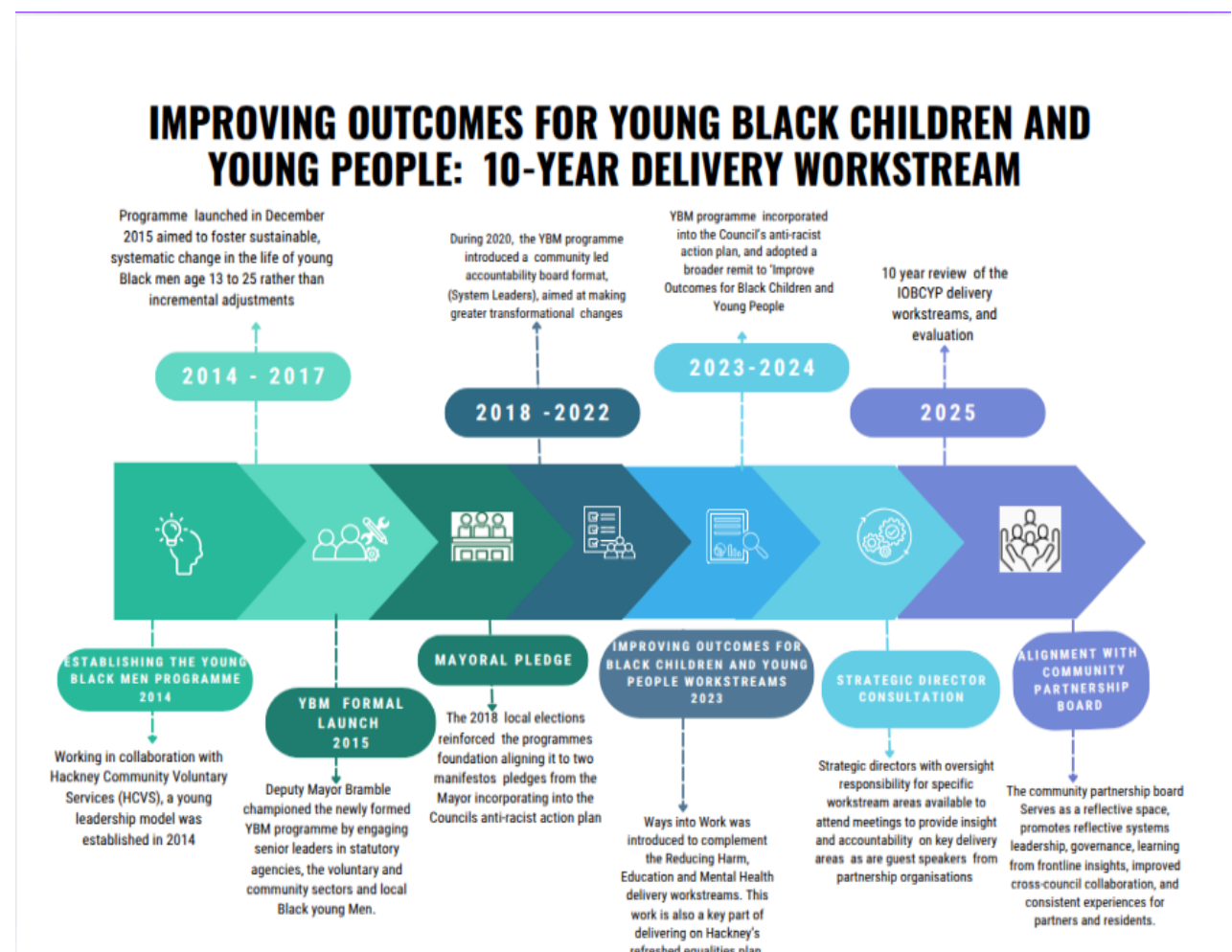
Report Summary

This report provides an update to the CYP Scrutiny Commission on a 10yr review of Improving Outcomes for Black Children and Young People workstreams. Including forward plans for an external evaluation and wider integration of this work across Council services and transformation.

Improving Outcomes for Black Children and Young People - Systems Change in Hackney

1. Introduction

The Improving Outcomes for Black children and Young People (IOBCYP) workstreams seek to foster positive changes to create an equitable environment for Black children and young people within Hackney. This report provides an overview of our journey on IOBCYP, across a ten-year span, through three key phases, from inception through subsequent iterations to the current work. The report also provides recommendations for the continuation of this vital work in the future.



2. Background and history

2.1 Establishing the Young Black Men (YBM) programme: 2014 - 2017

Working in collaboration with Hackney (CVS), a young leadership model was established in 2014. This collaboration provided a platform for community-led conversations between CVS, wider VCS organisations, and Hackney Council, addressing inequalities affecting young Black men. Initial research and scoping were conducted to explore potential disproportionality and a racial dimension to inequality, focusing on identifying key issues. Following this initial scoping phase, a new local Communities Group was formed in 2015, chaired by Deputy Mayor (then-Cllr) Antionette Bramble, to tackle these inequalities and help to improve life chances for young Black men aged 12-25.

Community discussions with young people, parents, council officers, and senior leaders enabled open and honest exchanges about the inequalities adversely affecting young Black men and the actions required to address these. Key elements of the work at this stage were the recognition of the need to develop culturally sensitive approaches and to ensure that no single organisation dominated, and that a genuinely collaborative partnership approach was taken.

2.2 Initial launch 2015

Deputy Mayor Bramble championed the newly formed YBM programme by engaging senior leaders in statutory agencies, the VCS and local young Black men through our community partners and the young leaders. The first programme iteration aimed to support young Black men aged 13-25. The decision was taken to focus on systemic change to improve life opportunities sustainably in the long term for all young Black men, rather than focus on a specific cohort, where the benefits would only accrue to that cohort. This approach recognised that meaningful change must be sustainable and 'baked' into the system.

This collaborative approach fostered radical conversations with community partners and institutions to tackle inequalities faced by young Black men. Partners focused on acknowledging the emotional experiences of the young Black panel, recognising the power dynamics, associated trauma, and unconscious bias that affects how services are provided for different racial groups. Centering the experiences and challenges of young Black men living within an oppressive racialised system was crucial to raising awareness of the disadvantages that arise from this. Acknowledging the impact of racism was a vital step to changing the narrative and ensuring that issues of racism could be openly discussed and addressed directly.

At the programme's inception a group of young Black Inspirational Leaders were trained and recruited through Hackney CVS to offer input, to steer the programme's activities, and to inform the direction of the programme. The partnership gained significant insights into the priority areas young people felt required attention and action. Consistent themes included mental health and the desire for their voices to be genuinely heard in service design and delivery.

A number of young men were sponsored to visit Atlanta in the US to see how [100 Black men of Atlanta inc.](#) were taking the lead in local communities. After this experience, a group of young Black men, trained as "Inspirational Leaders" in Hackney, to engage and inspire others, worked collaboratively with statutory and VCS partners and significantly enhanced the understanding of inequalities and their possible solutions.

2.3 Establishing long-term ambitions 2015

The YBM Programme work at this stage was guided by an evaluative framework that assessed success and fostered an understanding of effective practices and actions. Extensive research, including an analysis of data and insights, was implemented to improve understanding about what was driving disproportionate outcomes experienced by young Black men compared to the general population and other young men. The analysis also differentiated between different demographics of young Black men within broader Black communities.

To establish the [YBM Programme Ambitions 2015](#), a theory of change approach was introduced, which set out the background and aims of the programme, including a narrative account of Hackney and the priorities most relevant to improving outcomes for young Black men and shaping the context of the work in an effort to drive systematic change.

The programme embedded a cycle of reflection to map back to long-term outcomes and review initial objectives on a regular basis. This approach also facilitated a partnership approach to understanding and addressing the drivers of disproportionality of outcomes, where a multi-dimensional approach was needed to consider the inequalities that may be linked to:

- **Discrimination:** Direct or indirect discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, and their intersection.
- **Contextual or Cultural Drivers:** For example, a lack of trust between the community and the state, or cultural barriers.
- **Poverty and Socio-economic Inequality:** Black residents in Hackney are more likely to live in low-income households and experience other socio-economic inequalities.

During this period, the YBM programme reflected on lessons learned which informed a longer 10-year approach by outlining the context, drivers of inequality, desired changes, and actions required. Stakeholder and community events helped define the target partners and audiences for this work.

The YBM programme's long-term ambitions set in 2015 were as follows:

- *Within 10 years, outcomes and opportunities for black boys and young men in Hackney should be the same as the wider population.*
- *Within 15 years, working with other statutory services and central government, start to see cultural changes in terms of aspirations and trust in the state*
- *Within 15 years, working with other statutory services and the central government, started to see changes in media representation and portrayal of young Black men.*

Operating in a challenging environment as the borough underwent rapid growth and gentrification, the programme acknowledged an increase disproportionately affecting Black residents due to structural issues. Black men in particular were disproportionately represented in violent crime during this period. Despite these challenges, the programme successfully influenced national and regional policy, featuring in the Racial Unit and Lammy Review. Hackney schools' initiatives were showcased at education conferences, and DWP identified Hackney as a Challenge Area, attracting interest from other local authorities.

2.4 Academic research commissioned to support the programme's aspirations 2017

On November 16th 2017 Hackney Council held a [research symposium](#) for the YBM programme at Hackney House, 27 Curtain Road EC2. The full-day event aimed to create a space for the exchange of issues and challenges relating to the YBM programme between researchers and the YBM partnership.

Over 100 guests attended, invited by YBM partnership members, which included the YBM partnership group, residents, community groups, and featured keynote speakers, [Professor Cecile Wright, University of Nottingham](#), [Dr Richard Bramwell, University of Loughborough](#) and [Dr Ayo Mansaray, and Dr Charlotte Chadderton, University of East London](#).

The symposium highlighted new challenges for the programme. Young Black men, parents, and partners shared their concerns that the academic focus of the research symposium unintentionally alienated the target audience of local black people and that Black communities were not seeing any tangible action to improve outcomes for Black boys and young men. This provided a point of reflection for all concerned to consider their prejudices while challenging others.

2.5 Adopting a strategic vision 2018 - 2022

The full YBM partnership met in March 2018 to review progress since 2016 and again in July 2018 and November 2018 to steer the development of a new strategic approach, outlined in the [YBM Strategic Direction & Partnership Plan 2018- 2022](#). This approach listened to the concerns shared by residents and focused on the prioritisation of the areas where there were the greatest risks and tangible gains to be made to improve outcomes for young Black men.

The [YBM programme summary](#) sets out the work during this period and the revised strategy that was implemented, supported by the [YBM Data Digest March 2019](#), which provided an evidence basis for a more sustained programme with fewer proactive workstreams.

The statistics collated in the data digest were instrumental in fostering authentic leadership and ownership among all stakeholders, which powered decision-making, driven by a shared understanding of the evidence. This commitment to data-driven leadership was crucial for maintaining momentum and achieving the ambitious goals set for improving outcomes for young Black men.

The 2018 local elections reinforced the strategic approach, aligning it with two key manifesto pledges from the Mayor:

- *"We will tackle poverty, including child poverty, as well as key inequalities in health, education, and employment based on a solid understanding of the barriers and*

needs of our different communities, listening to their concerns and expanding the use of social value and co-design.”

- *“We will support those who face disadvantage, through projects like the Young Black Men’s Programme.”*

2.6 Cross-council anti-racist practice and youth leadership

The next four-year [strategy, 2018 - 2022](#), was a foundational component in the Council’s shift towards an anti-racist approach. This more systemic anti-racist practice moved beyond addressing conscious hatred, like racial abuse, and started to acknowledge and address the most damaging elements of systemic inequality and racism embedded in Council practice and wider statutory systems in Hackney and wider society.

The council was innovative in its approach during this period, driving forward forensic analysis about the experiences of different intersectional groups or residents, rejecting the practice of lumping complex issues together under the “BAME” umbrella. This direction was co-produced by a group of inspiring community leaders, aiming to foster a deeper understanding of inequality drivers and inspire other Black men to become active in co-production with statutory services.

The programme subsequently reduced its proactive work and refocused its efforts on three key areas:

- Mental Health
- Reducing Harms
- Education.

This led to streamlined workstreams aimed at addressing disproportionality and poorer outcomes through a whole-system approach to tackle the drivers of inequality.

On 2 October 2019, Hackney Council, in partnership with Lankelly Chase and Practical Governance, began developing a community-led accountability framework. This initiative aimed to redesign the programme to be genuinely led by youth community leaders.

The process involved consulting Youth Leaders and community members to establish partnership principles and defined three distinct roles in this work:

- 1) The Partnership (focused on strategy)
- 2) The workstream (responsible for delivery)
- 3) Youth Leaders (providing direction and accountability).

These groups were formed around a shared vision to develop a supportive community infrastructure.

2.7 Community Accountability

During 2020, the YBM programme saw a drive to ensure the development of a community-led accountability format to integrate young people, parents, and community elders into the formal structure of the programme.

To establish authentic leadership and ownership at the programme’s sixth year mark, a process of reflection informed by community and key stakeholders’ insights culminated in a

Community-led Accountability Board (Systems Leaders). The following groups took shape through the partnership:

- **Community Accountability Board** - of young people, parents, and community members, and independent advisers for steering and assessing progress, ensuring authentic leadership and ownership.
- **Youth Leadership Movement** - consisting of three project teams and wider advisory membership
- **Parents Forum** - consisting of parents and wider community members.
- **Supporting infrastructure** - including council, statutory, and voluntary sector officers, independent evaluators, community advocates, and learning partners.

This approach aimed to effect greater transformational change by addressing power structures within the system and ensuring that residents had increased power in leading the council's work, based on their lived experiences. During this period, a Graduate Trainee and young Black leader was employed as an apprentice specifically to support the strategy. This position was instrumental in establishing the Resident Accountability Board in 2020 and for the next phase of the YBM programme, with the intent to empower community members by placing them at the heart of decision-making.

The Accountability Board's primary function was to act as a critical friend to the Council, overseeing and reviewing targeted workstreams. The Board's core mission was to hold Hackney's statutory leaders accountable, monitor progress, raise challenges, identify areas for improvement, and offer recommendations for effective delivery.

3. Current Approach - 2023-2025

3.1 Improving Outcomes for all Black children and young people in Hackney

In 2023, the YBM work was incorporated into the council's [anti-racist framework](#) and adopted a broader remit to include Black girls and young women. The work was renamed 'Improving Outcomes for Black Children and Young People' (IOBCYP) at this point. This did not detract from the focus on young Black men, but rather widened the scope to recognise that issues addressed by the workstreams also impact Black young women and girls.

To ensure officer capacity for IOBCYP and the council's anti-racist commitment, a time limited post was established in the Policy and Strategic Delivery service during 2023/24. This was supplemented by a Strategic Delivery Officer from the base establishment. The officers in these roles have played a pivotal role in the successful coordination and execution of the IOBCYP workstreams.

3.2 Additional focus on employment

An additional workstream, Ways into Work, was introduced at this time to complement the Reducing Harm, Education, and Mental Health delivery workstreams at this point. This work is also a key part of delivering on Hackney's refreshed equalities plan.

The four IOBCYP delivery workstreams are now underpinned by a series of meetings structured around challenge, support, and reporting:

- **Accountability Board:** Quarterly meetings bringing Community Accountability Board members together with Workstream Leads and senior statutory leaders (council, police, and wider services as required) for oversight of progress and accountability questions from community partners.
- **Accountability Board Chair Meetings:** Additional monthly meetings provide updates on activities and offer insights into progress and concerns, to support proactive workstream planning.
- **Workstream Lead Manager Meetings:** Bi-monthly officer meetings allow for progress reporting against intended outcomes and provide an opportunity for the Strategic Delivery Team to offer support to workstream leads in preparation for wider programme reporting commitments.
- **Workstream Focus Area Meetings:** Bi-monthly officer and community partner meetings offer a chance to deep-dive into the details of each workstream, to understand successes and provide support for forward delivery.
- **Strategic Director Input:** Strategic directors with oversight responsibility for specific workstream areas are available to attend meetings to provide insight and accountability on key delivery areas, as are guest speakers from partnership organisations such as policing, particularly where strategic direction is crucial.

The Accountability Board continues to steer this work and is currently chaired by an award-winning educator and former Deputy Headteacher, who also founded a publishing house dedicated to books by Black children. The Board's diverse membership includes young people, youth practitioners, parents, mentors, a barrister, and a criminal psychologist.

3.3 Key outcomes in the last year 2024 - 2025

Key IOBCYP outcomes in the last year across all workstreams include:

- **Parenting:** Culturally specific Non-Violent Resistance Parenting, led by Black community partners.
- **Employment & Education:** Advice and opportunities for current/ex-gang members (with Community Gangs Team and Employment workstream) and a homework club at Pedro boxing club.
- **Policing & Community Trust:** Community-led partnership to improve trust, focusing on child-centric policing, stop and search, and youth-led training.
- **Therapeutic & Mental Health:** Support for Hackney Thinking Spaces and implementation of Tree of Life for African and Caribbean Heritage Students WAMHSs.
- **Community Engagement & Resources:** Monthly Community 'One Stop Shop' Drop-In and an annual Children's Black Book Fair.
- **Cultural & Educational Promotion:** Support for Blossom School's Windrush heroes theatre event and development of a diversified school curriculum.
- **Systemic Influence:** Advocacy for IOBCYP's integration into council systems and decision-making.

3.4 Progress made on initial ambitions

Over the ten year span of Improving Outcomes work, there has been a lack of continuity in resource, impact measurement and communication, which has limited our organisational

understanding of where the work has been effective and led to improved outcomes and where different ways of working are needed to reach our ambitious aims. A more in depth evaluation is needed to surface this learning in more detail.

Since the 2019 data digest, there has also been very limited data specialist officer capacity for this area of work. Consequently, evidencing impact has proven difficult. This is aligned with an acknowledged weakness of performance measurement across the council in the past decade, which is now being addressed. A 2025 data analysis is proposed as part of a 10-year evaluation; in the meantime, a brief narrative commentary is provided.

In considering the initial ambitions:

- *Within 10 years, outcomes and opportunities for black boys and young men (now all black children and young people) in Hackney should be the same as the wider population*

While some progress has been made across all areas in the past 10 years - education, mental health, harm reduction and employment - we remain far from achieving equitable outcomes for Black children and young people in Hackney compared to other ethnic groups. The council must increase its focus to accelerate the achievement of equitable outcomes.

- *Within 15 years, working with other statutory services and central government, started to see cultural changes in terms of aspirations and trust in the state*

We have seen good progress across the past decade in statutory partnership working with Health, Education and Employment, and improvement in the past three years in our work with Trust and Confidence in Hackney policing and community partnership and scrutiny of the police. However, these improved statutory partnerships rarely centre anti-racist practice and have not yet led to the equity in outcomes for Black children and young people that we need to see. Trust and Confidence in statutory services are still very low for Black communities in Hackney.

- *Within 15 years, working with other statutory services and the central government, I started to see changes in media representation and portrayal of young Black men (now all black children and young people).*

There has been some small progress made in this area, considering youth movements such as Account and Rise 365, which have seen positive media representation in recent years. We are still, however, far from seeing the truly equitable change in representation that is long overdue. Central government engagement with the IOBCYP programme has been limited in recent years, and we need to revive this engagement moving forward.

3.5 Systems Change

The IOBCYP workstreams continue to challenge the status quo by raising awareness of the inequalities that have a detrimental effect on the lives of young black people and are perpetuated by racist statutory systems. IOBCYP delivery workstream represents a

decade-long commitment to addressing systemic disparities faced by young Black individuals. Progression has been defined by continuous reflection, comprehensive evidence gathering, and strategic review. However, we need to understand that the racist systems we are seeking to change reach far and deep across all statutory services and will take more time, partnership working and focus for us to see true equity.

The iterative approach of IOBCYP has been instrumental in the delivery of anti-racist changes, aiming to dismantle the complex systems that perpetuate inequalities impacting Black children and young people. This systematic approach begins to foster true equity by creating a more equitable environment for the design and delivery of services that ultimately benefit all residents of Hackney.

4. Summary and evaluation

4.1 Key learning

The dedication and commitment to Improving Outcomes for Black Children and Young People in Hackney is evident with all partners involved, from the Deputy Mayor, Chief Executive, members of the Strategic Delivery Team, service area workstream leads, their management teams, and from Community Accountability Board members. Particular commendation should be given to council officers who have worked on this programme as workstream leads and as coordinating and facilitating leads for wider systems change - they have shown great commitment to this work, with limited organisational capacity and resources.

Hackney Council is committed to becoming an anti-racist organisation and borough. This programme aligns with Hackney Council's commitment to integrate anti-racist practices across all structures, systems, and processes to foster behavioural change across the council.

Despite being a flagship anti-racism, systems change and partnership programme for Hackney Council, IOBCYP has faced persistent challenges in its application. A significant hurdle throughout its ten-year lifespan has been the lack of sufficient prioritisation of officer resources for its leadership and delivery, both within the Strategic Delivery Team and within services delivering on the four workstreams. Limited prioritisation of officer support since the start of this work has directly impacted the council's ability to maintain momentum and to align its delivery fully with the initial aspirational ambitions.

Without sufficient resources, the IOBCYP workstreams have not been supported in implementing the level of cultural change needed within the council and with wider Statutory partnerships (e.g, Health, Policing, and Education) to realise significant, sustained improvements in outcomes for Black children and young people within the borough. Adequate resourcing of the delivery workstreams is therefore crucial moving forward to achieve its long-term outcomes.

Beyond the immediate IOBCYP workstreams, council officer engagement with this work suggests that further organisational development is needed in understanding and implementing complex systems change work. The timely alignment of the current development of the council's Target Operating Model and Transformation Programmes in

Hackney has the potential to strengthen this organisational capability and increase the effectiveness of the IOBCYP workstreams moving forward, if the two areas of work are aligned.

4.2 Ten-year evaluation

Strong engagement has been built with community advisory groups during the lifecycle of this work; however, due to a lack of resources, the delivery workstreams have lacked a robust and consistent communication strategy to effectively convey objectives and to celebrate success with wider Hackney residents. Clearer communication is also needed with council officers - many of whom are unaware of the work or have concerns about a lack of progress made. This lack of communication and transparency with both residents and officers has led to misunderstanding and criticism of the work, which at times spreads misinformation about the work and the council's intention.

The Accountability Board has requested an external evaluation at the 10-year marker for IOBCYP. Council officers agree that this is a strong next step that will guide the next iteration of IOBCYP and continue to build trust and confidence within communities and council officers, to ensure the highest level of integrity, effectiveness, and accountability in delivery. The scope of this evaluation should be clearly defined to reinforce the council's commitment to achieving meaningful and lasting outcomes for residents. The learning gain from completing an evaluation should establish a solid framework for continuous learning, adaptation, and demonstrable impact moving forward.

5.1 Looking ahead

While there is much to celebrate in this work, outcomes are not improving at the speed that is needed. More focus on the work is needed in the next 5-10 years to move more quickly to the outcomes we need to see.

IOBCYP could become a flagship workstream for the council. To achieve this status, a continued prioritised coordinating officer resource and increased collaboration from CLT and senior leaders in wider statutory services are needed to implement the desired system change successfully. We will be conducting a prioritisation vs capacity exercise ahead of launch of the new Strategy, Equality and Community Partnerships service but are working to the assumption this work will be prioritised.

5.2 New way of working from September linked to the Communities Group

The council is in the process of significant transformation and developing a refreshed 'target operating model'. This emerging operating model has a greater focus on collaboration and relational working and is aligned with the establishment of an internal Communities Group, designed to enhance and improve engagement and collaboration with Hackney communities. The group will champion and model relational ways of working, celebrate our diverse communities, listen to intersectional community needs and experiences, promote cohesion, and develop a strategic approach to cross-council and cross-borough partnerships.

The Chief Executive will chair the Communities Group, ensuring senior commitment and providing strategic direction for a whole-council approach that will help to improve cross-council collaboration, address siloed working, and provide systems leadership. The group will coordinate more efficient and effective use of resources, and support the council's journey toward providing partners and residents with a more consistent 'human-centred' experience when they engage or collaborate with council services.

Drawing inspiration from the existing Jewish community's strategic engagement group membership and approach, the board will provide a reflective space for systems thinking and change of power dynamics with our communities and residents, which will enable dynamic and reflective governance for cross-cutting system-wide work and programmes that address inequalities across Hackney communities. Improving Outcomes for Black Children and Young People presents a good practice example for this group and will be centred on this work.