

Title of Report	Children and Families Service Full Year Update Report to Members 2024/25	
Key Decision No	CE S648	
For Consideration By	Cabinet	
Meeting Date	26 January 2026	
Cabinet Member	Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Young People	
Classification	Open	
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards	
Key Decision & Reason	No	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards
Implementation Date if Not Called In	<i>Not applicable</i>	
Group Director	Jacquie Burke, Group Director for Children and Education	
Report Author	Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care diane.benjamin@hackney.gov.uk	

1. Introduction

- 1.1. I have requested this report from the Group Director for Children and Education. 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. 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 July 2024, the Ofsted ILACS found that “support for vulnerable children and their families has greatly improved since the last inspection of children’s services in 2019” and our overall effectiveness was rated as ‘good’. I am proud that the dedication, innovation and focus of leaders, partners and all staff across the service has been recognised, and that we are clearly making a positive difference to the lives of children and families in Hackney. Ofsted

commented specifically on my own and Chief Executive, Dawn Carter-McDonald's, contribution to the service stating "together, they hold the service history in mind and provide effective oversight of children's services. They are highly visible and well-informed leaders who bring both challenge and support across the council, children's services and with partner agencies".

- 1.3. Ofsted found that we had more to do, particularly in relation to our offer to care leavers and to ensure we are consistently utilising return home interviews for children who have been missing from home or care. I am pleased to say that we have continued to build on changes we introduced immediately after last year's inspection including, for example, opening a care leavers hub in May 2025 and improving our offer of return home interviews for children who have gone missing. The report provides more information about these and other changes we have introduced this year.
- 1.4. Children in Hackney are our priority and 'Working Together for Every Child' is one of our three Mayoral Priorities and underlines our strategic plan, ensuring that every child gets the best possible start in life is everyone's collective responsibility. In March 2024, our Councillors launched 'Promise to Children in Care', which ensures that care experienced children and young people get the support they need to live the happiest and healthiest lives possible. I was also delighted in June 2023, to help make foster carers exempt from paying Council Tax, in recognition of the invaluable contribution they make to the lives of Hackney's most vulnerable children.
- 1.5. In line with the Department for Education's requirements, we are preparing for the implementation of the Families First Partnership Reforms, bringing together targeted Early Help with statutory Child in Need services, alongside a multi-agency Child Protection service and making greater use of Family Group Decision Making. To achieve this we have established a Programme Team to lead in the delivery of the reforms, overseen by a multi-agency Partnership Families First Programme Board, chaired by the Group Director for Children and Education. Scoping and design is in the process of being finalised and we will be ready to publish our updated Local Assessment Protocol and Hackney Wellbeing framework in March 2026. We will be taking a phased approach to the implementation of the new Family Help Service across the four neighbourhood areas, aligning with our Children and Family Hubs and Children's Centres, from April 2026. More information on this is provided in the report.
- 1.6. In 2024 we launched our STAR (Systemic, Trauma-Informed and Anti-Racist) joint approach for Children and Education. STAR is an ambitious framework for understanding each other and our residents. Our anti-racist work over the last four years has been transformative and we continue our work to embed a systemic and trauma-informed approach across our children's social care, education and health systems. Over the last year to further support our STAR approach we commissioned the delivery of Foundation Level training

in Systemic Family Practice which will continue for the next three years; completed our fourth year of our internally developed Anti-Racist Practice Programme of Reflective Learning; and provided Systems Leaders and Psychological Safety training for our senior leaders on driving change and promoting Anti-Racist Practice across our service. We also rolled out a Leadership Programme to our Senior Social Workers, Team Managers and other managers within the service. This Programme includes a focus on Anti-Racist Practice. We also celebrated the first cohort of our Realising Potential programme for Black and Global Majority colleagues with a second cohort scheduled for early 2026.

- 1.7. Our staff showed great resilience as they continued to keep our children and young people safe in the aftermath of the criminal cyber attack in 2020, which completely devastated our case management system. The recovery has been swift and not only is Mosaic back up and running, but our 360 View App allows staff across Children and Education to see a full picture of every child, strengthening partnership working across the Directorate.
- 1.8. I want to thank the Chief Executive, Dawn Carter-McDonald, for her input and support. I also want to acknowledge our Cabinet, in particular Mayor Woodley, Cllr Fajana-Thomas, Cllr Etti, and Cllr Williams, and Corporate Parenting Board members Cllr Lynch and Cllr Patrick, who take a real interest in this area. I could not be prouder of the determination and dedication shown by all staff across the Service, who strive to achieve the very best outcomes for our children and families in Hackney. There is proactive and innovative work taking place across the service, with a focus on ensuring consistent, quality support to all of our children and families.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **The Council is recommended to note and endorse the content of the Children and Families Annual Report 2024/25 (Appendix 1).**

3. Reason(s) for decision

- 3.1. The report is for information and endorsement only.

4. Background

Strategic Policy Context

- 4.1. This report summarises progress against key areas for the service.
Equality, inclusion, diversity and belonging (including statutory equality impact assessment)
- 4.2. There are no new decisions within the report that require an Equality Impact Assessment.

Sustainability and climate change

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

Consultation/engagement

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

Risk assessment

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

5. Financial implications

- 5.1. This report asks the Cabinet and Council to note and endorse the content of the Children and Families Annual Report for 2024/25. The report also contains a financial update on the financial position of the Children and Families Service for 2024/25 and the mid-year financial forecast for the Children and Families Service (CFS) for the current financial year. There are no additional financial implications for the CFS as a result of the recommendations in this report.

Financial Implications prepared on behalf of the Group Director Finance & Corporate Resources by Sajeed Patni, Assistant Director of Finance (Children & Education)
Email: sajeed.patni@hackney.gov.uk
Date: 18 December 2025

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. Article 5.5 (b) of the Council's Constitution, gives the Mayor and Cabinet the authority to set priorities that contribute to the life and development of the Borough. Article 5.5 (h) authorises the Mayor and Cabinet to make decisions that improve the economic, social and environmental well being of Hackney and its inhabitants. As outlined in section 3.1 of this report, Cabinet is recommended to note and endorse the contents of the Children and Families Annual Report 2024/25 which reinforces the strategic direction of the Council.
- 6.2. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report.

Legal implications prepared by Juliet Babb, Assistant Director Legal and Governance on behalf of the Director of Legal, Democratic & Electoral Services by: Juliet Babb, Team Leader (People).
Name: Juliet Babb
Email: juliet.babb@hackney.gov.uk
Date 17 December 2025

7. HR/Organisational Development

- 7.1. The transition to the Families First Partnership Reforms and the continued embedding of the STAR framework necessitate a strategic focus on workforce integration, cultural change, and skills development. The implementation of the new Family Help Service across four neighbourhood areas starting in April 2026 will require a phased realignment of staff into multi-disciplinary teams.
- 7.2. The STAR joint approach requires embedding a systemic and trauma-informed culture across children's social care, education, and health systems to ensure long-term behavioral change within the workforce.
- 7.3. The report highlights a heavy investment in the "professional environment" to allow social work to flourish. These include 'foundation level training', 'leadership programmes' and 'realising potential programme'. These initiatives aim to build highly effective Leaders and promote psychological safety to drive service-wide change.

HR/OD prepared by Yvonne Turner, Strategic HR & OD Business Partner
Name: Yvonne Turner
Email: yvonne.turner@hackney.gov.uk
Date 16 January 2026

Appendices

Appendix 1 - The Children and Families Service Full Year Report to Members
2024/25

Background documents

None