

London Borough of Hackney
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission
Municipal Year 2025/26
Date of Meeting Tuesday 10 February 2026

Minutes of the proceedings of the
Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission held at
Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street,
London E8 1EA

Chair	Councillor Sophie Conway
Councillors in Attendance	Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock, Cllr George Gooch, Cllr Patrick Pinkerton, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof
Apologies:	Cllr Clayeon McKenzie, Cllr Midnight Ross, Cllr Lynne Troughton, Andy English and Jahnine Davis.
Co-optees	Lisa Neidich and Hashim Rawat
In Attendance	<u>Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission</u> Cllr Soraya Adejare, Cllr Zoe Garbett and Cllr M Can Ozsen
	<u>Cabinet Members</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deputy Mayor Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet member for Children's Services & Young People;• Cllr Anya Sizer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years & SEND• Cllr Sade Etti, Cabinet Member for Homelessness Prevention, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation
	<u>Officers</u>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jacquie Burke, Group Director Children & Education• Jason Marantz, Director of Education & Inclusion• Diane Benjamin, Director of Children's Social Care;• Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting• Sarah Warren, Service Manager Corporate Parenting• Yvonne Wade, Head of SEND• Sarah Darcy, Strategic Lead for Children and Young People, NHS North East London• Rickardo Hyatt, Group Director Housing, Climate & Economy• Alex Clarke. Director of Housing Strategy & Homelessness• James Goddard, Assistant Director Strategy, Assurance & Private Sector Housing• Lee Georgiou, Assistant Director, Benefits and Homeless Prevention• Marcia Facey, Strategic Lead Benefits and Homeless Prevention

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- Michael Walker-Roberts, Housing Strategy & Policy Manager
- Alice Clay, Housing Project Manager

Parent Representatives

- Niki Lampaski,
- Rachel Nkiessu-Guifo
- Yusuf Kaya

Press or Public in attendance 1

Meet recording <https://civico.net/hackney/23331>

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Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair

1 Apologies for Absence

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

- Cllr Clayeon McKenzie;
- Cllr Midnight Ross;
- Cllr Caroline Selman;
- Cllr Lynne Troughton;
- Andy English;
- Jahnine Davis.

2 Urgent Items / Order of Business

2.1 There were no urgent items of business.

3 Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 Housing support for Families of Children with SEND (19.05)

4.1 In January 2025, families of children with SEND made a deputation to Full Council setting out their concerns in relation to accessing local housing support. Following this deputation, the Commission met and discussed this issue with Cabinet members, officers and parent representatives, and agreed that this scrutiny could positively contribute to the support for local families.

4.2 The Chair noted that this was a crosscutting issue with housing services, therefore members of Living in Hackney have been invited to attend.

4.3 To support this scrutiny, members of the Commission were able to review the following reports:

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- Officers from across the Council produced a report responding to the issues identified by the Commission through scoping of this item:
- The Commission produced a summary report from the engagement (via site visits and a focus group) it has undertaken with local families ahead of this meeting;
- Parent representatives produced a short report highlighting their concerns through a number of local housing case studies.

Cabinet member introduction - Cllr Sade Etti, Cabinet Member for Homelessness Prevention, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation

4.4 A meeting was convened following a full council discussion in January 2025 to listen to parents' concerns. A subsequent meeting was held with a larger group of families to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced.

- The conversation facilitated an exploration of practical and improved service collaboration. As a result, a joint working arrangement and a team with terms of reference have been established with Children and Young Services.
- The need for improved medical needs assessment was highlighted as a key development point and the service is currently reviewing this process including the local assessment pathway. It was noted that the assessment focuses on the functional link between a child's disability and their environment, specifically addressing barriers to development within the home, rather than just the diagnosis.
- The primary constraint is the availability of suitable physical stock, as only 10% of social housing is located on the ground floor, which is essential for SEND families requiring accessibility and safety. The waiting time for a four-bedroom property was noted to be almost 20 years.
- Options discussed to address housing needs included the Fresh Start scheme, mutual exchange, and the private rented sector. Support is offered to families to help them prioritise space and accessibility, ensuring Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) and care packages are properly considered.
- There is a confirmed joint working effort between the Benefit and Homeless Prevention Team and Children and Young People Services to offer all housing options and continue to review the situation.

Cllr Anya Sizer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years & SEND

4.5 Cllr Sizer praised parents for their work in this area which was a powerful piece which had deeply impacted members. The work highlighted an important issue concerning children and families in need of additional support and acknowledged that this was far from resolved. It was hoped that a collective response can be developed to help find ways in which improved housing support can be provided to families of children with SEND.

Niki Lampaski, Parent Representative

4.6 Parent representatives highlighted systemic failures and institutional harm experienced by families with children, particularly those with disabled children, when seeking housing assistance. Parents highlighted the following challenges:

- Parents are forced to manage fragmented services across housing, health, education, and social care, having to coordinate responses that are interdependent. This results in families being overlooked and a system that often fails to respond to vulnerability, or actively creates it. Families are forced into a project manager role to ensure a proper link up between different council services.
- Negative experiences were also reported across all housing tenures. This includes overcrowding and disrepair being dismissed, professional evidence being minimised or lost, and families facing serious risks encountering delays. Children with hidden disabilities are subjected to repeated adversarial assessments.

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- A major concern raised was that NHS professionals have been discouraged from providing supporting letters for disabled children's housing applications. This was described as a structural barrier that impedes the proper assessment, protection, and safeguarding of disabled children.
- It was argued that failing to rehouse a family or formally recognise a home as unsuitable when it cannot be adapted is a decision-making failure, not merely a supply issue. It was suggested that legal obligations under the Children Act and Equality Act must be met even when resources are constrained.
- Parents often feel minimised, disbelieved, and blamed. Parents stressed that genuine equity means avoiding narrow, rigid categories for vulnerability, and focusing on different levels of need, complexity and disadvantage and that housing decisions should be linked to education, health, and safeguarding.
- Parents also called for a move toward solutions, including establishing a concrete mechanism for co-production, accountability, and ongoing scrutiny. Co-production was central to change, which means utilising the skills and personal experiences of parent carers as a key resource in the solution.

Questions from the Commission

4.7 Cllr Gooch asked what Hackney Council's strategy for significantly increasing the supply of accessible, adapted, and adaptable social housing for families with complex SEND needs, and how is the council planning to fund this?

- (RH) Hackney Council has invested heavily in new homes over the last 10 to 15 years, though the diversity of these homes to meet varied local needs has not always been a focus for this delivery. The current strategy is to maximise funding and grants from the Greater London Authority and the government to deliver a diverse portfolio of homes based on a needs assessment. It was acknowledged that obtaining 100% grant funding is a challenge. Additionally, the council plans to be more effective in optimising its existing housing stock and working with other social landlords in the borough, including specialist housing providers to extend housing options.

4.8 Cllr Suso-Runge asked if there is sufficient local data on the scale and nature of housing needs for families with children with SEND to be adequately reflected in key strategic housing strategy documents, and are these needs currently set out in the strategic housing ambitions?

- (RH) The honest answer is that more can be done to gather this data. The council plans to refresh its housing strategy and conduct a refreshed housing needs assessment, as the last one was in 2023. The council is open to co-producing and engaging more clearly and effectively with families with children with SEND to gather this information, acknowledging the difficulty in consulting with the right stakeholders across a broad spectrum of needs.

4.9 The Chair raised a concern that many of the needs of local families may not be documented and therefore there may not be a full picture of the full scale of need, as many families with acute needs were not on the local housing register.

- (RH) The Group Director welcomed this scrutiny opportunity. There were challenges in delivering accessible homes or homes that can be adapted and it was difficult to balance the needs of different stakeholders and the often complex needs of local families. It was important to recognise that many families had undiagnosed needs, such as their children's SEND needs, which underlined the importance of a crosscutting multi-agency response. Making sure the Council has access to this information to inform housing investment decisions is important.
- Cllr Anya Sizer (AS) Noted the important work taking place in Children and Family Hubs (CFH) including the workshops offered by Shelter. It was acknowledged that families were under acute stress and felt overwhelmed trying to find solutions therefore the multiagency offer through CFH can help to effectively signpost families to help. I

4.10 Cllr Garbett if asked if there was a formal response to the recommendations made in the 'Lived Realities' report, particularly those concerning changes to the housing register?

- (AC) The Director of Housing Strategy and Homelessness welcomed the recommendation in the Lived Realities report and emphasised the need to explore all possible avenues to resolve housing needs, particularly helping more families access safe, suitable, and affordable accommodation in the private rented sector, as the council cannot "build its way out" of the housing crisis in Hackney. A recommendation like replacing the medical assessment process with a panel was cited as potentially challenging due to staff capacity.
- (Cllr Garbett) It was stressed that a full reflection of need on the register is necessary for the council to effectively advocate for more government funding, as the current register is believed to significantly underreport the need.
- Niki Lampaski (NL) - Reiterated that if not all families of children with SEND were able to access the housing register this does not fully reflect local needs. It was also noted that the transfer to the private sector was difficult without the recognition of family needs as this allows families to explore a full range of options. The length of the housing application process (2.5 years) was also a significant barrier.

4.11 Cllr Binnie-Lubbock asked if there were currently any joint structures to support information sharing and cooperative working between housing services, the SEND team, and wider support for children with disabilities, especially regarding communication and processes like reasonable adjustments?

- Jacque Burke (JB) The SEND team is very small and its statutory remit, as set out in the 2014 act, is heavily focused on children's access to education and their health and care needs around learning outcomes. A team of 22 plan coordinators support over 3800 children with an EHCP. The ability of the team to work outside its statutory responsibilities is limited. However, for children with more complex disabilities supported by the Children with Disabilities team, there are good examples of cross-council working with housing and health colleagues on adaptations, safety/risk assessments, and locating suitable accommodation. The more general support is offered through the borough's four Children and Family Hubs (for 0-19, or up to 25 with SEND), which host voluntary organisations like Shelter and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to support and advocate for families.
- (NL) Raised the issue of two different teams conducting medical needs assessments (MNA) for the same housing needs was raised as a point of inefficiency and fragmentation. The medical needs assessment process can be traumatising for families where the medical needs of families are often taken out of context and presented in a positivity lens.
- Jahnell Dyer, Service Manager of Disabled Children Service (JD) acknowledged the challenges of the MNA but noted that in the Disabled Children Service, children's social care professionals worked closely with housing colleagues to make sure that assessments were undertaken in a meaningful way to make sure the needs of children and families are fairly presented.

4.12 Cllr Turbet-Delof noted that many families become 'trapped' in the medical needs assessment process, and asked what is the purpose of the medical assessment process within the housing allocation policy? What best practices is Hackney Council implementing to ensure families trapped in the medical assessment cycle are prioritized and their cases escalated quickly enough?

The Chair asked how many appeals of the medical needs assessment process are there each year? How many are successful?

- (AC) The purpose of the medical assessment process is not to determine if an applicant has a medical condition, but to assess how the medical need is impacted by their current accommodation and whether a move to an alternative

property would alleviate those medical issues. It is part of the housing allocations policy designed to ensure the limited stock of properties goes to the households in the greatest need.

- (NL) Indicated that in their opinion, the MNA process is flawed and adversarial, leading to the dismissal or reinterpretation of medical evidence. Clarification was sought on which other vulnerable groups are assessed through the MNA process?
- (AC) Confirmed that households with adults who have a disability are required to go through the same MNA process. It was acknowledged however, that the MNA should not be a traumatising process and not be adversarial. Senior officers would welcome the opportunity to sit down with parents to discuss potential improvements.
- Cllr Sade Ettie (SE) noted that there were currently over 7,300 families on the Housing Register and 3,400 in temporary accommodation which included 4,000 children. The Council was working closely with London Councils to ensure that this need is recognised on a London wide basis.
- (RH) The Group Director for Housing, Climate, and Economy emphasised that prioritisation is key, given the shortage of resources. The challenge is ensuring that allocation decisions are fair and transparent, particularly for cohorts where the system is not working. The council is interested in understanding how to alleviate the barriers raised through individual cases to apply solutions fairly. An update was also provided that the issues of the housing register and the large number of children in temporary accommodation have been discussed at the London Council cabinet meetings. Working across directorates was acknowledged to be challenging, but there were examples of good practice to build upon. It was also emphasised that housing staff, as local residents, also had lived experience of the challenges that this group of families faced.
- (AC) Data was not to hand on the medical needs assessment process, but this would be provided after the meeting.
- (JB) A weekly panel is convened to clarify and streamline the process for medical housing needs assessments for children with disabilities. The panel is made up of representatives from Medical Housing Needs Assessment Team, Health Occupational Therapy (OT) Team, Disabled Children's Service (DCS), Health, and Education) and provides information to the Housing Assessment Team to ensure a more streamlined medical assessment and to facilitate creative housing solutions. Families are referred by DCS, Health OT.

4.13 Cllr Gordon asked if there is a legal barrier to routinely including housing needs as part of the assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

- Jason Marantz (JM) While the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process is considered the best mechanism for a holistic assessment of a child's needs and their required environment. However, officers stated that incorporating housing assessment into the work of EHCP coordinators would be highly challenging due to the team's specific skillset, training, and already high workload, which is focused on getting the plan itself correct. They suggested that efforts should focus on exploring ways for the teams to interface and pass information between services more efficiently.

4.14 Cllr Gordon asked what consideration has been given to creating a single or limited point of contact for families navigating different council services, including Children's, Housing, and the voluntary sector?

- (RH) The council can explore this as part of its future strategy to transform services, which includes moving towards a "single front door" and "neighbourhoods" approach across various service areas. However, officers cautioned that this is a significant undertaking and would not be something that could be delivered immediately.

4.15 The Chair noted that engagement had highlighted examples of inefficiencies that families experience when attempting to access council services, particularly the housing register? Families reported having to repeatedly attempt to get onto the housing register over many years without success, which is inefficient and distressing for all involved. Another example is families being asked to provide medical evidence and then being told they failed to submit it within the correct timeframe, forcing them to start the process over again. The time and energy families spend navigating this complex system should be better recognised and valued by the council as an institution.

4.16 Cllr Adejare asked for the council's view of the impact of inadequate housing on children and young people with SEND, and what is its role in advocating for systemic change and funding?

- (AS) The council recognises that inadequate housing has a material, long-term impact on the social, developmental, and academic outcomes of children and young people. There is a perceived gap between national efforts to meet educational needs (such as the SEND white paper) and the ongoing reality of inadequate housing. It was noted that this issue is starting to gain national acknowledgment, with organisations focusing on the interplay between neurodiversity and housing. The council is keen to use its experience to show best practice in this area. It was also noted that housing is a factor in at least one-third of all referrals to Children's Social Care, regardless of disability, underscoring the chronic shortage of suitable housing.

4.17 Lisa Neidich noted that due to sector insecurity, families are naturally reluctant to consider the Private Rented Sector (PRS) for securing appropriate accommodation, even though in many cases this may be the only option. What packages of financial and practical support are in place to 'de-risk' this option for families with SEND who may require adapted or larger properties? Is there any local data on this?

- (AC) Support is provided on a case-by-case basis. This includes practical assistance from the procurement team to find available properties and liaise with landlords, as well as financial help with deposits and rent in advance. Officers expressed hope that the new Renters' Rights Act, which will address fixed-term tenancies, no-fault evictions, and introduce a decent homes standard, will alleviate families' legitimate concerns about the security of the private rented sector. Hopefully after the 1st May when the Act comes into force, this will bring greater security to tenants in the private rented sector.

4.18 Cllr Binnie-Lubbock asked how will the council ensure that promoting moves outside of the borough, which may offer the quickest housing solution, does not lead to the fragmentation of essential support services (e.g. special school and education places, CAMHS and wider NHS support)?

- (AC) The council makes appropriate referrals to the equivalent services in the new local authority area for any household that is assisted with an out-of-borough move. This alerts the new authority to the family's presence and helps link them to relevant services.
- (SE/RH) The council's policy emphasises choice and transparency, but it was acknowledged that compromises are often necessary due to the reality that it is not always possible for families to remain in the borough. The inability to guarantee local networks and proximity to family remains a significant barrier for many families to move. As a housing service, it must present all these options for families to consider.

4.19 Cllr Binnie-Lubbock asked if the council has data on the uptake of home swapping or home transfer schemes by local families with children with SEND, and is this a realistic option?

- (AC/RH) Specific data on the number of families with SEND utilising home swapping was not immediately available and would need to be requested from

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Housing Services. Officers stated that home swapping is not a solution for massive numbers, as it relies on two parties voluntarily agreeing to a swap.

- (SE) The council has held home swap events and recognises the need to improve the accessibility and comprehensiveness of information provided to families about both home swapping and out-of-borough options.

4.20 Cllr Suso-Runge asked how the council works with registered social landlords (housing associations) to improve the supply of larger and accessible accommodation and what support is available through them for SEND families?

- (RH) There are few legal mechanisms to compel housing associations to improve supply. However, the council has established relationships and forums to share best practice. Senior officers, including the Mayor, have invited chief executives of housing associations to discuss ways to work more closely together, such as providing temporary accommodation, supplying larger homes, and reviewing nominations agreements. This is an ongoing conversation with scope for improvement.
- (SE) Homeless Prevention Board brings other social landlords 'around the table' and has supported improved communication. Again, this is an area where improvement can be expected.

4.21 The Chair asked if further investment and capacity building plans are in place for the Children's Community Occupational Therapy (OT) service to meet escalating demand?

- Sarah Darcy, NHS North London (SD) The demand for social care occupational therapy is increasing, and while a service review is currently underway, a commitment to additional investment was not given at the meeting. Officers are attempting to mitigate demand through closer joint working across health and council-commissioned pathways. The service offers support through modifications, adjustments, equipment, and parental coaching. Children's services have recently uplifted its funding to the OT service to help meet the need.

4.22 The Chair asked if officers provide further data on the Disabled Facilities Grant uptake and usage in Hackney? What is the demand for this grant locally? What is the value of grants available locally? How is Disabled Facilities Grant being updated? Are families of children with SEND utilising this grant?

- (JB) This data was not to hand, but would be provided after the meeting. It was also noted that the Council had recently uplifted the budget to OT provision recognising the demand for this service.

4.23 Cllr Gooch noted that Children and Family Hubs provide a wide range of services for children and families in need, including housing advice, support and signposting. What data is there on the usage and uptake of services at Children and Family Hubs by families of children with SEND? Are local families sufficiently aware of the 4 hubs? Is there an effective communications strategy to promote access to the C&F Hubs?

- (JM) Data was not available at the meeting and would be provided at a later date.

4.24 Cllr Gooch asked what work is the council doing to assess the overall experience families receive from services, ensuring that gaps in service delivery are not overlooked?

- (JB) The council does not currently have a specific mechanism for assessing a family's end-to-end experience across all council services. The only council-wide measure is the annual resident survey. It should be noted that in children' social care, housing needs figure in approximately one-third of all family assessments, underlining the depth of local need and impact on families.

4.25 Lisa Neidich asked how is Hackney Education working to improve wraparound support (pre and after-school care) across educational settings, and is it available in special schools?

- (JM) The government grant for wraparound care was successfully taken up by schools across the borough and is widely available in primary schools. This grant is expected to continue and expand to include Breakfast Clubs. Officers will specifically check with special schools on their provision and encourage and support them to apply for the grant if it is not in place.
- (DMB) The council also provides other free options, including Youth Hubs (some with specific sessions for children with additional needs) and Adventure Playgrounds, both of which offer food. The Holidays Activities Fund (HAF) also provides free holiday activities.
- (AS) Highlighted the work of the short breaks team which provides a really important service for many families across the borough.

4.25 The Chair noted that there are disparities in cost and availability of after-school clubs across schools and that the financial ability of families must be factored in. It was also noted that the previous work of the Commission on Free School Meals (FSM) had highlighted how little was understood about local practice, which inhibited learning and service improvement.

- (DMB) thanked the Commission for its work on FSM, which informed a £300,000 task force, and emphasized the continued need for free school meals for secondary school students.
- (DMB) also wished to formally thank parents for their contribution to this meeting and wider engagement on this issue and it was hoped that this could help to streamline processes for families.

4.26 Cllr Adejare noted that considering that maintenance issues are deemed remedial rather than framed within the medical assessment process, what actions will ensure a robust and rapid multi-agency response to fully support medically vulnerable children living in poorly maintained social or private sector housing, particularly in light of Awab's law?

- (RH) The new regulatory standard from the Regulator of Social Housing requires the collection of data on additional household needs and the alignment of service provision, such as incorporating reports of repairs, damp, or mould to facilitate the response. While this is a work in progress with some data collection gaps due to occasional household reluctance to share information, the effort is mandated by the regulatory framework.
- (RH) Private Rented Sector Housing presents a broader challenge. The forthcoming extension of Awab's law to the private sector is anticipated to drive up housing standards. Furthermore, the Council secured approval to implement borough-wide licensing schemes in four of the 21 wards, requiring landlords to obtain a license and meet a certain standard to let properties. These measures are expected to improve the quality and decency of homes across both the council and private sectors.

4.27 Cllr Adejare asked in regard to the 'cross-pollination of data', as to whether the new systems coming on stream will ensure the full embedding of recorded information that services already possess, even with initial difficulties in obtaining all required data?

- (RH) Yes, the new systems are specifically being designed to fully embed and capture recorded information from existing services. It was also noted that household characteristics and vulnerabilities evolve over time, meaning this data capture is an ongoing, continuous exercise.

4.28 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to members' questions on this subject. The Chair also thanked parent representatives for their engagement and support for this scrutiny process. The Commission would summarise findings and make suggestions to Cabinet members.

The Commission Agreed that follow up data would be provided on the following:

i) The number of appeals of the Medical Needs Assessment process - and how many of these have been successful?

ii) The number of successful home swaps/ transfers for households moving out of the borough.

iii) Disabled Facilities Grant uptake and usage in Hackney? What is the value of grants available locally - is this a fixed annual pot? The report suggests that the Disabled Facilities Grant is being updated - can officers set out what changes are being implemented? Are families of children with SEND utilising this grant?

5 Housing Support for Care Leavers (20.25)

5.1 In 2022/23, the Children and Young People and Living in Hackney Scrutiny Commission jointly undertook a review of the housing support for care leavers in Hackney. The Commission produced a report with 10 recommendations for service improvement in October 2022. Cabinet produced a response to these recommendations which were agreed at Cabinet on 26th June 2023. The Commission received an update on the implementation of these recommendations in September 2024. This is the second update report to help the Commission to review and monitor progress against the recommendations.

Deputy Mayor Bramble, Cabinet member for Children's Services & Young People

5.2 DMB introduced the response and the update to the recommendations of the Commission.

- The main policy change was on the housing register, allowing young people from age 18 to be placed on it, thanks to the collaborative work of lead members and senior officers. This was described as a significant, game-changing achievement with phenomenal impact.
- 70 young carers have begun their tenancy through the bidding process, which was highlighted as successful work.
- Work continues with voluntary sector partners (Settle and Centrepoint) to look at good practice and learning, particularly focusing on post-tenancy support needs for young people. Insights gained will be used to inform the in-house service.
- Young people's feedback and reviews have been integral to the process, including shaping the procurement process for putting work out to tender. Improvements are continually sought, with young people at the centre of the work.

Children and Families Service - Corporate Parenting Team

5.3 Laura Bleaney, Head of Corporate Parenting (LB) updated the Commission on the work of the care leaving team to improve provision. Key areas highlighted included:

- The change to the housing register was met with delight by care leavers and has been transformative, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback from young people.
- A cohort of care leavers is starting university, with many in their early 20s. They often expressed a need to secure stable housing and financial security before commencing their studies. A successful example was shared of a care leaver securing a new home near their long-term foster parents.
- The changes to the housing register have successfully reduced the number of care leavers in Temporary Accommodation (TA). The service is now working

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- closely with the housing strategy team to explore best practice, and aims for a long-term goal of having no care leavers in TA.
- Work is underway with tenancy services to develop and roll out a mainstream offer of post-tenancy support. There is also a focus on ensuring clear and consistent information is accessible to care leavers, especially given high anxiety during transition periods.
 - The Care Leaver's Hub has been opened at a formerly disused council building in London Fields. This is being developed as a single point of access where services can wrap around care leavers, providing clear and consistent information. Regular housing drop-ins and planned workshops are being run at the hub.
 - Acknowledgment was made that the process for care leavers joining the housing register is currently outside the mainstream system and requires further streamlining to improve timeliness and document management. A survey is being conducted with young people to learn from their experiences.
 - The ability for young people to bid, choose, and take back power and control through the new housing register process was noted as a highly valued and positive outcome.

Questions from the Commission

5.4 Cllr Suso-Runge asked how the new housing strategy, scheduled for finalisation later this year, will ensure the needs of care leavers are met with a deliverable action plan regarding housing capacity and the range of accommodation options? Additionally, what is the expected date for the new housing case management system?

- Michael Walker, Housing Strategy and Policy Manager (MW) The new strategy is being developed as a standalone plan to provide sufficient depth for the complexity of care leavers' needs, acknowledging that a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient. Options include the successful expansion of the mainstream social housing register, potential extension of the supported commission pathway for those requiring more intensive assistance, and providing intermediate support for others. Acquisitions are a key area of opportunity to expand the borough's supply of properties suitable for care leavers.
- (AC) The new housing casework system is being implemented in phases. The first phase is expected to begin this calendar year, with the second phase starting by the end of the calendar year. The phasing is necessary due to the system's multiple modules and is partly a result of the ongoing backlog from the cyber-attack. The first module covers properties, temporary accommodation, and rent collection, while the second focuses on the housing register and property allocation management.
- (SE) Noted that the aftermath of the cyber-attack was still being felt and officers were still using spreadsheets, which was not ideal.

5.5 Cllr Gordon asked what progress has been made on the recommendation to use the Hackney Housing Company and other means to invest in and build purpose-built or modular housing to help meet the need?

- (MW) While the Hackney Housing Company is correctly identified as a potential mechanism for delivery, it is still some distance from being adequately set up. The borough's property acquisitions are currently a more active delivery mechanism. For modular new build, a comprehensive review of the Housing Revenue Account land and General Fund land is ongoing. Finding sites is challenging due to multiple competing uses within the organisation, but asset review processes have broadened their scope. As this review progresses and stock condition surveys are returned, a clearer sense of land opportunities will emerge. Modular housing remains a potentially viable option for faster delivery and is being monitored in the housing strategy.

5.6 Cllr Binnie-Lubbock asked what are the main reasons for the encouraging over 50% drop in care leavers in temporary accommodation, and are there any alternative pathways to mainstream temporary accommodation?

- (LB) The dramatic drop is solely the result of the impact of successful bidding for permanent social housing. The change in policy to backdate the bidding start date for care leavers aged 21 to 25 to age 18 has placed them in a much stronger position on the register. This has led to a shorter wait in temporary accommodation. They are also working on alternatives to mainstream temporary accommodation. The preferred option is an extended pathway of supported accommodation up to age 25. This would benefit those who are not yet ready for fully independent living. They are also exploring developing care-leaver-specific temporary accommodation that would guarantee facilities such as washing and cooking.

5.7 Cllr Binnie-Lubbock asked if the landlord licensing scheme, coming in May, would include a mechanism such as a tick-box to identify landlords willing to accommodate care leavers?

- (AC) There will not be a tick-box exercise for landlords willing to accept care leavers. The intention of the PRS licensing scheme is to develop a better picture of the borough's landlords and the condition of their properties. Through this increased information, they aim to build rapport with landlords to increase the supply of private rented accommodation for care leavers.

5.8 Cllr Gooch asked if there had been an analysis of which services are working well through the Care Leaver Hub, and what can be learned from care leavers who are leaving temporary accommodation to inform the goal of preventing all care leavers from having to use it?

- (LB) Social events, such as a summer barbecue and a winter event, have been successful at engaging young people, often motivated by food. This has helped with getting services there to speak with them. A survey revealed that benefits advice and housing were the most requested areas for further support. Housing drop-ins have been popular, as has practical support, including podcasts about financial advice for older care leavers struggling with debt. The care leavers are leaving temporary accommodation for permanent social housing because of successful bidding, and practitioners have reported that they are securing high-quality properties. It was also noted that care leaver parents successfully bid for two-bedroom properties, which is crucial for their children's stability. The goal remains a smooth transition from supported accommodation directly to settled accommodation without needing temporary accommodation.

5.9 Cllr Adejare asked what progress is being made on lobbying for a consistent pan-London housing offer for care leavers?

- (DMB) Political leaders are actively lobbying with the LGA, GLA, and government, working with a campaign called Homes for Good to stabilise the market and suggest a legal framework.
- (JB) The Director of Children's Social Care sits on the pan-London Care Leavers Covenant board, which is an ongoing initiative to align services across London on issues including housing and free prescriptions. The Manchester model was used as a reference for their work in Hackney.

5.10 Cllr Adejare asked about local connection rules for young people coming into the borough.

- (AC) noted that local connection rules, the recent changes are viewed primarily as an administrative burden. Hackney, like most councils, prioritises its own care leavers, giving them a significantly higher priority band (Band B) over non-Hackney care leavers (Band C). The policy is specifically worded for people leaving the care of Hackney Council. Given the significant difference in priority,

very few, if any, non-Hackney care leavers who join the register under this change are expected to receive an offer of social housing.

5.11 What have been the key reasons for securing the positive outcomes for care leavers, such as improved partnerships, better understanding across the organisation, or the ownership taken by the team?

- (DB) All of the suggested reasons contributed to the success: great partnership working, support from housing colleagues, a commitment and drive to do better, and direct feedback from care leavers. Ricardo was highlighted for his role in driving the joint housing strategy.
- (AC) Added a significant caution noting that the reduction in temporary accommodation would not have been possible without the high level of supply of suitable studio or one-bedroom properties, which constitute 49% of all social housing that becomes available in Hackney. While partnership is important, the supply of properties has made the biggest difference. It was acknowledged that prioritising care leavers does mean other residents with priority needs are not getting those available properties, underscoring the ongoing challenge of housing supply.

5.12 The Chair thanked officers for all their work in achieving such positive outcomes for local care experienced young people. Whether a further formal update is necessary will be a decision for the Commission's 2026/2027 work programme. Members agreed that a short briefing update may be helpful to review progress and decide if further scrutiny is needed.

6 Behaviour Management & School Inclusion - Update (21.10)

6.1 The Chair updated the Commission on its review outcomes:

- 103 completed responses to the survey were received when this closed on 16th January - including:
 - 68 responses from local parents from primary, secondary and special schools
 - 6 school staff (heads and teachers) at primary and secondary
 - 20 other adults that work with children in Hackney
- The Commission has held a number of focus groups with key stakeholders throughout January:
 - Children and young people: three focus group held in January - The Edge Youth Hub, Forest Road Youth Hub and Hackney Youth Parliament - involving 32 young people;
 - Parents: two focus groups held in January (making 3 in total) involving 20 parents;
 - School Governors: one focus group held in January with three school governors at both primary and secondary school;
 - School leaders/ other adults working with children in Hackney: One focus group with 7 participants - Head, SENCO, CVS
- Reporting: Aiming to get outline recommendations to the Commission at 16th March
 - Commencing analysis and reporting;
 - Meeting with Commission next week (Wednesday 18th) to report on key findings and develop recommendations collaboratively;
 - Meeting with Cabinet member and Senior officers;
 - Full report to be written by the end of March/ April before the end of the municipal year. Signed off with Chair and Commission.

7 Work Programme (21.20)

7.1 The work programme for the remainder of the municipal year was discussed. The final meeting of the Commission for this municipal year is on the 16th March 2026 and will have the following items:

- DM Bramble Q & A - which will focus on 1) School admissions (in-year and fair access) 2) Young Hackney reconfiguration 3) 10 x 10 programme
- Cllr Sizer Q & A - which will focus on 1) Children & Family Hubs 2) Specialist SEND provision 3) Wraparound childcare
- Council's response to the Area SEND inspection.

7.2 The Commission noted and agreed the work programme for the remainder of the municipal year.

8 Minutes

8.1 The minutes of the 13th October 2025 were noted and agreed.

9 Any other business

9.1 The next meeting of the Commission is on the 16th March 2026.

Duration of the meeting: 2 hours 30minutes.