



London Borough of Hackney  
Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission  
Municipal Year 2025/26  
Date of Meeting Monday 16 March 2026

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

---

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Councillor Sophie Conway</b>
<b>Councillors in Attendance</b>	<b>Cllr Margaret Gordon (Vice-Chair), Cllr Clayeon McKenzie, Cllr Patrick Pinkerton, Cllr Midnight Ross, Cllr Sheila Suso-Runge, Cllr Lynne Troughton and Cllr Claudia Turbet-Delof</b>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<b>Cllr Alastair Binnie-Lubbock and Cllr George Gooch</b>
<b>Co-optees</b>	<b>Andy English and Lisa Neidich</b>
<b>In Attendance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Deputy Mayor Anntionette Bramble, Cabinet member for Children’s Services &amp; Young People;</b></li><li>• <b>Cllr Anya Sizer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, SEND and Early Years.</b></li><li>• <b>Jacquie Burke, Group Director Children &amp; Education</b></li><li>• <b>Jason Marantz, Director of Education &amp; Inclusion</b></li><li>• <b>Diane Benjamin, Director of Children’s Social Care;</b></li><li>• <b>Yvonne Wade, Head of SEND</b></li><li>• <b>Pauline Adams (Head of Young Hackney)</b></li><li>• <b>Jason Marantz (AD School Improvement and Performance)</b></li><li>• <b>Terry Brian, Assistant Director for School Place Planning</b></li></ul>
<b>Members of the Public</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Meet recording</b>	<a href="https://civico.net/hackney/23488">https://civico.net/hackney/23488</a>
<b>Officer Contact:</b>	<b>Martin Bradford (martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk)</b>  020 8356 3315  martin.bradford@hackney.gov.uk

**Councillor Sophie Conway in the Chair**

**1 Apologies for Absence**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from:

- Cllr Alistair Binnie-Lubbock;
- Cllr George Gooch.

**2 Urgent Items / Order of Business**

2.1 There were no urgent items of business

**3 Declarations of Interest**

3.1 Cllr Patrick Pinkerton declared that in relation to item 6 (Cabinet Q & A - Children & Family Hubs) he was a parent with a child at a nursery in Hackney.

3.2 There were no other declarations of interest.

**4 Ofsted Area SEND Inspection (19.05)**

4.1 An Area SEND inspection of Hackney Local Area Partnership took place between 17th to 21st November 2025. Area SEND inspections are undertaken jointly by Ofsted/ Care Quality Commission under a new inspection framework which came into force June 6th 2025. In January 2026, Hackney was assessed as outcome 2 for its Area SEND inspection which states:

*'The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.'*

4.2 Cllr Anya Sizer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years & SEND was invited to set out the council's response to the inspection and to briefly outline the plan of action to address those areas where improvements are required. The Commission is aware that a more detailed plan of action is being developed by the SEND Area partnership in response to the inspection which, if agreed, can be scrutinised at a later meeting (new municipal year).

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

4.3 The Deputy Cabinet member thanked the Commission for the opportunity to set out the Council's response to the inspection. It was acknowledged that this assessment was fair and expected, though they felt the word "inconsistent" was unfortunate given the incredible amount of work done by many officers and people involved in the borough. Significant progress has been made to improve the experience and outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Hackney.

- Outcomes and Attendance: Children with SEND achieve well and have higher than average school attendance, a feat that should be celebrated.
- Leadership and Approach: Inspectors commended leaders' knowledge of Hackney's need and diversity, and the culturally sensitive co-production and commissioning of services.
  - Hackney's SEND work implements the STAR response and uses an intersectional lens, treating each case individually rather than applying a blanket approach.
  - Services provide tailored support, build trust, and remove barriers.

**Monday 16 March 2026**

- Partnership: The Hackney SEND Parent Carer Forum (PCF) is a recognised and valued strategic partner. The Council is thankful to the work of the PCF, and to the neurodiverse panel 'Indepth,' which acts as a constant critical friend.
- Complex Needs Support: Children with complex needs and health disabilities benefit from seamless pathways and a comprehensive tailored offer. The borough is nationally recognised for its joined-up work between education and health.
- Early Identification: Potential SEND in early years are identified quickly and carefully, leading to effective support. The work of the Children and Family and Portage was highlighted for its work in early diagnosis, assessment, and support, including respite care.
- Strategic Plans: Leaders' plans, especially those on HEELS and the Fair Access Protocol (FAP) for admission, are in the early stages and are expected to yield real results.

4.4 Deputy Cabinet Member Cllr Sizer also set out the SEND Area Partnership's response to recommendations for areas for improvement, which will focus on 5 key areas:

- a) Strengthening the strategic use of data
  - Develop and implement a robust SEND performance framework.
  - Provide regular performance reporting to the SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Executive Board, which will work alongside the SEND and AP Partnership for strategic leadership and oversight.
  - Use a shared outcomes dashboard to track progress and align data with the 'assess plan do review' delivery cycle.
- b) Making the local education system as inclusive as possible
  - Shift the focus from exclusion to inclusion, predominantly through the HEALS strategy. The Year 9 pilot targeting permanent exclusions for persistent disruptive behaviour successfully resettled two-thirds of the pilot group back into school.
  - Continue working with schools to address persistent absenteeism among pupils with complex needs.
  - Expand access to mental health support in schools via the Well-being and Mental Health in Schools (WHAMS) work and Mental Health Support Teams (MHST). Currently, 94% of mainstream schools and New River College are involved with WHAMS.
  - Co-produce and implement a revised alternative provision commissioning strategy.
  - Improve oversight and monitoring of children Educated Other Than at School (EOTES).
- c) Improving the Quality and Timeliness of EHCPs
  - The most recent plans are stronger due to programmed training and development for staff.
  - Timeliness has improved from 40% of plans completed within 20 weeks to approximately 60% in December. This was achieved by the Ed Psych Service pausing traded work in the autumn to eradicate the backlog of assessments.
  - Introduce a strengthened quality assurance framework for EHCPs and Improve the integration of health and social care advice within EHCPs.
  - Ensure EHCPs capture the voices, views, and aspirations of children and young people, fully supported by co-production with families, by embedding the child's voice at the centre.
  - Strengthen preparation for adulthood (PfA) from Year 9 (age 13/14) onwards.
  - Continue to improve the quality and timeliness of annual reviews, including stronger participation from health and social care professionals.

**Monday 16 March 2026**

- Prioritise the review and amendment of outdated EHCPs, particularly for young people aged 16 and over.
- d) Embedding Co-production with Families and Young People
  - Reinforce co-production with families and young people (PCFs and Indepth) to ensure the partnership is "talking with" them, not "talking at" them.
- e) Delivering Sustainable Improvement through the SEND Strategy
  - Integrate the SEND inspection response directly into the SEND and Inclusion Strategy, embedding improvement activity in long-term planning.
  - Work is underway to bring various concurrent work streams and frameworks together to make them user-friendly and communicate this externally as a reassurance piece to families and parents.

4.5 The Deputy Cabinet member noted that the positive outcome was a huge testimony to the hard work of officers from across the local partnership and thanked them for their support.

#### *Questions from the Commission*

4.6 The Chair asked about the mixed messaging which inspection agencies are giving in relation to the performance of schools in relation to exclusions and suspensions of pupils. The SEND area inspection has highlighted that the number of children with SEND who are excluded is a significant local problem, yet this is not highlighted by Ofsted in its individual inspections of schools. The Chair therefore asked what communication had been shared with schools and Ofsted, and what actions were being taken to reduce exclusions and suspensions, particularly for marginalised children and those with special educational needs.

- (Cllr Sizer) stated that the consensus is that "one exclusion is always going to be... too many" and that exclusions should only ever be an "absolute final last resort". The focus of the HEAL strategy is inclusion, aiming to create environments that are inclusive and welcoming for every child. It was noted that the new Ofsted inspection framework takes a clear stance on inclusion, validating the council's plan. The plan, three months on, is beginning to have an impact, and feedback has been shared with secondary school heads.
- (DM Bramble) noted the dichotomy highlighted in the report, contrasting schools' "brilliant" performance with high exclusion rates. The speaker observed a dramatic increase in exclusions between primary schools (one exclusion in five years) and secondary schools, questioning whether the current support model is better suited to primary settings and how it must be adjusted for secondary schools.

4.7 Councillor Gordon asked the partnership's plan for implementing health recovery plans at pace, specifically to reduce children and young people's waiting times for NDAs, ADHD medication access, and continence assessments. Supplementary to this, Councillor Gordon sought reassurance on what additional support and educational adjustments were available for families while they await assessment.

- (Cllr Sizer) noted that efforts are complicated by the ongoing ICB funding changes and restructuring, the outcome of which is still unclear. The health workforce has been significantly reduced, with roughly 50% redundancies and many long-established post-holders leaving by the end of the financial year. It was suggested that the best course of action is to revisit the issue in the new financial year once key personnel are in post.
- (Jacquie Burke) The partnership is committed to the improvements outlined in the inspection. Early prevention work, including speech and language therapists and the Portage service in local hubs, is in place for early capture of needs. The NHS record on this was of strong commitment and has been assessed to be performing well for general services in the inspection. At present however, the ICB restructure meant that it was not clear who would be in post for the new financial year.

**Monday 16 March 2026**

- (Jason Marantz) highlighted that the partnership has identified clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) including school exclusions, to be regularly reviewed. Governance structures have been tightened through the creation of a SEND and AP Partnership Board and a SEND Executive Board, which will own the use of this data.
- (Cllr Sizer) The focus is on providing "the right support at the right time" regardless of whether a child has a formal diagnosis. The borough operates an autism strategy, positioning itself as an autism-friendly borough that provides support and help even while families are on a waiting list.

4.8 Councillor Turbert Delof requested clarification on alternatives or a "Plan B" to the shifting timeline of the ICB restructuring, which was anticipated to stop at the end of the current year but may continue until April next year. Furthermore, Councillor Turbert Dof asked for confirmation and figures regarding the backlog reduction mentioned.

- (Jacquie Burke) confirmed that the partnership is focused on mitigating risks and managing gaps resulting from the ICB restructure. This complex work, led through the Chief Executive of Homerton, involves working with all health partners on the 'leadership of place' and is an ongoing focus for the partnership.
- (Cllr Sizer) confirmed that the backlog improvement was achieved by last December following a strategic decision. As an overview, the council moved from approximately 40% to 60% of cases being completed within the statutory timeframe.

4.9 Councillor Suso-Runge asked about the service cliff edge at 18' and asked how the new 'preparing for adulthood' initiative would develop post-18 placement options and provide practical, effective support to prevent young people from becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). Further details on supported internships were also requested.

- (Cllr Sizer) The work involves a strong team regularly updating the strategy and focuses on forward planning starting at Year 9 (age 14) to match young people's interests with future opportunities. Supported internships are run within Homerton Hospital and the council, with plans for additional streams. It was also noted that supported internships are now accepting young people from 16+. The Deputy Cabinet member thanked officers for their support in running the conference and coproducing this with young people, many of whom were in attendance.
- (Jacquie Burke) To address the cliff edge for children with more complex needs, a new transitions team has been recruited and co-located with the Children with Disabilities Service across children and adults. This team works closely with the children's transition team to ensure a more seamless transition to adulthood.

4.10 Councillor Ross sought information on WAMHS, noting that 94% of maintained schools use the service, and asked why other schools were not participating and which schools did not use it.

- (Jason Marantz) clarified that the issue is not non-participation by schools, as the vast majority of all schools (maintained and academies) receive and engage with the offer. The core issue is the availability and staffing of the CAMHS practitioner, which is being addressed by a joint strategic group.
- (Cllr Sizer) noted that the WHAMS service is not a one-size-fits-all model, allowing it to adapt to individual school needs.
- (Jason Marantz) A pilot offer currently exists for 8–10 Orthodox Jewish independent schools, and the partnership is seeking funding to increase this provision.

4.11 Councillor Pinkerton asked what actions Hackney Education is taking to improve the timeliness, quality, and systemic review of EHCPs, in light of the report's listed shortcomings.

- (Jason Marantz) confirmed that Hackney is currently achieving 60% timeliness in EHCPs, above the national reported figure of 46% (as of 2025 data), a result

**Monday 16 March 2026**

of strategic decisions including dealing with the backlog. It would cost an additional £4m to service the backlog. Efforts are underway to look at training and ways to expedite the process while maintaining the improved quality of the plans, which was recently recognised. The SEND White Paper's proposed changes will also be engaged.

4.12 Lisa Neidich asked how the new deemed local outcome framework data/maturity tool would be used to improve local performance of SEND provision.

- (Jason Marantz) the partnership was introduced to the DfE's new maturity tool in February 2026 and is currently ahead of the curve in engaging with it. This tool is critical because engaging with it will help the DfE decide how much of the High Needs Block Deficit (statutory override) the council will receive back (90%). The tool has been drafted with representation from health, social care, education, and two seconded head teachers, and will be submitted to the DfE ahead of a catch-up meeting at the end of the month. Two local head teachers have been seconded to work with the council to develop this and it was hoped that funding could be found to extend this further.

4.13 The Chair thanked officers for attending and responding to questions from members of the Commission.

## **5 Cabinet Q & A - Deputy Mayor Bramble (19.30)**

5.1 Under the agreed protocol Cabinet members attend annually for a Question & Answer (Q & A) with respective Scrutiny Commission(s), where up to 3 areas of questioning can be selected. Cabinet members are required to provide a verbal response to questions set by the respective scrutiny Commission/Panel. This Q & A is for Deputy Mayor Bramble, Cabinet member for Children's Services and Young People and the three policy areas selected for questioning by the Commission for the Deputy Mayor's children and young people portfolio were as follows:

- School Admissions
- Restructure of Young Hackney
- Update on the 10 x 10 commitment - access to extracurricular activities.

### 5.2 School Admissions

- a) Data presented to scrutiny in 2022 suggest rising numbers in-year school applications/admissions across both primary and secondary schools in Hackney through the Hackney In Year Admissions Process. Can DM Bramble set out:
  - I. The most recent full years data for in-year admissions for primary and secondary schools and confirm trend analysis?
  - II. What are the main drivers for rising in-year school applications/ admissions?
  - III. What is the impact on schools of increasing in-year admissions?
  - IV. How many local secondary schools and primary schools do not participate in the in-year admissions process?
  - V. If some schools choose not to be part of the in-year admissions process, what assurance can be provided that there is a level playing field and all children have fair and equal access to schools?
- b) Can DM Bramble set out to the Commission how local admissions systems operate to ensure that schools have a fair and equal responsibility in supporting children with additional learning needs or those who have 'challenging behaviour'?
  - I. In the past year, how many times have local schools refused to accept children as agreed by the Fair Access Protocol?
  - II. In the past year, how many children on roll at New Regents College were successfully reintegrated back into mainstream schools?

- III. Can DM Bramble set how the local Fair Access Protocol will be updated as part of the establishment of Hackney Education Alternative Learning Service (HEALS).

*Cabinet member response*

5.2.1 The data indicates a positive trend of reduced in-year movement among children and young people. In 2024/25, overall in-year admissions are projected to be 3,311, a slight decrease from the 3,500 recorded in 2023/24. This represents an overall reduction of approximately 14% in in-year movement between the two years, with a reduction of 8% in primary schools and 24% in secondary schools. The specific decline in secondary school placements is notable, dropping from 2,743 in 2023/24 to 2,140 in 2024/25, a difference of about 600 placements.

5.2.2 The drivers behind this general decline in mobility are multifaceted. They include a significant decrease in the birth rate across London, families moving away due to transformed work-life patterns post-pandemic, and lifestyle choices to seek environments outside the borough. Furthermore, the high cost of living in Hackney and London, coupled with the impact of changes to the government's housing benefits cap, compels some families to move.

5.2.3 While overall pupil movement has reduced, the movement that does occur presents substantial challenges for schools, particularly concerning assessments, transition, and providing bespoke intervention and support. Movement has a detrimental effect on educational attainment: 86% of pupils who do not move achieve success in reading, writing, and mathematics, but this drops dramatically to 42% for children who move in Year 2 or later. Additionally, schools face funding challenges if a young person joins after the October census date. We are also seeing an emerging theme of increased emotional-based school non-attendance, which requires a highly bespoke program of support tailored to the needs of the individual child.

5.2.4 The local coordinated approach to in-year admissions is robust. High participation is maintained across the borough, with 49 out of 50 maintained schools and academies, and all 16 secondary schools, engaging in the Local Authority's coordinated protocol. The only exception is The Olive School, an independent faith school, which nonetheless uses the council's resources and shares statutory compliant information regarding unsuccessful applicants and available places.

5.2.5 The council has seen significant success through the Fair Access Panel, which mandates school compliance with its placement decisions. It is very rare that schools appeal once the FAP has made a decision. There were only 6 appeals in 2023/24 and 5 in 2024/25. Recent governance improvements, including tightening accountability, ensuring increased statutory compliance around Section 19 of the Education Act, and implementing an early, tiered approach to support (universal offer, targeted support) have been crucial. The positive trend in placement stability is evident: in 2024/25, all 10 children placed through the Fair Access Panel remained in their new settings, compared to six of 16 in 2023/24 and three of six in 2022/23 who remained. This 100% retention to date for 2024/25 indicates that the subtle changes we are making are working effectively for the most vulnerable children.

5.2.6 The criteria for admissions prioritise parental preference, compliance with legislation, and give priority to oversubscriptions from children on various plans (Looked After Children, Child Protection Plan, Child in Need Plan), as well as those with a sibling at the school. Crucially, mandatory participation for all schools, including free schools, allows for equitable distribution. The weighted system ensures no particular school is disproportionately impacted by children who have additional duties, thereby ensuring that children are placed in an environment where the school can appropriately meet their needs.

*Follow up Questions from the Commission*

5.2.7 The Chair questioned how fair is the current Fair Access Protocol (FAP) in practice, considering some secondary schools are oversubscribed while others, like Urswick School, have vacancies and disproportionately high numbers of children with special educational needs (SEN)?

- (DM Bramble) The system is acknowledged as imperfect, but the fair access protocols constantly aim to improve it. The protocols ensure that a family with siblings, even if more than one child has additional needs, is not disproportionately denied their choice of school. FAP works best with in-year movement, which offers a better opportunity to strategically place a child. While parental choice is a key factor, the council remains committed to continually seeking ways to make the system fairer for all schools to thrive, particularly addressing high student mobility.

5.2.8 Cllr Troughton asked if the authority could reconsider the annual admissions criteria to give priority to children in Kings Park ward for whom a school, such as the City of London Academy, which is their closest secondary school yet they are unable to attend and therefore required to travel significant distances across the borough? Can the admissions be changed so that schools prioritise those students for whom this is their closest school?

- (DM Bramble) This issue has been discussed previously and is still actively being looked at by officers. The concern is that young people from large social housing complexes in Kings Park (including Kingsmead Estate and Clapton Park Estate) are being offered places at schools like Haggerston and Stoke Newington, which involve difficult journeys, instead of the closer City of London Academy. DM Bramble offered to meet with local Councillors, and a formal written response will be shared with the Commission. Local authorities currently have no powers to change admissions policies, but the upcoming white paper offers an opportunity to reshape admissions to address these challenges.
- (The Chair) Noted this was particularly concerning given falling school rolls, as it incentivises children to attend schools in neighbouring boroughs.

***Action: DM Bramble to write to the Commission in respect of admission arrangement and criteria, particularly in relation to Kingsmead Estate and City Academy.***

5.2.9 Cllr Gordon asked what is the strategy for making school intakes more representative of all communities, particularly concerning socioeconomic division and student movement between Year 7 and Year 11?

The Chair also noted that schools with vacancies tend to serve more working-class families, often attracting a disproportionate number of boys, children from minority ethnic groups, and children on free school meals. This division is further entrenched by in-year pupil movement.

- (DM Bramble) The aim is for all schools to be representative of the communities they serve and where this is not the case the council would like to see change. Due to limitations on changing admissions policies and parental choice, the focus is on partnership work with local schools. Bringing schools together and getting school leaders working together to look beyond their individual schools and think about the wider offer. The goal is to create a more collaborative and inclusive system where every child can go to their local school, preventing the perception that different parts of the borough are for different communities. Everyone wants schools to be inclusive and to reflect local communities.

5.2.10 Cllr Turbet-Delof asked how can the council provide more in-house school support for parents to help them access welfare benefits, which is critical given the high cost of living in Hackney? This would help more families to be able to stay in Hackney.

- (DM Bramble) The council acknowledges this is a valuable point, noting that nearly £1 million in unclaimed benefits was identified around Christmas. A full-

time member of staff is in place to focus on parents and her work includes signposting to welfare benefits and support. The council plans to consider offering more signposting sessions with parents and head teachers. Information will also be cascaded to school governors through work being led by school governors and children's social care. The suggestion to discuss the link between mobility and housing at the Housing Scrutiny Commission and Children & Young People commission is accepted.

### 5.3 Young Hackney

Youth services provided through Young Hackney have been restructured to achieve £1m of savings to help reduce the Council's overall deficit. Can DM Bramble update the Commission:

1. On how local youth services have been reconfigured to date and how services have been impacted?
2. How were Young Hackney users engaged and involved in planning service changes?
3. How will the new National Youth Strategy inform policies and priorities for supporting youth provision in Hackney going forward?

#### *Cabinet member response*

5.3.1 The update on Young Hackney celebrated ten years of dynamic and innovative youth provision, which is regarded as a beacon for other local authorities. The team successfully addressed 13% budget reductions through a holistic review that affirmed the effectiveness of the hybrid model, where the local authority and community groups work collaboratively. Notable successes include the phenomenal work of the Youth Parliament in advocacy and skill development, and the continuation of the Youth Opportunity Fund, which enables young people to secure up to £5,000 for community-based programs.

5.3.2 The restructure maintained existing referral pathways for early help, substance abuse, and health and well-being support. Key changes involved organising provision into four new areas—north, central, south central, and southwest—by integrating with existing hub models to streamline support for families. A significant game-changer highlighted was the Health Spot introduced in the Youth Hub in Forest Road, which provides young people with discreet access to a GP, sexual health advice or mental health consultation.

5.3.3 Changes to funding and support involved extensive engagement with members of Young Hackney, partners, young people, the head of service and DM Bramble director for finance. Ultimately, a report recommended maintaining all services but implementing an overall reduction across them to ensure the broad range of the offer remains sustainable.

#### *Questions from the Commission*

5.3.4 Councillor Suso-Runge asked about the National Youth Strategy and if an example of a practical initiative for the co-production of policies, addressing the shift from "excluded to empowered" could be provided? Furthermore, regarding the strategy's shift from "national to local," are the place-based initiatives in Hackney based exclusively on the existing hub models, or is there an alternative approach?

- (DM Bramble) The place-based initiatives are based on existing hub models, which foster collaboration and co-production. An illustration of this is the Forest Road hub, where young people have accessible services such as general practitioners (GPs) and mental health support within a familiar location. However, alongside the hub model, the re-engagement team conducts outreach by having staff go out to where young people are. This detached worker model is good and represents an additional model in itself. The council's overall response to issues concerning children and young people—including governance and planning—is continuously channelled through the legacy of the Hackney Young Futures

Commission, ensuring the voice of young people is constantly heard across the council.

5.3.5 Councillor Alastair Binnie-Lubbock asked about the restructure and involvement of children and young people. Following the service reduction and restructure that delivered a million pounds' worth of savings to address the council's overall deficit, is there potential for more funding for youth services moving forward, recognising the high return on investment? Also, what mechanisms were used to involve young people in shaping the changes to the youth service.

- (DM Bramble) The restructure was focused on older, younger people, with the lens reshaped based on data identifying young people most at risk between 3:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m., which is why youth hubs now concentrate on older children. The council welcomes the new government funding beginning to restore some of the previous loss to local government. A commitment has been made to fund adventure playgrounds, as younger children are now using those settings more than the hubs. Additionally, there has been a significant local investment of over £200,000 in capital improvements for youth spaces. Consultation with children and young people is constant and occurs through various channels, including the legacy work of the Young Futures Commission, current youth parliamentarians, looked-after children, and Hackney of Tomorrow input facilitated by Hackney of Tomorrow.

5.3.6 Councillor Alastair Binnie-Lubbock: While investment has focused on adventure playgrounds, is there an opportunity for greater investment in youth workers to ensure they are respected and treated well as professionals within the council?

- (DM Bramble) Everything about the authority's delivery relies on capacity, and Hackney takes a measured, strategic approach to its actions. The council is always looking at the development and training of youth workers. In recognition of the need for outreach, four additional detached youth workers have been put back into the team to engage children and young people who do not attend the hubs, occupying the spaces where they are.
- (The Chair) While much work is ongoing, it is recognised that more can always be done to extend engagement beyond the existing groups and is committed to making a concerted effort, possibly involving schools, to hear from as many different young people as possible in shaping services.
- (DM Bramble) Staff actively talk to young people in various settings and provide feedback, such as sending a video to school councils during the pre-consultation for the education strategy. Furthermore, children in care have been empowered through the work of children's social care to reshape how services are commissioned for them, defining the standards that the services must meet. The council is also exploring new mediums for engagement, such as social media and TikTok, to reach young people where they are.

#### 5.4 10 (activities) x 10 (years old)

5.4.1 Activities outside the classroom are important to help to build children's soft skills, develop networks and improve confidence and their sense of wellbeing, yet research shows that the type of school children attend and their socioeconomic background largely determines what activities are available to them. Can DM Bramble update the Commission on the Council's 10 x 10 programme which aimed to introduce 10 activities to children by the age of 10?

- I. What formal evaluation has taken place of the 10 x 10 programme and what were the key outcomes?
- II. Has the programme achieved good coverage/uptake across all local primary schools and early years' settings? Do all primary schools have the resources and facilities to support children to access the 10 activities?

- III. How has the programme engaged and been received by children and families from a range of different backgrounds?
- IV. Socio-economically disadvantaged communities?
- V. Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)?
- VI. Charedi community?

*Cabinet Member response*

5.4.2 The 10x10 initiative has proven highly successful in providing a range of experiences to children and young people, including chair exercise, musical events, swimming, drama, cultural visits to museums and heritage sites, camping, cycling, library use, and debating. The fundamental philosophy of the program is to promote equity and agency, ensuring all children have access to these enriching activities regardless of their background.

5.4.3 Key metrics of success include distributing 14,000 10x10 booklets, sending library cards to over 2,000 reception children, and funding swimming lessons for over 400 children provided by Better (leisure service provider). Additionally, over 100 children participated in Debate Mate, 10,000 hits were recorded on the website and 300 children and families attended the launch. The Communications team is active in making sure local families are aware of what activities are available over the holiday periods and many of the activities are free to access. A central tenet of the programme is to ensure that children, regardless of their background, have access to these activities.

5.4. More than 40 schools have signed up to the associated pledge for 10 x 10. Targeted strategies were developed to engage communities that did not initially participate, specifically through collaboration with the SEND team to adapt the program booklet for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) by increasing its size from A5 to A4 for improved visual aid. For the Charedi community, bespoke one-to-one drop-in sessions were established, in part to address anxieties following unpleasant comments directed to some communities; this approach, involving the creative community and SENCOS, has resulted in better engagement and program uptake.

*Questions from the Commission*

5.4.5 Cllr Turbet Delof asked what support and discounts are in place to ensure equality of access for young people and families who struggle financially, particularly those from migrant communities, to participate in initiatives such as visiting the seaside, musical experiences, and drama and performing arts?

- (DM Bramble) A variety of support is available to make the initiatives accessible, as most of the offers are discounted and funded. This support includes GL grants, the lending of resources, and discounted services. Individual schools also possess a budget to cover these costs. Most schools offered the majority of the initiatives, ensuring that every school offered some form of participation. Noteworthy examples of funded activities include free swimming lessons offered by 'better' and the Mayor's Music Award, which allocates thousands of pounds to schools to purchase classical instruments for children to learn. Most of the activities were free or discounted making sure support was available for those who may need this help the most. The Cabinet member wished to formally thank the lead officer for all the work in supporting this initiative.

5.4.6 The Chair asked what measures are being proposed to improve young people's access to e-bikes for necessary journeys, such as traveling to school?

- (DM Bramble) agreed and suggested that there could be plans to collaboratively write to e-bike providers within the borough to advocate for young people and ask what offers can be made available to improve access and uptake.

5.4.7 The Chair thanked DM Bramble for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

## **6 Cabinet Q & A - Cllr Sizer (20.15)**

6.1 Under the agreed protocol Cabinet members attend annually for a Question & Answer (Q & A) with respective Scrutiny Commission(s), where up to 3 areas of questioning can be selected. Cabinet members are required to provide a verbal response to questions set by the respective scrutiny Commission/Panel. The three service areas selected by CYP Scrutiny Commission for scrutiny from Cllr Sizer's portfolio as Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years & SEND are as follows:

- Children & Family Hubs
- Specialist SEND places in Hackney
- Wraparound Childcare

### 6.2 Children and Family Hubs

6.2.1 Children & Family Hubs aim to give children the best start in life by providing joined-up, 'one-stop' access to health, education and social care support. The Council operates 4 Children and Family Hubs across Hackney (full service offer here).

- a) Can Cllr Sizer set out how Children & Family Hubs provision have been evaluated to date?
  - i. What is the overall activity and trends for the number of family contacts across the four Family Hub settings?
  - ii. Are Family Hubs reaching local families most in need; those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, have special educational needs or experiencing exclusion (from being from a minority group)?
  - iii. Are Family Hubs delivering services which local families need - are parents' views and experiences routinely assessed?
- b) Can Cllr Sizer set out how Family Hubs provide a fully integrated 'one-stop' offer to local families in need?
  - i. How are local Community and Voluntary Sector groups fully integrated into the local Family Hub model?
  - ii. How are Family Hubs linked to local housing services?
  - iii. Are there regular meetings with partners and stakeholders to ensure effective governance and oversight of Family Hub provision?
  - iv. How will Family Hubs integrate with the new Families First Partnership approach which is being developed for children's social care?
- c) Can Cllr Sizer set out current and future funding arrangements for Family Hubs to ensure that provision is fully integrated and sustainable.

#### *Cabinet member Response*

6.2.2 The hubs offer a wide range of opportunities, information, and support in one place where the work that takes place in these is considered to be of very high quality.

- The children's centre network recorded 151,165 contacts or attendances from 9,37 children and 10,659 families between April 2025 and February 2026. However, there was a 6% reduction in total individuals using services compared to the previous year, which is linked to a 19% decrease in live births and an 11% reduction in the take-up of early years provision by 3 and for year olds.
- Hub attendance variation: Woodbury Wetlands and Springfield Park recorded the highest number of attendances.
- Digital Offer successes: Highlights include the "Solihull" parenting program (348 learners registered between 2023 and 2025), the "Anya" breastfeeding support app, and the "OnePlus one" app for reducing parental conflict.

**Monday 16 March 2026**

- Program Successes: The breastfeeding initiative rose from 91% in 2022 to 98%. The father-friendly borough has been a great initiative with good outcomes. The PEEP program led to a significant increase in parental confidence, with parents who felt confident to help their children's learning rising from 35% to 99%, and a huge rise in general parental confidence to 88%.
- Over 70% of those accessing services live within the top 30% most disadvantaged areas according to the indices of multiple deprivation, demonstrating proactive outreach to vulnerable groups.
- Navigators play a key role by going out into the community, including to GPs, temporary accommodation, and even houseboats through work with the Canalside Trust, to share the available provision.

6.2.3 The hubs are continually evolving their methods to expand their reach, supported by a consistently dedicated staff team, including the nationally recognised father friendly borough initiative, which began with a needs assessment of approximately a thousand fathers and resulted in the introduction of dedicated father's well-being checks and a Father Friendly Charter.

6.2.4 A core strength of the service is its fully integrated, one-stop local offer, which places four Children and Family Hubs and 20 children centres within diverse neighbourhoods to ensure local ownership. This model provides a user-friendly environment where families can access housing needs assessments, breastfeeding support, and meet with a diverse team of integrated professionals, including health visitors, midwives, speech therapists, and mental health specialists. Service delivery is further strengthened by robust partnerships with the voluntary and community sector; organisations like the Citizens Advice Bureau and Shelter are now offering support and weekly advice surgeries within the hubs, with Shelter having recently delivered a highly successful event on special needs and housing. The Family First initiative is also being implemented to provide early, continual, wraparound support, adhering to the core principle of "nothing about you without you".

#### *Questions from the Commission*

6.2.5 The Chair asked if the Cabinet member can set out future funding arrangements for the children and family hubs.

- (Cllr Sizer) To guarantee the sustainability of this work, the Best Start Family Hubs project has secured an additional three years of funding, with a focus on transformation and building long-term viability through the shared partnership approach.

### 6.3. Specialist SEND Provision in Hackney

6.3.1 As the number of children and young people with an EHCP in Hackney is projected to grow by almost by 19% by 2032, can Cllr Sizer update the Commission on current and future plans for developing additional in-borough specialist placements for children with SEND?

- a) In addition to the current offer of 529 places across Stormont, Ickburgh and The Garden, how many new placements in special schools are planned to be provided in Hackney in the medium term (next 3 years)?
- b) How many additional special school places will the repurposing of a vacant school site bring to Hackney? Will the site be operated by an existing specialist school? When will the new places become available?
- c) There are currently 10 Additional Resource Provisions (ARP) in local primary schools and 3 in local secondary schools. How many new ARPs are planned for the medium (3 year) period and how is the imbalance between primary and secondary ARP provision being addressed?
- d) How many new in-borough specialist places are planned for children with SEND from the Charedi community? Will any of these be in maintained provision?

*Cabinet member response*

6.3.2 Hackney is implementing a significant expansion of its specialist SEND provision, building upon the current offer of 529 places. Over the medium term of three years, the plan is to add between 120 and 150 new special school placements. This is in addition to an ongoing capital project that will deliver 48 extra places at Ickburgh from 2027 by repurposing the former Baden Powell primary school site. The local authority is currently evaluating potential sites for the remaining 150 placements, and the determination of whether these will be managed by an existing specialist school or a new provider will follow consultation.

6.3.3 There are currently 10 ARP in primary schools and 3 in secondary schools. To address the current imbalance in provision, an additional 90 to 100 Additional Resource Provision (ARP) places are intended for creation over the next three years, with 54 to 64 designated for the secondary sector. This intention will note new provisions in the new white paper which is still being finalised in parliament.

6.3.4 Finally, the authority is actively collaborating with Charedi schools and specialist providers to develop more SEND options, including plans to transition some independent schools into the maintained sector as voluntary aided schools, though the exact number of resultant specialist places is currently unspecified. All planned developments are being considered in line with the SEND white paper published in February 2026.

*Questions from the Commission*

6.3.5 The Chair thanked the Cabinet member for their response, noting member satisfaction of the additional in-house provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) within the borough. This development is greatly welcomed as it ensures children can receive high-quality education locally, often at cost than independent providers. The plans were particularly reassuring regarding efforts to meet the needs of the Charedi community by supporting their schools to re-join the maintained system.

6.4 Wraparound Childcare Provision

6.4.1 LB Hackney received £913,638 funding (2023/24-2025/26) to develop wraparound childcare provision in schools, nurseries and other childcare settings. Can Cllr Sizer update the Commission on how this funding has been used to improve the capacity and sustainability of wraparound childcare provision to parents across Hackney?

- a) How has funding been used to ensure that wraparound provision has been effectively targeted to support those families in greatest need?
- b) How has funding been used to support wraparound provision in local special schools and more broadly to those families of children with SEND?
- c) Cost is a significant barrier to the take up of wraparound childcare provision, how has the programme addressed affordability for local parents?
- d) Has funding been used to test or pilot new models of wraparound care which offer high quality, affordable and sustainable placements/opportunities for local families?

*Cabinet member response (join responsibility with DM Bramble)*

6.4.2 DM Bramble acknowledged positive progress with the Department for Education's (DfE) initiative. Hackney Education has been scaling up provision in schools to cover hours from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM, with the goal of extending these offers more widely across Hackney. Hackney received approximately £900,000 for this program, with just under half distributed directly to schools. The remaining funds support a caseworker for about two weeks and a senior officer who oversees the provision's successful operation. An additional grant of £133,000 was noted for early years' provision.

**Monday 16 March 2026**

6.4.3 Cllr Sizer noted that in respect of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision, it was noted that no special schools have joined the wraparound care program despite two rounds of grant funding. However, Hackney has supported other schools in utilising capital grants for building modifications and resources to make wraparound care as inclusive as possible for children with SEND. A package of continuous professional development for school staff has been undertaken, including training on interaction with parents, food, health and safety, and various SEND models. (DM Bramble noted that) Schools with provision are encouraged to open it up to children from other schools, and future efforts will focus on expanding breakfast clubs across the borough. The value of in-house SEND provision was highlighted, emphasising the opportunity for SEND children to form relationships with local peers.

#### *Questions from the Commission*

6.4.4 The Chair asked whether value for money, affordability and the disparity in pricing and service quality, drawing parallels to the work on free school meals. Concerns were noted about the variance in costs for breakfast and after-school clubs, which could amount to hundreds of pounds per month for families. The Chair inquired about the work being done to test and pilot new models to identify and support the adoption of best practices, ensuring rollout is according to need rather than by school.

- (DM Bramble) confirmed that training is being offered alongside these initiatives to ensure schools operate sustainably. The previous work through the task force, which invested £300,000 into food for schools, provided training for teachers, involved parents, and gave every Year Three primary school child a session with a chef. This task force work is intended to make school meals more sustainable, economical, and healthier. Schools are showing innovation, such as one school that controversially required all children to have a packed lunch to achieve economies of scale and provide a cheaper, more accessible lunch for all. It was agreed that the goal is to see schools charging approximately the same price for the wraparound offer across the borough.

6.4.5 The Chair thanked Cllr Sizer for attending and responding to questions from the Commission.

## **7 Behaviour Management & School Inclusion (21.00)**

7.1 The Commission concluded evidence gathering for its review of Behaviour Management and School Inclusion on January 22nd 2026. The Commission is in the process of collating evidence from:

1. Public evidence gathering session; -
2. Call for Evidence Survey; -
3. Focus groups with stakeholders.

7.2 Although data analysis and drawing of conclusions from the evidence is ongoing, the Commission has developed a number of high level outline recommendations for member discussion as enclosed. It was noted that initial headline recommendations and further recommendations will emerge as data analysis completes. The Commission is preparing a final report for completion before the end of the municipal year 2025/26 for submission in 2026/27.

## **8 Support for Young Parents (21.15)**

8.1 At a meeting of the Commission in March 2023, City & Hackney Public Health set out plans to decommission the Family Nurse Partnership programme in Hackney and to replace it with an Enhanced Health Visiting Service (EHVS) operated by the Homerton University Hospital. The EHVS provided an additional 5th level of support from Health Visiting services, in which intensive support would be available for vulnerable families with complex needs. The Commission reviewed the introduction of the EHVS together

**Monday 16 March 2026**

with broader arrangements to support vulnerable (young) parents and has written to the Cabinet members making a number of suggestions for service development and improvement.

8.2 Members noted the letter to Cllr Kennedy, Cabinet member for Health, Adult Social Care, Voluntary Sector and Culture, & Deputy Mayor Bramble, Cabinet member for Children's Services and Young People.

8.3 The response would be published in the next available agenda.

## **9 Child Safeguarding Practice Review - Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy (21.15)**

9.1 Following the concerns raised by parents, local safeguarding partners agreed to undertake a Child Safeguarding Practice review of the impact of the school behaviour policy at Mossbourne Victoria Park Academy (MVPA) in December 2024. The focus of the review was to identify any lessons learned concerning the application of behaviour policies and their impact on students, families, staff and the wider school community. The findings of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) Child Safeguarding Practice Review (CSPR) was published on the 9th December 2025.

9.2 Following a review of the conclusions and recommendations of the report to assess the strategic implications for CHSCP, the local authority and the Department of Education, the Commission has requested a further update from the CHSCP at a future meeting of the Commission on July 8th 2026.

9.3 In response to questions raised about constructive engagement of Mossbourne Academy Trust, it was noted that the Director of Education and Group Director for Children & Education had, along with representatives from the Department of Education, met with the school in London. The Trust has set up an implementation committee, of which representatives from both Hackney and Thurrock have been invited to attend as advisers and would be sharing further information in due course.

9.4 It was noted that the Chair and Vice Chair would meet with the Chair of Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee in Thurrock to share information about scrutiny processes in respective boroughs. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor would also be meeting with their equivalents in Thurrock.

9.5 Members noted the invitation letters to CHSCP and, as regulator of academies, the Department of Education. An invitation has also been sent to Mossbourne Academy Trust to attend.

## **10 Improving outcomes for Black Children & Young People (21.15)**

10.1 The improving outcomes for young Black men programme commenced in 2014. The purpose of this programme was to plan, prioritise and coordinate local systems change to address inequalities as experienced by local Black boys and young men. The aim for the programme was that the outcomes and opportunities for Black boys and young men in Hackney would be the same as the wider population within a 10-15-year period.

10.2 The Commission reviewed the IOBCYP at its meeting in January 2026 and has written to the Cabinet member for Children's Services & Young People setting out a number of suggestions to inform the strategic development of the programme.

10.3 Members noted the letter to DM Bramble, Cabinet member for Children's Services & Young People. The response would be published in the next available agenda.

## 11 Housing Support for Families of Children with SEND (21.15)

11.1 Following a deputation by parents to Full Council in January 2025, the CYP Scrutiny Commission and Living in Hackney Commission jointly agreed to scrutinise housing support for families of children with SEND. The Commission focused on:

- Local authority housing duties and responsibilities for families with children with SEND;
- Nature /scale of the housing challenge supporting families of children with SEND;
- Medical needs assessment process;
- Available help to support families move into alternative suitable accommodation (swaps, PRS and out of borough);
- Coordinated council wide offer in the absence of local housing options (e.g. adaptations, Family Hubs, Disabled Children Service, Respite, Early Help CVS).

11.2 Using the evidence presented at the meeting, the Commission has drafted a letter to Cabinet members setting out a number of suggestions for improvement. The letter was presented to the Commission for consideration and finalisation ahead of presentation to Cabinet members.

11.3 Members noted the letter to Deputy Mayor Bramble, Cabinet member for Children's Services and Young People, Cllr Sade Etti, Cabinet Member for Homelessness Prevention, Rough Sleeping and Temporary Accommodation and Cllr Anya Sizer, Deputy Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years & SEND, subject to the amendments / clarifications received. The final letter would be published in the next agenda.

## 12 Work Programme (21.20)

12.1 Members of the Commission are asked to note the Commission's work programme for 2025/2026.

12.2 Given the proximity of the first meeting of the Commission in the new municipal year to the Annual General Meeting, members agreed potential items from the long list (for 2025/26) that can be taken at this meeting for the Chair and Vice Chair to confirm.

- Childhood immunisations;
- School Nursing;
- Elective Home Education.

## 13 Minutes of previous meeting (21.20)

13.1 Members noted and agreed on the minutes of the previous meeting.

***Members Agreed the minutes of 10th December 2025;***

***Members Agreed the minutes of 12th January 2026;***

***Members Agreed the minutes of 10th February 2026.***

13.2 Members noted follow up information (Housing Support for Families of Children with SEND) on the 10th February 2026.

## 14 Any other business

14.1 As this was the final meeting as Chair of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission, Cllr Conway shared a number of reflections on scrutiny.

**Monday 16 March 2026**

14.2 The most important element for effective scrutiny is to remain curious about the challenges and possible solutions. It is essential to actively seek out and listen to the voices of the most marginalised and least visible children, young people, and families, as they often experience the sharpest end of things. Scrutiny role is to keep both high-profile services and those delivered to smaller, more vulnerable groups in focus, listening for "the profound in the silence" when changes occur with little noise.

14.3 To maintain a clear sense of direction, choose topics carefully, focusing on where meaningful change through recommendations is possible. While accountability can be complicated, you must continue to "hold feet to the fire" even when the levers for change sit beyond the council. I believe that scrutiny provides the necessary "friction" that builds grip, traction, strength, and resilience, which is essential for moving forward.

14.4 While progress is often slow, one of the commission's most significant pieces of work was securing housing support for care leavers, giving them access to the housing register. This work, which I saw come into sharp focus recently, demonstrates the real human benefit of what we do. My understanding of the lived experience of children, young people, and families in Hackney was most profoundly shaped by my interactions with them, their parents, carers, and community organizations, as this brought the commission's work to life in a way no report or data set ever could. The legacy I hope to leave is that the children, young people, and families we have worked with felt heard, seen, and that their experiences mattered.

14.5 The Chair thanked all those who had supported the work of the Commission:

- To the officers, the Mayor, and cabinet members, I thank you for your professionalism and for working constructively with the commission, especially during challenging situations like proposed school and children centre closures.
- To Vice Chair Cllr Margaret Gordon, for being a warm, supportive, and steadfast presence, and a fierce advocate for families and equity.
- To Scrutiny Officer Martin, for his dedication, planning, and understanding of the council, which enabled our ambitious work programs and ensured the quality of the commission's output.

14.6 It has been a privilege to have chaired this commission for eight years. Thank you all.

14.7 The next meeting of the Commission is on the 15th June 2026.

Duration of the meeting: 2 hours 50 minutes