



# **Serious Case Review Update**

## **Tashaûn (Child C)**

**December 2021**

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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 On 1 May 2019, Tashaûn Aird, a 15-year-old male, died after being stabbed whilst in the street. Tashaûn had been permanently excluded from school and three months before his death, he was seriously injured in another stabbing incident.
- 1.2 On 19 December 2019, a 15-year-old boy was found guilty of his murder at the Old Bailey. A 16-year-old boy and an 18-year-old male were both convicted of manslaughter. A fourth suspect, a boy aged 16, died in custody prior to trial after becoming unwell.
- 1.3 [Tashaûn's Serious Case Review \(SCR\)](#) was published in December 2020 and made nine findings relating to the protection of young people at risk of extra-familial harm.
- Exclusion from mainstream school can heighten risk.
  - Education settings need access to local intelligence.
  - A focus on the individual child is important.
  - Clarity is needed about interventions to mitigate extra-familial risk.
  - Developing positive relationships with young people is important.
  - Involving and supporting parents is essential to effective safety planning.
  - Inconsistent judgements about risk creates uncertainty.
  - The use of child protection procedures.
  - Poor case recording can directly impact on practice.
- 1.4 The SCR identified that a range of practitioners had access to information indicating that risk had escalated. They knew Tashaûn had been excluded from school, that he was frequently going missing, and intelligence suggested he was being criminally exploited. However, despite these signs, multi-agency practice lacked a collective focus on Tashaûn's lived experience and whilst it can be said that local procedures were broadly followed, they were insufficient to keep him safe.

1.5 At the time of publication, the Independent Child Safeguarding Commissioner of the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP) committed to revisiting certain aspects of the SCR to accrue further learning. These included the areas of:

- Exclusions
- Alternative Provision
- Contextual Safeguarding and the response to extra-familial risk

1.6 This report provides an overview of the activity undertaken in response to these areas whilst detailing the progress made against the wider recommendations of the SCR. It also takes account of the Hackney Children & Young People Scrutiny Commission's review into permanent exclusion that was published on 6 December 2021. It does not cover the entire range of activity that is underway in terms of responding to extra-familial harm and safeguarding adolescents.

## **2 Action Plan Progress**

2.1 The SCR action plan is overseen by the CHSCP Case Review Subgroup. The wider partnership response to extra-familial risk remains under the governance of the Safeguarding Adolescents Subgroup, although there remain close links with activity being delivered by the Community Safety Partnership.

2.2 Progress against the plan has been broadly positive and several of the themes identified by the SCR have gained significant traction within our safeguarding system. That said, there remain stubborn challenges. Key headlines from the action plan are set out below.

### **Awareness Raising and Training**

2.3 Actions in response to the need for awareness raising and the delivery of training have largely been completed. Relevant learning continues to be

promoted, embedded, and tested as part of the CHSCP's Learning & Improvement Framework.

- 2.4 The SCR report has been cascaded to front-line practitioners via partner agency leads, single agency communications, a [CHSCP Things You Should Know \(TUSK\)](#) briefing and via the CHSCP website.
- 2.5 Two learning seminars were also hosted by the CHSCP in March 2021. Led by the independent author, these sessions involved Tashaun's mother, stepfather and sister providing an account of the family's perspective. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the contribution of Tashaun's family was powerful in driving home key lessons for practice.
- 2.6 Over the course of the two events, 133 practitioners participated. 94% of those attending said the content was either excellent or very good and 92% said the learning shared on the day would enable them to safeguard children and young people more effectively. A selection of comments made by participants are set out below:

*"The fact that the parents and sister of the young man who lost his life contributed to the presentation, was both humbling and powerful. I am most grateful to them for sharing their thoughts, feelings, and reflections. As professionals we MUST learn from this".*

*"The voice of the parents was crucial to us as professionals remembering we are dealing with people, not cases, and each child should be seen as an individual not a statistic".*

*"Understanding the true impact on the family. Having the opportunity to hear first-hand from the parents' perspective. Hearing real, live emotion, distrust, their journey. How things can improve from young people and the necessary steps to prevent this from happening in the future".*

- 2.7 In support of these events and to help create a '*learning legacy*' of Tashaûn's experiences, the family has also agreed to participate in a video training resource for the CHSCP. Whilst the imposition of the pandemic has frustrated our ability to finalise this, we remain hopeful it will be completed and launched in early 2022. This resource will be available to the entire professional network and will form part of the CHSCP training programme focused on safeguarding adolescents.
- 2.8 Of relevance, Hackney Education has also revised the content of exclusion training for school governors to include reference to Tashaûn and the SCR's findings. Further information for school governors was similarly developed and has been shared via the Hackney Governors' Forum.

### **Policy and interventions as an alternative to PEX**

- 2.9 The SCR recommended that safeguarding partners should reassure themselves that all schools within their jurisdiction abide by national and local exclusion policy and promote the use of other interventions designed to address disruptive behaviour as an alternative to Permanent Exclusion. Actions in response to this recommendation have made progress.
- 2.10 On publication of the SCR, a copy was sent to all schools in Hackney. The report was also formally considered by Hackney Education's Senior Leadership Team, with discussions being held on its recommendations.
- 2.11 As a result, several initiatives to promote early intervention and alternatives to Permanent Exclusion (PEX) have commenced. These include an offer of 'Behaviour and Exclusion' visits being made to schools (deep dive reviews) and the delivery of trauma informed practice training. Both are being led by Hackney Education's Reducing Exclusions Executive Group and overseen by a Reducing Exclusion Board, which includes school representation.
- 2.12 Furthermore, as of November 2021, work to expand and strengthen the preventative offer to schools has also gathered momentum. Plans have been

developed for an enhanced education early help offer with a focus on reducing exclusions. Consultation is taking place with schools on the detail and work is being undertaken in collaboration with key services to ensure the offer aligns with the wider early help offer.

- 2.13 Further details are set out in Section 3 of this report. The initiative remains on track for launch in September 2022. In the meantime, effort continues in securing alternatives to exclusion using managed moves. Exclusion reviews have also been held in some schools to provide an opportunity for learning following a PEX.

### **Risk Assessment**

- 2.14 The SCR recommended that schools should ensure they have a detailed understanding of the potential safeguarding needs of any child who is at risk of PEX. This should be informed by a robust assessment that includes a clear focus on extra-familial risks and the contextual safeguarding implications for the child. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.
- 2.15 In response to this recommendation, secondary schools in Hackney were engaged to complete a survey on exclusion practice. Secondary schools were also asked to ensure their Designated Safeguarding Leads remained aware of all Fixed-Term Exclusion and PEX processes and that behaviour policies were updated to include reference to extra-familial risk. The pandemic hindered follow-up visits to schools on this issue over the summer of 2021.
- 2.16 That said, recent evaluation of the [CHSCP's self-assessment process](#) for schools and colleges illustrates some positive reassurance in this respect.
- 90.8% schools cover contextual safeguarding and extra-familial risk as part of induction
  - 81.6% provide further training on these topics, with 18.4% providing some.

- 87.4% of schools include contextual safeguarding and extra-familial harm within their safeguarding and child protection policy. Only two schools self-assessed as not being compliant in this area.

2.17 Also relevant to this recommendation, a defined risk assessment process has been incorporated into the exclusion notification form. Going forward, this will help ensure that Alternative Provider (AP) settings are alert to any possible risks – something that was missing in the context of Tashaûn’s experiences.

2.18 This issue remains an area of priority for the CHSCP and following publication of the [Child I SCR](#), the partnership is considering additional options for how multi-agency involvement can be improved both prior to and at the point decisions are being made about permanent exclusions

2.19 The CHSCP recognises that discipline is a key issue for schools, as is their responsibility to ensure all pupils are safe and can learn without disruption. Having said that, PEX is a known mechanism that can exacerbate risk. It can inadvertently create more danger for children and as such, this issue remains one firmly in the line of sight of safeguarding partners. As set out in the Child I report:

*‘The current exclusion process fails to accrue the benefits of multi-agency working, which as we know, is the most effective way to help and protect the young and vulnerable. This does not necessarily mean that the overall accountability for decision making needs to change, but no child should ever be excluded without a process that engages the wider partnership.*

*This should be done for two reasons. Firstly, to leverage the maximum support available to keep children within mainstream school and secondly, if this isn’t possible, to begin early planning for mitigating the predictable risk that will arise for some.*

*Operating within the current law and guidance concerning exclusions, Safeguarding Partners should explore with both primary and secondary schools*



*how multi-agency involvement could be improved both prior to and at the point decisions are being made about permanent exclusions.'*

## **Review of guidance by the DfE**

- 2.20 The SCR recommended that the Department for Education (DfE) should review the statutory guidance and non-statutory guidance covering exclusions to ensure safeguarding risks are sufficiently considered as part of the decision-making process for exclusions. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.
- 2.21 The Department for Education (DfE) was sent a copy of the SCR report on publication in December 2020. Follow up communication with the DfE was sent in April and September 2021. There has been no response.
- 2.22 In June 2021, the DfE issued call for evidence in respect of behaviour in schools, the use of inclusion units and managed moves. The DfE has said this consultation will inform revised behaviour and exclusion guidance. A response submitted by Hackney Education included the need for safeguarding factors to be considered, referenced the experiences of Tashaûn, and included a link to the SCR.

## **Intelligence Briefings**

- 2.23 To help PRUs / APs manage the potential risk arising from different cohorts of young people placed in their facilities, the SCR recommended regular briefings be made available that include intelligence on youth violence, local gang conflicts and other areas of community tension. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.
- 2.24 To help facilitate improved awareness of key themes, patterns and trends relating to serious youth violence and gang activity, the Hackney Gangs Information Sharing Meeting is now attended by representatives from Hackney Education and New Regent's College.

- 2.25 Whilst positive, the CHSCP remains committed to facilitating the production of a quarterly briefing for direct circulation. Whilst there have been delays, agreement has been reached on this issue with the Integrated Gangs Unit. It is intended that the first briefing will be ready for circulation in the new year.

### **The Focus on Trauma**

- 2.26 The SCR recommended that local guidance covering risk, safety, and contingency planning for victims of serious youth violence considers the trauma a young person has experienced, with the plan focussing on both the individual physical and emotional recovery. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.
- 2.27 At the time of publication of the SCR, guidance and processes were already in place to respond to community-based trauma from the Community Resilience Partnership and Young Hackney. There remains work to do for the partnership in embedding integrated support around trauma for every young person who experiences significant harm in the community, including the trauma experienced through racism.
- 2.28 Additional areas where progress has been made include revisions to the Hackney CFS Critical Incident Response Protocol that now includes a recommendation in respect of trauma. Trauma also features in Daily Risk meetings held in the Hackney Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and will also be added to the Extra-Familial Risk Panel referral and the Context Intervention Unit consultation document. These actions will help ensure this issue is actively considered in practice.

### **Anti-Racist Practice**

- 2.29 The SCR recommended that policy, procedure, and guidance is sufficient to ensure the active consideration of racial and cultural identity as part of the safety planning process involving extra familial risks. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.

- 2.30 Beyond policy and guidance, there is a need for practice to proactively and confidently explore cultural and racial identity when engaging children from black and global ethnic majority groups.
- 2.31 Positively, relevant activity against this recommendation is evident across a range of partner organisations. Examples include the work undertaken by Hackney CFS in developing its Anti-Racist position statement and practice standards when working with Black children and families and those from global ethnic majority groups.
- 2.32 The CHSCP itself is working on developing its own Anti-Racist charter and is setting up a defined group to ensure this work is embedded. However, recognising the need to immediately influence practice, the CHSCP commissioned a 12-month programme of training sessions on Adultification.
- 2.33 Initially delivered to senior leaders across the safeguarding partnership, this training covers the broad concepts of racism, intersectionality and adultification, helping practitioners understand notions of vulnerability and childhood and how these are applied to some children more than others. Using the learning from relevant case reviews, participants are also taught how to guard against adultification in their practice.

## **Interventions**

- 2.34 The SCR recommended that the CHSCP should ensure the available interventions for responding to extra familial risk, including young people at risk of serious youth violence and/or exposed to criminal exploitation are sufficiently defined within local guidance to promote consistency of best practice. Actions against this recommendation are complete.
- 2.35 Local guidance is in place defining the available / evidence-based interventions with children and young people at risk of extra-familial harm. This is available for all practitioners via the CHSCP website and has been widely disseminated as part of the work on contextual safeguarding.

- 2.36 In terms of the partnership interventions specifically relating to serious youth violence, these were set out in a roundtable discussion at Downing Street in March 2021. This report can be found in *Appendix 1*.

### **Named Professionals / Trusted Adults**

- 2.37 The SCR recommended that the multi-agency partnership should nominate a named professional or adult who has (or who can develop) a trusted relationship with children who are assessed to be of risk of serious youth violence. This named professional should focus on developing the child to adult relationship. Actions against this recommendation are complete.
- 2.38 The CHSCP has revised and updated its practice guidance on strategy discussions to ensure that every child at risk of serious youth violence now has the possibility to benefit from developing a positive relationship with a trusted professional. Guidance now sets a clear expectation for trusted adults to be identified at the strategy discussion stage of intervention.
- 2.39 Multi-agency audits undertaken by the CHSCP in June 2021 identified evidence of good practice in this context with named / trusted leads identified in several cases involving serious youth violence.
- 2.40 Strategy discussion guidance and its accompanying agenda template continue to be promoted by the CHSCP. A video explainer has also been released by the CHSCP and can be found [here](#).

### **Child Protection Procedures**

- 2.41 The SCR recommended that Hackney CFS should ensure that it follows the Pan London Safeguarding guidance for children who have been victims of serious youth violence, with an emphasis on the need to ensure that managers chair any relevant strategy meetings as defined. Actions in response to this recommendation are complete.

2.42 Details on the Pan London procedures and the requirement to follow these were included in the April 21 CHSCP TUSK briefing. The audit of strategy discussions undertaken by the CHSCP provided reassurance about the sufficiency of practice in this context. Pathways and responsibilities for police contribution to strategy discussions have also been strengthened and previous delays / inconsistencies improved.

## **Kinship**

2.43 The SCR recommended that Hackney CFS should ensure it exhaust all kinship options as part of a safety or contingency plan for children who are at risk of serious youth violence to help keep them safe. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.

2.44 There remains an expectation that kinship options will always be sought as an alternative to care or as part of safety planning for young people. To help strengthen practice in this context, in cases of serious youth violence, families are offered a family group conference. The requirement to explore kinship care has also been included in Critical Incident Protocol and circulated across Hackney CFS. This recommendation remains open given the challenges in tracking performance due to the Cyber-attack.

## **Safety Planning**

2.45 The SCR recommended Hackney CFS should ensure the different methods of family engagement that can be deployed are promoted and that relevant practice guidance is sufficient. Actions in response to this recommendation remain in progress.

2.46 Proposal for relevant training within Hackney CFS were developed in early 2021. Workshop materials were finalised, and initial sessions completed. These are mandatory for all Hackney CFS practitioners to attend within the year.

## **Risk Gradings**

- 2.47 The SCR recommended that the CHSCP should review partnership and individual agency processes that involve the application of risk gradings for young people at risk of serious youth violence. Where required, these should be changed to ensure consistency and a clear understanding as to what the judgement means in the context of practice. Actions in response to this recommendation are complete.
- 2.48 Several multi-agency sessions were held to better understand practice in this context. It was agreed impractical to try and align all agencies' risk processes into one singular approach. This was largely due to the fact these are used for different purposes.
- 2.49 As a 'workaround', local guidance has been strengthened to ensure the more detailed information about risk gradings / judgements is shared during strategy discussions (see below). The potential / relevance for this narrative to feature in other partnership meetings is being reviewed by Hackney CFS.

*If in place within their agency (normally applicable to Police/Probation/IGU), professionals need to share a RISK GRADING/CATEGORY assigned to the child (ren), explain the action taken/ to be taken as a result of this grading/category and share the date this will be reviewed (note: risk gradings/categories should always be updated when new and relevant*

## **Case Status**

- 2.50 The SCR recommended that the CHSCP should review the current guidance relating to the local response to extra familial risk and ensure that this provides sufficient clarity on the 'status' of a case, management oversight and the thresholds for intervention. This should enable practitioners to clearly differentiate when a response is required as part of an early help, child in need or child protection response or one that involves the engagement of contextual

safeguarding procedure. Actions in response to this recommendation are complete.

2.51 The Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework was refreshed during 2021. This includes threshold descriptors and guidance relevant to extra-familial risk. For all cases where extra-familial harm is an issue, a strategy discussion will be held under child protection procedures.

2.52 Pathways ordinarily lead to longer-term intervention being managed under a 'Child in Need' Plan. The Hackney HCFS position statement detailing the application of thresholds and case status are set out in *Appendix 2*.

## **Recording**

2.53 The SCR recommended that the CHSCP should reassure itself that clear minutes, including agreed actions from strategy and/or discharge planning meetings for victims of serious youth violence are accurately recorded, with copies circulated in a timely way to participant agencies and where appropriate, the family. Actions in response to this recommendation are complete.

2.54 Ongoing work has been undertaken on strengthening strategy discussions following the last Ofsted inspection. This has included the production of a local guidance in Hackney, supported by a defined agenda template. The findings and report summary of the audits undertaken on strategy discussions are available on the [CHSCP website](#).

## **3. Exclusions**

3.1 In terms of Tashaûn's exclusion, learning beyond that already identified by the independent author was limited. Further analysis was frustrated by the fact that none of the involved school staff or governors remain in post and inadequate record keeping hindered our ability to find out more.

- 3.2 That said, we were advised during our work that the approach to excluding Tashaûn was unlikely to have been an isolated incident at the time. Several children who ended up in Hackney’s Pupil Referral Unit are also said to have been the focus of an ‘over-enthusiastic’ approach to PEX at Tashaûn’s school. Some of these were described as ‘soft’ PEXs, with the children reintegrating back into mainstream school relatively quickly.
- 3.3 What influenced the school’s approach at the time remains largely unknown. However, what we do know is that following work with Hackney Education in the summer of 2019 (after an inspection finding the school inadequate), there was a significant change to the trust overseeing the school and to the senior leadership team. The school is now recognised to be in a much more stable position.
- 3.4 Whilst recognising the complex circumstances in which school leaders need to manage discipline, this is a key area where their leadership and the support that schools are given will be tested going forward. In this respect, monitoring of performance is key and the recommendations made by the Hackney CYP Scrutiny Commission are fully supported in this regard.
- 3.5 In terms of other activity relating to exclusions, this is set out below:
- 3.6 Positively, reducing exclusions clearly continues to be a strategic priority for the Council and the effort of the entire partnership is evident. This is reassuring, but there is more to do. The development of new initiatives and performance in respect of local exclusions is overseen by the Reducing Exclusion Board (REB), led by the Director of Education in Hackney.
- 3.7 Work of the REB and the wider system falls into two categories. That which supports whole school approaches to behaviour and wellbeing and that which supports individual pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion.



## Whole school approaches

- 3.8 **The Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (WAMHS) programme** – WAMHS is now in most primary and secondary schools and all of the special schools. Wellbeing Framework Partners in Hackney Education oversee the work of the CAMHS Worker in School (CWIS) in each school and maintain a focus on developing a whole school culture of inclusion and wellbeing.
- 3.9 **Continual Professional Development (CPD)** - The Hackney Education CPD offer includes specific training for schools including writing Pastoral Support Plans and developing an inclusive culture. Several primary, secondary, and special schools have taken up the offer of Attachment and Trauma Awareness training and have reported a positive impact on policy, practice and staff understanding.
- 3.10 **Transition to secondary school** - There are clear and established transition processes between Year 6 and Year 7, ensuring schools share relevant data and highlight any children at risk of exclusion. The Reengagement Unit (REU) supports this with a transition programme for individual pupils who are most at risk in their schools. The Reducing Year 7 Exclusions programme also supports schools with pupils who find transition challenging.
- 3.11 **Deputy Headteacher meetings** - Secondary school Deputy Headteachers responsible for behaviour and wellbeing meet each half term. The focus of this is sharing good practice in the area. This helps develop understanding of why young people may be dysregulated in school settings and how we can collectively develop systems and processes that support them to develop the necessary skills and behaviours to learn effectively.
- 3.12 **Whole school exclusion reviews** - Exclusion reviews have been offered to all secondary schools, with two having taken place to date. The purpose is to support schools in identifying how they can further develop their work to avoid exclusion.

## Support and intervention for individual pupils

- 3.13 **The Reengagement Unit (REU)** - The REU is a multi-disciplinary service designed to respond to support schools, families and children with meeting and overcoming SEMH challenges. They work in a systematic way, to deliver long lasting change and build positive relationships both with our schools and families, and between them where communication has broken down. The REU works in 18 primary schools (as a traded service) and all secondary schools as a rapid response service to support schools, pupils, and their families with managing SEMH needs.
- 3.14 **New Regent's College** - Partnership placements have been successful at reducing permanent exclusions in primary schools. These placements see pupils attend New Regent's College for a 12-week period for assessment, intervention, and support, while they remain on a dual registration with this home primary school. At the end of the placement pupils are either reintegrated back to their primary school or, in some cases, transition to a specialist setting having secured an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).
- 3.15 In 2020/21, the partnership placement to pupils in Key Stage 3 of secondary school was expanded. Pupils attend New Regent's College for a half term long period of assessment, intervention, and support.
- 3.16 **No Year 7 Permanent Exclusions Initiative** - The No Year 7 PEX initiative saw a group of Hackney Education managers come together in 2020/21 to have a targeted focus on Year 7 pupils vulnerable to exclusion. Each secondary school had a named link officer who was the schools point of contact should they be concerned that a Year 7 was becoming vulnerable to exclusion. A total of five permanent exclusions were prevented by the direct intervention of the panel, while with others the schools were supported to sustain the pupil placement.
- 3.17 **Managed and Arranged Moves** - Managed moves have long been used as an alternative to permanent exclusion. These see pupils who would otherwise be

permanently excluded given the opportunity to attend another mainstream school for a trial period. If after the trial period, the move has been successful the pupil transfers permanently to the new school. Arranged moves are similar to managed moves except that the pupil transfers to New Regent's College, as opposed to another mainstream school.

### **Next steps for Practice: Exclusions**

- 3.18 The publication of Tashaûn's SCR has acted as a catalyst for considering how schools are supported to prevent exclusions.
- 3.19 Building on the work that has been already undertaken, proposals have been developed to create a universal education early help offer to support pupils vulnerable to exclusion.
- 3.20 Building on the strengths of the REU, this service will be expanded to cover all primary schools and have an expanded offer for secondary schools, enabling them to support greater numbers of pupils who are vulnerable to exclusion than currently.
- 3.21 This is being developed alongside the wider changes in early help provision within Hackney and it is envisaged that referrals for support would be made via the Early Help Hub, thus allowing for a wider understanding of needs and support to be established at the point of referral.
- 3.22 The development of a universal education early help offer will enable greater numbers of pupils to sustain their placements in mainstream schools and reduce the need for Alternative Provision placements. These proposals are due to be implemented in September 2022.
- 3.23 Alongside these proposals, the agreement with New Regent's College is due for renewal and will be updated to reflect the service required from New Regent's College going forward. Whilst recognising there will remain a need for some provision for pupils who have been PEX from school, the new agreement

will consider how placements at the PRU and other AP settings can better support school inclusion in Hackney. The new agreement will commence in September 2022.

- 3.24 Whilst these plans are still in development, there has also been several immediate actions to improve information sharing and understanding of risk at the point of PEX.
- 3.25 In order to improve the process, the exclusion notification form has been redesigned to include a short risk assignment that highlights to an AP any known risks. In addition details of all permanent exclusions are now routinely shared with MASH, YOT and Young Hackney so any existing information about the young person from those services can be shared with the AP prior to their starting. This means that when pupils start in their AP setting, there is a better understanding of who is working with the young person and any risks or issues that might affect their placement.

## **4. Alternative Provision**

- 4.1 The review undertaken by the Hackney CYP Scrutiny Commission is comprehensive and sets out a range of recommendations specifically relating to Alternative Provision. This report seeks to complement the Commission's work through concentrating on the issues of risk assessment, regulation and guidance.

### **Risk Assessment**

- 4.2 As set above, a defined risk assessment process has been incorporated into the exclusion notification form. This will undoubtedly support APs as part of inducting pupils into a new setting and risk management in the context of the child, other pupils, peer groups and the setting itself. This was a key issue in Tashaûn's SCR, where the AP held limited information about the risks that Tashaûn was exposed to.

- 4.3 Engagement with Hackney's Integrated Gangs Unit is also progressing and a suitably anonymised briefing on the key themes, patterns and trends relating to gang activity will be produced for direct circulation to schools, colleges, the PRU and APs.
- 4.4 As described previously, the CHSCP remains committed to exploring with schools how the exclusions process can better accrue the benefits of multi-agency working. This will have the aim of leveraging support and mitigating risk.

## **Regulation**

- 4.5 In Hackney, children on roll at New Regent's College only attend APs that are registered with the DfE and regulated by Ofsted. These APs are directly commissioned by the PRU. It is understood that these APs receive further support through 'contract monitoring' by New Regent's College. This includes the scrutinising their arrangements through visits (announced and unannounced), performance oversight and other quality assurance input. This is good practice and provides a robust level of reassurance about the quality of provision for a cohort of extremely vulnerable children.
- 4.6 That said, we were also alerted to potential gaps existing in the line of sight on some APs. As understood APs can be accessed directly by schools (i.e. supporting children temporarily whilst they remain on roll at the school). There is neither a maintained 'register' of APs located in Hackney nor one that identifies 'Out of Borough' APs at which Hackney children attend. We were told that some secondary schools in Hackney have never had a child placed in the Hackney PRU.
- 4.7 The precise number of children accessing APs and the quality of all provision remains unknown. This information gap is significant. Given the operating model of some, this could create inherent risks similar to those witnessed in

respect of Unregistered Educational Settings. As Amanda Spielman, Ofsted's Chief Inspector, wrote:

*“The law says that if an AP provider operates full-time, it must be registered with the Department for Education and inspected by Ofsted. Otherwise it is an illegal school. But unregistered provision gets no comparable, consistent scrutiny. For the past 10 years we have been calling for mandatory registration of all AP, no matter how many hours they are open or how many children attend. Without this there is little assurance that their pupils are getting a good full-time education.*

*Schools and local authorities are responsible for finding AP placements for pupils who can't stay at their school. Most schools will make sure that any AP they use is safe and suitable, but some are failing to check even that basic standards are met. And the blurred lines around which APs are required to register mean it's too easy for a child to find themselves in unregulated provision, with no one checking they're getting a good deal.”<sup>1</sup>*

- 4.8 The oversight of the AP sector and importantly, the individual children who might be attending one is an area that requires strengthening. In response, we will seek to inform the actions developed against to the Scrutiny Commission report. The CHSCP will also directly engage New Regent's College to ensure the CHSCP's minimum commissioning standards are embedded as part of its approach to engaging APs. These will also be circulated to the wider school community.

## **Guidance**

- 4.9 APs, like any other setting working with children, require good guidance to function effectively. Beyond the support already provided by New Regent's College and the recommendations set out by the Scrutiny Commission, the CHSCP intends to strengthen the connection of APs with our local safeguarding

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/nov/05/loophole-vulnerable-pupils-england-risk-alternative-provision-registered>

arrangements. As part of a wider initiative to fully engage all ‘relevant agencies’, APs will be invited and expected to participate in the CHSCP’s self-assessment programme. As a tool, this can help APs focus on the basics of safeguarding and facilitate access to free training and the wider support available from the safeguarding partnership team.

## **Next steps for Practice: Alternative Provision**

- 4.21 For those pupils in alternative provision, the newly created [AP Taskforce](#) co-locates a range of different services at New Regent’s College to provide them with enhanced pupil support on site.
- 4.22 The Taskforce brings together practitioners who can provide family support, young justice, post-16 transition support, speech & language therapy, and education psychology support under the one roof with the aim of reducing youth violence and improving outcomes for those young people who attend. The taskforce had a soft launch in November 2021 and is funded for two years.

## **5. Contextual Safeguarding: Extra-Familial Risk**

- 5.1 On 31 March 2020, the DfE published an evaluation report completed by the University of Sussex into the contextual safeguarding system in Hackney<sup>2</sup>. This report concluded the following:

*‘There are some limited indicators that suggest Contextual Safeguarding has the potential to exert a positive impact on practice but very limited evidence is available so far regarding service user experiences or child-level outcomes. This is not surprising, as the new system is not yet finalised and embedded. The final report of Round 1 of the Innovation Programme indicated that social care innovation generally requires substantial lead-in time for process change to translate into enhanced service experiences and outcomes for young people,*

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<sup>2</sup> [Evaluation of the implementation of a Contextual Safeguarding system in the London Borough of Hackney Evaluation report, 2020](#)

*families and communities (Sebba et al., 2017). We would suggest that 2-3 more years might be necessary for the embedding of the new Contextual Safeguarding system in Hackney to be completed, costs ascertained, and impact evidence to be generated. Only then might the value for money of the new system be adequately appraised.'*

- 5.2 The University of Sussex research is continuing and is due to conclude in 2022. This work and additional scrutiny has been hindered by both the Covid-19 pandemic and the Cyber-attack on Hackney's systems. In the absence of this evidence-base, there is little detail to add until this research is complete.



## Appendix 1

### Briefing Paper, Serious Youth Violence Downing Street Round Table, March 2021

#### Introduction

Adolescent safeguarding has been a London-wide priority for the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) for the last two years and collaborative work has been ongoing through the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance.

Activity across authorities has included peer reviews and the development of a Multi-Agency Adolescent Safeguarding Practice Framework, which is intended to drive up the quality and consistency of work to safeguard adolescents across partners in the capital. This work continues as a key priority for ALDCS.

In March 2020, the London Children's Safeguarding Partnership Executive established an Adolescent Safeguarding Oversight Board to better coordinate police, local authority, health, MOPAC, violence reduction unit and voluntary sector activity to safeguard adolescents in London. This Board will have a particular focus on extra-familial harm and exploitation, closely associated with serious violence.

In responding to the questions posed, we have set out our analysis of risk and outlined the combined work of the local partnership to safeguard young people and to reduce harm within our community. Hackney's approach treats violence as a preventable public health issue; using data and analysis to identify causes and to examine what works and to co-produce solutions. Incidents of serious violence have a significant and lasting impact on the wider community as well as for the young people and families involved. We are conscious of the impact and effect of trauma and as a partnership are committed to increasing resilience and developing trauma informed practice.

**Q1) What assessment you have made of the size and nature of the threat of serious youth violence and criminal exploitation in your area and how COVID-19 has changed the nature of vulnerability, including any hotspot neighbourhoods, schools, alternative provision, colleges, or other settings where there may be particular risks.**

- We note that the data circulated to local authorities attending the SYV roundtable has been drawn from A&E. In the last 12 months local Police and youth offending data shows a downturn in serious violence, however we remain mindful of the increased threat of serious youth violence as lockdown restrictions are eased and young people return to school.
- As of today (10/3/21), Basic Command Unit (BCU) data for Hackney shows that Knife Injury Under 25's is down -35% compared to this time last year. Total Knife Crime is down -32% compared to this time last year. Robbery is also down -32% compared to last year (this is noted because 60% of knife crime in Hackney can be found within robbery).
- Hackney YOT has undertaken a local and comparative analysis of SYV to identify key themes in performance over a period of three financial years from 2016 to 2019, using the Youth Justice Board's SYV toolkit and the latest available local data. SYV offences are defined as any Drug, Robbery, or Violence against the person offence committed

by a child aged 10-17 which receives a score of 5 or above on the YJB's list of offence seriousness scores.

- In 2018/19 there were 34 SYV offences in Hackney; a small reduction from the previous financial year but a significant reduction from 83 offences in 2016/17, when SYV comprised 18% of all youth offences. In 2018/19 the rate of SYV in Hackney was 13.7 (per 10,000 of the general 10-17 population) - lower than most members of the 'YOT Family' (Haringey, Islington, Southwark, and Lewisham), but slightly higher than Greenwich. Over the same period the average rate across the SYV Network (30 local authorities) was 23.1.
- The rate of SYV offences in Hackney indicates a downtrend and the borough is the only member of the 'YOT family' to experience falls each year. In Hackney male children continue to commit the majority of all SYV offences (94% in 2018/19), although the total SYV offences by males has reduced. Most SYV offences are committed by 16-year-olds (accounting for 40 to 45% of all SYV) however the yearly total offences by 16-year-olds have reduced significantly over time from 33 in 2016/17, to 13 in 2018/19.
- Common features of those engaged in SYV include complex and traumatic family experiences (domestic violence and/or abuse; SEND needs and experiences of school exclusion, family history of involvement in offending and parental substance misuse and/or mental health). In Hackney our education, health and social care services have placed emphasis on understanding these adverse childhood experiences and developing practice which is trauma informed.
- Our BCU conducts serious violence threat assessments daily, weekly and monthly to support the tasking process. The tasking process ensures that partnership resources are allocated to undertake interventions in an integrated way. We anticipate that there will be an incremental return to pre- lockdown crime patterns through the ease of the restrictions as footfall increases. In Hackney, this creates serious violence demand in late afternoons and throughout the evenings and within open spaces and transport modes during school egress, in the night-time economy (NTE) of Shoreditch, at transport hubs and at the site of unlicensed music events (UME).
- Health services and third sector charities are also playing a key part in our approach to tackling SYV. Red Thread and St. Giles Trust staff are embedded at Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (HUHFT) and the Royal London Hospital trauma unit respectively and use '*teachable moments*' to divert young people away from offending and violence. The most recent report received from Red Thread shows that 54 young people attended HUHFT A&E between 01.10.20 and 30.11.20.
- Of these, 26 attended for assault (the most common reason for YP attendance). In the reporting period July to end November 2020 between 50-60% of referrals to Red thread for support were for young women. Young women were more likely to be referred in relation to mental health reasons or illness but also for reasons of domestic violence and sexual violence. Presentations for mental emerging, ongoing and crisis mental health conditions have increased. Hackney Context Intervention Unit and Integrated Gangs Unit are developing closer working relationships with both teams to ensure the partnership is fully sighted on emerging trends and peer groups and locations of harm.

- Within the Safer Schools Partnership, information is exchanged on a case by case or school by school basis to inform daily and weekly deployments of police, schools and partnership staff.
- A monthly Gangs Partnership Tasking Meeting is held to present the latest intelligence and analysis on gang youth related violence and exploitation. This meeting identifies priority areas and individuals who require immediate and longer-term partnership interventions.
- Joint panel meetings address gangs violence matrix (GVM) individuals and their complex needs. It should be noted 15 % of those on the GVM are aged under 18 years.
- The police Local Intelligence Team (LIT) assessment of Threat, Harm, Opportunity and Risk (THOR) is also utilised to support the reduction of SYV.
- A bespoke, Hackney 'return to school' plan is in place and will address unauthorised absence and linked vulnerability, school egress (safer routes initiative) and open space vulnerabilities.
- An integrated Local Authority and Police patrol plan was activated on Monday 8th March 2021 to provide high visibility reassurance patrols in the vicinity of our educational premises. This initiative will be reviewed for effectiveness at the weekly tasking meeting.
- The Police response is delivered by a locally enhanced Safer Schools Team (this team is ring fenced from abstraction to other duties during this period), Safer Neighbourhoods Officers and the Police Task Force Team, Violence Suppression Unit, Integrated Gangs Unit and Robbery Task Force officers. The local police also have the support of central policing resources.

**Q2) What multi-agency assessment and tasking arrangements you have put in place, to coordinate an effective response and, for example, whether there is a joint control strategy**

- The reduction of SYV and the safeguarding of vulnerable adolescents are key objectives for local safeguarding partners. The response to SYV is driven through the Hackney Community Safety Plan chaired and attended by senior strategic leaders in our borough. To support delivery, a single Serious Violence Action Plan is reviewed for progress at a number of operational boards. Partnership resources are tasked at the Monthly Partnership Tasking Meeting to provide better integration. Our Violence Action Plan has recently been reviewed by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) with a favourable assessment being made.
- The City & Hackney Safeguarding Partnership (CHSCP) leads on the response to safeguarding adolescents through a defined action plan and working group. This is focused on children and young people at risk of exploitation, including criminal exploitation, and as such there is a clear correlation to the work underway in tackling SYV.
- The London Borough of Hackney (LBH) has also invested in an Integrated Gangs Unit (IGU) incorporating a number of key stakeholders including officers from Children and Families Service to work in an integrated way to reduce gang violence in LBH. The IGU works closely with schools and other educational premises to identify and reduce SYV.

- The Police hold twice daily, weekly and monthly intelligence and tasking meetings. Local authority staff attend the latter. All issues of threat risk and harm discussed and actions (Victim, Offender, Location, Time) assigned to mitigate.
- The Local authority holds regular Partnership tasking meetings focused on escalating ASB (which links to SYV).
- Hackney has a Safer Young Hackney Board which has oversight of youth justice practice across the partnership. Hackney's Youth Justice Strategic Plan runs from 2019-22 and is refreshed annually. It links with, and contributes to, the principles and priorities of the strategic plans of the Council and key partner agencies; including but not limited to the Serious Violence Plan, Reducing Exclusions Board, and Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men Programme. The youth justice plan ensures all delivery is in the best interests of children; recognising their particular needs, strengths and capacities to develop a pro-social identity that will sustain desistance, prevent violence and safeguard young people at risk of serious youth violence.
- Through the local focus on embedding contextual safeguarding practice across our partnership, young people identified as being at risk of extra familial harm are discussed at the Extra Familial Risk Panel (EFRP). THE EFRP coordinates multi-agency safeguarding interventions, takes decisions and deploys resources in cases where an individual child / young person is (or a group of children / young people are):
  - at risk of, or are experiencing harm outside their family and/or
  - at risk of, or are causing harm to young people outside their family.
- The EFRP also coordinates safeguarding interventions regarding contexts where significant harm to young people is occurring such as within peer groups and at specific locations. Young people over the age of 18 are discussed at EFRP when they are linked to a peer group or neighbourhood that is being considered.
- The Context Intervention Unit (CIU) located within Hackney's Children and Families Services provides twice-weekly safeguarding Case Consultation Forums for staff working with young people at risk of extra-familial harm as well as assessing and intervening in 'contexts of concern'.

**Q 3) How you are identifying young people (U18) who may be at risk of serious violence, particularly where they are not in school or accessing online provision, and how you are making sure that young people at risk are attending their education setting, including how you are making use of the 'otherwise vulnerable' category.**

- Schools and the Police share information on all young people who are assessed as being vulnerable, at risk or at risk of offending. This will include young people coming to the notice of the police or who are habitually disengaged from school attendance. Intervention plans are tailored to mitigate these risks. Single agency and joint visits/working are supported.
- A Vulnerable Children's group was formed during the first lockdown and meets fortnightly to monitor school attendance and consider the needs of vulnerable pupils. The group is attended by officers from Children's Social Care, Early Help and Education. Children and Families Service staff quickly identified young people in need of support, at risk of harm and in receipt of statutory or early help services through its casework database. An assertive approach was taken with young people, their families

and schools to encourage and facilitate their return to in-person learning as a means of addressing their needs and reducing risk. Where they have not returned to school, young people are engaged proactively in home and other settings e.g., parks and Youth Hubs.

- The Extra familial Risk Panel assesses and sets action plans for those most at risk. Safety planning and intervention activities are agreed.
- A Hackney gangs panel (jointly chaired) also meets fortnightly for joint action planning for individuals who are vulnerable to gang activity.

**Q4) How you plan to identify and support young people who may be at risk of serious violence as national restrictions ease, including how to re-engage them in school or other meaningful activity to prevent them becoming NEET.**

- The vision for early help in Hackney is that services secure improvements in the immediate situations of children, young people and families (to avert crises where problems are already significant) and improve their longer-term outcomes and life chances. In support of this vision Hackney has continued to invest in youth and community services delivered in partnership with the voluntary and community sector.
- Young Hackney is the Council's integrated early help and prevention service for children and young people aged 6-19 years (up to 25 for y/p with special educational needs and/or disabilities). The service provides universal youth, play, sports and participation alongside targeted early help for young people who are vulnerable and at risk of poor outcomes. Delivery includes health and wellbeing, substance misuse and prevention and diversion intervention with access to careers advice and guidance. Throughout the pandemic, delivery has been risk assessed and adapted to meet PHE and National Youth Agency guidance. Scaled back delivery has thus been maintained for vulnerable young people.
- Young Hackney Early Help & Prevention Service delivers the out of court function of youth justice. It offers young people aged 10-18 diversionary interventions whilst working in close partnership & collaboration with police, YOT, CSC colleagues and specialist services. Hackney's approach to prevention and diversion is to ensure that all young people offered an out of court disposal (Triage, Youth Caution, Youth Conditional Caution) are provided with interventions to reduce the risk of further offending. Interventions focus on identity, building and creating opportunities for change through participation and community integration. Restorative justice, desistance & criminogenic factors and the Good Lives Model underpin interventions alongside an exploration of young people's own experiences of 'victimisation'. Outcomes for young people offered an 'out of court disposal' are positive - consistently over the last 4 years Triage success rates (i.e. Not converted to First Time Entrant to the Youth Justice system) has been over 82%.
- In 2018 Hackney successfully bid to the Home Office's Trusted Relationships Fund to establish a detached outreach team with an embedded clinical psychologist. The team has operated throughout the pandemic and engages young people on the street to develop trusted relationships with professional adults, build resilience and reduce vulnerability to criminal or sexual exploitation. Delivery involves engagement through recreational sports and arts activities, support to develop critical thinking skills, information advice and guidance (substance misuse, relationships, health/ sexual health, careers), conflict resolution, safety mapping/ planning, first aid, mental health first aid, and sharps disposal. The project is subject to independent evaluation by the Behavioural Insights Team commissioned by the Home Office.

- The IGU community coordinators supported by St Giles also undertake outreach sessions in our communities to engage with young people in their setting with the intention of identifying and responding to safeguarding issues. This is aligned with the Young Hackney 'Trusted Relationships' detached outreach team as outlined above.
- Young Hackney targeted support teams continue to work closely with secondary schools to support young people's engagement in education and reduce the risk of exclusion. This includes a dedicated team to work with students attending the pupil referral unit (funded through the VRU).
- Schools have a professional network from which to draw support. This includes a linked Young Hackney Unit, safeguarding consultation line, and Wellbeing and Mental Health in schools teams (WAMHS). WAMHS aims to increase access to early intervention and high-quality mental health interventions for children and young people through enhanced partnership working across health, education and social care. A link worker is allocated to a school to help to develop and sustain closer working links between CAMHS and schools; providing training, consultation and support, signposting and liaison. WAMHS is delivered now in all of our Hackney schools, with Mental health support teams delivering direct clinical support to children and Young People.
- We implemented our online digital counselling service (for 11yrs +), in April 2021, which is being well accessed by a range of demographic cohorts, and our mental health crisis service is now available 24/7.

**Q5) How you are engaging with your Violence Reduction Unit to access the support they can provide to you.**

- You have a synopsis from VRU to cover this, but in essence the Hackney serious violence action plan was described as being very comprehensive by our VRU colleagues. The VRU is working to share best practice whilst providing peer support to our continuous development. The VRU is working with us to develop a terms of reference to support the delivery of our action plan going forward.
- We secure £210k per annum from the VRU. This contributes to funding for both the "New Directions" initiative at the Borough's PRU and the IGU. A further £38K has been secured from the VRU to deliver a 'Parent Champions' programme; to help build resilient families through peer support and IAG. This programme is delivered through a partnership between the local authority, local voluntary sector organisations, a housing provider and the charity Coram.
- As an outcome of the roundtable discussion, Hackney would welcome investment that would secure and sustain the evidence-based interventions that have been developed through grant funding, for example the Trusted Relationships detached outreach team that includes an embedded clinical psychologist and our Context Intervention Unit.

## Appendix 2

### **The Application of Threshold in Relation to Children Experiencing or at Risk of Extra-Familial Harm**

Historically, with social work focusing on the family context, extra-familial harm has been seen as outside of the family domain and therefore NFA for CSC at the point of referral/ following assessment where concerns around the family are not identified.

To take a contextual approach however, our role in considering the needs and risks faced by young people across all contexts (and their interplay) are critical to effective safeguarding.

The revised Hackney Child Wellbeing Framework supports us to make threshold decisions where universal plus or targeted services are required to support a child's needs and reduce the risk of harm, with complex and high-risk needs outlined requiring a statutory or multi-agency response. Those indicators highlighted in bold indicate where the threshold of significant harm is met across both intra and extra-familial contexts.

Therefore children with additional needs in relation to their peer group, school or neighbourhood experiences may be supported through universal plus/ targeted services.

Children at risk of or experiencing significant harm in either intra or extra-familial contexts should have a statutory plan overseen by Children's Social Care.

Where the threshold of significant harm is met, the actions within a statutory plan overseen by Children's Social Care will be multi-agency and will relate to the family as required, but to be effective should also relate to the context in which the harm takes place. The role of the Social Work Unit may be to provide a specific intervention and may largely be to coordinate an effective safeguarding plan. In many cases, the plan would have a critical role for youth work in either direct 1:1 work where this cannot be undertaken by a social worker and peer group work as required. Some proposed interventions would need to be taken back to other multi-agency partners or forums such as Partnership Tasking or may require a broader context assessment to be undertaken by the Contextual Safeguarding Team.

The Contextual Safeguarding Project Team are, as the result of pilots and multi-agency working, able to leverage multi-agency engagement in the plan beyond our traditional safeguarding partners as outlined in the Assessment and Intervention Planning Guidance.

While practice varies nationally, we would expect children experiencing significant extra-familial harm to be overseen by the Extra-Familial Risk Panel and to have an individual Child Protection Conference only if there were additional safeguarding concerns in relation to parenting. The reason for this is that CP Conferences with their current multi-agency attendance being set up to focus the plan in relation to parents rather than extra-familial contexts.

For this reason, the majority of children experiencing extra-familial harm would be supported through a Child in Need Plan with a parallel plan integrated into this from the EFRP.

