

Child Q - Hackney Council response

Dear whom it may concern

Thank you for writing to the Council regarding the Local Child Safeguarding Practice review into the case of Child Q. As Group Director for Children & Education, I am responding on behalf of the Council.

My thoughts are first and foremost with the child and her family. We know that there will have been a traumatic impact on this girl, her family and those closest to her. Please be assured that the Council is continuing to offer support to Child Q and her family, who are our utmost priority.

The anonymity of Child Q is paramount and anything said or done to identify her would be wrong. A judge in a civil case has made an order regarding reporting restrictions – this prohibits the identification of the child and the identification of the school could lead to identifying Child Q and this would be harmful to her.

I acknowledge the strength of feeling in response to this incident and the wider distress across the community that it has caused. The treatment of Child Q is shocking and raises wider issues about disproportionality, adultification and police approaches to young people in some circumstances and racism.

The review makes 8 findings and 14 recommendations for practice improvement which we fully support and want to see implemented. The Council will be working with our partners, including schools and settings across Hackney, to ensure these recommendations are taken forward. Please be assured that we will provide whatever support we can to ensure that lessons are learned and acted upon. If you have not yet seen the report, details of its findings & recommendations can be found here.

The Council has issued a statement regarding the treatment of Child Q and how we are responding to the report which you can read here. In addition, the Mayor, Deputy Mayor Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Cllr Susan Fajana-Thomas and Council Chief Executive, Mark Carroll, wrote to Metropolitan Police Deputy Assistant Commissioner Laurence Taylor and Home Secretary Priti Patel to ask for an immediate review of policing guidelines and practice around strip-searching and for a public police action plan. If you have not yet had the opportunity to read these letters I would encourage you to read these online here. In addition a letter for stakeholders was issued by the Group Director of Children and Education, and the Director of Education, which you can read here.

In addition to the recommendations which call for local and national changes, I do think that this is the time to reflect on culture in secondary schools, locally and nationally. There is a great deal of highly positive work going on in all schools, with dedicated professionals working so that children are cared for, safeguarded and learn effectively. I absolutely acknowledge and appreciate this. However, there are concerns about bias in some areas and about culture in some schools. I want to use the impetus from this case to see change happen locally and nationally.

More widely, the Council is committed to anti-racism and Hackney Education leads on a range of work with regards to equalities and anti-racism with schools in the borough. We have a firm and unwavering commitment to ensuring that all schools embody anti-racist practice, and to making sure

that schools are places where all children feel they belong and are safe. We provide training for schools on unconscious bias, adultification, and the diverse curriculum. However, we acknowledge that there is more to be done, and this incident has given us pause to reflect on how we can ensure that this work is truly embedded in Hackney schools.

Additionally, Hackney Education instigated a local investigation to be undertaken by the Governing Body in order to understand how this situation was allowed to occur, including why school staff did not feel empowered to challenge the actions by the police. As a result the school has conducted reviews and implemented change. This includes reviewing roles and responsibilities in working with the police, and an external evaluation of safeguarding.

Hackney Council cannot take direct employment action against school staff. However, Council officers have been working, through the correct channels, to ensure that the school will have appropriate leadership capacity to build trust with students, parents and carers, and the wider school community.

The school is facing a challenging time and it is important that care and quality of education are maintained for the hundreds of pupils who attend. The Council has put in place a range of support with officers on site this week to offer advice and to monitor safety and safeguarding. Wellbeing and mental health support has been promoted to students, and the Council's Young Hackney team is also working with the school to provide 'Know your rights' and 'Police stop and search' sessions, as well as drop ins for students. More generally, Young Hackney is responding to queries and feelings from young people across the borough in response to the situation and providing space for these discussions, outside of school.

The Council has issued more detailed local guidance to schools this week on their policies on searching, and asked that they all review the existing policies they have in place.

I hope that this response provides some reassurance with regards to how seriously this incident is being taken by myself and all at the Council, and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to learning the lessons from the event.

Yours sincerely

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Group Director (Children & Education)

Cc: Mark Carroll (Chief Executive) and Annie Gammon (Director of Education)

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