

# Children and Family Hubs Engagement Report

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## **Introduction**

Hackney Council sought to engage with parents, carers and families on the development of new Children and Family Hubs.

## **Background**

‘Children and Family Hubs’ will offer help and support to families from conception up until age 19 (or 25 for young people with special educational needs and disabilities- SEND). The hubs will see professionals and services from right across the Council, as well as from the health, community and voluntary sectors, working together to provide high-quality, cohesive and tailored support for families.

## **Engagement approach**

Engagement with service users is the first stage in the development of the Hackney’s Children and Family Hubs with the aim of gathering insight on the services service users currently access, what works well and where there are gaps in provision, and what service users will need from children and family hubs. This insight will form the basis of engagement with providers and partners to ensure that the needs of service users are centred in the development of hubs.

Parents, carers, and children and young people were engaged through workshops and interviews at stay and play sessions and events from October 2022 to January 2023. Workshop and interview participants were given £20 Love2shop vouchers as an incentive to take part and in recognition of their time.

### **Workshops**

11 workshops were organised with Hackney parents, carers, children and young people. Workshops were facilitated by an independent facilitator, accompanied by a note taker.

### **Interviews**

As an alternative to organised workshops, members of the project team attended stay and play sessions held by Lubavitch Children’s Centre, Minik Kardes Children’s Centre and Shoreditch Trust to conduct interviews with smaller groups of parents.

### **Woodberry Down Winterfest**

Members of the project team attended the Woodberry Down Winterfest event aimed at families and gathered views through shorter conversations.

### **Wider engagement survey**

A wider engagement survey “Help us to develop Children & Family Hubs” was launched on 25th November and ran for 4 weeks to capture the views of parents, carers and professionals who may not have had the opportunity to take part in workshops. The survey findings are included as an appendix.

The survey was promoted through a range of channels:

- Posters at children's centres and libraries
- Children's centre communication channels
- Promotion at Woodberry Down Winterfest
- Schools Bulletin
- Hackney newsletters
- HCVS newsletter
- Social media advertising

## **Methodology**

The target audiences for the engagement approach were identified from partners and providers engagement delivered in July 2022 and included:

- Children and young people
- Fathers
- Single parents
- Working parents
- Parents of children with SEND
- Turkish and Kurdish parents and families
- African and Caribbean heritage parents and families
- Orthodox Jewish parents and families
- Marginalised disadvantaged groups at risk of poor education, health and life outcomes
- Low income families and those eligible for free early years entitlement
- Families with no recourse to public funds

### **Recruitment of workshop participants**

An expression of interest form was initially shared with service users through children's centres and communications channels. The form was open for 4 weeks, from 26th September to 21st October. A total of 58 respondents expressed interest in taking part in workshops. Respondents were initially selected to take part with the aim of ensuring workshops were representative. Due to the low number of EOI survey respondents who replied to invitations to take part in workshops, all respondents who expressed interest were invited to at least one workshop. In total, 13 EOI survey respondents participated in workshops.

Workshop participants were additionally recruited through children's centres, youth hubs, Council networks and partner and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that target audiences were represented. Eight engagement sessions were organised in partnership with children's centres and voluntary sector partners. Across the workshops and interviews, participation was diverse with representation of participants across a wide range of ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds. Following a gap analysis in December 2022, three further engagement sessions were planned with Shoreditch Trust, Turkish speaking parents, and fathers. Through this approach, all identified target audiences were engaged.

Workshops and interviews for parents and carers followed the same approach, asking the following questions:

- Which services do you currently access?

- What works well about the services you access?
  - Are there any barriers to accessing current services?
- What do you need from children and family hubs?
- What do we need to do to help you access support?

Questions were adapted for sessions with children and young people.

# Engagement summary

A total of 211 participants took part in the engagement between October 2022 and January 2023.

131 participants took part in workshops and interviews. 35 parents and carers were engaged at Woodberry Down Winterfest. 45 participants took part in the wider survey.

## Workshop and interview participants:

Workshop participants were recruited through children's centres, youth hubs, Council networks and partner and voluntary sector organisations to ensure that target audiences were represented. As explained in the Methodology section, full demographic information is therefore only available for 13 participants who signed up to take part in workshops through the EOI survey.

The following workshops and interviews were delivered:

- **Parents and families of children aged 0-5** - two workshops, 9 participants
- **Parents and families of children aged 6-11** - 4 participants
- **Hackney Young Futures Commission** - 8 participants, 6 young people
- **Parents and families of children of all ages** - four workshops, 22 participants
- **Woodberry Down Winterfest event** - 35 participants
- **Orthodox Jewish parents** - 23 participants
- **Children and young people aged 10-16** - 10 participants, 8 young people
- **Young people aged 14+** - 5 participants, 4 young people
- **Turkish speaking parents** - two workshops, 12 participants
- **Connecting All Communities** - 10 participants
- **Fathers** - 8 participants
- **Shoreditch Trust** - 22 participants

## Key themes identified in the workshops and interviews:

A number of key themes have been identified across the engagement session. The most common themes include:

- **Information**
  - Participants wanted better access to information on children's and family services.
  - Across the workshops and interviews, participants wanted to receive information through a wide variety of methods including:
    - A website or app with accurate information on all services where parents can filter by age of the child, location and time and date.
    - Printed materials such as leaflets and letters
    - Email, text messaging and social media
    - Information via hospitals, GPs, health visitors, schools and libraries
    - Accessible printed and online materials in a range of languages
    - Word of mouth and face-to-face information through children's centres and community leaders

- Young people wanted information through schools, youth hubs, posters, community leaders and social media. Participants stated that word of mouth is important for young people.
- **Support for parents**
  - Parents wanted a wide range of support including peer support and social opportunities, access to professional advice on children’s development, parenting and dealing with challenging behaviour, health, finance, housing and employment, access to creches and affordable childcare, and skills classes including ESOL classes and CV advice.
  - Participants identified the following groups as needing particular support: new parents, parents of children with SEND, parents returning to work, fathers, low income parents, single parents.
- **SEND support**
  - Children and families needed more support during referral and diagnosis waiting periods, including behavioural support, peer support for parents, and more support for school aged children in particular. Additional support was needed for families who speak English as a second language and asylum seekers.
  - There was support for the idea of wrap-around youth provision and colocation of professionals to support families of children with SEND.
  - Many participants shared negative experiences of long waiting times for referrals and support for children with SEND, including speech and language therapy, CAMHS, autism and ADHD diagnoses.
- **Support for older children**
  - Participants wanted more services for older children, aged 6+ and for teenagers and young adults. This included homework clubs, arts, practical and physical activities, life skills, counselling and mental health support, and parenting guidance.
- **Barriers to accessing services**
  - **Language barriers:** The challenges of accessing information, services and support for non-English speakers and families who speak English as a second language. The barrier particularly impacts asylum seekers living in temporary accommodation. Participants wanted ESOL classes at hubs and education support for children of ESL parents.
  - **Accessibility barriers:** The challenges in accessing services and children’s centres for parents with mobility issues. Participants asked for more support for disabled parents. Young people stated that more support is needed for children and young people with disabled parents and for young people who are carers.
  - **Financial barriers:** The impact of the cost of living crisis on families. Participants suggested that hubs could provide cost of living support, including food vouchers. Affordable childcare was a primary issue for many families.
- **Online support**
  - Participants had mixed views on accessing online support and generally thought service users should be given a choice. Participants discussed the challenge of digital exclusion and stated that accessing online services also

- requires childcare and is not automatically accessible.
- Children and young people also had mixed views on online services and stated there should be a balance of online, phone, and in-person services.
- **Mental health support**
  - Participants wanted mental health support to be offered in hubs. Children and young people experienced long waiting times for CAMHS support.
  - Young people talked about the importance of mental health support, the need to build trusted relationships with support workers and the challenges of mental health stigma.
- **Health visitors**
  - Some participants wanted to access health visitors and maternity support through hubs; others only wanted to see health visitors at home.
  - Participants shared mixed experiences with health visiting and talked about the value of building positive relationships with health visitors and the importance of being able to see the same professional across appointments.
- **Concerns regarding Children and Family Hubs**
  - Some participants raised concerns about children and family hubs including concerns that existing services would be reduced and concerns about the safety of children of mixed age groups.
- **Support for younger children**
  - Participants valued existing 0-5 services and wanted more access to baby services and activities including stay and play, baby massage, weighings, health visiting and spaces to get informal advice and support.
- **Partnerships & community building**
  - Participants wanted VCS partnership with hubs and stated that hubs should not replace community provision. Participants also saw hubs as tools for community building. Participants wanted better communication between partners and providers.



# Appendix: Workshop summaries

## 1: Parents and Families of children aged 0-5

- **Thursday 27th October**, Ann Tayler Children's Centre
- 4 participants attended on the day. 15 participants from the expression of interest survey had been invited to take part.
- Three participants had children under 3 years. One participant had teenage children. Two participants worked in early years settings.

### **Services accessed**

The participants had accessed a range of services at children's centres, Homerton hospital and in the community:

- Stay and play sessions at children's centres
- Intergenerational arts and crafts classes at Round Chapel
- Maternity services, lactation classes and health checks at Homerton Hospital
- Health visitor checks at home, children's centres and GP practices
- Baby massage classes
- Hackney Ark
- CAMHS services

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Services for older children:**

- Participants discussed the need for services for older children, especially for the age group between young children and teenagers, and discussed the challenges of grouping children of this age with younger children or older teenagers. Participants also stated that youth hubs should be separate to Children and Family Hubs spaces.
- Participants discussed the impact of the pandemic on teenagers' development, social experiences and the need for greater mental health support as a result. They also discussed the importance of leveraging community leaders to support older children.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants stated that they wanted more opportunities to meet other parents and build social networks as new parents.
- Participants asked for more support for young parents and parents experiencing mental health challenges. One participant talked about the value of peer support when their child received mental health treatment.
- Participants also wanted more support for parents of children and young people with SEND. This included connecting parents and teaching parents how to respond to children with behavioural issues. One participant shared that this experience had made them feel less alone.

#### **Mental health support:**

- Mental health support for parents and children should be offered in hubs. Participants stated that CAMHS waiting lists are challenging for families.

**Partnerships:**

- While participants supported the idea of a 0-19 service, they stated that hubs should not be expected to fill gaps in NHS or social services.
- The participants also commented on the important work of voluntary sector organisations and stated that hubs should not aim to replace this provision but rather signpost parents to community and voluntary services.
- Participants discussed the need for better communication between healthcare, childcare, and social care providers.
- Participants also raised the question of partnering with neighbouring boroughs to enable parents to benefit from services and provision outside of Hackney.

**Online support:**

- Participants had experienced online services during the pandemic, such as antenatal classes, however one participant commented that this had contributed to a feeling of social isolation.
- Participants discussed the costs associated with building online services and emphasised that online support would need to be user friendly.
- Other participants raised the issue of the digital divide and the need for services for parents who cannot access online services.

**Barriers (and cost of living crisis):**

- Participants discussed the cost barriers in accessing services and classes. Participants discussed the impact of rising costs on families with older children, limiting their ability to access sports and clubs. One participant talked about the benefits of receiving funding for NCT antenatal classes.
- Participants asked whether hubs could provide support for parents during the cost of living crisis.
- Participants connected antisocial behaviour among young people to the rise in living costs for families.

**SEND support:**

- Participants asked whether hubs would include nurseries for children with SEND and commented on the impact of the pandemic on children who may have missed early intervention.
- Participants also raised the need for support for parents of children with SEND.

**Partnerships and community building:**

- Participants saw hubs as a way to build community and discussed the need to recognise and celebrate Hackney's diversity through hubs. Participants discussed the need to provide space for Hackney community groups, including Muslim women, Black parents, and fathers and a space to celebrate cultural and religious events.

**Health visitors:**

- The participants reported positive experiences of health visiting and had accessed this service at home and in children's centres. One participant talked about the importance of building a relationship with a health visitor and shared the experience of being referred for postnatal anxiety support following health visiting.

## 2: Parents and families of children aged 0-5

- **Thursday 3rd November**, online (Google Meet)
- 5 participants. 32 participants from the expression of interest survey were invited to take part.

### **Services accessed:**

The participants had accessed a range of services:

- Ihsan Children's Centre, Comberton Children's Centre, Hillside Children's Centre and Linden Children's Centre
- Stay and play sessions
- Church play groups
- Maternity services
- Breastfeeding drop-ins at Daubeney Children's Centre and in Islington
- Henry group

### **Strengths:**

- Participants shared good experiences with breastfeeding support at Daubeney.
- There was strong support for the idea of hubs as a one stop shop.
- Participants valued practical advice in Start For Life emails.
- Participants thought the strength of children's centres is being staffed by childcare professionals who are highly knowledgeable. One participant gave Ihsan stay and play as an example of great support: "staff are so knowledgeable and information is relevant to the individual."

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Concerns:**

- Participants were concerned about cuts in services and expressed concern that hubs were a tool to consolidate services and may lead to cuts.
- Participants raised the challenge of affordable childcare and the 2021 consultation on children's centres. One parent emphasised that affordable childcare should be central to the conversation of family hubs and that childcare is the most important issue for many families. Participants discussed the challenges for both parents who work and stay at home parents.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants preferred face to face support for infant feeding rather than phone health visitor support.
- Health visits and support for new parents, including postnatal support were important for participants but they felt that choice of location was additionally important, particularly for parents with mobility issues.
- Participants wanted greater support for parents who work or want to go back to work, in addition to support and advice for families balancing challenges of parenting and returning to work.
- Participants stated that a creche is needed. One participant shared the experience of a friend who uses a gym to work because it provides a creche. Participants

discussed the need for working spaces for parents with low cost or free at the point of access childcare.

- Participants wanted financial advice and support related to children and families such as tax credit information. Participants discussed the challenges of finding information as a new parent and suggested workshops or advice by appointment. Participants also stated that the 15 hours free childcare entitlement allowance for 3 and 4 year olds should be automatically applied.
- Participants suggested that hubs could provide a baby bank, like Linden Children's Centre, or clothes swap events as a way to support parents with low cost baby clothing and sustainable practices.

#### **Information:**

- Participants wanted information on a website or via hubs on all drop-ins and services available. Participants said that it can be hard to find support.
- One participant asked if Start for Life could be tailored to Hackney or if a similar service could be offered detailing what is on offer locally each week.
- Participants also wanted information about hubs and services to be shared with parents via schools.

#### **SEND support and additional needs:**

- Participants talked about long waiting times for referrals to CAMHS. One participant whose child had received treatment for anxiety recommended integrating hubs with schools to provide better support. The participant had a good experience with an online support system which allowed the family to come off the waiting list. However, they stated that the challenge was knowing what support their child needed.
- Participants shared the challenges of long SEND waiting lists for autism and speech and language therapy. This was coupled with the challenge of short initial meetings and limited support for parents and children on waiting lists.
- Participants talked about the added challenges for single parents and concerns about the costs of accessing additional support for children with SEND.
- Participants asked whether some support or referrals currently accessed through GP could be provided through hubs.
- One participant raised the challenges of austerity and funding being a contributing factor to long waiting times.

#### **Services for older children:**

- Participants wanted more support for teenagers, especially for families who can't afford holiday activities and raised fears about teenagers falling into trouble.

### 3: Parents and families of children aged 6-11

- **Friday 11th November**, Sebright Children's Centre
- 4 participants, parents of children aged 3 to 13 years

#### **Services accessed**

- Parents accessed services through Sebright Children's centre and were all actively involved in the parents' forum.

#### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

##### **Services for older children:**

- Participants talked about having limited knowledge about their children's wellbeing and development once they start secondary school. More information should be given to parents as their children enter primary and secondary school.
- Participants wanted more free activities and spaces, homework clubs for older children.
- The participants discussed the challenge of accessing services with younger and older children, for instance being unable to attend children's centre sessions for their younger children if they also have older children with them. One participant stated that parents feel like they don't have access to the children's centre community once their children turn 5 years old. Another participant stated that it was easy to become isolated as their children grew up.
- Participants said children need a space to socialise, where parents feel informed and safe. When asked if their children attend youth hubs, the participants stated that they did not use youth hubs as they did not know what their children would get up to, they were concerned about the behaviour of other children and the distance of the hubs from their homes. Participants also viewed youth hubs as more appropriate spaces for older children and stated that there is a gap between children centres and youth clubs for primary school children.

##### **SEND support:**

- One participant shared their experience of waiting 7 years (from age 5 to 12) for their child to receive an autism diagnosis. The participant explained the challenges of supporting two children with SEND and described the process of trying to access support as exhausting. The participant stated that they need more accessible information about what services are available to parents and their children.

##### **Information:**

- Participants preferred to receive information in person, from children's centres or parents' forums and through leaflets.

##### **Language barriers:**

- Participants explained that in person information helps parents to overcome language barriers and online information can be harder for parents with limited English skills to access. As parents who are involved in Sebright's parents forum, the participants support each other and other Sebright parents with translation.

- The participants stated that community or peer-to-peer support is not enough and more support is needed for parents who do not speak English.

**Support for parents:**

- The participants stated that more support is needed for a wide range of parents including new parents, working parents, single parents, fathers, and low income parents. The participants discussed the challenges for low income families who are not eligible for benefits.
- Participants talked about providing more physical activities to enable fathers more opportunities to engage with their children.
- Participants wanted more access to indoor and outdoor activities for children of all ages. However, the participants were clear that they wanted access to activities that are low cost or no cost to families.
- Participants wanted more social opportunities for parents, without their children present. Participants described the value of the parents' forum as a space to connect a diverse group of parents.
- Participants also wanted access to financial advice and support, skills classes and a creche. Participants also suggested that hubs provide parents with help finding work, including CV writing skills.
- One participant stated that they need a private space for breastfeeding.

**Response to hubs:**

- Participants described the trauma of retelling their story multiple times and seeing multiple social workers. As a result, the participants were enthusiastic about the idea of hubs as a one stop shop.

## 4: Hackney Young Futures Commission

- **Tuesday 22nd November**, online (Google Meet)
- 8 participants; 6 young people aged 18-23 years
- Joint session with the Hackney Young Futures Commission on Children and Family Hubs and Super Youth Hubs.
- The workshop followed an amended approach and discussed the following questions:
  - How can we help older children and young adults and their families access support?
  - How would you want your families or key adults in your life to be involved?
  - How do you feel we can overcome barriers to accessing health and well-being?
  - Who do you want to deliver these services?
  - Where do you want to access services?
  - What would make hubs inviting for young people?

### **Recommendations**

- **Mental health support:**
  - Participants spoke about the importance of building relationships between young people, service providers and support workers before young people feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues such as mental health.
  - The group suggested that fun activities are important to offer as a way to connect with young people.
  - Participants warned that stigma can be an issue for first generation immigrant families. Families may avoid accessing services like counselling, adventure playgrounds and youth hubs due to stigma and fear of social services.
  - Participants stated that more support is needed for young people waiting for mental health referrals such as mentoring. Participants commented on the importance of accurate information sharing by professionals.
- **Information:**
  - Participants stated that more information needs to be shared directly with young people and suggested working with community leaders to reach young people and help families access support. Suggestions included religious leaders and leaders at Turkish community centres.
  - Participants also stated that word of mouth is an important way to share information.
  - Participants suggested that services could be advertised better, but warned that advertising should not be condescending.
  - Letters and leaflets to residents via schools are the most effective way to reach young people and their families.
- **Accessibility barriers:**
  - Participants discussed the challenges for young people who need to translate documents for their parents and the trauma this can cause.
  - It was recommended that translated leaflets are shared in schools for young people to take home.

- Participants discussed the similar challenges for young people with disabled parents and recommended that more support be given to young people who provide care and support for family members.
- **Online support**
  - Participants had mixed opinions on whether online services would be valuable for young people. One participant shared a negative experience with online counselling and had felt unsupported as a consequence.
  - One participant commented that phone services can be helpful for young people who may not be comfortable receiving face-to-face support.
  - On balance, participants concluded that it was most important for young people to know where support is available before they need it.

**What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

- **Service providers and professionals:**
  - Young people want services provided by young people, and people from their communities. Participants stated that family hubs and youth hubs need Black, Asian and male counsellors and support workers.
  - Participants also raised the importance of choice, stating that some young people would prefer to talk to someone from outside of their community or religion.
- **Space for young people:**
  - The participants stated that young people are attracted by activities, food, inclusive spaces to hang out, and a lively environment. Young people are attracted to a space they can decorate and be comfortable in.
- **Activities:**
  - The participants suggested expanding access to a range of activities for young people to take part in including cooking classes, pottery, karate and movie nights.
  - Participants also suggested intergenerational activities.
- **Life skills and support:**
  - Participants stated that young people need life skills advice and support including:
    - Financial advice and budget management
    - Signposting to other services accessible to families
    - Job support and advice
- **Opportunities for family counselling or support:**
  - Participants stated that family hubs should signpost young people to adult services to enable young people to help their families access support.



## 5: Parents and families of children of all ages

- **Thursday 24th November**, online (Google Meet)
- Three workshops were held simultaneously to accommodate the large number of interested participants. The notes of these sessions have been grouped together to capture the key themes discussed.
- 16 participants took part:
  - Group 1: 4 participants, children aged 2 to 16 years
  - Group 2: 7 participants, children aged 0 to 17 years
  - Group 3: 5 participants, children aged 0 to 16 years

### **Services accessed**

- Children's centres: Millfield, Daubeney, Fernbank, Ann Tayler, Old Hill, Linden, Lubavitch
- Stay and play
- Perinatal care
- Health visitors and home visits
- City and Hackney maternity services
- First steps
- Henry group
- Hackney Playbus
- Adventure playground
- Hey Baby at St John's
- Playgrounds and parks
- Libraries, Homerton and Hackney Central

### **Strengths:**

- Free vitamins for mothers and children
- Participants valued the support offered at children's centres like Henry group and support starting solids.
- One parent described a parents course at a children's centre as "empowering."
- Participants were interested in the idea of hubs as an accessible way for families to access youth services and the value of a hub and spoke model that could connect children and families to other services.

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants talked about the value of being able to access safe spaces, such as children's centres, churches and youth hubs.
- Participants asked for hubs to provide creches.
- Participants wanted spaces for adults in hubs and discussed the challenges of balancing working life and children. This was also seen as a tool for building peer support. Participants wanted to be able to share their experiences as parents and to have a space to talk with both other parents and professionals. Participants also appreciated having support from other parents through classes and benefitted from meeting parents with shared experiences.

- The importance of peer support was seen as important across children's developmental stages.
- Participants wanted to access health visitor sessions at centres where parents can get advice and ask questions and talked about the benefit of being able to hear other parents' experiences.
- Participants with older children wanted support for parents as their children transition to secondary school and advice on behavioural challenges.
- Participants said that provision of vouchers, food support and nappies would be helpful.
- Participants also wanted to be able to access financial advice, advice on relationship building within families and advice on how partners can support each other. Other participants stated that they valued parenting classes such as Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities.
- Participants wanted to be able to access maternity checks and vaccinations at hubs.
- Participants also wanted access to services for parents that are not available through schools such as coffee mornings.
- Working parents wanted to be able to access support and services at convenient times such as early mornings or lunchtime.

#### **Barriers:**

- One participant shared their experience of parenting with mobility issues, the challenge attending children's centres and the impact on their children. The participant explained the impact of lack of interaction with other parents on their mental health and their worry about the impact on their children's social development. Participants recommended that more support be provided for disabled parents.
- Affordability was a key barrier for participants who stated that services need to be financially accessible. Participants also discussed the barriers of accessing affordable childcare.
- Participants felt that less is on offer to parents and families now than compared to before the pandemic.

#### **Online support:**

- Overall, participants wanted a balance between access to online and in person support. A virtual offer was seen as a tool for improving accessibility.
- Participants were in favour of having more online sessions and information, however, participants emphasised that this offer needs to be well planned. For some parents the challenge is that they need to provide childcare while they attend online classes and may not be able to engage fully. Participants reflected that while many services became more accessible during the pandemic, online services are not automatically accessible to all parents.
- Other participants talked about the challenge of online, interactive classes for parents who work evenings. Participants recommended that more pre-recorded sessions be made available to parents.
- Participants also felt that face to face interactions were a better way to foster relationships between children and services providers and that online services should be for adults rather than children.

- Other participants stated that online support was often not easy to access because information about what support is available is unclear.

#### **SEND support and additional needs:**

- One participant with neurodiverse children stated that the idea of wrap-around of youth provision was appealing because it would provide greater access to all services for their children.
- Participants asked for more SEND services, including outreach help and referrals. This included support for families and children waiting for referrals.
- Participants asked whether support would be provided for children with emerging needs. One participant stated that it is confusing finding out how to access speech and language support and there is a danger of parents giving up if they cannot easily find information.
- The participants also suggested that group support would be helpful, in addition to a space for parents to ask questions. Participants commented that children and family hubs could provide additional support where parents may feel their questions do not justify a GP appointment.

#### **Support for older children:**

- Participants wanted a range of activities to be provided for children of all ages and were interested in expanding access for older children and young people. Some participants felt that there was a gap in provision for primary school aged children. Others felt that the sessions available were aimed at too wide an age group, such as age 6 to 13.
- Participants wanted demarcated spaces for older children to balance spaces for all ages.
- Participants with older children valued the adventure playgrounds as spaces where they can take their children after school and leave their children to play. One participant stated that this was especially important as a single parent.
- Participants wanted support for children around puberty. One participant had heard of resources available for parents of older children, such as sex education and support for handling teenage issues and wanted similar services to be offered, or signposted, through hubs.
- Participants also felt that there used to be more on offer at children's centres for families with older and younger children, such as cooking classes, but participants felt that similar activities are less available now.

#### **Mental health support:**

- Participants also raised the challenge of children struggling with mental health, emotional wellbeing and communication as a result of the pandemic.

#### **Information:**

- A timetable or website with information about all services and classes across children's centres and hubs was suggested by multiple participants. Participants suggested having a website or platform that would allow parents to filter by the age of their child or the date to find out what is accessible at each centre.

- Participants stated that finding information can be a challenge and that often information is shared by individual children's centres. The participants recommended compiling a resource with timetables for all centres.
- Additionally, other participants stated that timetables are not always up-to-date and that finding accurate information can be time consuming. Other participants wanted sessions to be offered at different times across neighbouring children's centres to allow parents and children opportunity to access classes and activities at a range of times.
- Other participants wanted to receive information by email and text messages.
- Participants wanted schools to be able to signpost information to parents as spaces parents access regularly.
- Participants also talked about the value of links to local communities and efforts to actively engage parents through outreach work and the development of partnerships.
- Participants wanted more information to be directly shared with parents who access children's centres and stated that having to register at each centre they visit was "tedious" and unwelcoming.

**Accessibility:**

- Participants stated that being able to co-design physical spaces was important to ensure hubs are accessible.

**Concerns:**

- Participants wanted hubs to build on the services Hackney provides and raised concerns that services could be slimmed down through hubs.

## 6: Woodberry Down Winterfest

- **Monday 28th November**, Redmond Community Centre
- 35 parents, families and children were engaged through one-to-one conversations at an event in Woodberry Down aimed at families. Participants were asked about what they would need from children and family hubs.

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Activities for older children:**

- Participants wanted activities for older children and young people to enable them to have fun and develop practical skills such as cooking, exercise, and opportunities to meet other children. Participants also described activities as a gateway to accessing more support services.
- Participants raised the need for separate space for under 6s and over 6s.
- Participants wanted a space for children and young people to be together with their families.
- Participants also wanted a space for children to do homework, especially for those who may not have space at home and suggested that volunteers could support homework clubs.
- Participants also wanted provision of books and toys at hubs.

#### **SEND support:**

- Participants raised the need for more access to speech and language therapy, including activities provided by experts who can help to support children and build confidence.

#### **Online support:**

- Participants expressed an interest in a mixture of online support and face to face support.

#### **Information:**

- Participants wanted more and better information on where to access support. Suggestions included a specific Facebook group for each local hub as well as notice boards in all facilities across the borough.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants wanted the hubs to connect parents to one another. This included more indoor spaces for parents of babies to meet other parents.
- Participants wanted more services for pregnant women, including access to more information and opportunities to meet other expectant mothers. Participants wanted support for mothers including post natal depression and drop-ins for new mums to allow parents to easily access support.
- Participants also wanted more infant feeding support, including out of hours contacts such as telephone numbers and emails.
- Participants asked for more flexibility in opening times, including weekend access.

## 7: Engagement with Orthodox Jewish families

- **Monday 5th December**, Lubavitch Children's Centre
- 24 participants engaged in small group and one-to-one conversations, children aged 0-19 years

### **Services accessed:**

- Lubavitch Children's Centre
- Health visiting
- Hackney Ark
- Midwives
- Breastfeeding support
- Baby massage
- Stay and play
- After school sessions for older children
- Food vouchers
- Libraries
- First aid training

### **Strengths**

- Participants spoke highly of the services received at Lubavitch Children's Centre. This included:
  - The ability to socialise and meet other parents and share experiences.
  - Access to a wide range of toys and large indoor space for children to play in.
  - Participants stated that stay and play gave mothers the opportunity to spend quality time with one child. Parents valued the ability to see their children interact with others and see the development of their children.
  - The ability to speak to midwives and access breastfeeding support.
  - Baby massage was very popular among participants.
  - The ability to get immunizations at the centre, especially for mothers unable to get GP appointments.

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Support for younger children:**

- Participants wanted a greater variety of sessions, including baby massage.
- Participants also wanted access to a creche to enable mothers to go back to work.
- Participants asked for more access to professionals for their children and suggested having a separate section for small babies whether parents can go to baby clinic, have their baby weighed, access health visitors, raise concerns and get advice.
- Long waiting lists for nursery provision at the children's centre were a barrier for some participants.

#### **Support for older children:**

- Participants stated that there are not many services or activities for older children.
- Participants stated that after school clubs and holiday provision would be helpful for older children. Some participants also stated that Sunday sessions would be valuable

to the whole family.

- In general, parents wanted more support for teenagers.

#### **SEND support:**

- One participant's child had waited 1.5 years for a speech and language therapy referral. The participant had received some support from Hackney Ark and the GP but said that more was needed to support families waiting for referrals and diagnoses.
- Another participant experienced long waiting times for their teenage child's ADHD referral.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Signposting to other services and activities was an important aspect of hubs for participants.
- Participants wanted more classes for mothers such as sewing, music, arts and crafts.
- Participants wanted an affordable, subsidised offer.
- Participants talked about financial support and the challenges of rising costs of food and transport. Participants also explained that school fees for Orthodox Jewish private schools were a challenge for many families. One participant shared their experience of receiving food vouchers during the pandemic, and stated that this type of support is crucial now more than ever.
- Participants also wanted access to employment advice and information on working opportunities to plan for when their children are school aged.
- Participants stated that more support is needed for postnatal mothers, including support with postnatal depression.

#### **Additional needs from family hubs:**

- Participants had a positive response to the idea of children and family hubs.
- Participants wanted more flexible hours including evenings and Sundays more options of places to go, however, some participants stated that these options would need to be culturally appropriate.
- Participants wanted more spaces for the whole family to enjoy.

#### **Information:**

- Most participants found out about Lubavitch's stay and play or other services through friends and family.
- Participants stated that they wanted to receive information through the post, email, leaflets at hospital, word of mouth and through community representatives.

#### **Health visitors:**

- Some participants wanted more opportunity to see midwives and health visitors at hubs, others preferred to be seen at home.
- The majority of participants reported long waiting times for GP appointments and multiple parents had challenging experiences with health visitors. Two participants reported waiting over five months for their babies' 6 week health check. The participants asked whether these services could be provided through hubs and centres.

## 8: Parents and families of children of all ages

- **Monday 5th December**, online (Google Meet)
- 6 participants, children aged between 1 and 6 years.

### **Services accessed**

- Daubeney, Millfields, Gainsborough, Sebright children's centres.
- Baby massage groups
- Adventure playground
- Hackney scouts
- Health visitor
- Henry
- Peppy app
- Arts and crafts classes

### **Strengths**

- Participants shared positive experiences with children's centres, stating the centres made them feel welcome and supported. Participants said centres were a good place to meet other parents. Participants felt that there was a lot on offer for families across Hackney children centres, community groups and private nurseries.
- Participants were enthusiastic about the hubs model, particularly improved signposting.

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Services for older children:**

- One participant had heard that their child could start attending youth hubs from age 8 and thought there were a lot of services on offer.
- Homework support, especially for children of parents who speak English as a second language.

#### **Information:**

- Participants wanted a timetable with information about all services and sessions offered.
- Email and text messages were the preferred method of communication.
- Participants liked receiving leaflets and information through hospitals, schools, health visitors. The participants talked about the benefit of information being handed to people especially for those who are new to the UK without family networks.
- Participants shared experiences of finding out about services too late to sign up or benefit from them, such as baby massage. They said this was particularly a challenge for new parents.
- One participant talked about the support they had received during pregnancy through apps like Peanut, but also discussed the challenge of the cost of using some apps. Participants raised the idea of a local authority app.

#### **SEND support:**

- Support for parents of children with SEND. One participant asked for more



behavioural support for parents and shared their experience of managing their child's challenging behaviour.

- The participant asked for professional advice and tips and suggested that a group setting or drop-in could work.
- Participants talked about the value of speaking with parents who have had the same experiences.
- Participants stated that learning support for children with SEND should be provided and that SEND staff should be at all locations, including Adventure playgrounds.
- One parent shared that apps like Peppy were helpful as a way to gain expert advice during lockdown and could be beneficial for parents of children with SEND.
- One participant had a positive experience at a speech and language walk-in clinic which supported them and their child. Other parents talked about the challenge of accessing speech and language therapy and ADHD support.

**Support for parents:**

- Participants discussed the benefit of being able to connect to parents who have had similar experiences.
- Participants wanted support around emotional and mental health and for first-time mothers in particular.
- Coffee mornings and pre-natal classes were requested.
- Participants wanted education for parents, connected to maternity voice partnerships at Homerton Hospital, and the ability to speak to a midwife or health visitor.

## 9: Children and young people aged 10-16

- **Tuesday 6th December**, Forest Road Youth Hub
- 10 participants; 8 children and young people aged 10 to 17 years.
- The workshop approach was amended for children and young people and discussed the following questions:
  - What do you like about Youth Hubs? Why do you come to youth hubs?
  - What support or services would you like to see for your parents and your family?
  - What would make your family use Children and Family Hubs?
  - How do you want to find out information about Children and Family Hubs?

### **What do you like about Youth Hubs? Why do you come to youth hubs?**

- Children value youth hubs as spaces to socialise, do activities, and spend time away from home and their parents.
- The participants talked about the importance of being able to trust and talk to staff at youth hubs and the importance of non judgemental spaces.
- The participants talked enthusiastically about the activities they have taken part in at the youth hub, including dancing, games, volunteering, and cooking.
- Most of the participants had been attending the youth hub for a number of years. One first visited with a school trip, others first went with their siblings or friends.

### **What support or services would you like to see for your parents and your family?**

#### **Youth led activities and support:**

Participants wanted:

- Gaming spaces and a space they could design.
- Studio equipment and sessions to enable young people to pursue creative passions.
- Sports teams and physical activities like boxing and karate.
- Summer camps. The participants also wanted more opportunities to go on trips, like the youth hub summer trips to Camber Sands.
- Homework support and space to work quietly with the support of tutors.
- Faith groups.
- Choir.
- Space to learn skills including cooking and sports.
- Younger participants wanted more mixed age groups and valued mentoring from young people. The eldest participant shared their experience of mentoring, being able to relate to younger children and help them deal with challenges they may experience.

#### **Involvement of parents:**

- Participants talked about having celebrations and awards. The participants wanted to be recognised for their achievements, one child wanted trophies for listening, and wanted their parents to see their achievements.
- Participants suggested having parents evenings and wanted their parents to be involved with celebrations like Black History Season.

**Online services:**

- Participants were interested in accessing hybrid online and in person services, if the online offer was linked to hubs. One participant stated that there are times when they would want to be able to connect support workers outside of youth hubs.

## 10: Children and young people aged 14-19

- **Thursday 8th December**, Forest Road Youth Hub
- 5 participants; 4 children and young people aged 14 to 19 years
- The workshop approach was amended for children and young people and discussed the following questions:
  - What do you like about Youth Hubs? Why do you come to youth hubs?
  - What support or services would you like to see for your parents and your family?
  - What would make your family use Children and Family Hubs?
  - How do you want to find out information about Children and Family Hubs?

### **What do you like about Youth Hubs? Why do you come to youth hubs?**

- Two participants had attended the youth hub for about a year. One participant started going to the youth hub aged 9.
- The participants valued the youth hub as a space to socialise with support from older adults. One participant said that everyone's reasons for going to youth hubs are different and explained that they had started going when they experienced personal problems and needed extra support from youth workers. Another participant stated that they had spent a lot of their younger years at the hub, when they struggled to attend school. The participant valued being able to socialise at the hubs and take part in activities. Other participants said that they like going to the youth hub because of food and activities like bracelet making and drawing.
- The participants also talked about being able to build their confidence, independence and communication skills. One participant described the youth hub as "a place to go other than home."
- One participant talked about their first experiences with the hub, taking part in after school sports, gaming and swimming.
- Other participants liked the opportunity to develop independent skills like cooking.
- Participants generally valued being able to develop social skills with both children and adults at hubs.

### **Skills building:**

- The participants talked about the skills they had learned through the hub, including having the opportunity to take part in interview panels for youth hub staff. One participant said that the experience had helped grow their confidence. Participants said that it was important for the hub to get the opinion of young people. Another participant said the experience "showed me that everyone had different perspectives and strategies for working with young people."
- The participants wanted involvement in projects that give young people a voice and talked about the end of year gala and 10 year celebration of Forest Road they were organising. The participants had gained experience in submitting ideas, funding videos, event planning and organisation, from equipment and flyers, to awards and entertainment. Participants said the experience brought them together.

## **What support or services would you like to see for your parents and your family?**

### **Online support:**

- Participants thought there should be a balance of in person and online support, to meet the needs of different people. Generally, the participants thought in person services were better but one participant stated that they liked to read and review information before taking action.

### **Information:**

- Participants thought that more could be done to share information about services for young people. The participants got most of their information through the youth hubs but stated that other people who don't attend hubs would not have access to that information.
- Participants thought that schools and assemblies, posters, and social media were a good way to share information with young people. One participant recommended getting young people involved in creating social media content.

### **Opportunities for volunteering and skills development:**

- Participants suggested having relationships with food banks and talked about their experiences volunteering with local food banks that support schools, adventure playgrounds and youth hubs in deprived areas.
- Participants wanted more opportunities to volunteer and said that there should be a programme to support parents who need help with young people in their lives. This idea included having young people give advice to older adults and parents on young people's experiences.
- Participants wanted support to find employment, build networking skills and CV and personal statement advice, and help for young people preparing for interviews including advice on how to dress.
- Young people also wanted more opportunities for work experience.
- The participants valued having mentors and said that seeing older people mentor had inspired them to take part.

### **Recommendations:**

- The participants felt that most services don't listen to young people and make young people feel like they are a problem. Participants also described it as intimidating to try to access support. For instance, one participant talked about the challenges of working with CAMHS support workers and found their question style formal and clinical. In comparison, the participant said that support workers just listen or sit with you until you want to talk.
- Participants said that support workers have to make young people feel comfortable and recommended activities as a way to make young people feel comfortable.
- The participants really valued the support they received from youth workers at Forest Road and said that support staff should be people that understand the experiences of young people and relate to the experiences of the young people they work with.

### **Involvement of parents:**

- The participants were more resistant to the idea of parents and families being involved with young people through hubs, stating that some young people have difficult relationships with their parents.

## 11: Engagement with Turkish speaking families

- **Friday 9th December**, Minik Kardes stay and play at Forest Road Youth Hub
- 3 participants, children aged 1-10. A second workshop was arranged for January 2023.

### **Services accessed**

- Minik Kardes Children's Centre, Comet at Thomas Fairchild, Linden Children's Centre
- Stay and play sessions at Forest Road Youth Hub
- Nursery
- Health visitors
- Speech and language therapy
- Online antenatal classes
- Dalston CLR James Library activities and events
- ESOL classes, supported by Minik Kardes

### **Strengths**

- All three participants were happy with the services they access currently, in particular the support they receive from staff at Minik Kardes.

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Barriers:**

- All three participants discussed the challenge of language barriers and all had attended ESOL classes. One participant stated that there are classes they would like to attend but their English is not strong enough.
- Timing of classes. Two participants stated that they would like to attend more classes but could not because of the timings. One participant could not attend a 13 week Solihul parenting programme because of the timing of their child's nursery.
- The participants wanted more arts and wellbeing classes.
- Participants stated that many families do not know what services are available. One participant had not enrolled their youngest child, aged 1 year, in nursery and stated that they didn't know what services were available.
- One participant described the cost of living crisis as a barrier and suggested that food vouchers to support low income families should be provided through hubs.
- The participant also described mental health challenges and working hours as a barrier to accessing services.

#### **Information:**

- Participants stated that they found out about Minik Kardes through a facebook group for Turkish migrant mothers and by word of mouth. One participant first heard of the Forest Road stay and play through a friend.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants asked for more ESOL classes.
- Participants also wanted access to a creche while parents take part in classes.

- Participants also asked for more support for fathers.



## 12: Connecting All Communities engagement

- **Thursday 15th December**, Whitmore Community Centre
- 10 participants with children aged 3 to 16. The participants all volunteer with Connecting All Communities, an organisation that tackles social isolation and promotes community cohesion especially in Somali and East African communities in Hackney.

### **Services accessed**

- Nursery
- Ihsan Children's Centre
- Youth club for older children
- Sewing classes
- Free activities at children's centres
- After school clubs
- Adventure playgrounds

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **SEND support:**

- Participants said that more support is needed, particularly for children with autism, and support for parents of children with SEND
- Participants discussed challenges for children with SEND in schools and the need for more subject specific support.
- Participants recommended having a specific timetable of support for children and young people with SEND.
- Participants also wanted sign language classes to help parents to communicate with deaf children.

#### **Support for older children:**

- Participants wanted activities for teenagers, particularly sports and physical activities.
- Participants suggested organising meet-ups and supporting young people to make friends.
- Trips were also suggested, such as the activities and trips organised by Connecting Communities that support low income families.
- Participants also suggested acting, drama and arts activities
- Participants thought that hubs should support young people's mental health.
- Participants also talked about the high cost of leisure centres and swimming lessons.
- When asked if they access youth hubs, the participants stated that they were concerned about the behaviour of other children and young people and worried about the influence on their children. Other parents stated that they would like to send their children to youth hubs, when their children are older.
- Participants wanted safe spaces for older children to go where they will be less likely to become involved in gangs and illegal behaviour.
- Participants also wanted career guidance for young people aged 16 and above.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants suggested having creches for new mothers and discussed the challenges of affordable childcare and discussed needing to rely on friends. One participant explained the challenges of childcare for immigrant mothers who have limited family and friend networks and little financial support. One participant had valued access to a creche while taking part in classes.
- Participants wanted opportunities to socialise, especially for parents experiencing depression and mental health challenges. Again, the participants emphasised the importance of this for parents without friends or family. Another participant shared their experience of needing a break from their children when struggling with depression.
- Participants also wanted opportunities to gain skills that could lead to employment. Participants discussed the challenges of finding flexible working opportunities that allowed them to balance childcare and employment. This is particularly challenging for parents without support networks, low income families, and those not eligible for benefits.
- Participants suggested providing vitamins for parents through hubs, particularly vitamin D for parents of African descent.
- Participants also discussed the challenges for single parents.
- Support for parents learning English and for parents who speak English as a second language was raised. One participant described the challenge of helping their children with English homework and worried about their child receiving enough support.

#### **Language barriers and skills:**

- Participants suggested training parents who are bilingual to provide support services to other parents in hubs as a way to utilise their skills and help parents gain experience.

#### **Information:**

- Participants preferred to get information from a range of sources, including leaflets from children's centres, schools GP practices, libraries and online information.
- Other participants wanted information by text.
- While some participants wanted information online, others stated that information through children's centres is more accessible, especially to those who are digitally excluded.

## 13: Fathers of children of all ages

- **Monday 23rd January**, Ihsan Children's Centre
- 8 participants with children aged 2 to 15 years

### Services accessed

- Hackney Ark
- Ihsan Children's Centre
- NLMCC

### What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?

#### **Support for older children:**

- Participants were supportive of the aim of hubs to provide support for children aged 0-19.
- Participants said that there is less support for teenagers, especially around mental health. One participant described their child's experience of CAMHS and said that if their child had felt connected to a community centre or hub they may have been able to receive more help outside of CAMHS.
- One participant described the time between 3pm and 6pm as a critical "dead time" after school before parents return from home when older children need more support.
- Participants asked for more provision for secondary school and college aged young people, such as homework clubs, and safe environments for young people to spend time.
- Participants also suggested hubs could offer confidence building activities in addition to CV and interview advice.
- Participants expressed concern about potential dangers their children may be exposed to as teenagers, including drug use, gangs, and social media. For instance, participants discussed the challenges of teenage boys being vulnerable to misogynistic influencers. The participants wanted early support for young people and skills classes to help young people navigate potentially damaging content online.

#### **SEND support:**

- Participants discussed the challenges of gaining support for children with autism. One parent stated that there is no support currently for parents of children referred to Hackney Ark.
- One participant shared a positive experience with Project Search, supporting young adults with learning disabilities with employment skills.
- Participants were supportive of colocation of health, child support and education professionals and discussed the challenges parents of children with SEND face with keeping up with appointments.

#### **Language barriers:**

- Participants stated that clear information was needed to support families with who speak English as a second language and for families with parents with different immigration statuses. One participant shared a challenging experience navigating

Hackney's school enrollment system that was complicated by the participant's partner's visa.

- Participants explained that language barriers are a common barrier and residents rely on the NLMCC service centre for support.
- Participants stated that the family hub should provide interpreters and information in multiple languages online and in person. Leaflets should be provided in multiple languages.

#### **Information:**

- Participants were dissatisfied with the move to online information for many Hackney Council services and valued face-to-face interactions and the ability to walk into a location like the Town Hall and receive advice. Participants found the Council to be slow to reply and experienced having to tell their story multiple times.
- The preference of the group was for physical information. Participants said that word of mouth and Whatsapp were the most effective ways to share information.
- Some participants preferred online information as they found it more likely to be up to date. However, the group discussed the digital divide and challenges for older residents.
- Participants asked for hubs to provide clear, concise information about what services are available. This included clear advice on what residents need to do to register births and ensure their children receive entitled support. Participants thought hubs should also provide information on benefits and other support residents may be eligible for.
- One participant who works for NLMCC advice service also shared that information needs to be better provided by the Council to support workers across communities.
- One participant shared the experiences of family members in Tower Hamlets who benefited from fostering support and advice via Children and Family Hubs.

#### **Partnerships and community building:**

- The participants recommended that hubs could provide volunteering opportunities and work closely with community sector partners.
- One participant thought that hubs should also broadcast the work of charities and voluntary sector organisations.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants wanted opportunities for intergenerational activities for children and parents. Participants talked about the psychological benefits of parents and children playing together and suggested that hubs could provide facilities for family units to spend time together.
- As a group, the participants all wanted more support and training on how to be better parents and how to navigate taboo subjects. Participants also wanted support for parents and classes or advice on how to navigate smart phones or social media.
- As fathers, participants wanted wider availability of sessions such as weekend sessions. One participant stated that events often feel targeted at women.
- The participants said that single fathers need more support with one participant sharing the experience of a friend raising two children with SEND.

## 14: Shoreditch Trust engagement

- **Wednesday 25th January**, Shoreditch Trust
- 22 participants with children aged between 0 and 15 years. Most participants had young children, under 5 years.

### **Services accessed:**

- Comet and Comet at Thomas Fairchild, Linden, and Daubeney Children's Centres
- Speak and language therapy
- Stay and play sessions
- Baby classes
- Health visiting
- Children's centre gardening club and activities for children
- Happy Baby charity
- Care for Calais
- Music sessions
- CAMHS
- Round Chapel
- Shoreditch Trust
- Nursery
- Maternity services
- Youth hub
- Mums and Bumps

### **Strengths**

- Participants stated that they enjoyed the structured activities provided by children's centres, like gardening clubs for children.

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Health visitors and maternity services:**

- One participant stated that their experience with their first child in 2010 had been good, but they had struggled to access maternity support with their youngest, aged 1 year.
- Multiple participants praised the midwifery services accessed via Shoreditch Trust at Pitfield Street.
- Participants stated that they wanted more access to health visitors and multiple participants stated that they had poor experiences with health visitors, including incorrect information being recorded. One of the challenges of health visiting was the inability of parents to form a relationship with the health visitor.
- One participant stated that their experience of maternity services was positive because they had been able to have face-to-face contact and build a relationship with midwives.
- Participants wanted to be able to have their babies weighed at centres.

#### **Support for parents:**

- Participants talked about the challenges for parents without a support network as single parents, those without family, and as asylum seekers.
- Participants wanted opportunities for parents to socialise. Participants also asked if there could be opportunities for intergenerational social activities. Multiple participants stated that the late afternoon or early evening, before children go to bed, is the best time for parents to interact.
- Participants also asked for more support for parents of teenagers.

#### **Information:**

- Participants asked for a timetable of services offered at centres and hubs such as stay and play sessions. One participant stated that this would also help parents and their children to build relationships.
- Participants wanted information online. Most participants found out about services by word of mouth, through community partners like Shoreditch Trust or through Church groups.
- Participants stated that it can take a long time to find information about services and that communication needs to be clearer.

#### **Support for older children:**

- One parent of a 13 year old said that they did not know where to go with their child and needed more access to activities and support. The participant stated that finding information required a lot more research that stated that they would have struggled to access support had they not been connected to Shoreditch Trust.
- One participant shared their experience of CAMHS and stated that more support was needed to support their child with self harming and anxiety. Support workers had helped the participant's child and provided support. The participant stated that it can be hard to access support through GPs.

#### **Support for younger children:**

- Participants said they need environments with more space to allow their children to play freely.

#### **SEND support:**

- Participants raised the need for support for young children of asylum seekers, particularly children with SEND, and the impact of trauma experienced by young children.

#### **Relationships:**

- Participants talked about the importance of buildings relationships with professionals and support workers and the importance of being able to access support without judgement.
- Participants stated that the ability to form relationships should be a key element of employment criteria for hubs staff.

#### **Barriers:**

- Six participants were asylum seekers living in temporary accommodation, five of whom were pregnant. Language was a primary barrier for the participants living in temporary accommodation. The participants were unaware of the services available

to their children, including children's centres. Participants said that there was no information provided in the temporary accommodation they live in. More support is needed to support the participants to access services and to share information.

**Additional provision hubs could offer:**

- Participants asked for activities at a range of times throughout the day and the need for evening access. Parents living in temporary accommodation stated that they need more help, including more food support.

## 15: Engagement with Turkish speaking families

- **Wednesday 25th January**, Minik Kardes at Forest Road Youth Hub
- 9 participants. Parents of children aged 0-18.

### **Services accessed**

- Wentworth, Minik Kardes, and Linden Children's Centre,
- Nursery at Comet Children's Centre
- Stay and play
- Maternity support
- Weigh and play
- Leisure centres
- Libraries
- Community sports and dance clubs
- Music lessons
- Homework clubs
- Imece Women's Centre for domestic violence support
- London Alevi Cultural Centre
- After school clubs

### **Strengths**

- Participants stated that childcare provides children an opportunity to be socially active and develop social and motor skills. This provided respite for one participant with a long-term illness.
- Participants were pleased with health and other services received at children's centres.
- Participants also valued libraries as a place for children to study and stated that children really enjoy stay and play.
- Participants shared positive experiences at Linden and Minik Kardes Children's Centres: "I receive my rights, I feel secure, I develop myself and my child, I feel enlightened by the learning."

### **What do you need from children and family hubs? And what do we need to do to help you access support?**

#### **Information:**

- One participant stated that they had struggled to find information on available services and did not have the time to look for information.
- Participants wanted to receive printed materials (leaflets, letters), information via social media and word of mouth, including parents whatsapp groups.
- Participants wanted more information in Turkish. One participant explained that they were reliant on their husband and friends to translate websites and asked for more information on family services in Turkish.
- Other participants relied on Minik Kardes and friends for information.
- One participant stated that they had been told post-COVID that they can no longer go to one children's centre because their child attends another nursery.



**Language barriers:**

- Participants felt that many Turkish parents rely on partners and friends to translate information. In particular, participants asked for more information on services in Turkish that will help women navigate services.
- Participants also stated that they had faced language barriers using children's centres and in accessing services face to face. One participant often has to translate from their phone.

**Online support:**

- One participant felt that the virtual support and midwife support they received during COVID was inadequate and not in line with what they had received with their first child.

**Support for parents:**

- Participants asked for more relationship support services and advice at hubs. This included support to help improve parent-child relationships and more services focussed on single parent families.
- Participants wanted to access more adult learning opportunities while children are using hubs, including ESOL classes.
- Participants also wanted more subsidised or free activities and after school activities for older and younger children. Participants also wanted more activities for families that span age ranges particularly during school holidays.
- One participant shared that they have struggled to access benefits and support due to their immigration status, and would like access to more information and advice on what is available to their family.
- Participants wanted to access guidance and support on housing and financial guidance at hubs.
- Participants wanted more services for fathers and some participants asked for more encouragement for fathers to take up parenting responsibilities.

**SEND support:**

- Participants wanted targeted support for children with SEND in Hubs, including Turkish language guidance for parents.
- One participant talked about the struggle of focusing on their child's SEND needs amidst financial pressures.
- Another participant stated that frequent changes in address has created difficulties in getting timely access to SEND support.

**Barriers and cost of living:**

- Participants talked about the rising cost of living and transport and its impact on what they can do with their children.

**Access and concerns:**

- One participant expressed concern that services do not reflect religious/cultural positions of the Turkish community.
- Participants also expressed concerns about the safety of their children in the borough and wanted hubs to be a safe space for after school activities.

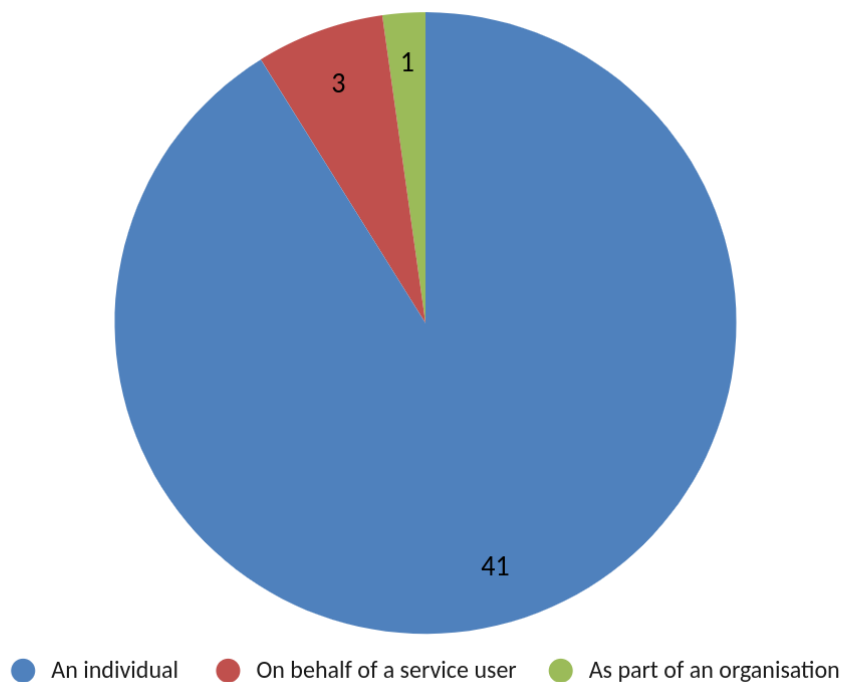
# Help us to develop Children and Family Hubs survey

The survey ran from 25th November 2022 to 20th January 2023 and was hosted on Citizen Space.

The aim of the survey was to give parents and carers who had not taken part in workshops, in addition to representatives from community organisations, the opportunity to share their views on Children and Family Hubs. The survey asked local people who use our services currently, or who may use these services in the future to tell us what they need from Children and Family hubs.

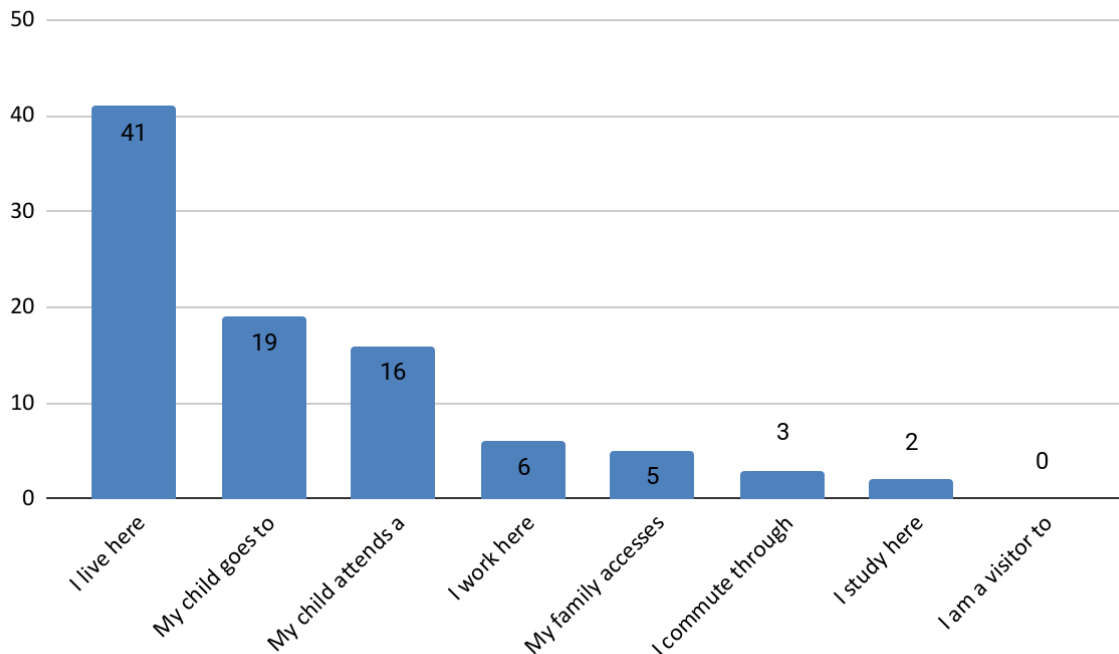
A total of 45 respondents took part.

## **Are you sharing your views as.. (base: 45)**



The majority of respondents shared their views as an individual (41). This is followed by entries made on behalf of a service user (3) and one respondent who took part as part of an organisation (1).

**If you are sharing your views as an individual, what is your connection to Hackney?  
Select all that apply (Base: 92)**



The highest number of respondents stated that they live in Hackney (41 respondents). This is followed by “my child goes to school or college here” (19), “my child attends a children's centre here” (16), “I work here” (6), “My family accesses another form of child care here” (5), “I commute through Hackney” (3) and “I study here” (2).

**If you are part of an organisation, what type of organisation are you part of? (Base 1)**

The respondent stated that they were part of a Hackney voluntary and community sector organisation.

**What services do you access with your child? (Base 44)**

Respondents’ comments were coded into the following key themes. The theme with the highest count was children’s centres (17), followed by maternity services (7), clubs and activities (7) and libraries (7).

Key theme	Count
Children's Centres	17
Maternity services	7
Clubs and activities	7
Libraries	7

Youth Hub	6
GP and health visiting	6
No services accessed	4
Nursery provision	2
CAMHS	2
SEND services	2
Adventure playground	2
Community centres	2
Unaware of services available	1
School	1
College	1
Hospital and medical services	1

### **Children's Centres:**

*"Children's centre"*

*"Lubavitch children's centre - during school holidays. Eeeny house nursery - Childcare for my toddler"*

*"Children's centres. Mapledene, morningside, Ann taylor"*

### **Maternity services:**

*"Maternity Services and Children's Centre."*

*"Maternity, hospital, health visitor, breastfeeding support."*

*"Maternity"*

### **Clubs and activities:**

*"Soft play centre, youth hub."*

*"Hackney quest, Youth club, Holiday clubs, Church activities for children Kickboxing, after school clubs"*

*"Financial support. After school activities"*

### **Libraries:**

*"Libraries."*

*"Woodberry Down Library"*

*"Library special play (play therapy)"*

**Are there any services that you want to access but are not currently available to you?**  
**(Base: 37)**

Respondents' comments were coded into the following key themes.

<b>Key theme</b>	<b>Count</b>
Activities and experiences	12
Support for parents and carers	6
No additional services needed	6
Health services and immunizations	3
Request for more children's centres	3
Services for older children	3
Financial and housing	2
SEND support	2
Homework support	2
Breastfeeding support	1
Weekend services	1
Youth hub	1
Libraries	1
Health visiting	1
Childcare support	1

The theme with the highest count was “activities and experiences” (12 responses). This is followed by support for parents and carers (6) and no additional services needed (6).

**Activities and experiences:**

Respondents asked for more sports, exercise, and arts activities and more opportunities for experiences such as trips:

*“Singing/street dance for younger kids/boxing.”*

*“Gymnastics and sports.”*

*“More activity clubs for children and families.”*

**Support for parents and carers:**

*“Single parent services”*

*“More services for Black and Bame mothers. Due to gentrification we are now isolated within our own communities. Everything is expensive and for people who have only moved in the borough over the last 2-3 years.”*

**No additional services needed:**

*“Family Support”*

*“Not that I can think of”*

*“No”*

**How can Hackney Council, community organisations, charities and faith organisations work together to support families? (Base: 38)**

Respondents' comments were coded into the following key themes.

The theme with the highest count was promote family services (7 responses). This is followed by better communication between service providers (6) and provide support for parents (6). All other themes have a lower count.

<b>Key theme</b>	<b>Count</b>
Promote family services	7
Better communication between service providers	6
Provide support for parents	6
Map services and barriers to access	4
Provide access to activities and events	3
Signpost and support families to navigate services	3
Co-location for providers	2
Examples of good practice	2
Community centre and estate based support	2
Access to food support	2
Work with schools	1
Provide support for Black and Global Majority families	1
VAWG support	1
Provide breastfeeding support	1
Affordable childcare	1
Provide homework support	1

**Promote family services:**

*“Need to improve cross promotion of services - all above organisations should communicate about what all the others off[er] for families.”*

*“Communicate and share resources”*

*“Try having all information supporting services together.”*

**Better communication between service providers:**

*“Communicate and share resources”*

*“Statutory services, the community, charities, private sector and faith sector partners are working together to get families the help they need.”*

*“Shared training. Knowledge of what is available whenever and whoever you speak to.”*

**Provide support for parents:**

*“Support for children with parents who have disabilities.”*

*“By providing a space where families can meet and specialist organisations can provide services from. It is important that at least one day a week is a women and girls only day with access to specialist VAWG services, workshops and legal advice on these days. It will be important to be able to offer free childcare to enable parents to take part in workshops and programmes.”*

*“Continue to work with families and young people/children as they need continuous support.”*

**How can Children and Family hubs help to strengthen relationships for families?**  
**(Base: 33)**

Respondents’ comments were coded into the following key themes.

<b>Key theme</b>	<b>Count</b>
Community support and connections	8
More activities	6
Parenting guidance	4
Services for Fathers	3
Intergenerational activities	3
Critique of family hubs model - Need for younger and older children to be separate	3
Strong relationships between staff and families	3
Family counselling	3
SEND support	2
Multi-agency networking	2
Greater digital offer	1
Support for Orthodox Jewish families	1
Support for adopted children and families	1
Support for LGBTQ families	1
Affordable childcare	1

The theme with the highest count was community support and connections (8 responses.) This is followed by more activities (6) and parenting guidance (4). All other themes have a lower count.

**Community support and connections:**

*“Through fun, interactive events in the local communities that can bring everyone together.”*

*“Help integrate families with the local community. Hold classes for all ages and family members.”*

*“Parenting courses that focus on community rather than individuals”*

**More activities:**

*“More summer trips, more things to do in the centre”*

*“Local clubs for families”*

*“Family learning schemes: gardening, cooking, repairing etc things that families can do alongside one another and alongside other families Local neighbourhood hubs”*

**Parenting guidance:**

*“Supporting parents with children's behaviour and development and also better and cheaper availability of services such as family counseling/therapy” [sic]*

*“Parenting classes. Some need to be differentiated for parents of children with learning difficulties.”*

*“Provide support groups for parents. Parenting courses that focus on community rather than individuals”*

**What should be the top priority for Children and Family Hubs? (Base: 42)**

Respondents' comments were coded into the following key themes.

<b>Key theme</b>	<b>Count</b>
0-5 years support	12
Activities	9
SEND support	8
Counselling	7
Affordable childcare	7
5-12 years support	5
Teenage support	5
Spaces for families and communities	4
Financial and housing advice	4
Joined up services and greater access to support	3
Homework clubs	2
Health and wellbeing	2
Breastfeeding support	1



Food support	1
Parenting guidance	1
Weekend and evening services	1
Women only spaces	1

The theme with the highest count was 0-5 years support (12 responses.) This is followed by activities (9) and SEND support (8). All other themes have a lower count.

**0-5 years support:**

*“My priority is definitely a focus on 0-5 support, older children should receive services for them in place that are more familiar to them like their schools”*

*“My priority is affordable Nursery Care and 0-5 support.”*

*“Support with 0 to 5 children”*

**Activities:**

*“More activities clubs and boxing classes, maths and English for kids”*

*“Activities for children all ages to go with parents”*

*“A safe space to spend time with children during the day with daycare facilities. Parent lead childcare facilities. Library and learning hubs. Sport based holiday clubs.”*

**SEND support:**

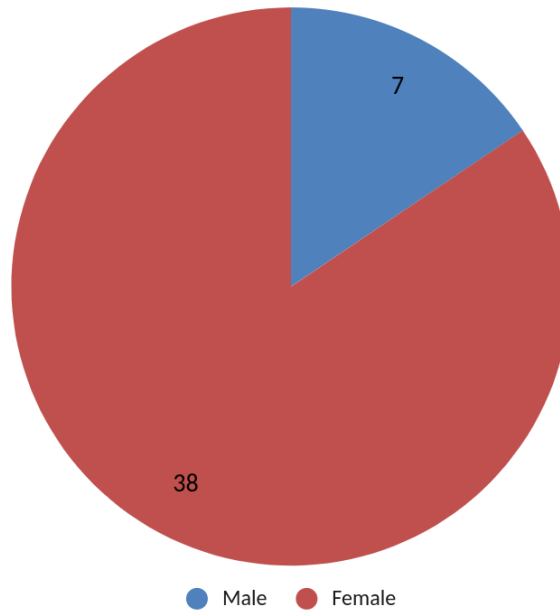
*“More services for SEND”*

*“More support for young people with send”*

*“More SEND facilities.”*

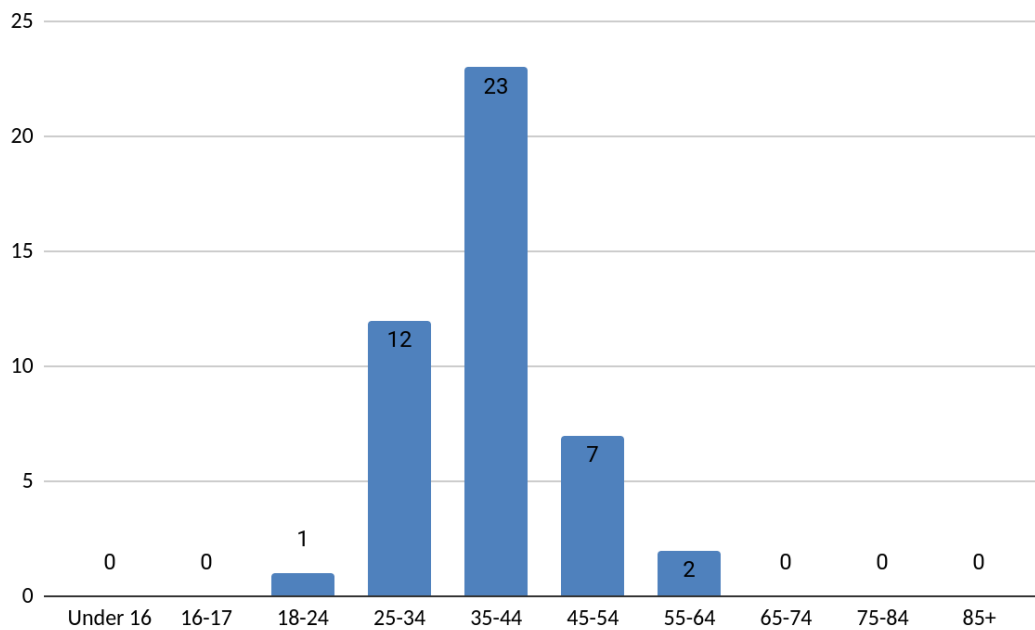
## About You

### Gender: Are you... (base: 45)



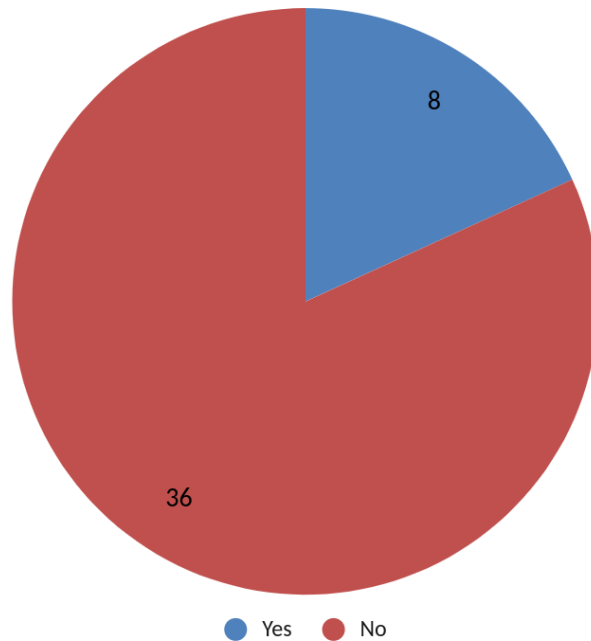
The majority of respondents were female (38). 7 respondents were male.

### Age: what is your age group? (Base: 45)



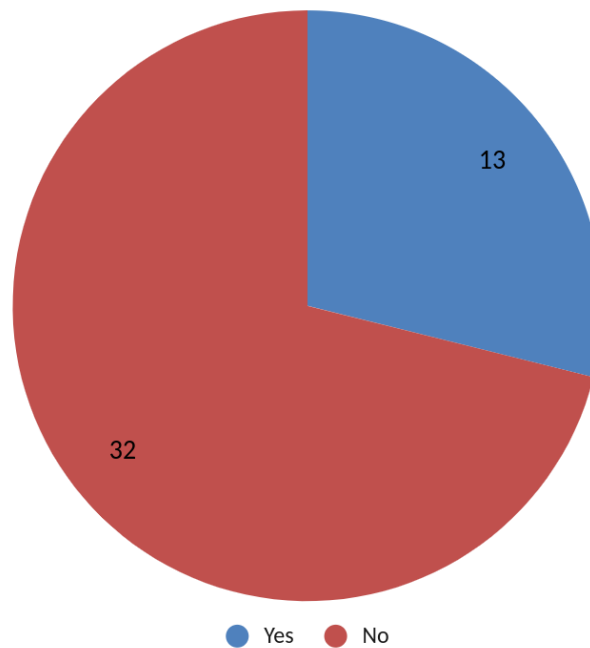
The highest number of respondents were aged between 35-44 (23). This is followed by 25-34 (12), 45-54 (7), 55-64 (2) and 18-24 (1).

**Do you consider yourself to be disabled? (Base: 44)**



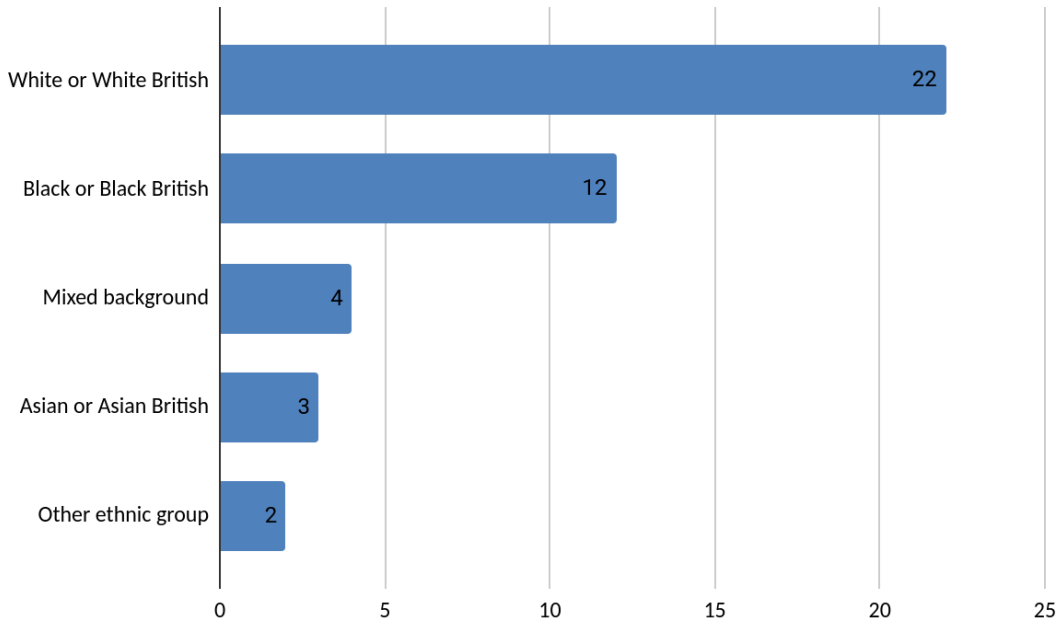
The majority of respondents did not consider themselves to be disabled (36.) 8 respondents stated that they were disabled (8).

**Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone? (Base: 45)**



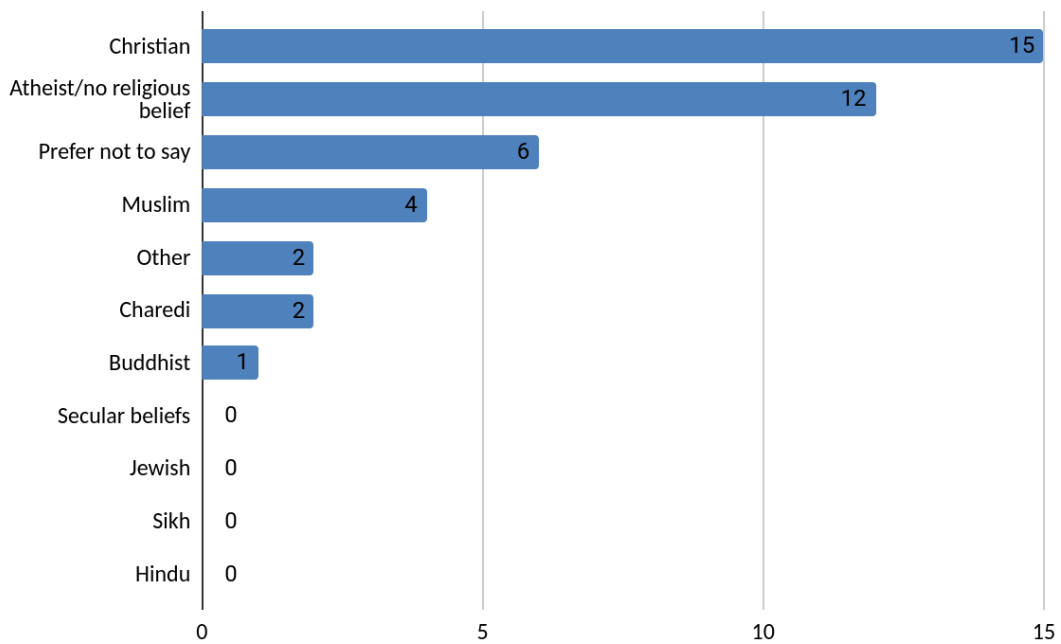
The majority of respondents stated that they did not provide unpaid caring support (32). 13 respondents stated that they did provide caring support.

**Ethnicity: Are you... (Base: 43)**



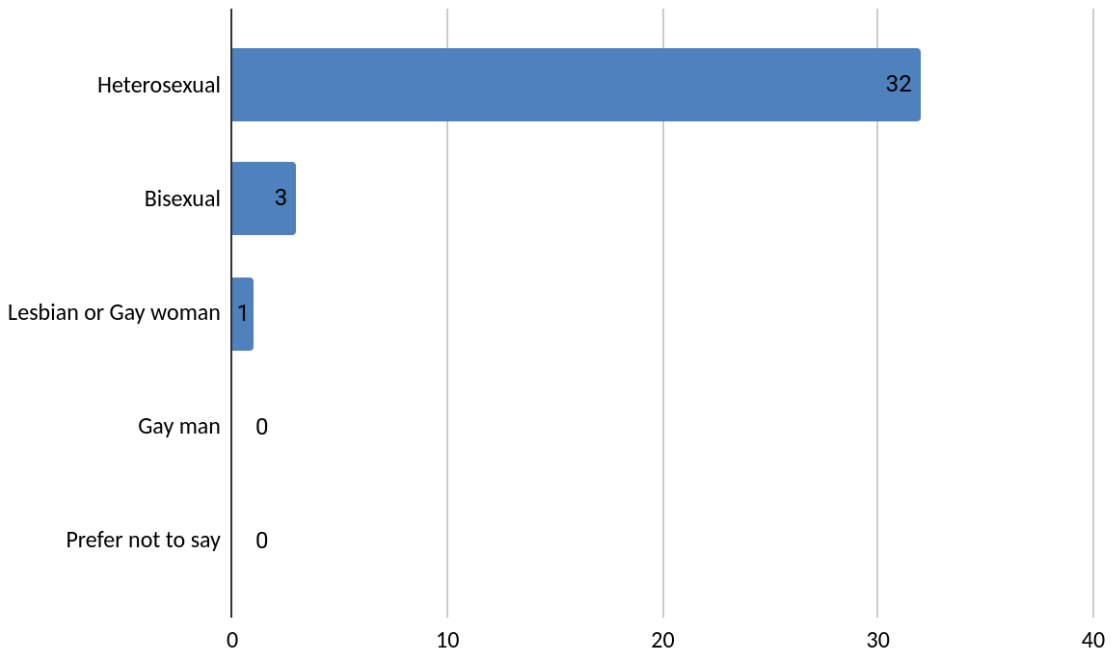
The highest number of respondents were White or White British (22). This is followed by Black or Black British (12), mixed background (4), Asian or Asian British (3) and other ethnic group (2).

**Religion or belief: Are you or do you have... (Base: 42)**



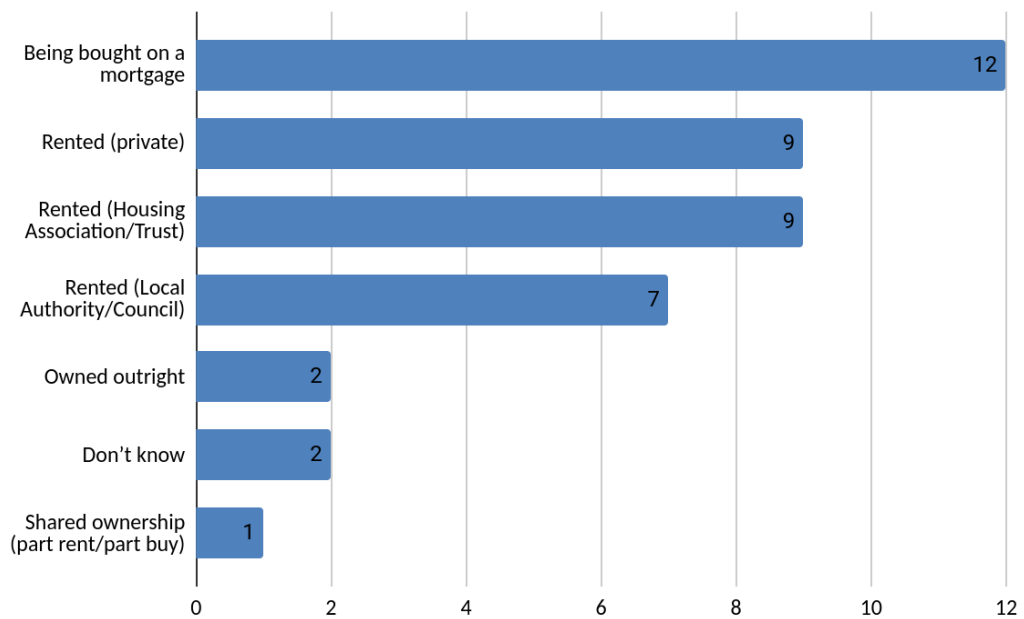
The highest number of respondents were Christian (15). This is followed by Atheist/no religious belief (12), prefer not to say (6), Muslim (4), other (2), Charedi (2) and Buddhist (1).

**Sexual orientation: Are you... (Base: 36)**



The highest number of respondents were heterosexual (32). This is followed by bisexual (3) and lesbian or gay women (1).

**Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home? (Base: 42)**



The highest number of respondents were buying their home on a mortgage (12). This is followed by rented (private) and rented (housing authority/trust) (both 9), rented (local authority/Council) (7), owned outright (2), don't know (2) and shared ownership (part rent/part buy) (1).

## Secondary insight

### Listening to Parents and Carers Talking About Race, Hackney Schools Group Board

The following findings have been extracted from [Listening to Parents and Carers Talking About Race](#), the 2020 Hackney Schools Group Board Inquiry undertaken by Eleanor Schooling CBE, Chair of Hackney Schools Group Board, Marisa Childs and Andrea Powell, co-chairs of Belonging for All Panel in collaboration with Hackney parents and six Hackney Schools.

Four key sections from the report are highlighted here for their relevance to the aims of Children and Family Hubs, working with and for families and children aged 0-19 (up to 25 with SEND):

- **Introduction:** The importance of listening to understand and not to respond
  - Learning and reflection that can be applied to Children and Family Hubs and the importance of listening to parents and families in order to understand their experiences and needs.
- **Curriculum, its power to be transformative, and escaping tokenism**
  - The importance of a diverse and inclusive curriculum and books for nurseries, hubs, and extracurricular activities.
- **Challenging adult biases and behaviours in school and at the school gate**
  - The importance of anti-racist training for staff, parents and children and actions to reduce cultural misunderstandings and microaggressions between parents.
- **Friendships across cultures and races and how schools make this happen**
  - The importance of helping children to build friendships across cultures and races and the role of activities in facilitating friendships.

#### **Extract from Introduction**

*The parents who took part were considered and gave their thoughts generously in the hope these discussions would be shared more widely. We were all talking about race with a renewed and more shared vocabulary, and memorably one parent explained to everyone the importance of “**listening to understand and not to respond**”. Many of them felt it would be helpful to have similar sessions on a regular basis. This might go part of the way towards tackling the fact that some parents felt that they had to fight to get heard and this is emotionally draining.*

#### **Curriculum, its power to be transformative, and escaping tokenism**

*“[My son] doesn’t understand what Black History Month is about.”*

*Every group of parents commented on the curriculum. Many parents said that Black History should be incorporated as part of the curriculum and not just taught for a month. They felt*

*that the curriculum should be less Eurocentric. Teaching positive stories, achievements and legacies is more important than falling back on slavery which tends to embed a victim or powerless view. Black History Month has often been about Black History in the US. For some parents it has added to a feeling of marginalisation as they are not part of that kind of Black, but a different ethnicity. Taking themes such as hair as a way of celebrating Black culture is a hugely positive way into a range of curriculum subjects and very affirming for children.*

*“Black people’s history didn’t start and end with slavery”*

*“You get the sense that something is only important once it has been discovered by Europeans”*

*Parents have seen much more of what their children were learning recently, and had valuable comments to make. They could see the challenges of teaching under lockdown for example when some children were asked to write pledges about anti-racism after the killing of George Floyd. Children sometimes said they did not want to do this as no-one really cared about it anyway. Surprisingly, some parents felt that schools used books that lack diversity and suggested a review of this would be an easy win.*

### ***Friendships across cultures and races and how schools make this happen***

*Even in schools where parents say that their children have a strong sense of belonging, children still separate themselves by ethnicity for example in the cafeteria. This seems to happen as children get older and so schools that think carefully about this are able to have an open conversation about why this happens. It’s a complex matter where at different ages children see the world in different ways. It’s important to respond without judging so that adults hear what children are really saying. Sometimes very young children can be dogmatic about ethnicity, and children from mixed heritages may tell one another they can’t be white, for example.*

*Young children’s comments to one another can also be very hurtful and not always intentionally so. It’s important to find ways of hearing these comments so children can be helped to understand why remarks can be cruel. Although it’s not always easy for schools to know everything that happens, finding a way for issues to be spoken about openly is very important. One school was highly praised for the number and range of its out of school activities that meant every child could be a part of something and make new friends outside the mainstream classroom. I felt this was a really positive solution that could get lost during the return to school that relies on bubbles and less interaction between groups of school children.*

### ***Challenging adult biases and behaviours in school and at the school gate***

*“We would love more ownership and involvement to support the school [and] other parents.”*

*Many parents wanted to be able to mix in different groups as adults themselves and they wanted to find ways to set a better example to their children, where adults are not segregated by race. The school gate is going to be a very different place in September, but*



*that does not mean that change cannot come. Parents suggested that anti-racism training would offer the space for children and adults to discuss and address issues without fear. This was commented upon a number of times and parents felt parents themselves could get a lot from unconscious bias training. Some parents went further to talk about conscious inclusion instead, and some parents felt that understanding unconscious bias doesn't really tackle structural inequalities as it focuses on the individual and not on societal issues. Many parents commented on misunderstandings about culture, for example mistaking loudness for aggression. They told us that PTAs, Governing Bodies, exclusion committees, and similar structures often don't reflect the children in the school and parents felt that actively approaching others from different backgrounds could help, as well as the possibility of a Black parents' group. Many parents felt that PTAs could really help with enriching the school community. Sometimes parents had noticed racist and dismissive comments at the school gate that were being left unchallenged by staff and they wanted these incidents to be dealt with. They felt that just leaving them implied that the school was OK with these incidents. Some parents suggested that bringing all parents in at the start of term, so everyone can see who the community is, would be a great start. During Covid this will be hard but they would like to hold on to some of these ideas.*

# Valuing the Future Through Young Voices

The independent youth-led Hackney Young Futures Commission, published the [Valuing the Future Through Young Voices report](#) in 2019. The report captures the feedback from over 2,500 children and young people aged 10-25 years old about their lived experiences of living in the London Borough of Hackney and the asks / solutions they put to the council to address these.

Using six main themes; **Secure Future, Healthy Future, Active Future, Inclusive Future, Safe Future** and **Bright Future** the report highlights the concerns, priorities and solutions in the form of 'asks' young people directed towards the council, its partners and the wider community.

## Housing

Many children and young people were concerned around issues pertaining to housing; lack of affordable housing, inadequate living conditions and rough sleepers. Children and young people expressed a desire to eradicate homelessness and felt feelings of anxiety and helplessness about their ability to make meaningful change in this area. An ask to the council outlined in the report, was to increase access to specialist housing and services.

## Mental health

Young people expressed that various areas of their lives gave rise to anxiety, stress and other mental health issues. These areas included exams, loneliness, bullying, substance misuse and the pollution around the borough. Within the report, young people have asked the council to review how mental health services are delivered to this cohort.

## Youth Services

The importance of providing young people with access to safe spaces such as youth clubs has been well established. The report highlights the desire for young people to know more about where in the borough these spaces are located. The family hubs will:

Offer access to staff / resources which provide information and refer young people to universal youth services such as youth clubs, sports and other specific activity clubs, uniformed youth groups (scouts / guides) and homework clubs.

Report feedback indicated the need for improved communication between the Hackney council and young people.

## Employment and financial support

The Commission found that although young people in Hackney were ambitious, this cohort were experiencing barriers to accessing employment and training opportunities. The report highlighted that stresses relating to finances and housing affordability impacted their emotional and overall wellbeing.