

Scrutiny Café 2026 – 24 September 2026

Children and Young People

Top Priorities from Survey from within terms of reference:

- 1) Schools and Education – 107 (49.5%)
- 2) Services for children with disabilities and additional needs -84 (38.8%)
- 3) Youth Services – 81 (37.5%)
- 4) Safeguarding children – 68 (31.5%)
- 5) Early Years & Childcare – 62 (28.7%)

Top Priorities from the Scrutiny Café:

- 1) Youth Justice
- 2) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- 3) Safeguarding
- 4) School Avoidance
- 5) Engagement & Representation

Specific Suggested Issues or Concerns:

No.	Suggestion	Comment(s)	Priority – High, Medium or Low	Proposed Action (Item for OSC meeting/potential review/Cabinet Member Question/no further action).
1.	Youth Justice	Youth justice was identified as a significant area of concern, particularly in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour within local communities. Attendees discussed the importance of understanding the root causes of youth behaviour rather than approaching young people from a position of fear or negative perceptions. Consideration should be given to how services engage with young people, what the prevailing mindset is towards them, and how support can be provided effectively. Factors highlighted as potentially contributing to youth offending and anti-social behaviour included: • The influence of social media on young people. • Parents working long hours and having limited capacity to supervise their children.	High	Scrutiny Review

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		A reduction in the number of youth clubs and youth provision compared to previous years. There was a view that scrutiny should explore how young people are engaged and supported, with a focus on prevention and early intervention.		
2.	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	SEND was identified as a major priority. While the opening of new Autism Spectrum Disorder hubs was welcomed, attendees highlighted the following areas of concern: - High exclusion rates in schools. - The possibility that some excluded children may have undiagnosed SEND needs. - The impact of SEND on wider outcomes for children and young people. There was a discussion around the fact that SEND reforms are expected in the near future (refer to Item 9).	High	A report to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.
3.	Safeguarding – Changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements	Attendees highlighted recent changes to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and suggested this should be an area for scrutiny. Key questions included: - How effectively are the new safeguarding arrangements operating in Haringey? - How well are partner agencies working together? - What impact have the changes had on outcomes for children and families? A report on safeguarding developments and contextual safeguarding practices could provide useful oversight of the current position and future direction of the service.	Medium	A report to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.
4.	School Avoidance and Attendance	School avoidance was raised as an area requiring further exploration.	Medium	School avoidance to be part of a wider report on exclusions for a future meeting.

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		Attendees questioned whether sufficient attention was being given to understanding why children avoid school, noting that the reasons can vary widely and may include difficulties with the school environment, relationships with staff, SEND needs, mental health concerns, or other factors.		
5.	Engagement and Representation	Attendees reflected on consultation and survey responses, noting that respondents were predominantly white and aged over 65. Concerns were raised about whether consultation processes adequately capture the views of children, young people and other groups directly affected by the issues being considered. Discussion focused on: • Ensuring engagement exercises are inclusive and representative. • Increasing participation from children and young people. • Examining demographic gaps in consultation responses. • Exploring how scrutiny can help improve engagement across all communities. It was noted that surveys are only one method of engagement and should be complemented by direct outreach through community organisations, targeted group discussions, online engagement, and conversations facilitated by councillors and local networks. Attendees agreed that improving the quality and inclusiveness of engagement should remain an ongoing consideration for both the Panel and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.	Medium	Cross-Cutting piece of scrutiny work.
6.	Reliance on Private Provision	Concerns were expressed regarding the current reliance on private sector provision within children's services. Members suggested scrutiny could explore opportunities to reduce dependence on private providers and strengthen local authority provision where appropriate.	Medium	Questions to the Cabinet Member

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7.	Ofsted and Public Perception	Attendees noted that public perception does not always reflect inspection findings and questioned how evidence was collated and presented during the Ofsted inspection process. It was suggested that scrutiny may wish to consider the outcomes of recent Ofsted inspections and the extent to which these findings align with public perceptions of youth services and children's services more broadly.	Low	Questions to the Cabinet Member.
8.	Mental Health and Financial Insecurity	Mental health and wellbeing were highlighted as important themes, particularly in the context of financial insecurity and pressures on families and schools. Attendees acknowledged the financial challenges faced by schools and commented on the impact these pressures could have on the support available for children and young people.	Medium	Questions to the Cabinet Member around what was being done to support financial insecurity through schools.
9.	SEND Reforms and other legislative changes	Attendees discussed emerging changes to children's services at the local and national level. Of particular importance was the SEND reforms. It was suggested that scrutiny should take a forward-looking approach, considering anticipated changes, emerging priorities and the implications for local services.	Medium	The Panel received an update at the October Panel meeting on the government's vision for schools and special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reform. Which is contained in the White Paper 'Every child to achieve and thrive'. The Panel will continue to monitor legislative changes as they progress.
10)	Early Year's Provision	Continuing the work undertaken by the previous Panel on children under 1.	Low	The Panel will receive an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the review at a future meeting.