

<b>Committee(s):</b> Safeguarding Sub Committee Health & Wellbeing Board – For information	<b>Dated:</b> 23 November 2023 24 November 2023
<b>Subject:</b> The Child Q Update report – Why was it me?	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>Contribute to a flourishing society</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People are safe and feel safe.</li> <li>2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.</li> <li>3. People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.</li> <li>4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.</li> </ol>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of: Jim Gamble QPM &amp; Rory McCallum</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Report author: Jim Gamble QPM &amp; Rory McCallum</b>	

## Summary

In 2020, Child Q, a Black female child of secondary school age, was stripped searched by female police officers from the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). The search, which involved the exposure of Child Q’s intimate body parts, took place on school premises, without an Appropriate Adult present and with the knowledge that Child Q was menstruating.

A Local Child Safeguarding Practice was initiated by the City & Hackney Safeguarding Children Partnership (CHSCP). It was authored by Jim Gamble QPM (Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner) and Rory McCallum (Senior Professional Advisor) and published in March 2022. The review made eight findings and 14 recommendations for improving practice.

At the request of Hackney’s Mayor, the Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner committed to providing an independent update on the progress made in response to the first review.

The Child Q update report - *Why was it me?* was published in June 2023. It is 104 pages long, covers 9 sections and provides an evaluation of progress against the review’s initial 14 recommendations and looks at the work undertaken on trust and confidence in the police, schools and anti-racism.

## **Recommendation(s)**

Members are asked to note the report.

### **Main Report**

#### **Background**

1. The Child Q update report and an accompanying video can be read/seen on the CHSCP website – [HERE](#). A short summary is set out below.

#### **1.2 Overview**

- The immediate response to the Child Q review reflected the shock that went through the system. The police and school in question initially adopted a defensive position.
- Hackney council's leadership responded with a clear vision regarding the issues and recognised the need for a coordinated multiagency response. This leadership was key.
- There was evidence of strong and effective leadership from many individuals and organisations.
- The appointment of the new BCU Commander has seen a shift in approach and there is some cautious optimism.

#### **1.3 Engagement / Voices**

- The report primarily focuses on the voice of children. The update engaged with about 100 local children (overwhelmingly from the Black community).
- They were engaged in spaces and places where they felt able to speak and we believe that their input is an authentic reflection of their own experiences.
- For many adults, the incident involving Child Q caused shock, disbelief and fear. There was also anger. However, for children, many felt no sense of shock. They saw Child Q as another example of a Black child being treated unfairly by the police.
- They could also draw parallels with their own experiences and what some saw as the insensitive practices within their schools. Their comments focused on discipline and welfare, racism, how schools search children and their views about the police.
- The views of children were echoed in those of parents, carers and community representatives.

#### **1.4 The Police**

- There has been progress in the MPS, but much remains to be done.
- The MPS has improved how they record and present the data on strip searching and there is a much better level of scrutiny. Some pilots have also been started to look at the best way to support young people when they are stopped and searched by the police.
- There have been no MTIP searches of children in Hackney for over a year and a 45% reduction across London. Improvement in the number of Appropriate Adults being used is also noted (although the report acknowledges some wider difficulties on this matter).
- Authority levels have been increased and in Hackney, the BCU Commander has enhanced the requirement to Supt (from inspector and to the Commander on out of hours decisions)
- The Report highlights several other issues including.
  - A call for the MPS Commissioner to acknowledge institutional racism.
  - The requirement for better and more meaningful engagement at a local level regarding the appointment of future BCU Commanders and more insightful and meaningful local scrutiny of policing.
- It also covers issues related to the need to revisit the law (PACE Codes) and the approach to reasonable grounds when conducting a search.

## **1.5 Education**

- Children had concerns about the nature and frequency of searches undertaken by teaching staff in schools and what was felt to be an overly authoritarian approach in some education establishments.
- The report highlights the lack of consistency in the way schools identify what is considered a prohibited item, i.e. something you can be searched for. The report makes recommendations in this regard.
- The report also makes several recommendations that will give the LA and CHSCP greater insight into how children feel or do not feel safe and supported in schools.

Child Q asked, “*why was it me?*” and the report has been given that title. It makes the point that it is time to focus on the root cause and move on from Child Q’s experience. She needs time and space to grow.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

Strategic implications – Whilst the Child Q case relates to a Hackney child, the findings and recommendations from the review have implications for the strategic focus on safeguarding practice within the City of London.

There remains ongoing and active consideration of these issues via the City's statutory safeguarding partners, the CHSCP Exec and the City of London Safeguarding Children Partnership Board.

Financial implications - None

Resource implications -None

Legal implications -None

Risk implications- None

Equalities implications – The issues raised by this case highlight broader issues regarding the need for greater understanding of anti-racist practice, adultification and disproportionality. The learning from the case will seek to support and improve practice across these areas.

Climate implications - None

Security implications – None

## **Conclusion**

As stated in the Child Q update report, following its publication:

*'it is now essential that our partnership takes a whole systems approach to improvement. This needs to be coordinated and overseen in a way that drives and demands progress – in a way that practically addresses the alienation and isolation experienced by far too many people because of the colour of their skin. It also needs to engage all relevant partners, including colleagues in adult services and have an unapologetic focus on humanising relationships.'*

## **Appendices**

<https://www.chscp.org.uk/case-reviews/>

## **Background Papers**

The initial Child Q review, the update report and associated statements are available on the CHSCP website:

<https://www.chscp.org.uk/case-reviews/>

## **Jim Gamble QPM**

Independent Safeguarding Children Commissioner

## **Rory McCallum**

Senior Professional Advisor

T: 02083564183

E: chscp@hackney.gov.uk