



Reducing school exclusions summit overview

23 January 2023



On Monday 23 January 2023, we hosted a summit on reducing school exclusions in Hackney, delivered in partnership with Rise Up East and the Hackney REP consortium, supported by Hackney CVS.

The summit brought together organisations and individuals who work with young people and families in and around education to share challenges, opportunities, projects and network, to strengthen our community-based approach to reducing school exclusions and improving re-inclusion for young people in Hackney.

The summit was hosted in person at the Morningside community centre and was attended by 50 people from 28 voluntary and community sector organisations as well as statutory partners who work with young people across Hackney.

Why did we host this summit?

School exclusions and negative school experiences disproportionately impact our communities in Hackney, particularly those from ethnically and culturally diverse communities.



The voluntary and community sector in Hackney supports young people, families and schools in a huge variety of ways to improve educational outcomes for young people and make education more inclusive and positive.

Rise Up East and Hackney REP have come together to host this summit to bring together organisations and individuals who work with young people and families and education to share challenges, opportunities, projects and networks, to strengthen our community-based approach to reducing school exclusions and improving re-inclusion for young people in Hackney.

Summit aims:

- Identifying and discussing challenges the local community face around participating in education
- Identifying opportunities and actions for collaborative working across sectors and organisations locally to reduce school exclusions
- Sharing information and raising awareness of local work around reducing school exclusions and supporting young people and families through education
- Building consensus and momentum to empower and enable community-led solutions to reduce school exclusions, support young people and families and create a positive school experience

Rise Up East

is a local (Hackney Wick, Homerton and Marsh Hill) consortium part of the wider initiative My Ends, being delivered in 8 London boroughs addressing youth violence. My Ends programme is funded by the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), a department in the London Mayor's office focused on reducing violence across London. Rise Up East consortium is made up of voluntary sector organisations who provide services in the community aimed mainly at 11 – 25 year olds and families: The Crib, East London Business Alliance, Hackney CVS, Hackney Wick Football Club, Hackney Quest, Immediate Theatre, The Wickers Charity.

Our mission is to empower the community through strengthened partnerships and decision-making about the changes that are needed in the area of youth violence, through providing interventions and activities.

For more information contact riseupeast@hcv.org.uk or 07534 916 342

Hackney REP

A partnership of 12 VCS organisations and local experts, delivering an advocacy programme that streamlines and bolsters existing community relationships and advocacy projects, aiming to reduce school exclusions and maximise positive school experiences in Hackney.



Hackney REPs provide advocacy to young people, and their care givers, who are at risk of school exclusion or facing challenges around participating in school, particularly those from Black Caribbean and African Heritage.

Hackney REP brings extensive and unique expertise in working with young people and families, education, schools, Hackney local areas, cultural nuance, advocacy, mental health and holistic person-centred support.

Jessica@hcvs.org.uk or hackneyrep@gmail.com

Summit Panel

The summit included a panel discussion with the following community members on the panel:

Allison Vitalis, East London University, The Charlie Burns Foundation, parent governor

Kieran Harris, The Wickers Charity and parent

Sharon White, London Violence Reduction Unit

Helena Burke, Hackney Education

Yolanda Lear, Hackney CVS, Author & Founder of The Undefeated Mind

We were also privileged to hear from a young person who had experienced exclusion.

Key discussion points

Cultural and historical context for high exclusions in Hackney, and behaviour policies

- Historically teachers have found it hard to relate to the children and young people they teach, they often don't look like them and don't understand the way they think.
- It helps young people when their teachers look like them and have had to overcome similar barriers to them
- There is a lack of understanding around why young people behave 'badly'. Some children can't and won't fit into the behaviour policies
- It is not possible to contact academies, education organisations and leaders are not able to have conversations with them
- Teachers find it difficult to deal with young people when they are in heightened states of emotions, this can lead to a situation escalating and then exclusion
- Hackney has historically had bad school results, so when academies were set up in Hackney, parents were keen to send their children to them without knowing what their behaviour policies were like. Parents still don't know what the behaviour policies are like before they send their children to academies often.



- Parents aren't bold enough to challenge the behaviour policies, and no one else is challenging them either, meaning that academies are 'laws unto themselves'
- Language in the behaviour policies are confusing and point us in the wrong direction and because we are in a minority group, we are branded as causing problems, this is racism
- Gentrification of Hackney has affected schools by creating imbalance in the schools children are sent to

Training for teachers

- Training can be a tick box exercise e.g. emotion coaching training
- Community members should be able to check training that teachers are having – it needs to come from and represent the people

Challenges with schools/academies

- School exclusions seem like a business to schools as there is money involved
- There is an academy where the owner also runs pupil referral units
- Alternate provision is expensive and it isn't one size fits all
- How can Hackney Education work with them?

Curriculum

- The curriculum needs to be modified as it isn't fit for purpose to support and educate young people

Support available

- Reengagement team at Hackney Council is a case work team dedicated to supporting young people universal to schools in Hackney, they work with schools to adjust behaviour and work around reasonable adjustments
- We need support for parents of the young people who are fighting against the system
- Some parents are suing schools – Just For Kids Law are supporting young people. We should support more young people to take legal action when their rights are not being upheld.

Summit outcomes:

- Partnership building and information sharing between organisations with aligned aims to strengthen community and support
- Increased understanding and alignment between Hackney Education and Community
- Built momentum for tackling the issue of school exclusions



- New Hackney REP partners: Just for Kids Law, BetaMinds
- Hackney Education (Helena Burke) is committed to working together to reduce school exclusions
- Potential funding for Hackney REP from Just for Kids Law
- New relationship with Hackney REP and BEO Head of Research
- Partnership development between Alliance for Youth Justice and Hackney Community
- Increasing awareness across the community of Hackney Council's Re-engagement team