

POLICING THE PLAYGROUND:

A new model for schools policing

July 2025



LIBERTY

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Acknowledgments: Liberty is grateful to Luke Billingham, youth worker at Hackney Quest and Research Associate at the Open University, for his support and guidance throughout all stages of this project, which was key to our ability to carry out this research. Liberty would also like to thank those who participated in the research for sharing their time, insights, and experiences with us.

Finally, Liberty would like to thank Kareen Cox (absolutelykareen.co.uk) for designing the report and Executive Summary.

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1.

INTRODUCTION: WHY RESEARCH SCHOOLS POLICING?

In 2002, Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs) were launched as a framework through which to structure and maintain working relationships between police and schools.¹ SSPs are implemented largely by Safer Schools Officers (SSOs) whose activities vary depending on their local SSP, the school in which they operate, and their own approach to the role.

The way that police and schools structure their relationships has significant consequences for young people. This is especially acute for young people who have been subjected to or are at risk of disproportionate and harmful policing practices, including children who are racialised as Black and Global Majority. How police and schools engage with one another can either exacerbate the over-policing of marginalised communities, or seek to address and reduce it. Policies and practices related to the police-school relationship (such as SSPs) are therefore potentially key sites for the delivery of police forces' commitments to eliminate disproportionality and racist policing practices.²

Recognising this, young people, their parents, youth practitioners, community organisers, and others in civil society who are members of and/or work with those in over-policed communities have been calling for changes to the police-school relationship for several years.³ During this time, instances of extreme harm carried out by police officers against young, often Black, children in schools have attracted national concern. One of the most familiar examples of this occurred in Hackney in 2020. A Black child referred to as 'Child Q' was strip searched by officers at her school in a way that exposed her intimate parts, while menstruating, without an appropriate adult present, and based solely on school staffs' claims of a smell of cannabis.⁴ Against this backdrop, on 2 May 2025 the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) moved all SSOs in London into Neighbourhood Policing Teams. These officers, now called 'Dedicated Ward Officers – Children and Young People',⁵ still maintain relationships with schools and are still responsible for delivering their local SSP.⁶ This shift coincided with a significant budget shortfall within MPS of £260 million and staff cuts of 1,700.⁷ It also coincided with the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, a Government commitment to put 13,000 more officers in Neighbourhood Policing

Teams by 2029.⁸ This policy change is – at the time of writing – confined to MPS and does not affect how schools and police interact outside of London.

Prior to the public announcement of this change, coordinated and organised pressure from members of the community in Hackney since Child Q was strip searched catalysed substantive discussions with and among policymakers in police forces and local government about what the police-school relationship should look like. In 2024, MPS and local authority officials in Hackney published a new draft SSP model that would apply across the borough once finalised.⁹ The new model seeks to incorporate recommendations made in the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review report regarding Child Q,¹⁰ a 2022 MPS review of disproportionality in schools policing,¹¹ and a London Policing Ethics Panel report into schools policing.¹² It also seeks to function as a pilot model for how to effectively operationalise the London-wide changes that were subsequently made to schools policing on 2 May 2025. A description of the new model is in [Section Three](#).

This research qualitatively examines the Hackney model and analyses policy development in schools policing in both Hackney and London to contextualise the new model. Liberty chose to carry out this research because further scrutiny and consultation could identify potential improvements to the new model, particularly in ensuring that it reduces disproportionality in policing for Black and Global Majority children in line with our previous work on criminal justice and policing.¹³ During the new model's design, Hackney Education and MPS ran several consultations with stakeholders including head teachers and SSOs.¹⁴ No publicly available documents state whether young people or youth practitioners were consulted (although at a Hackney Council Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission meeting in 2024, then-Central East Borough Commander James

Conway¹⁵ stated that MPS would consult young people on some elements of the proposal).¹⁶ As such, we chose to interview youth practitioners to understand their perspectives on the proposed policy changes.

We have sought to draw out insights relevant for MPS and officials in other local authorities as they consider how to operationalise the shift of SSOs into neighbourhood teams, in a way that:

- Meets MPS's commitment to reduce racially disproportionate policing,
- Identifies specific elements of the Hackney model that are evidenced as potentially effective or ineffective,
- Addresses existing and potential unintended harms of policing in and around schools for young people, and
- Identifies recommendations for how to structure the police-school-student relationship in a way that improves outcomes for young people and fulfils the stated aims of SSPs.

These insights will also be relevant for police forces and local authorities outside of London as they consider how to structure the relationship between policing and education institutions.

1.1 Methodology

1.1.1 Policy development analysis

We attended the 2024 Scrutiny Commission meeting, held confidential discussions with 10 professionals working in safeguarding, education, policing, and violence reduction in Hackney and across London, and procured meeting minutes of the Safer Schools Partnership Board¹⁷ via Freedom of Information requests. We analysed these documents and relevant responses to questions submitted to Mayor's Question Time by London Assembly Members to examine schools policing policy development in Hackney and London. Data collected as part of this phase of the research included insightful perspectives from practitioners and policymakers within and beyond MPS, on policies and practices related to schools policing. These are included below in [Section Two](#), and informed our design of the second phase of the research: interviews with youth practitioners.

1.1.2 Youth practitioner interviews

We conducted semi-structured interviews¹⁸ with six professionals providing non-statutory services to young people in Hackney. Their professions ranged from frontline youth work to senior management positions within youth organisations, and their years of experience ranged from 7 to 40 years. Before the interviews, participants were provided with documentation produced by Hackney Education and MPS for the 2024 Scrutiny Commission meeting. They were asked about what young people had relayed to them about schools policing, their views on the new Safer Schools Partnership model, and what an ideal police-school-student relationship would look like. All interviewees are anonymised and designated as 'YW' followed by a number.

1.1.3 Limitations

Limitations of the research include that the version of the Hackney model examined was as it existed at the 2024 Scrutiny Commission meeting as no further information on the model was published. Other limitations include that interviewees were recruited via pre-existing professional relationships, and those interviewed were self-selected.¹⁹ Lastly, the small sample size limits the generalisability of the findings, however all participants worked in different organisations which somewhat mitigates this limitation. The ensuing policy recommendations take these limitations into account and seek to reflect the strength of the available evidence.



2.

BACKGROUND: HOW DOES SCHOOLS POLICING WORK IN THE UK?

This section lays out the background and context for the research. It considers what the existing evidence tells us about how schools policing operates across England (including in London before the changes made on 2 May 2025), its effectiveness, and any unintended harms. It also draws from data collected as part of the policy development phase of the project to better understand how the Hackney model emerged, and where it sits in relation to wider schools policing changes that have taken place across London.

2.1 How schools policing is governed

There is no national statutory guidance or policy on schools policing in England.²⁰ However, some statutory guidance has implications for how police operate in and around schools and with young people in education settings, which all schools policing models must adhere to:

- The statutory guidance ‘Keeping children safe in education’ lays out the legal duties that schools have regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, including their duties in regard to contact with the police.²¹
- ‘Working together to safeguard children’ sets out statutory guidance on multi-agency working.²²
- The National Police Chiefs’ Council has guidance for senior staff in schools on ‘When to call the police’.²³
- Non-statutory guidance on ‘Searching, screening and confiscation in schools’ outlines the relevant police powers as well as the role and responsibilities of senior school staff to pupils subjected to these powers.²⁴

One key duty for schools policing arises from the Home Office Crime Recording Rules²⁵ which require police officers to record certain incidents as crimes. These Rules are accompanied by the Home Office Schools Protocol²⁶ which sets the threshold for what incidents are recorded as crimes on school premises. These include, for instance, cannabis possession and ‘consensual’ sexting.²⁷

Schools policing – both before 2 May 2025 and now – is largely delivered via Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) agreements between schools and their local police force. When a school enters into an SSP in London, they are provided with the standard Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) SSP Handbook (outlining the aims of the partnership,

roles and responsibilities of those involved, and relevant guidance, among other information). They also sign a standard Data Sharing Agreement authored by MPS.²⁸ Our discussions with practitioners in policing, education, and safeguarding indicated that police forces outside of London often structure their SSP using joint protocol templates, which are specific to each police force and contain their own aims and objectives. These are not routinely published.

The primary aims of all London SSPs (as outlined in the SSP Handbook) are to:

- Build trust and confidence
- Improve safety and enhance safeguarding
- Disrupt experiences of victimisation and future involvement in crime
- Deliver early intervention and diversion.²⁹

In London, MPS established a new governance arrangement for SSPs by creating the Safer Schools Partnership Board, which held its inaugural meeting on 23 April 2023.³⁰ The Board was established in order for MPS to comply with a court order arising from a legal challenge (discussed [below](#)) and as part of commitments in the Mayor’s Action Plan on Transparency, Accountability and Trust in Policing.³¹ The Board is led by the MPS Commander for youth and schools, and consists of senior stakeholders in MPS and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime, alongside others whose names and organisations have been redacted from the Board’s meeting minutes (sent to Liberty in response to a Freedom of Information request).³² These may be stakeholders working in education, academia, and civil society with specialisms in the wellbeing of children in education,³³ and in the Department for Education.³⁴

The Board is a “source of review and challenge on the existing approach to police in schools and developing initiatives”.³⁵ The Board spent 2023

and 2024 sharing perspectives on the deployment of officers in schools and developing a set of intended outcomes that schools policing intends to achieve. They have consulted on a draft MPS performance and outcomes framework “to shift the way in which the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) monitor SSO [Safer Schools Officer] activity”.³⁶ At the time of writing, this framework has yet to be published due to the ongoing operational changes shifting SSOs into Neighbourhood Policing Teams.³⁷

2.2 The scale of schools policing

Schools policing varies considerably across England, and as such it is difficult to assess the nature and scale of police-school engagement on a national level. A 2023 report by the Runnymede Trust provides the most updated figures, at which time there were 979 police officers working in schools across 38 of the 45 police forces in the UK.³⁸ This includes Safer Schools Officers (SSOs) and all other police working in schools in some capacity, such as youth engagement officers.

At the time, half (489) of all school-based officers were operating in London³⁹ – which was disproportionately high considering that just over a quarter of all police officers in England were employed in London.⁴⁰ A 2022 report by the Metropolitan Police Service stated that, at the time, the following officers were involved in schools policing:⁴¹

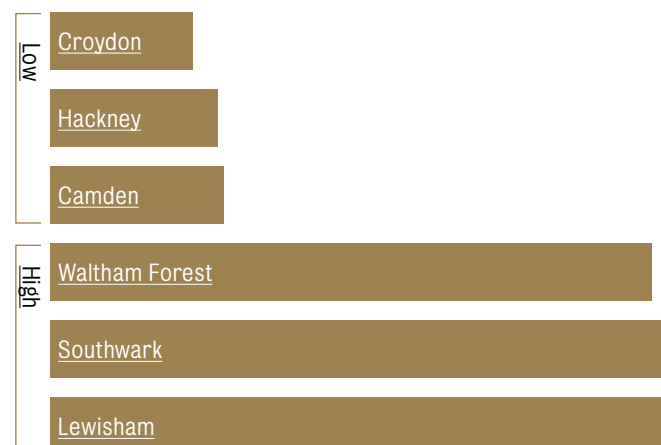
Role	Year 2022 (n)
Safer Schools Officers	370
Youth engagement and police cadets	107
Safer Schools sergeants	32
Safer Schools inspectors	12
Total	521

The number of SSOs then decreased in 2023, but the number of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs) increased significantly from 2023 to 2024:

	Year 2023 (n) ⁴²	Year 2024 (n) ⁴³
Safer Schools Officers	311	331
Safer Schools Partnerships	613	724

In 2024, 11 of these officers were in Hackney.⁴⁴

Until 2 May 2025, all schools in London were offered support from an officer who would deliver an SSP, but not all schools took one up. In July 2022 a disclosure from the Mayor’s Office indicated that boroughs with the lowest proportion of secondary schools with an SSP were Croydon (23%), Hackney (27%), and Camden (28%), while boroughs with the highest proportion were Waltham Forest (97%), Southwark (100%), and Lewisham (100%).⁴⁵



Some schools were prioritised⁴⁶ for police support using the following assessment criteria:

“[...] recorded rates of anti-social behaviour with a link to the School (including community impact), amount of first time entrants to the Criminal Justice System, number of victims of crime, intelligence on weapon related incidents attributed to the school, number of pupils attending the school and the permanent exclusion rate.”⁴⁷

However, headteachers were ultimately responsible for deciding whether to enter into an SSP with the police.⁴⁸ If they chose not to establish an SSP, they were offered a named officer (the prevalence of which was much higher across all boroughs, where in 2022 100% of secondary schools in 24 boroughs had a named officer).⁴⁹ As such, the rates of schools with SSPs is not necessarily an indicator of the rate of schools assessed as priorities against the criteria listed above.

Publicly available documents do not indicate that young people in London are regularly consulted on whether they would like an SSP, or on what the SSP could entail within their school.⁵⁰ The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime conduct large-scale youth surveys every 3 years, which include questions related to schools policing, the results of which are analysed in the section entitled 'Meaningful consultation'.⁵¹

2.3 Evidence on the effectiveness of schools policing

There is very little evidence related to the effectiveness of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs) at achieving their intended outcomes.⁵² Given the number of recent evidence reviews examining research into the effectiveness of schools policing, our report does not include a fresh systematic review.

Existing evidence reviews generally conclude that there is no evidence that schools policing reduces crime or violence, and that there is some evidence that pedagogical activities carried out by officers can increase trust and confidence in certain contexts but they are usually ineffective at achieving their primary outcomes of e.g., reducing drug use or knife crime.⁵³ One study suggests that pupils benefit from the material they learn (such as about their rights and procedural justice) but this benefit seems to be derived from the topic of the lesson, rather than who delivers it.⁵⁴ Evidence also suggests that pedagogical activities are more effective when officers deliver them in partnership with other professionals with the required skills, such as teachers.⁵⁵

Far more evidence exists evaluating the impact of schools policing in the United States.⁵⁶ However, the nature of schools policing there is vastly different to that in the UK, and there are other significant factors that mean findings in the US are not generalisable outside of the American context, such as that officers based in US schools carry firearms.

Overall in the UK, the London Policing Ethics Panel concluded in 2024 that "[t]here is no reliable empirical evidence that schools policing makes schools safer".⁵⁷ In addition, the ambiguity of the intended outcomes of SSPs means they are difficult to evaluate: "The measures of success

for SSPs are unclear, and identifying appropriate metrics for understanding the benefits and detriments of policing activity is extremely challenging".⁵⁸

This ambiguity has contributed to wide variation in how Safer Schools Officers have delivered their SSPs, due to confusion among policing and school professionals about one another's roles. The SSP Board noted that, "There is nothing at a strategic level that drives consistency/performance in this space".⁵⁹ Then-Central East Borough Commander James Conway pointed out that loose definitions and blurred roles mean that sometimes officers become involved in disciplinary matters for non-criminal behaviour, and teachers were "going out with BWV [body-worn video] to stop stabbings".⁶⁰

The evidence indicates that there are several factors that influence how effective schools policing is at achieving its intended outcomes.

These include:

- Levels of trust and confidence
- Clarity of role and intended outcomes of all professionals within the partnership
- Consistency and availability of officers
- Clarity of governance structures and information-sharing protocols
- Expertise and training of officers.⁶¹

Many of these factors were identified by the SSP Board in meetings held in 2023 and 2024. Additional factors identified by the Board include a lack of central oversight and coordination, which compounds issues posed by unclear roles and a lack of effective performance indicators.⁶² The Board also elaborated on a tension between seeking to build trust and confidence in schools, and police interactions as the source of a lack of trust and confidence overall. Members reflected that trust and confidence built through schools policing can be instantly undone when a young person encounters an officer in the community setting who does not approach them appropriately or does so in a procedurally unjust way, e.g., if they are stopped and searched without reasonable grounds, or in a way that is traumatically invasive.⁶³ For this reason, performance indicators used by MPS in the past such as the number of youth engagement events in schools or the number of police deployments in and around schools⁶⁴ may not accurately measure the effectiveness of the police-school relationship

at achieving its intended outcomes.

In another meeting, a member presenting the Hackney model to the Board noted there is also a “need to consider those children for whom seeing Police does not make them feel safe and can raise tensions”.⁶⁵ This indicates that there is a level of understanding among those developing schools policing policies that they should be designed and delivered in a way that reduces the risk to particular groups of young people posed by police in and around schools.

2.4 Evidence on unintended harms and disproportionality in schools policing

In 2020 a legal challenge was raised on behalf of the family of a 14-year-old Black boy with autism. The boy was subjected to a criminal investigation after “a verbal altercation with a member of staff that was reported to the school officer”.⁶⁶ The case raised significant concerns about the impact of schools policing on Black and Global Majority children, as well as children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). The family withdrew their claim on the basis that the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) would review equalities implications and the extent of disproportionality in schools policing.

MPS conducted this review and published a report of its findings in 2022.⁶⁷ Its methodology included workshops with school staff, parents, and young people, alongside a general review of the Safer Schools Officer (SSO) role, an analysis of Merlin reports⁶⁸, and a sample of 59 criminal investigations in relation to Black children charged by SSOs between September 2018 and June 2019.⁶⁹ It found that workshop attendees had a generally positive view of SSOs but that cultural awareness and SEND awareness training needed to be improved. Further, they found that officers’ abstractions – where they are temporarily removed from their regular duties and redeployed elsewhere to meet a specific need – has a harmful effect on links with schools.

The report analysis found that Black children were overrepresented in both safeguarding Merlin reports and crime reports, which “could be interpreted as SSOs disproportionately investigating Black children as suspects”.⁷⁰

Analysis of the sample of 59 criminal investigations of Black children found that while No Further Action was an outcome reached in 90% of reports, exclusion or suspension from school occurred in 40% of reports.⁷¹ 25% of Black children charged were suspects in 10 or more subsequent reports following their charge and 15% received custodial sentences.⁷²

The report concluded that a full assessment of racial disproportionality was not possible because officers were not required to record ethnicity data when completing reports.⁷³ MPS have since updated the CONNECT system⁷⁴ to require the collection of ethnicity data following encounters with children.⁷⁵ As stated in the MPS Children’s Strategy (published in September 2024), MPS have “committed to collect and analyse data about the equality implications of police officers working closely with educational establishments”.⁷⁶

School intervention was therefore a more common outcome than a criminal justice response to SSO investigations, however there is ample evidence that school exclusions lead to significantly poorer outcomes for children, and that they are disproportionately used against Black and Global Majority children, children with SEND, and children from low-income backgrounds.⁷⁷ Further, while children whose cases result in No Further Action do not receive a criminal justice outcome, there is strong evidence that experiences associated with being arrested, investigated, and charged are incredibly damaging, particularly when children are held in police custody.⁷⁸ While the MPS report considered the high proportion of No Further Action and school intervention outcomes as suggestive of a lack of disproportionality or criminalisation of young people, the evidence indicates that children in these circumstances may still be harmed by these interactions and may have poorer short- and long-term outcomes than if their behaviour was not addressed through police involvement.

A 2024 London Policing Ethics Panel report evaluated schools policing in London to assess whether the benefits of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs) outweighed their evidenced and potential harms to children.⁷⁹ The report states that the negative effects of SSPs may be disproportionately experienced by Black and Global Majority children, and children from low-

income backgrounds⁸⁰ who are also more likely to report feeling less safe with an officer in their school⁸¹ which aligns with findings from research with young people in Manchester.⁸²

Research published in 2018 further indicates that schools with a high number of children entitled to free school meals were more likely to have established SSPs, indicating that young people from low-income backgrounds were more likely to be in contact with police while at school.⁸³ As the London Policing Ethics Panel notes in their report, officers' duty to report crime means that the more contact a young person has with police, the more likely their actions risk being recorded as a crime.⁸⁴ Both a regular police presence in schools and the uneven establishment of SSPs may therefore contribute to the disproportionate criminalisation of low income and Black and Global Majority children.⁸⁵

Evidence of and concerns around the unintended harms and disproportionality of schools policing led to commitments in the Mayor's Action Plan on Transparency, Accountability and Trust in Policing related to schools policing. These include that MPS "will continue to ensure that the work of the Safer Schools Officers is monitored and assessed to ensure [...] that there are no disproportionate impacts for Black children".⁸⁶ Given policymakers' and practitioners' commitment to reducing disproportionality, we asked research participants to provide insights into how effectively the new Hackney model might achieve this.

2.5 What do Safer Schools Officers do?

Because there is no national policy on schools policing, the activities carried out by Safer Schools Officers (SSOs) vary widely and are driven by a mixture of the terms of their local Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) and their own approach to their role. A 2011 study of schools policing identified that models varied in relation to:

- The physical location of the officer(s): they may work from the school, police station, or elsewhere.
- The nature of their connection to the school: they may be present daily or be called in to respond to specific incidents.

- The number and type of schools they work with: such as a single school, a cluster of schools, or all schools within a given area.
- The amount of police time provided: including if an officer's role within schools is full- or part-time and the frequency with which they are abstracted to other duties.⁸⁷

Our discussions with London-based practitioners in policing and safeguarding (which we triangulated with existing research⁸⁸ and MPS documents)⁸⁹ indicated that common officer activities tend to relate to one or more of the following areas: (1) law enforcement, (2) youth engagement, and (3) safeguarding and prevention. They include, e.g., weapons sweeps and information-sharing, workshops and assemblies, and home and truancy visits.



3.

WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THE HACKNEY SAFER SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIP MODEL?

The new Hackney Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) model contains key changes such as the allocation of school-linked officers⁹⁰ to two schools each, and a single SSP governing the police-school relationship across the borough.⁹¹ There are three main elements to the proposal:

- **Tactical advice:** School-linked officers (now ‘Dedicated Ward Officers – Children and Young People’ as of 2 May) will no longer have a regular presence within the school. They will instead act as tactical advisors to school staff, contributing to school policy, strategy, and responses to particular incidents. The documents note that school staff should be “cognisant of officer’s duties to report and record crime under Home Office Counting Rules”⁹² which implies that this proposal in part seeks to reduce the prevalence of minor incidents being recorded as crimes, when they are best addressed without a policing or criminal justice response.
- **“Safer Corridors”:** School-linked officers will map out routes in the vicinity of the school⁹³ using intelligence and crime data, and patrol those routes in the after-school hours alongside ward officers in their local team who are not linked to specific schools. One document also states youth workers will be present.⁹⁴
- **Toolkit of engagement options:** Each primary and secondary school in the borough will be given 20 points per school year, which they can “spend” on police-led activities in their school.⁹⁵ Each activity on the Toolkit

costs a certain number of points. They range from enforcement-related activities such as knife arches (which will be based on risk assessments),⁹⁶ and pedagogical and pastoral activities such as workshops. The toolkit is recreated in the section on [Toolkit activities](#).

The objectives of the new model are to operationalise the incorporation of school-linked officers into Neighbourhood Policing Teams, as well as to “find a balance” between “school being a safe space for the children to learn, develop and make mistakes” and the identification and reporting of incidents “for either a criminal or safeguarding purpose”.⁹⁷

The following table compares Safer Schools Officer (SSO) activities (which are currently carried out nationally and were carried out in London until 2 May 2025) with school-linked officers’ activities in Hackney’s new SSP model, and organises them according to London SSPs’ aims (as outlined [above](#)). Some activities are cross-cutting and appear multiple times. Activities which are not listed on the Toolkit (and as such are not requestable by the school) but still form part of the officer’s role, have a points cost labelled ‘n/a’:

Aim	Prior to 2 May 2025	Hackney model & point cost of activity	
Build trust and confidence	Workshops	Workshops/Presentations	5
	PSHE ⁹⁸	PSHE (6 sessions)	5
	Assemblies	Assemblies	1
	Mentoring	Careers fair	2
		Student council engagement	2
		Parents evening	1
		School lunches	0
Safety and Safeguarding	Intelligence gathering	Intelligence gathering	n/a
	Weapons sweeps	Weapons sweeps	0
	Information-sharing	Information-sharing/DSL Forum ⁹⁹	0
	Advice provision	Advice provision	n/a
	Home visits		
	Truancy patrols		

Law enforcement	Intelligence gathering	Intelligence gathering	n/a
	Weapons sweeps	Weapons sweeps	0
	Information-sharing	Information-sharing	n/a
	Assisting investigations	Assisting investigations	n/a
	After school patrols	After school patrols	0
	Hallway patrols	Advice provision	n/a
	Truancy patrols		
Early intervention	Mentoring	After school patrols	0
	After school patrols	Advice provision	n/a
	Truancy patrols		

The above table is not an exact comparison; because London schools policing before 2 May was school- and officer-specific outside of Hackney, the activities listed above under the pre-2 May model are not comprehensive. Further, under the pre-2 May model schools theoretically had access to all listed activities throughout the school year. Officers may have also proactively sought to undertake activities on a regular basis. Under the Hackney model, schools will usually request officers' activities which have a points cost (even if that cost is zero) and are limited by the number of points they are allocated. The table above demonstrates that only activities related to building trust and confidence cost more than zero points.

The table demonstrates that although under the Hackney model (and now across London) officers no longer have a regular police presence in schools, they still carry out many of the same functions as under the previous model. Because the Hackney (now London) model does not include a regular police presence in schools, this indicates that a regular presence is not necessary for fulfilling the aims of an SSP.

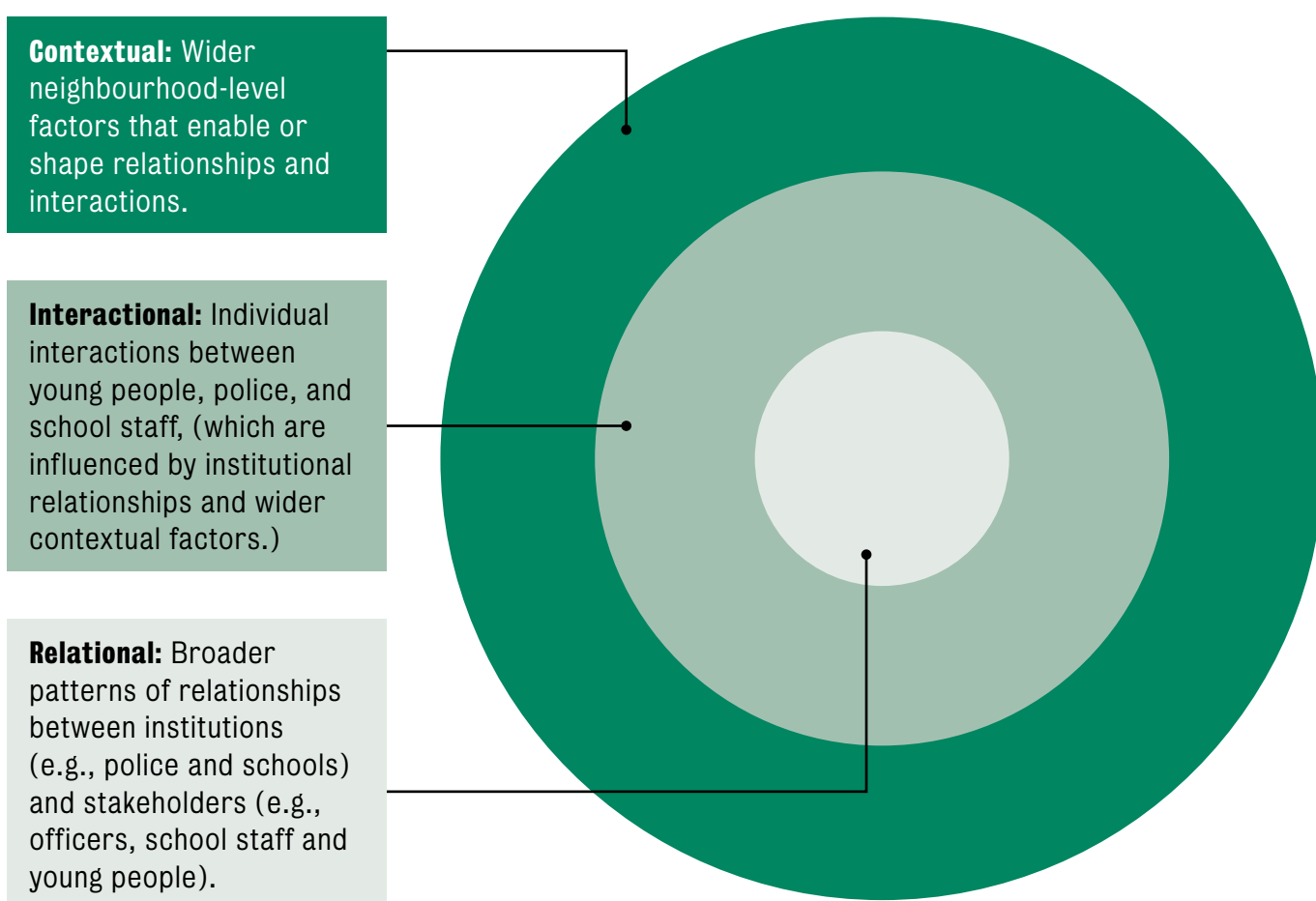


4.

**WHAT DO LOCAL
YOUTH PRACTITIONERS
THINK OF THE NEW
HACKNEY MODEL?**

This section summarises the perspectives of six Hackney-based youth practitioners on the new Hackney model. It focuses on (1) contextual factors situating feedback on the Hackney model, (2) the role that police could and should play in relation to schools, (3) feedback on the three main elements of the new model, and (4) factors that may influence the effectiveness of the new model. The end of the section contains a summary of key findings.

The below analysis refers to the police-school-young person relationship at differing scales: interactional, relational, and contextual – as illustrated and elaborated in the diagram below.¹⁰⁰



4.1 Situating the Hackney model

Interviewees discussed two key factors that help to situate the Hackney model within its local context and provide a crucial backdrop both for interviewees' feedback on the model itself, and on what role their experience tells them the police could and should play in and around schools. These factors are (1) a demographic and experiential distance between officers, school staff, and young people, and (2) a potential

relationship between schools' disciplinary approaches and police involvement in responses to certain student behaviour.

4.1.1 Demographic and experiential distance

Most interviewees mentioned the prevalence of both police officers and school staff who work in Hackney coming from other parts of the country. This was described as partly due to Hackney's

“cool” reputation, but also because it’s known as a “tough” borough that can advance public sector careers:

A lot of people make professional choices to come into a borough. They kind of go, ‘Well, look, I could work in Kensington and Chelsea and, you know, find out I might be able to progress from there to another area. But if I work two years in Hackney? I could go for any job [...] Let me get a piece of that.’ I hear that from teachers, from police, from all sorts. – YW1

Interviewees understood this to have significant impacts on how school staff and police interact with young people. One interviewee’s statement shows how this may be linked to zero-tolerance and silent transition policies¹⁰¹ in Hackney schools:

I spoke to one of the teachers at one point. I said, ‘Why are you guys like this? What is with this zero-tolerance stuff?’ And they said, ‘Some of our staff are not from these type of areas, so we need to support them’. Basically, their narrative was because these [staff] are not from this kind of area, and we know there’s so much knife crime and stuff like that around, we need to have a zero-tolerance approach to support them [staff] [...]

They’re [school staff are] scared. But these people chose to come to Hackney. – YW4

This participant sees behaviour management in schools as affected by how staff perceive students and the local neighbourhood as unfamiliar. The fear that they say the teacher refers to stems from this lack of understanding, which in turn leads to strained relationships between school staff, students, and parents. It also leads to school policies which are well-evidenced as having a disproportionate and negative impact on children from marginalised groups, including Black and Global Majority children and children with SEND.¹⁰² In another example, in 2020 Urswick School in Hackney agreed to an out of court settlement with a child who was repeatedly suspended in Years 10 and 11 because of her afro hairstyle.¹⁰³ The settlement included mandatory changes to their racially discriminatory hair and uniform policies.

One interviewee (YW6) used to be a Chair of Governors and noted that teachers themselves are also subject to policies that require them to enforce strict behaviour policies that can leave young people feeling “bereft of their identity”. Their jobs may be at risk if they do not comply with the school’s expectations of them, particularly, the interviewee stated, for racialised staff.

Ultimately, interviewees emphasised that they wanted school staff and police officers operating in Hackney to seek to better understand the communities they work with and exercise power over. This would help them to better understand why some people respond to them in particular ways, and subsequently how to incorporate this understanding into their own professional practice to achieve better outcomes for young people. The same interviewee gave the following example:

We asked young people about the potential role Black police officers could play in the community [...] one of the things that stuck out for me was the notable effect of having a Black police officer in the presence of raids at homes. In one example the African parents were so distraught because they didn't know their kids were involved in stuff, and then all of a sudden they're getting raided [...] Luckily at the time, that officer was from the same culture and could understand the language of the parent who couldn't speak English. And it was just so helpful. And the child we spoke to was the younger brother and that's what he remembered most distinctly. It was just so compelling to hear how, you know, that role of Black police officers should be [...] I don't know if they ever check out the race heritage of this family we're going to raid and, therefore, what's the makeup of our team. – YW1

In this instance, the Black police officer who shared a language and presumably a level of cultural understanding with someone whose home was being raided left an indelible impact on a young person whose experience of the raid may have been significantly traumatic. Police and school staff who share or seek an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of young people and their families have, according to interviewees, been positive figures in young

peoples' lives: "They share a kinship with the youngsters. They're able to bring their lived experience into the conversation" (YW1).

Overall, however, interviewees stated that school staff and police officers' lived experiences usually differ significantly from those of young people growing up in Hackney, and that this is a key factor in understanding the relationship between police, schools, and young people, as well as the

Illustrative vignette:

One interviewee recounted their experience as a parent of a student at an Academy school in Hackney (a school with Academy status which is therefore not run by the local authority). The interviewee stated that their child was repeatedly harassed and disproportionately disciplined by school staff. After their child gave another child a fist bump, they were aggressively accused by school staff of physical assault. Each time their child was disciplined, the school required them to leave work and attend the school: "If I questioned anything that they had said about my [child], they would cancel the meeting. And then I would have to come back again and again until I agreed with what they said" (YW4).

This particular Academy has zero-tolerance and silent transition policies. What school staff perceived to be behaviour infractions, the interviewee and their child perceived to be normal behaviour such as greeting a friend. The repercussions for this behaviour were severe: "Between April and July, my [child] had been removed and suspended I'd say 50 times" (YW4).

This interviewee sought to make a complaint, however because academies are not run by local authorities there are limited avenues through which parents and students can seek to hold academies accountable. They wished to speak to a senior staff member who was Black, because they perceived that their treatment partially resulted from school staff (who were not Black) "taking what I'm saying the wrong way", where racialising stereotypes impacted how they interpreted and responded to the way they and their child were communicating. "I asked for a senior member of staff to speak to that is of the same colour as me because I feel you're thinking maybe I'm aggressive when I'm just speaking normally or something. They went and got the vice principal's PA. Their personal assistant" (YW4) because the school had no senior staff of colour.

potential effectiveness of the new Hackney Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) model.

The points raised in interviews about demographic and experiential distance corroborate the findings of the Child Q Safeguarding Practice Review report,¹⁰⁴ which concluded that Child Q was subject to adultification bias both from school staff and the police: she was treated as older than she was, in a manner frequently experienced by young Black girls.

4.1.2 Relationship between a police presence and school disciplinary processes

As the vignette above attests, there are schools in Hackney with very strict disciplinary approaches. Interviewees expressed concerns that schools with strict behaviour policies had significantly adverse impacts on some of the young people they support and work with. Consistent disciplinary action resulting from normal, harmless behaviour (such as turning one's head to check the time, as YW5 gave as an example) has had long-term consequences for young people subject to these policies:

So, a lot of young people that I've worked with have had really, really bad experiences in academies and a lot of my work now has been around educating parents around the choices of schools that they're making for their children [...]

We've had quite a lot of young people that have had- you know, that are even a few years older now and have reflected on their years in [redacted Academy school] and just really feel its impacts. Even some parents we've spoken to and they can tell the difference between one child that went to [redacted Academy school] and another child that didn't. – YW5

Interviewees alluded to the risk that police presence within schools could exacerbate the punitiveness of schools' disciplinary approaches. As outlined in [Section Two](#), the 2022 Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) disproportionality report on schools policing notes that, within the dataset they reviewed, 90% of cases recorded by Safer Schools Officers (SSOs) resulted in No Further Action and 40% resulted in school exclusion or suspension.¹⁰⁵ MPS's report interpreted this as evidence that criminal records produced by SSOs do not result in criminal justice outcomes for young people and as such do not produce poorer outcomes. However, several of the participants reflected on how they've seen suspensions, exclusions, or criminal investigations and records harm young people over time, which is corroborated by a wealth of evidence demonstrating that suspensions and exclusions lead to outcomes such as increased offending rates.¹⁰⁶

Further, as the Department for Education notes in its statutory guidance on suspensions and exclusions, "particular groups of children are more likely to be excluded from school, both for a suspension or permanent exclusion".¹⁰⁷ Those groups include children with SEND, Black children, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, and children eligible for free school meals.¹⁰⁸ Although the exact role played by school-linked officers in school staffs' decisions to suspend or exclude is unclear and may differ between schools, the findings from the 2022 MPS report and interviewees' professional experiences appear to suggest that a police presence within schools may affect disciplinary decisions, due to a higher risk of behaviours being recorded as crimes and the nature of subsequent criminal investigations. However, further research with police officers and school staff is needed to better understand whether police involvement in behavioural incidents at school impacts school staff decision-making.

4.2 The role of police in relation to schools

4.2.1 Austerity: Police filling in the gaps

Interviewees discussed two impacts of austerity: (1) a funding crisis among youth work organisations and statutory youth services, and (2) cuts to public funding leading to police increasingly fulfilling functions previously carried out by other professionals.

4.2.1.1 Funding crisis for youth services

Between the 2011/12 fiscal year and 2021, London statutory youth services' budgets were cut by more than half,¹⁰⁹ 30% of youth clubs in London closed,¹¹⁰ and councils lost 611 youth workers, with an average of 15 youth workers per borough in 2021 compared to 48 in 2011/12.¹¹¹ Prior to these closures, 40% of teenagers in London attended youth clubs at least weekly.¹¹²

Several interviewees worked for non-statutory organisations that had previously been funded in whole or in part by the state, such as through Government's 2011 Ending Gang and Youth Violence Strategy.¹¹³ However, between 2011 and 2013 their funding streams shifted dramatically due to austerity. Their programmes in statutory spaces such as Young Offender Institutions were cut and they recounted being discouraged by policymakers from attempting to work in partnership with public services:

Project Daedalus¹¹⁴ isolated all voluntary sector organisations from their role in prisons. We used to have an office in Feltham Prison [a Young Offender Institution] and we used to meet young people, screen them and run delivery programmes there. That got removed. We also began to see the police being introduced into young offenders' teams, which now no one even questions it, now that's just normal, right? But I've been around so long that was not the case 10 years ago, 15 years ago. – YW1

Participants discussed how funding concerns impacted their ability to deliver services through to the present, and amounted to a crisis so significant it threatened the existence of non-statutory youth services in Hackney. While some organisations received programme-specific and time-bound funding, one interviewee described the negative impact this can have on young people, and on the relationships between young people, the police, and community organisations:

These young people, especially some from the communities that we're from, they need that long-term sustainability, that long-term support, it isn't a quick fix. And then you're seeing these programmes that are kind of limited to time or have to be done by a certain period of time that I've worked with... Like the Mayor of London gave us a project where it was very, very restricted of what we could do. Which meant that, really, the only people that were getting something out of this was the organisation delivering it, which was a bit of funding [...]

We work closely with the police. We have done for quite a while, but unfortunately up until about 6 months ago that's all had to come to a stop because the funding that the police are getting for prevention has completely gone [...]

I remember being young and something [a youth services programme] coming up once and then disappearing again. It's that you get your hopes up and they you kind of disappear, you know? It's not good. – YW4

This interviewee went on to describe the types of police partnership working they had planned but were no longer able to deliver due to this budget cut, including workshops to discuss Tasers. While youth work programming cuts have enormous implications for both statutory and non-statutory organisations, their impacts on young people are even larger. For instance, evidence indicates that youth club closures have led to increased reoffending rates and poorer educational outcomes.¹¹⁵

4.2.1.2 Police officers delivering non-policing services

Other interviewees pointed out that cuts to public services and non-statutory youth work funding streams have led to police officers and school staff fulfilling a wide range of functions that do not relate to policing or education, respectively. One interviewee (YW1) noted that when lines blur between the roles and objectives of different professions, it increases the pressure on and stretches the capacities of the professionals involved. Interviewees described this as resulting in school staff feeling overwhelmed when a behavioural incident occurs, and reacting by involving the police or enacting zero-tolerance or silent transition policies. This is exacerbated by unsustainably stretched statutory and non-statutory youth, mental health,¹¹⁶ SEND,¹¹⁷ and school resources,¹¹⁸ meaning school staff lack dependable services. Ultimately, police workshop delivery is attractive because it is not paid out of school budgets, according to interviewees.

Police budgets have also been cut: the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have a £260 million shortfall in 2025.¹¹⁹ Some interviewees questioned the allocation of MPS's limited resources to school-based initiatives: "They talk about police resources being stretched [...] Then why are you spending time delivering workshops when you should be policing" (YW3). Further, as the Safer Schools Partnership Board noted: "When resource shrink, police officers need to be police officers, in a school space that is the safest they [young people] are going to be. Feedback coming in is should we have [officers] in schools. Is it the right thing to do?"¹²⁰ MPS appears to agree: in an update on their 2025/26 budget, the Mayor's Office for Policing and

Crime detailed that MPS assessed that the role of youth engagement officers (including Safer Schools Officers) "do not meet the requirements of a core policing purpose" and that this is a key reason for rethinking their role and shifting them into Neighbourhood Policing Teams.¹²¹ Interviewees had nuanced, mixed views on what role school-linked officers should play and what policing in general should entail, particularly in the context of limited public funding. These views are elaborated in the next two sections.

4.2.2 Regular police presence in schools

All participants agreed that a regular police presence in schools was unnecessary and has been harmful. Many stated that they had heard from young people they supported that they had experienced harm or poor outcomes as a result of having a regular police presence in their school.

All participants also stated that the removal of a regular police presence from Hackney schools would be a positive change that would lead to better outcomes for children. Some participants emphasised that this was a particularly important change for children who have had negative experiences with police, Black and Global Majority children, and children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

A further unintended consequence of schools policing is that some young people feel unsafe in the school environment. Many of the interviewees had worked with Child Q, with Child Q's classmates, or with young people in the borough who were affected by the incident. One participant stated:

Through the experience of working through the Child Q stuff, we had conversations with our young people in terms of how it made them feel. And the consensus was that seeing an officer in the school, the uniform, it just makes you feel a certain way. They spoke about not feeling at ease and also that they didn't feel that it was the right place for police to be, within school grounds. That was the shared consensus among young people.

I think particularly for young Black boys in my work with them, I've really come to understand the mental impact it has and the anxiety that's caused when they even see a police car go past them. It raises their anxiety around, 'Am I going to be stopped? Is the car going to stop?' You know, it causes a lot of triggers for them. [...] And now being faced with what you've been running from on the streets, to now within the school. – YW5

Interviewees also stated that they understood that young people were at risk of harm from non-policing actors. They emphasised that there is a reality in which “young people [are] losing their lives on the way to school” as one participant (YW5) stated. However, they were concerned that the risks of harm from the police – and the threat of violence that even the uniform carries for some young people, as the interviewee above outlined – increases when police have a regular presence in schools, or where young people have no choice in their interactions with them in schools (i.e., if attendance at police-led activities in school is mandatory).

The same interviewee (YW5) reflected on the role a regular police presence in schools has in the criminalisation of young people. Because police officers have a duty to record behaviour that meets the threshold of criminal activity, even if innocuous, this participant stated that they believe police should not have a place in schools:

I just don't feel comfortable with police officers walking around in a school where children are trying to be children and learn and how easily they can then be criminalised. You know, for example, if they throw something or do something that now has to be reported, they now end up into that system quicker for something which we would think is quite trivial. But now it has to be dealt with in a different way because somebody's in a position which they have to report it in a different way.

I think there is a case for policing outside of some schools if they are known to have been having to manage serious issues and to be safeguarding young people. But I just thought it needs to be done on a case-by-case kind of scenario, I don't think it should be a blanket thing across all schools, that police officers should be present or involved. – YW5

The Hackney model documents also refer to this: “The role [of a school-linked officer] will come with a distinct set of responsibilities, remaining cognisant of officers' duties to report and record crime under Home Office Counting Rules.”¹²² This implies that officers may wish to remain unaware of incidents that reach the threshold of criminal behaviour but for which a policing response would be disproportionate and inappropriate. It also implies that the Hackney model has been designed with the understanding that a regular police presence in schools is a contributing factor to the undue criminalisation of young people.

4.2.3 The purpose of policing in the new Hackney model

The new Hackney model seeks to refocus school-linked officers' roles such that they do not “deviate beyond a specific policing purpose”.¹²³ The proposal documents define this as officers focusing on “crime issues and not broader non-crime related Safeguarding or child related issues, unless complex or crime related”.¹²⁴ The

proposal documents recognise the need to avoid overlap with the responsibilities and functions of non-policing professionals, and as such moves officers' focus away from behavioural and safeguarding incidents within school walls and towards crime and "emerging crime types" in the area in which the school is located.¹²⁵

Research participants had mixed views on whether this shift in the role of school-linked officers would be effective and reduce disproportionate policing. Many agreed with the shift: "The bottom line of it is police should be arresting young people or, you know, solving crime. I don't think that they should move into a kind of community situation [...] they should be responsive to crime and serious issues" (YW1). This entails police addressing crime without a regular presence in schools and without providing services that are provided by other, specialised professionals such as youth workers or designated safeguarding leads. This view also aligns with how the policing purpose is defined in statutory instruments.¹²⁶

One interviewee (YW2), however, conceptualised the policing purpose as more holistic and outcomes-focused: keeping people safe, supporting communities, and helping to build positive relationships with young people. For YW2, the policing purpose also encompasses officers being there to protect children rather than solely to police them. They were critical of the proposal documents for having little meaningful reference to the young people whom the new SSP model affects. Another interviewee elaborated on this by referring to how police have shifted their approach to nightlife in the borough:

Police have managed to have a more positive presence. 'We're here to make sure you keep safe, rather than we're here to book you'. If this policy [the new model] is to work, its intention should not just be to keep knives out of schools and to stop stabbings. It should be to make young people feel as though the police will help them. But if it's only schools and the police, well it isn't gonna work. Because sometimes you will need somebody else who is not part of an institution [to mediate engagement]. – YW6

This participant sees the policing purpose as more holistic, but argues that police alone, or police and schools alone, cannot rebuild trust and confidence among young people. They argue that success will only come with partnership working: working with and learning from young people and the organisations that work with and support them.

Further, interviewees raised that the proposal documents – while referring to recommendations arising from the Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review related to the Child Q case – do not explicitly name the harms that police have carried out against children in the borough, whereby children have been and are at risk of being victimised by the police. If a key intended outcome of reforming the Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) model in the borough is to eliminate or reduce the circumstances which enable these harms to occur, a reframing that explicitly demonstrates how each activity in the new model seeks to achieve that outcome could be beneficial.

Interviewees saw a tension between police officers' duty to report crime, and their ability to engage in activities related to community support – a tension acknowledged in the Hackney model documentation and in SSP Board meetings. While participants had varying views on how to approach this, all agreed that the role and objectives of school-linked officers should be made explicit to everyone impacted by police-school partnerships, and should be evidenced

as and evaluated against their effectiveness at producing positive outcomes for young people, specifically Black and Global Majority children.

4.3 The proposed activities for school-linked officers

Research participants had specific feedback and insights for each element of the Hackney model: (1) Tactical advice, (2) Toolkit activities, and (3) Safer Corridors.

4.3.1 Tactical advice

As discussed in the [above subsection](#), one participant shared a concern that the shift to tactical advice provision may not reduce the risks of disproportionality, racialisation, and adultification that are prevalent in the policing of Black and Global Majority young people. They elaborated:

If you've got the issues we were talking about race and adultification – where somebody's height and size might inform the way they [police and school staff] might come up with a recommendation. And that might be taken as a rule for that age group as opposed to just that individual. – YW1

Publicly available documentation regarding the new Hackney model provides very little information as to what tactical advice might entail. One document states that schools should call their school-linked officer under the new model for issues such as historic knife possession, youth-produced sexual imagery, and historic assaults, among others.¹²⁷ Without further information, it is difficult to assess whether this shift in role will reduce disproportionality in schools policing. Another participant (YW2) stated that they would like to see the new model outline specifically how the new approach will challenge disproportionality, including this shift to tactical advice provision. A Terms of Reference regarding the tactical advisor role will be developed by the Metropolitan Police Service and shared with schools,¹²⁸ which may provide more detail about how the new role seeks to reduce disproportionality.

One interviewee (YW2) gave an example where remote police engagement with a school led to tangibly improved outcomes for a young person: to help a young person access emergency housing support, they needed to compile a record of the contacts this person had had with the police. Initial contact with the police stated that the waiting time for this information would be three months, but through a school-linked officer, this information was able to be provided the next day to support the safeguarding of this young person. The officer's links to the school improved that young person's access to the services they needed without the young person needing to interact with that officer. Three participants reflected on how strengthened partnerships with youth organisations could support this shift away from a regular police presence in schools. They suggested a system in which schools contact a local youth work organisation to help address an emerging behavioural concern or risk factor (rather than their school-linked officer):

Maybe it's to call us first, a youth-led organisation, to see if we can do some preventative intervention work. And if that doesn't work, we would be duty-bound to then refer that young person to the police. Let's have a situation where we're coming with a lens of positive intent rather than punitive first. Let's give the young person a chance. – YW3

As this interviewee later stated: "it could be a three-pronged approach with police, schools, and communities" in order to avoid a policing response, or school exclusion.

4.3.2 Toolkit activities

The new Safer Schools Partnership model gives schools the opportunity to request that their school-linked officer attends the school to deliver PSHE classroom sessions, specialist police presentations on e.g., drugs, presentations on topics including sexting and knife crime, and crime prevention workshops. Each of these activities is listed on the Toolkit¹²⁹ made available to schools and recreated here (with descriptions drawn directly from the original Toolkit):

Toolkit of Activities		
Points	Activity	Description
5	All day workshop	This event is for all year groups with police being on site to deliver presentations and workshops with a view to educating students in regards to 'A Day in the Life of a Police Officer'.
	PSHE	This event will be supporting the school in 6 x classroom sessions run throughout the day on a subject matter relating to a determined PSHE topic.
3	Knife arch	Knife arch operations pose an unknown risk to both staff and students. Officers will be on site in the capacity to react and advise should prohibited items be found. The number of officers on site will be determined by the school's capacity.
2	Careers fair	This is the promotion and introduction of policing to students. Officers will discuss the pathways into policing and the opportunities that arise in this chosen career path. Supported by Cadets.
	Student Council	This session will be held on school premises and is for the student body to raise concerns to officers, discussing topics that are currently in the public debate around crime and policing.
	Year 7 introduction	This event is an introduction of new students to the officer at the beginning of the new school year in September. This event takes place within the format of an assembly with topics like safeguarding and the age of criminal responsibility being discussed.
	Specialist police presentation	This event is where specialist officers will be in attendance to give a presentation on a specialist subject e.g., Drugs, THC, Spice
	Neighbourhood team workshop	This event is similar in nature to the All Day Workshop but will see officers being present for only a period of 1 lesson.
	Key Point meeting	Parents meeting to find out about the school, explaining the role of police supporting schools.
1	Presentations	Officers to deliver presentations to classes on 20+ topics, e.g., VAWG, Drugs, Safety online, Sexting, Youth Produced Sexual imagery, Violence, Knife crime, Crime prevention.
	Assemblies	This will see the assigned officer attend and give a talk during any given morning assembly on a subject determined by the school.
	Workshops	Crime prevention workshops, e.g., Knife Crime, Stop and Search, provided by Youth Engagement team.
	Parents evening	Safer Schools Officer or Ward Panel to have a stand to talk about Policing objectives within the community footprint of the school.

Toolkit of Activities		
Points	Activity	Description
0	Targeted weapon sweep and patrols	Intel-led patrols in and around the environs of any given school tackling anti-social behaviour and supporting school staff at the end of the day with 'Safer Corridors'.
	Quarterly senior leadership meeting	This will see the Schools Sergeant Adviser / officer meeting with the schools' senior leadership team to discuss topics relating to concerns and any improvements around the current policing model.
	Designated Safeguarding Lead forum	Schools Sergeant to attend the Designated Safeguarding Lead Forum and share best practices.
	Specialist police events	This event will see Specialist Policing Units attend the school to give presentations and workshops relating to their specialty. This is an offer from other units when they have availability.
	Safety First	Joint presentation with the London Fire Brigade (LFB).
	School lunches	Officers to have lunch with year group and can answer questions subject to resourcing demand.

Two youth practitioners shared feedback they received from young people about police-led workshops they attended in school:

No kid liked the police workshops at all. They are not seen as effective, they are seen as scaremongering. They don't convey the subtleties, they just showed kids blood and knives and they scared them. – YW1

The second participant stated of workshop design:

Some officers have good relationships with community organisations and will naturally signpost to them. But most officers don't know any [organisations], so they're like, 'I'll speak to my Sergeant' and then they go off and start making PowerPoints. The other issue is, why are police doing that role [of delivering workshops] in the first place? – YW3

Their perception – informed by their professional experience carrying out similar workshops, and informed by what young people have expressed to them – is that designing and delivering workshops that are effective at reducing crime requires specialised skills that police officers do not regularly develop as part of their job. As participants described it, "it's an art" (YW1) that requires the ability to, for instance, consult young people during workshop design (YW6). Indeed, research carried out by the PSHE Association¹³⁰ indicated that while 90% of surveyed police officers expressed confidence in delivering materials to schools, only 16% had received training in how to deliver PSHE education.¹³¹ Further, the survey found that 80% of officers endorsed techniques evidenced as harmful, ineffective, and unethical, such as shock or shaming tactics.¹³² As outlined in [Section Two](#), police-led workshops and presentations are evidenced as ineffective at reducing crime and violence involving young people.

In addition, requiring young people to attend police-led workshops may undermine the Metropolitan Police Service's goal to improve trust and confidence in policing. As one interviewee stated:

If I talk from a young Black person's perspective, and particularly in my experience of working with them, they don't trust the police. So, you're now going into an environment where you're trying to learn and trying to be a child and grow. And then you have further anxiety placed on top of you, feeling that there's a person or people within the school that you don't trust or doesn't work in your best interest. The experience of a police in school is not going to be equal for all [...]

Would young people have a choice to attend those sessions with officers or would it be a compulsory thing? Let the parents know as well, but that choice- if you had a young person who's had a really bad experience of officers, and now he's called to go and sit down in a workshop. That could bring further mental anxiety and impacts for him. All those things should be taken into consideration. – YW5

Because many of the pedagogical activities on the Toolkit are evidenced as ineffective, and police do not usually have the specialist skills required to deliver effective workshops and lessons, it was unclear to many participants why the Toolkit focuses so heavily on such activities. Most participants were concerned that their potential harms could outweigh any potential benefits, given how young people they've worked with had experienced these same police-led activities in the past. Given the significance of the topics suggested in the Toolkit, feedback from interviewees, and the available evidence which indicates that police-led pedagogical interventions are at best ineffective and at worst harmful, workshops and lessons should ideally be delivered by professionals with the most appropriate skills and knowledge. At minimum, police should design and deliver them in partnership with those professionals and young people should be able to choose whether they attend.

4.3.3 Safer Corridors

Most participants were supportive – to varying degrees – of the Hackney model's proposal to strengthen and increase the visibility of after-school police patrols in the areas between schools and young peoples' homes. Called 'Safer Corridors', similar initiatives have existed in London for a number of years.¹³³ A key commitment in the Metropolitan Police Service's Children's Strategy is to "Provide reassurance to children, parents and the wider community through greater visibility and accessibility by developing partnership activities, such as safer routes to and from schools".¹³⁴

Interviewees stated that the immediate after-school hours can be a time of vulnerability for young people, although they had various levels of professional experience supporting young people who were involved in violent or criminal incidents on the way home from school. Some participants stated that some young people may benefit from Safer Corridors patrols because they might feel safer: "I think we want to see more police on the streets, you know, that can give a better sense of safety. I don't mind the idea of monitoring particular distinct corridors where young people go to school" (YW1).

Another participant relayed what a young person said about this:

Where the officers are needed – and what young people do always say – is the corridors. So, I remember an example a young person gave me a couple of years ago that said, 'Look, let's take Mare Street, for example. You might have two schools crossing Mare Street. If you have officers just present in Mare Street, then there's a less likelihood of something happening because there's a police presence there'. So, you can have a police presence there, but what we don't need is these officers in the schools per se [...]

But it's been very rare that you hear rival schools, at least in Hackney, are having a fight. So again, this is something that we need to think about and look at: how many instances are taking place after school that you are aware of? Is this a good use of police time? – YW3

Based on their professional experience, this interviewee saw the value in the Safer Corridors initiative, and they have spoken with young people who believe that having higher visibility patrols along certain routes could help keep young people safe. They were also concerned about whether the initiative would have a substantive effect on the prevalence of crime and violence, however, and emphasised the importance of a data- and intelligence-led approach to reduce unnecessary contact between police and young people.

Many participants also stressed the importance of an intelligence-led and targeted approach to schools policing overall. Similar to the feedback most gave about the workshop and lessons activities on the Toolkit, participants wanted the Safer Corridors operations to be a targeted response to a specific, tangible risk.

The Hackney model proposal documents state that “time/offence/location data” will be used to identify areas that will be patrolled by school-linked officers, ward officers, and youth workers.¹³⁵ However a separate document does not reference youth workers, and instead only refers to police officers and potentially school staff patrolling these routes.¹³⁶ As such, it is unclear whether youth workers will be proactively involved, and if they will be from statutory or non-statutory organisations.

More than half of participants suggested that the vulnerabilities of the after-school hours could be addressed by a diversity of professionals who are present on Safer Corridors, including police, school staff, youth workers, CAMHS professionals,¹³⁷ and other familiar adults whose roles are clear to young people:

Having a youth-led organisation – which we [are] – that are out there talking, letting them know why this is happening, letting them know of other services that they could go to after school, is just a no-brainer. And so, for me, I think them [the police] doing it in isolation isn't going to give them what they think they're going to get out of it. – YW3

Given that some young people in Hackney are very likely to have had a negative experience with police officers, partnership working could ensure that all young people feel safer on Safer Corridors, and have someone they trust and can approach if they need.

4.4 Factors that influence effectiveness

Participants identified two key overarching factors that may influence the effectiveness of the new model: (1) a lack of trust and confidence in the police and (2) a lack of equitable and meaningful consultation with young people and youth practitioners.

4.4.1 Trust and confidence

One of the strategic objectives of the Metropolitan Police Service's Children's Strategy is to “build strong and trusted relationships with London's children to strengthen confidence in policing”¹³⁸ and the Hackney model seeks to increase police engagement with primary schools via the Toolkit to “improve positive police contact at an earlier and more formative stage”.¹³⁹

Interviewees were sceptical of the model's ability to deliver this objective. Every research participant identified the lack of trust and confidence that young people in the borough have in police institutions and individual officers as a significant barrier to the effectiveness of the new model:

We have a lot of young people in our team who have case studies and stories of interactions with the police, and Safer Schools Officers don't make them feel that safe [...]

Look, I have young people within my team that would not step out of their house. If they see a police vehicle, they almost have a fight or flight moment. And they've done nothing. And these are people who work within my team. So how much are other young people [experiencing this]? [...] It's [the new model] not going to achieve what they want to achieve: are the young people going to engage, are they going to listen, are they going to remember what they apparently have been told [by police]? – YW3

This interviewee illustrated the physiological response that some young people have when they see the police. School-linked officers do not make them feel safe, which hampers the effectiveness of the Toolkit activities and the Safer Corridors initiative, which both rely at least in part on young people feeling comfortable around officers delivering those activities or patrolling the street.

Several interviewees also referred to the fact that young people do not distinguish schools-linked officers from other officers:

A lot of the issues between the community and the police aren't those officers [schools-linked officers]. The issues are from the ones who don't interact with young people. Some of the TSG [Territorial Support Group], the response cars.

Everybody should have a youth engagement mindset. If you bump into a TSG, he also has, 'Oh, this could be a young person and there's a whole load of things [I need to keep in mind]'. Rather than only six officers who get it, and 30,000 that don't. – YW3

And interviewees noted that a lack of trust and confidence is not only developed through negative direct encounters with police, which may limit the effectiveness of police activities targeted at primary school-age children. Recollections of harmful, deadly, and otherwise negative interactions with police are "passed down" across generations of individuals (YW5).

4.4.2 Meaningful consultation

Every research participant spoke about the role that consultation plays in policy development. Overall, they discussed (1) a lack of consultation of young people and non-statutory youth work organisations, (2) where consultation does occur, a lack of resourcing that creates barriers for non-statutory organisations' meaningful engagement, and (3) that consultations are often run with a non-representative sample of young people, and are not transparent. Only one of the organisations for which research participants worked was involved in the consultation for the Hackney model. Participants emphasised that, in their experience, it is common that they are not approached to provide insights or feedback during the development of policies that affect young people in the borough.

Some stated that a flurry of engagement often occurs after a serious policing incident involving a young person, but meaningful consultation is not baked into the regular process of policymaking. Interviewees were adamant that, were meaningful consultation with young people and community organisations a cornerstone of policy development, resulting policies would be more effective and the risk of serious harmful police encounters would be lessened as a result. Interviewees at some organisations stated that – when consultation does occur – engagement is not remunerated so only organisations with resource to expend are able to participate. They stated that those organisations' contributions then tend to be misconstrued as representative of the views of all community organisations, further entrenching a pattern of limited consultation with only a few of the same organisations.

Documents outlining the Hackney model do not state that young people were consulted directly during its development.¹⁴⁰ In a 2024 Children and

Young People Scrutiny Commission meeting at Hackney Council, the then-Borough Commander stated that the police would consult young people via Young Hackney¹⁴¹ on some elements of the proposal.¹⁴²

Several interviewees stated that, in their experience, consultations with young people also tend to occur with non-representative groups:

It's also about the type of young people you're speaking to. It's easy to say you've gone into youth provisions like Young Hackney, but if you're speaking to the Youth Parliament [part of Young Hackney] then you're speaking to a completely different group of young people than young people that are experiencing those engagements with the police or those disparities with the police. Those young people need to be included in those consultations and more work needs to be done in the way that they are included [...]

You're not gonna get the response you need [from e.g., Youth Parliament] in the same way that a young person that's been excluded from school and hasn't had any education for the past three or four years. – YW5

As another interviewee remarked in relation to student councils, who will be able to raise concerns to school-linked officers according to the Toolkit: “The Student Council will be full of people who are not in that 10% [of young people who have had extremely negative experiences of police]. They won't be the right young people. Neither will those on the Youth Parliament” (YW6).

The Metropolitan Police Service often refer to results from the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's youth survey¹⁴³ as evidence that young people feel safer with police in and around their schools.¹⁴⁴ Interviewees argued that the young people who have been harmed by police or are at greatest risk of harm should be at the forefront of consultations, because it is their lived experience and opinions that are key to shaping effective policy and practice that reduces that risk of harm. While the survey¹⁴⁵ states that 68% of surveyed young people would feel safer if a Safer Schools Officer dealt “with people who commit crime in school”, participants' insights indicate that the 6% who would feel less safe should be more heavily involved in policy development.

Participants acknowledged that this may be difficult, given that young people who feel less safe around police are less likely to want to engage with policing institutions (as discussed [above](#)). However, they offered recommendations for how to structure this engagement in a way that elicits responses from a more representative sample of young people, such as by working with young people in exclusion units, by working with professionals who have specialist expertise in designing and delivering trauma-informed consultations, or via community and youth organisations.

4.5 Summary of key points

1. Disproportionality in schools policing is linked to school staffs' disciplinary practices and policies.

The interview data indicates that some of the harms that arise from schools policing are part of a wider mix of practices and relationships in schools and the wider community. Interviewees noted that in Hackney, school staff and policing officials often have a demographic background and set of lived experiences that differ significantly from those of young people in the borough. This lack of familiarity, combined with stretched resources putting pressure on school staff may contribute to the increasing prevalence of behaviour policies that lead to repeated disciplinary action, including school exclusion (temporary or permanent). Junior staff are then required to enforce those policies, regardless of if they agree with their purported effectiveness.

Interviewees relayed that the use of detentions and exclusions seems to be disproportionately applied to certain groups of children – including Black children – which is also evident in research.¹⁴⁶ This disproportionality is connected to the racial disproportionality associated with policing, in that school staff have sometimes relied upon police to address behaviours and incidents that may not have necessitated a policing response. Disproportionality that arises from schools policing is therefore not solely a product of policing practices, but also a product of how schools respond to certain behaviours and students and this response is sometimes influenced by racialisation and adultification.

2. Funding pressures have contributed to police delivering non-policing functions in schools.

At the same time, the research identified that the youth work funding crisis exacerbates these issues. With fewer and fewer services available to them, young people are less able to access long-term, sustainable support from professionals outside of the school environment, particularly those who are able to connect with them through a shared lived experience of growing up in Hackney. On the other hand, cuts to public services have increasingly pushed police officers to 'fill the gap' and fulfil non-policing functions. Participants indicated that where schools cannot afford to pay for youth work organisations to deliver their services, they may be more willing to accept an offer for a school-linked officer to deliver a PSHE class, for instance.

3. Pedagogical activities delivered by police undermine the Safer Schools Partnership (SSP) model's ability to reduce disproportionality.

However, it is acknowledged among those who designed the new Hackney model and reported by interviewees that police delivery of non-policing functions is a key source of disproportionality in schools policing. This is because the more contact with young people police have, the more likely young peoples' actions will be recorded as crimes. Further, interviewees' contributions indicate that some young people feel highly unsafe around police officers, and have harmful physiological reactions when they are forced to encounter them. While interviewees had mixed views on what role officers should have in relation to young people, the majority agreed that this means that reducing unnecessary contact between these two groups could reduce the risk that children learning and making mistakes in school are criminalised.

The Hackney model seeks to reduce this contact, but this is undermined by the activities Toolkit. The data collected for this research and pre-existing evidence indicates that police officers are not well-placed to deliver many of the activities listed on the Toolkit. Evidence indicates that workshop delivery practices police officers cite as effective are, in reality, harmful for young people. A key finding of this work is, therefore, that the Toolkit should be revised such that police are not delivering services better delivered by skilled professionals such as youth workers and specialist teachers. Or, at minimum, that young people should have control over whether they encounter an officer at school by giving them the option not to attend.

4. Partnership working with youth practitioners, clear roles, and meaningful and adequately-resourced consultation processes can increase the effectiveness of the police-school relationship.

The research found that a lack of trust and confidence is an evidenced barrier to the effectiveness of police-led pedagogical activities and a potential barrier to the effectiveness of the Safer Corridors initiative. While police-led activities are aimed at increasing trust and confidence, it is unclear how they will do so, and there is little pre-existing evidence that they have done so in other contexts. This barrier to effectiveness could be mitigated by working alongside professionals who have trusted and strong relationships with young people, such that they lead on or are involved in the design and delivery of Safer Corridors and pedagogical activities. Further, ensuring that young people who have had negative experiences with the police are able to provide their views on an ideal school-police relationship, and are able to see how this feedback has been considered could increase the effectiveness of the school-police relationship. This type of engagement with young people can also be achieved through stronger partnership working with non-statutory youth organisations.

To help illustrate this, the diagram on the next page shows what kinds of activities police could do either in a leading or supporting role, and where they fall in relation to enforcement and community support. Most participants agreed that more clarity is needed from the police on which role(s) they see themselves as playing for Hackney's young people, schools, and community:

Leading

Police could lead:

- Workshops
- PSHE
- Careers fairs
- Presentations
- Mentoring
- School lunch activities
- Cadets
- Safeguarding interventions

Police could lead:

- Weapons sweeps
- Knife arches and wands
- Intel-gathering and sharing
- Criminal investigations
- Response to historic knife possession
- Truancy patrols
- Home visits

Community support

Enforcement

Police could support:

- VCS youth work, including safeguarding processes
- Other professionals' presentations, PSHE, and workshops
- Training given to other professionals
- Local community organisations' activities

Police could support:

- Youth worker-led assertive interventions
- CAMHS-led assertive interventions
- School disciplinary procedures
- Tactical advice

Supporting

The majority of respondents identified supportive roles that the police could play in partnership with a range of professionals who work with young people, which differ from the leading roles included in the Hackney model. These supportive activities (such as supporting youth worker-led interventions or pedagogical activities) could fulfil police forces' and schools' intended aims for the police-school relationship, while reducing the unnecessary contact between young people and police that contributes to disproportionality and unintended harms. Supportive activities could also strengthen the relationships between individual police officers and longstanding community organisations and other statutory and non-statutory services, improving their ability to sustainably and effectively work together and signpost to the best resources for each child – which participants stated is currently lacking. The research finds that replacing leading activities with supporting activities could produce better outcomes for young people who are at risk from disproportionality in policing.

5. Policing policies and practices that impact young people should be adequately monitored and evaluated.

The research found that the process of developing the Hackney model was opaque to community members. People who would be directly affected by the new model, or whose professional expertise could contribute to designing a more effective model, were unaware that the policy was being developed. Given the significant impact the new model will have on young people, the ability to monitor and evaluate it against a set of clear intended outcomes and performance indicators would ensure that it is targeted, impact-led, and works towards the goal of eliminating unintended harms and disproportionality in policing.



5.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Governance

- 1. Police forces should produce a framework of intended aims and outcomes for how police and schools interact with one another, linking each to key pre-existing force-wide commitments (e.g., reducing racial disproportionality, or taking a child-first approach) which should then form the basis for the design of Safer Schools Partnerships (SSPs).**

A wealth of pre-existing evidence, and the data collected in this research, indicates that clarity of objectives is a key enabler that ensures that the way schools and police interact improves outcomes for all young people. This should involve designing and delivering meaningful consultations with young people, youth practitioners, parents, and community organisations among other groups (see recommendation 9 for more detail). In London, the Metropolitan Police Service has produced (but not yet published) an SSP outcomes framework.

- 2. Police forces should ensure that SSP models contain relevant performance indicators – drawn from the framework of intended aims and outcomes referred to in recommendation 1 – that can be used to measure models' success at achieving their intended outcomes and advancing key commitments such as reducing disproportionality.**

SSP delivery should be regularly evaluated against these performance indicators to ensure that policy and practice related to how schools and police interact are effective. The pre-existing evidence and this research strongly indicate that an inability to evaluate the effectiveness or impact of SSPs has led to, for instance, a lack of knowledge about the extent to which the pre-2 May 2025 SSP model enabled disproportionate policing practices. These performance indicators should therefore seek to accurately

measure impact rather than, e.g., the number of youth engagement events or the number of deployments in and around schools.

- 3. Police forces should, if they have a designated school-linked officer role, produce a Terms of Reference for that role, including how this role interacts with other professionals in and beyond education, with explicit reference to the intended outcome of each activity undertaken by the role-holder (based on the framework referred to in recommendation 1). This Terms of Reference should be produced in meaningful consultation with people and groups affected by the school-linked officer role. It should be tailored to specific local areas and school communities.**

The Hackney model seeks to create a Terms of Reference. The pre-existing evidence strongly indicates that clarity of roles and responsibilities significantly impacts the effectiveness of school-linked officers, including by reducing the risk of actual and potential unintended harms for young people resulting from school-police partnership working practices.

Role of school-linked officer

- 4. Police forces should design SSPs such that school-linked officers do not have a regular presence within schools.**

There is no evidence that a regular police presence within schools reduces youth offending or produces positive outcomes for young people. Pre-existing evidence and this research indicate that a regular police presence within schools has had a harmful effect on some young people, especially those whose behaviours are recorded as crimes even where a policing response is inappropriate, due to the Home Office Crime Recording Rules. This research indicates that police forces and schools can fulfil the aims of partnership working without a regular police presence in schools, to reduce the risk of harm and disproportionality.

- 5. Police forces should consider ensuring that guidance and trainings for school-linked officers include best practice for building relationships with community youth organisations and using those relationships effectively.**

The research indicated that stronger partnership working with non-statutory services could improve outcomes for young people. These relationships could be used to, for instance, map the non-statutory youth services available in the local area to ensure that young people who come into contact with officers are signposted to the most appropriate and effective service.¹⁴⁷

- 6. The National Police Chiefs' Council should consider suggesting that school-linked officers produce localised versions of the 'When to call the police' guidance¹⁴⁸ which include suggestions for local non-statutory organisations (with whom officers should build relationships as referred to in recommendation 5) to refer young people to in specific circumstances, if calling the police is an inappropriate response.**

The pre-existing evidence and policy development analysis indicate that school staff may refer incidents to their school-linked officer unnecessarily, increasing the risk of disproportionate crime recording. Greater coordination between police, schools, and statutory and non-statutory youth organisations may help to address this issue by improving access to service provision for young people.

School-linked officer activities

- 7. Police forces and schools should take steps to fulfil the aims of SSPs while minimising contact between officers and young people, in order to eliminate harmful impacts of the Home Office Crime Recording Rules on young people, whose actions and behaviour are routinely unnecessarily recorded as crimes (later leading to No Further Action).**

These steps include removing a regular police presence (referred to in recommendation 4) as well as recommendations 7a and 7b below. The Hackney model seeks to achieve this, but is undermined by the activities Toolkit which bring officers into the school environment without sufficient grounds, risking unjust and disproportionate policing responses to certain behaviours. The pre-existing evidence and this research indicate that the evidence of harm outweighs the evidence of benefits to young people of activities which bring them in contact with officers at school.

- a. *Workshops and lessons should be delivered by professionals with the most appropriate skills and knowledge. If police continue to be involved in these activities:*
- At minimum, police should design and deliver them in partnership with those professionals.*
 - At minimum, young peoples' participation in these activities must be made optional. Parents and young people should be notified in advance, and young people should be provided with a suitable alternative educational activity if they choose not to attend.*

The pre-existing evidence, corroborated by this research, indicates that police-designed and -delivered pedagogical activities often use harmful techniques and are ineffective at achieving their intended aims of (1) changing young peoples' attitudes and behaviour and (2) increasing trust and confidence in the police. Design and delivery by experts and rendering

contact with officers optional would improve outcomes for young people. Some police forces offer free resources to school staff to design and deliver PSHE workshops themselves, through the Pol-Ed programme.¹⁴⁹

- b. *Safer Corridors patrols (and their equivalents in other boroughs and regions) should be designed and delivered with a diversity of professionals, including school staff, youth workers, CAMHS professionals, and other familiar adults whose roles are clear to young people. Patrols should be targeted and intelligence-led, and the makeup of professionals on patrols should reflect the aim of that specific patrol. Young people and parents should be notified in advance when and where these patrols will take place.*

Under the Hackney model, Safer Corridors will be intelligence-led and delivered with non-policing professionals. This research suggests that this would be beneficial, but could be improved by allowing the aim of each specific patrol to determine the makeup of professionals on that patrol, including whether or not police officers join and how the presence of officers affects which other professionals are comfortable attending (our research suggests that some youth practitioners, for instance, may see visibly accompanying police officers on patrols as antithetical to the integrity of their professional role). If police are not present, a protocol should be designed and agreed by all parties, which outlines communication and deployment arrangements with the police during patrols. This would ensure that Safer Corridors and similar initiatives meet their objectives, while minimising potential unintended harms to young people.

Policy development

8. Police forces should ensure that officers responsible for consultations have sufficient resource to design and deliver meaningful processes that engage community organisations, young people, and parents who have experience of the issues a new policy or proposal seeks to address. This includes ensuring that young people who have had negative experiences with the police are given the opportunity to engage in consultations, particularly when setting youth engagement strategy.

This research indicated that inadequate resourcing of consultations is a significant barrier to equitable, meaningful engagement with the community, which hinders effective policymaking.

9. Police officials responsible for consultations should consider seeking to engage people who have had negative experience with the police. This could be achieved, in part, by:

- a. *Seeking feedback on their consultation design from professionals and organisations who are familiar with the communities they wish to consult, including youth practitioners.*
- b. *Using allocated resource (see recommendation 8) to remunerate community organisations for their involvement in consultations to ensure they are equitable and meaningful.*
- c. *Partnering with non-statutory youth organisations to facilitate consultations with young people who have negative experiences of policing, to ensure young people do not need to engage with police directly but can still engage in the consultation if they wish to do so.*

- d. *Requiring that the following is published after consultation occurs: groups of people consulted, number of people consulted in total, feedback received, and a brief explanation of how feedback has been incorporated (even if it is rejected, e.g., due to operational or financial constraints).*

This research indicated that consultations often occur with non-representative groups of young people or organisations. Improving representativeness could improve the accuracy of data collected during consultations. Improving transparency could lead to higher levels of buy-in from the community for new policies and initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation

10. Police forces should regularly collect and publish data related to schools policing so that they, other public bodies, civil society, and researchers can monitor and evaluate the impact of school-linked officers' activities on young people. Data should be collected, published, and reviewed in line with police forces' Public Sector Equality Duty.

- a. *Bodies such as the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime's Evidence & Insight team should consider regularly analysing this data to assess proportionality.*

Pre-existing research strongly indicates that the inability to monitor and evaluate the impact of how schools and police interact is a key reason for a lack of evidence on its effectiveness. Routinely collecting and publishing data related to the school-police relationship would help to ensure that relevant policies reduce the risk of unintended harms and disproportionality, alongside regular evaluation as referred to in recommendation 2.

11. Violence Reduction Units and What Works Centres (such as the Youth Endowment Fund) should consider investing in research that evaluates the impact of various models that govern how schools and police interact, with the aim of identifying how to create the best outcomes for all young people.

This would help to ensure that the evidence base is improved, with the aim of maximising the effectiveness of school-police relationships.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Bowles, R., Reyes, M. G., and R. Pradipto (2005) 'Safer Schools Partnerships' Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, p. 7.
- 2 See, e.g., the Metropolitan Police Service's (MPS) commitments in the London Race Action Plan: MPS (2024) 'London Race Action Plan' MPS.
- 3 See, e.g., the No Police in Schools campaign in Manchester: No Police in Schools (nd.) 'Home', Accessed 4 June 2025.
- 4 Gamble, J. and R. McCallum (2022) 'Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review: Child Q' CHSCP, 14 March 2022.
- 5 Mayor of London (2025) 'Safer Schools Officers final report (4)' Mayor of London, 28 May 2025.
- 6 Oliver, S. and K. Vittozzi (2025) 'Pupils and teachers voice fears over 'staggering' decision to remove specialist police officers from London schools' Sky News, 9 April 2025.
- 7 Mercer, K. (2025) 'Met to cut 1,700 staff to plug £260m 'black hole' BBC News, 2 April 2025.
- 8 UK Government (2025) 'New measures to put neighbourhood bobbies back on beat' UK Government, 9 April 2025.
- 9 Clarke, B. E. (2024) 'Safer Schools Partnership (Safer Schools Officers)' Hackney Council, 11 September 2024.
- 10 Gamble, J. and R. McCallum (2022) 'Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review: Child Q' CHSCP, 14 March 2022.
- 11 MPS (2022) 'Report: Safer Schools Officers (2022)' MOPAC.
- 12 London Policing Ethics Panel (2024) 'Policing London's Schools: supporting children to flourish?' London Policing Ethics Panel.
- 13 See, e.g., Liberty, et al. (2023) 'Holding Our Own: A guide to non-policing solutions to serious youth violence' Liberty; Liberty (2019) 'Policing by Machine' Liberty.
- 14 Clarke, B. E. (2024) 'Safer Schools Partnership (Safer Schools Officers)' Hackney Council, 11 September 2024.
- 15 This role-holder is responsible for policing in Hackney and Tower Hamlets. The current interim role-holder is now Brittany Clarke.
- 16 Hackney Council (2024) 'Minutes of the proceedings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission held at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA' Hackney Council, 11 September 2024, p. 11.
- 17 This Board is discussed in the subsection entitled 'How schools policing is governed'.
- 18 Interviews took place between February and May 2025.
- 19 This means that they were motivated to speak to us about schools policing.
- 20 Policing is devolved in Scotland and Northern Ireland. Education is devolved in all four nations. As such, this research refers only to England
- 21 DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education' UK Government, 3 September 2024.
- 22 DfE (2025) 'Working together to safeguard children' UK Government, 8 May 2025.
- 23 NPCC (2020) 'When to call the police: guidance for schools & colleges' NPCC.
- 24 DfE (2023) 'Searching, screening and confiscation in schools' UK Government, 19 July 2023.
- 25 These are better known by their previous name, the Home Office Counting Rules. They fulfil requirements linked to powers granted to the Home Secretary in Section 44 of the Police Act 1996, which allow the Home Secretary to require the police to provide certain types of crime data: The Police Act 1996, s44, c. 16; Home Office (2025) 'Home Office Crime Recording Rules for frontline officers and staff' UK Government, 4 April 2025.
- 26 Home Office (2025) 'Crime Recording (Schools Protocol)' UK Government, 5 April 2025.
- 27 London Policing Ethics Panel (2024) 'Policing London's Schools: supporting children to flourish?' London Policing Ethics Panel, July 2024, p. 20.
- 28 For version 1.63 of the Handbook and version 1.3 of the Data Sharing Agreement, see: Southwark Council (2022) 'Schools Safeguarding Forum (8 December 2022) - Updates from the Police, Housing Resident Services, MASH and FEHS' Southwark Council, 8 December 2022. Updated versions of these documents are not routinely published by MPS.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Mayor of London (2024) 'Safer Schools Officers final report (3)' Mayor of London, 15 March 2024.
- 31 Mayor of London (2023) 'Quarter 4: Mayor's Action Plan for improving transparency, accountability and trust in policing' Mayor of London, p. 4-5.
- 32 MPS (2024) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/ actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 23 May 2024; MPS (2024) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/ actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 20 March 2024; MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/ actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 07 June 2023; MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/ actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 19 April 2023
- 33 MPS (2023) 'Policing in Schools – Safer Schools Officers' ('SSOs') MPS, 9 April 2023.
- 34 See: MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/ actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 19 April 2023, p. 3.
- 35 Mayor of London (2025) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board meetings' Mayor of London, 22 January 2025.
- 36 Mayor of London (2024) 'Safer Schools Officers final report (3)' Mayor of London, 15 March 2024.
- 37 Mayor of London (2025) 'Stakeholder consultation for Safer Schools Officers' Mayor of London, 22 January 2025.

- 38 Runnymede did not obtain information from 7 of the 45 forces and as such the true figure was likely higher. Runnymede (2023) 'Over-policed and under-protected: The road to Safer Schools' The Runnymede Trust, January 2023.
- 39 *Ibid.*
- 40 As at September 2023, there were 139,067 full time employed police officers in England, 35,488 of whom operated in London (in the MPS or City of London police forces): Home Office (2024) 'Police workforce, England and Wales: 30 September 2024: data tables' UK Government, table 1.
- 41 MPS (2022) 'Report: Safer Schools Officers (2022)' MOPAC.
- 42 MPS (2023) 'On site police officers at schools' MPS, 30 July 2023.
- 43 MPS (2024) 'Police Officers based in schools' MPS, 29 September 2024.
- 44 Clarke, B. E. (2024) 'Safer Schools Partnership (Safer Schools Officers)' Hackney Council, 11 September 2024.
- 45 Mayor of London (2022) 'Safer Schools Officers' Mayor of London, 7 July 2022.
- 46 It is unclear from publicly available information who classifies schools as priorities, and what occurs once they are categorised as such.
- 47 Mayor of London (2019) 'Safer Schools Officers (5)' Mayor of London, 5 June 2019.
- 48 Mayor of London (2022) 'Safer Schools Officers' Mayor of London, 7 July 2022.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 MPS (2022) 'School based police officers' MPS, 8 May 2022, q. 3.
- 51 MOPAC Evidence & Insight (2023) 'We Are London' Youth Survey 2021-22' MOPAC, p. 21.
- 52 London Policing Ethics Panel (2024) 'Policing London's Schools: supporting children to flourish?' London Policing Ethics Panel, July 2024.
- 53 Bradford, B. and J. A. Yesberg (2019) 'Police in schools – an evidence review' PSHE Association; Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., and H. White (2021) 'Police in Schools: toolkit technical report' Youth Endowment Fund, June 2021; Lamont, E., Macleod, S., and A. Wilkin (2011) 'Police Officers in Schools: A scoping study' NFER; NAHT (2024) 'Police in schools: a review of the evidence' NAHT.
- 54 Pósch, K., and J. Jackson (2021) 'Police in the classroom' London School of Economics; London Policing Ethics Panel (2024) 'Policing London's Schools: supporting children to flourish?' London Policing Ethics Panel, July 2024.
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- 57 London Policing Ethics Panel (2024) 'Policing London's Schools: supporting children to flourish?' London Policing Ethics Panel, July 2024, p. 35.
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 19 April 2023, p. 4.
- 60 MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 07 June 2023, p. 3.
- 61 Hackney Council (2024) 'Safer Schools Partnerships and Role of Police in Schools – Background Briefing' Hackney Council, 11 September 2024, p. 7.
- 62 MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 07 June 2023, p. 4.
- 63 MPS (2023) 'Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/actions/Decisions for Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 07 June 2023, p. 5.
- 64 Mayor of London (2025) 'Safer Schools Officers final report (4)' Mayor of London, 28 May 2025.
- 65 MPS (2024) 'Strategic Safer Schools Partnership Board: Minutes/actions/Decisions for Strategic Safer Schools Partnership Board' Liberty, 23 May 2024, p. 2.
- 66 Weale, S. (2020) 'Met to review role of school police officers after legal challenge' The Guardian, 20 April 2020.
- 67 MPS (2022) 'Report: Safer Schools Officers (2022)' MOPAC.
- 68 This refers to reports related to children recorded in the MERLIN system. Reports are created "to enable safeguarding teams to assess any risks or harm to individual children based on the report [...] These reports are often shared with partner agencies to ensure a multi-agency approach can be taken to safeguarding": Mayor of London (2021) 'Children on the Metropolitan Police Service Merlin database' Mayor of London, 26 February 2021.
- 69 Gathered via Crime Reporting Information System (CRIS) reports: *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 70 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 6; It is unclear whether (and if so, how) SSOs are involved in disciplinary decision-making in practice.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 7.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
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- 75 As indicated in correspondence between the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime at the time (Sophie Linden) and Liberty in February 2024.
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- 77 IPPR (2025) 'Who is Losing Learning?: The case for reducing exclusions across mainstream schools' IPPR, 5 September 2025.
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- 91 Clarke, B. E. (2024) ‘Safer Schools Partnership (Safer Schools Officers)’ Hackney Council, 11 September 2024; Clarke, B. E. (2024) ‘Role of Schools Officers: Hackney Borough’ MPS, 11 September 2024; and Clarke, B. E. (2024) ‘Appendix 1 – School Toolkit for Engagement’ Hackney Council, 11 September 2024.
- 92 Now known as the Home Office Crime Recording Rules, these are discussed in the subsection entitled ‘How schools policing is governed’.
- 93 These routes will be outside of the school.
- 94 Clarke, B. E. (2024) ‘Role of Schools Officers: Hackney Borough’ MPS, 11 September 2024.
- 95 Clarke, B. E. (2024) ‘Appendix 1 – School Toolkit for Engagement’ Hackney Council, 11 September 2024.
- 96 Hackney Council (2024) ‘Minutes of the proceedings of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission held at Hackney Town Hall, Mare Street, London E8 1EA’ Hackney Council, 11 September 2024, p. 14.
- 97 Clarke, B. E. (2024) ‘Safer Schools Partnership (Safer Schools Officers)’ Hackney Council, 11 September 2024, p. 3.
- 98 See, e.g., this handbook for supporting police officers to teach PSHE: NPCC and PSHE Association (nd.) ‘Police in the Classroom’ PSHE Association.
- 99 DSL refers to Designated Safeguarding Lead.
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- 102 See, e.g., Welsh, K. and A. A. Payne (2018) ‘Zero Tolerance School Policies’ In: *The Palgrave International Handbook of School Discipline, Surveillance, and Social Control*. Zero-tolerance behaviour policies in Hackney have been criticised for their apparent disproportionate impact on children with SEND, see e.g., Steen, J. (2025) ‘Hackney mayor slams ‘zero-tolerance’ behaviour policies in schools’ *Hackney Citizen*, 18 March 2025.
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- 106 Graham, B. et al. (2019) ‘School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children’ UK Government; Cornish, R. and I. Brennan (2025) ‘Exclusion from School and Risk of Serious Violence: A Target Trial Emulation Study’ *The British Journal of Criminology*, n.v., p. 1-20.
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- 108 Graham, B. et al. (2019) ‘School exclusion: a literature review on the continued disproportionate exclusion of certain children’ UK Government.
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- 111 Berry, S. (2021) ‘London’s Youth Service Cuts: 2011-2021: A Blighted Generation’ City Hall Greens.
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- 117 Sibieta, L. and D. Snape (2024) ‘Spending on special educational needs in England: something has to change’ Institute for Fiscal Studies, 10 December 2024.

- 118 Drayton, E., et al. (2025) [‘Schools and colleges facing another round of belt tightening in this year’s spending review’](#) *Institute for Fiscal Studies*, 8 January 2025.
- 119 Mercer, K. (2025) [‘Met to cut 1,700 staff to plug £260m ‘black hole’](#) *BBC News*, 2 April 2025.
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