

City of London

Draft Special Educational Needs and Disability Joint Strategy

SEND in the City of London – the local context

Around 300 children and young people receive some additional services through SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Support because they go to school in the City (281 children in January 2016) or because they live in the City. A small number of these children and young people (19) have a statutory plan to support their needs. This is about 9% of the total number of children aged 0–19 years who either live in the City or go to school in the City.

The families of the children and young people who have statutory plans (including an Education Health and Care Plan, Statement of Special Educational Needs or Learning Disability Assessment) each receive tailored packages of support from a wide range of agencies. The children and young people themselves all attend school or college, most in a mainstream setting and all but two live at home.

All but one of the City of London's schools and early years settings are within the independent sector and there are no special schools in the City. This makes our children and young people and their progress less naturally visible to us than they might be, and makes direct conversations with them, the most important stakeholders, about how we should shape our services more challenging than it might be in other authorities.

The City's families live in two main locations, one towards the east in Portsoken and the other in the Barbican/Golden Lane area. Children and their families are supported with health services provided by either by the City and Hackney Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) or by Tower Hamlets CCG. Families have very positive feedback about both services and there is no noticeable difference in health or other outcomes based on the CCG that serves them.

The number of City children subject to a statutory plan has increased by 35% within the last year whereas the percentage of pupils with SEND has remained stable across the rest of the country. There are two main contributory factors: schools and settings are developing skill and understanding in identifying needs; a number of children have recently moved into the City with SEND.

Small increases in the number of children have a disproportionate impact on the size of overall cohort in the City of London. Nonetheless, the increase is significant for the City of London and the volatility creates challenges in making sure services are well resourced.

How to use this strategy

The SEND Strategy sets out the City of London's ambitious vision for children and young people with SEND and describes the journey we need to make to achieve this. It follows the previous plan which is the SEND Strategy Action Plan (2013–2017). The strategy should be read alongside the 2016 SEND Self-Assessment and 2016 SEND Action Plan.

- The 2016 SEND Self-Assessment is a tool for us to know where we are on the road map, how far along the road we have travelled and how far we have to go.
- The 2016 SEND Action Plan sets out the things we need to do to if we are to achieve our vision.

How does this strategy fit with the work of the Corporation and its priorities?

The City's vision for children and young people is to ensure that:

“Every child and young person enjoys a safe and healthy lifestyle. They will be able to access a high-quality education provision to achieve their maximum potential in order to thrive in their community. They will be supported by a skilled and confident workforce.”

The health, wellbeing and achievement of children and young people with special educational needs is a very high priority within the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The CYPP priorities are as follows:

Priority 1 – SAFEGUARDING AND EARLY HELP

Children and young people in the City are seen, heard and helped, they are effectively safeguarded, properly supported and their lives improved by everyone working together.

Priority 2 – CLOSE THE GAP FOR VULNERABLE GROUPS

Every child and young person in the City has the right to educational attainment, participation, confidence, health and wellbeing. We identify and provide early support and help for particularly vulnerable groups in the City to ensure they are able to have every opportunity to succeed, regardless of their background.

Our vision

Our vision describes the way we want to be, now and in the future.

The City of London is a place where children and young people with special educational needs, disabilities, mental health conditions or other long-term medical conditions can **thrive**.

We identify developing conditions, difficulties and needs at the earliest stage and make it straightforward for children and young people's families to assess what help may be required.

We work seamlessly with our partners to provide high-quality, easily accessed services and opportunities that promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and development and break down the barriers that make achieving their hopes and ambitions hard.

Our children and young people are confident that they are highly valued, equal to all of their peers, and have high expectations for their futures.

Our children and their families know where to turn, what is available and how to get services for themselves or their children; they feel understood, involved and supported at all times.

Our children and young people with SEND have excellent long-term life outcomes. Each fulfils their potential and achieves their goals.

Where are we now?

The City of London is the smallest local authority area in London. Its population of children with SEND is also small and, partly because of this, our families have enjoyed well-resourced, tailored services and a stable team of professionals, some of whom have worked with the children and young people for many years. We are deeply committed to maintaining the quality of services and the strength of our relationships as we move forward and make improvements.

Across the country, SEND reforms which came into force in 2014 changed the expectations of children, young people, families and professionals about the way in which they should work together. The City was well placed to introduce these reforms as its small numbers lend themselves to close and harmonious working relationships between professionals and with families.

Since the introduction of the SEND reforms, the City of London has introduced a number of changes. All former Statements of Special Educational Needs have been transferred to Education Health and Care Plans with the full engagement of the children, young people and their families. All statutory assessments are completed within 20 weeks of commencement (the legal timeframe) compared with 59% nationally and 70% in London as a whole, and the City has completed the transfer of all Statements (of Special Educational Needs) to Education Health and Care Plans, well in advance of the national deadline of 1 April 2018. An Education Health and Care Plan has also been issued for a young person who previously had a Learning Difficulty Assessment. This was well in advance of the legal deadline.

Many of our schools and settings have been providing excellent services and support to children and young people with SEND and their families. City-wide SEND audits during the early part of 2016 confirmed this. We are not yet at a point where we can provide a City-wide picture of how all our children and young people with SEND are progressing or confirmation of the outcomes they are securing.

We need to understand much more about all of these children and young people to make sure they have the high-quality services they need and that they themselves are satisfied and know how to seek support and advice as needed. With no legal authority over most of our schools and settings, achieving this goal is highly dependent on the quality and effectiveness of partnership working in the City.

There is a very high satisfaction rate among our families, and most children and young people with an Education Health and Care Plan enjoy a comprehensive suite of services and feel they have their needs well met. Parents meet together with City of London officers regularly and children often come too. However, within parents' feedback there is a sense within a small number of families of reliance on the City, of 'not knowing what it is they don't know' and wanting to be able to find out more for themselves. We need to do more to make information accessible, to highlight opportunities and to facilitate participation to enable this.

The City of London's published **Local Offer** (everything that is offered to children and young people with SEND and their families at a local level) is factually accurate and has a comprehensive level of content but can be difficult to navigate and needs children, young people and their families to critique it and make it more attractive to use. More importantly we need our Local Offer to be designed by our children, young people and their families. To this end, we have begun work with our young people, put our services under their close scrutiny and asked for their help in redesigning the website.

The Local Offer can be found here:

<http://www.fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk/kb5/cityoflondon/fyi/localoffer.page?familychannel=7>

Families tell us that they experience good multi-agency working. Often this means they have a close relationship with one agency or individual within an agency who then acts as a gateway for other agencies. However, working in partnership across agencies can have its challenges in the City. The City's children receive their healthcare services through either the Tower Hamlets CCG or the City and Hackney CCG, so the City of London's partnership with both CCGs is equally important. We need to do more to strengthen integration of services.

Because of the size of the City's resident population, joint commissioning activity needs to be reframed to specifically meet the needs of the City's children, particularly where there is a joint commission of services targeting large numbers of children across two boroughs. New governance arrangements and multi-agency participation at SEND Implementation Boards will create a new paradigm in which the voice of the *City* child is the first voice in all that we do.

We have recently established a multi-agency Transitions Forum within the City to make sure that young people who have received services as a child have their future needs as an adult assessed long before they become one. This enables a fresh assessment to be made in which the young person's needs are central, the securement of resources, continuity of service where required, and an early introduction to any new professionals and services before the current ones stop supporting the young person and their family.

The legal framework

The Children and Families Act, 2014 has established a clear programme of SEND reforms which have made best practice in services a set of robust requirements:

- a person-centred, joined-up approach to identifying and meeting the needs of children, young people and their families;
- increased engagement and participation of young people and families so that they have greater choice and control, are listened to and their concerns are resolved swiftly;
- a published Local Offer of support, services and provision, how to access it and how to raise concerns or seek redress;
- the use of effective practice, data and wider intelligence and independent assessment to drive improvement;
- clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities;
- increased integration of services and joint commissioning across the LA and Health.

This legislation sits in the context of the **Equality Act 2010**

Public bodies must adhere to the General Duty and the Specific Duties of the Equality Act 2010.

General Duty

In the exercise of functions, due regard must be given to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

These are sometimes referred to as the three aims/arms of the general equality duty.

Due regard for advancing equality involves:

- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics;
- taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people;
- encouraging people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

Specific Duty

- Information about how disabled people have been involved in its development.
- The authority's methods for undertaking impact assessments.
- An action plan setting out the steps it will take to meet the general duty.
- Arrangements for gathering information on the effect of the authority's policies and practices on disabled people.
- Arrangements for using this information, including reviewing the effectiveness of the action plan and preparing subsequent disability equality schemes.

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Our priorities

The priorities for this strategy are:

Early identification of need

- Equipping professionals with the skills and knowledge to recognise needs early, know what resources are available, what process to follow and provide support and advice to families from the outset.
- Helping our families to know how to access services independently, make a contribution and challenge our thinking.

Assessing and meeting needs

- Timely, skilful and multi-disciplinary assessments of need leading to ambitious and meaningful plans.
- Gathering benchmarking data across all schools and settings to compare the educational and other outcomes for children and young people with SEND and developing action plans as required.

Improving long-term outcomes and creating an area-wide impact

- Securing excellent long-term life outcomes through challenge, support and opportunity.

Communication and engagement

- Communication and engagement with children, young people and their families; making sure their voices are the first voices in everything we do.
- Getting to know the children who don't have a plan – listening to their expert views, giving them a leading role in the way we do things.
- Providing a rich information and guidance resource for children, young people, their families and professionals.

Working in seamless partnership

- Working in seamless partnership across agencies to create a suite of joined-up services that can be easily understood and navigated.
- Introducing mechanisms to better co-design our services with our children and young people and empowering them to shape their own futures and the future of our services.

Removal of barriers to participation

- Working with all major stakeholders within the City of London to actively remove barriers to participation, including physical barriers, informational, communicational or attitudinal.
- Supporting families creatively with short breaks that increase children and young people's opportunities.
- Mystery shopping venues and building a reliable information bank of accessible venues and activities.

Quality assurance

- Developing new governance arrangements to evaluate the quality of services.
- Inviting our families to hold us to review their services, set the agenda and hold us to account.
- Regularly seeking third party review.

Each of these priorities is the subject of a separate workstream which reports into a main SEND Delivery Board. Parents and children are participants in each workstream and are also represented on the Board.

Priority 1 – Early identification of need

At the start of 2016, we conducted SEND audits to find out more about the quality of services across the City's educational and early years settings. Most audit reports show positive work and good levels of skill and understanding. In March we commissioned an Area SENCo to work in all early years and educational phases and regardless of legal status. Since that time, specialist advice through the Area SENCo has been provided at all schools and settings and sponsorship to enable school/setting-based SENCo staff to qualify has been provided. Targeted training in identifying SEND has been provided for all schools and settings.

City of London Early Help Services bring professionals from all agencies together regularly to discuss early identification of need and strategies to support families and children. This is known as the MARF (Multi-Agency Referral Forum). With such a small cohort of children this allows partners to work seamlessly together and agree the right package of support.

A new year-long programme for the under-fives – 'Little Movers in the Big City' – is being delivered across early years settings which develops gross and fine motor skills towards accelerated and improved cognitive development. One of the aims of this programme is to identify the signs of need through the course of the year.

Web pages for professionals that provide specialist advice and training, access to policies and strategies, changes in legislation and updates on performance will be rolled out during 2016/17. Online SEND training resources including videos are currently being developed for City early years and education professionals.

Priority 2 – Assessing and meeting needs

Most children and young people with additional needs (93%) in the City are supported through SEN Support which is provided directly by their school or early years setting. When a child or young person is identified as having an additional need that requires specialist input, resources or support, and following an assessment, they are often entitled to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) which sets out the services that have to be provided for them. At the heart of this Plan are the child's or young person's own wishes. The Plan is reviewed every year to make sure that, as things change, the Plan reflects this. The law sets out some timeframes for assessing children and young people's needs and then reviewing them. The City of London exceeds these legal requirements as is shown in the Self-Assessment. But there are bigger challenges which go beyond statutory duties and take us on a path to outstanding services.

We want to be fully confident that all children and young people who might need a statutory EHC assessment are receiving one. To gain this confidence, we need to work closely with the independent schools and settings as well as our one maintained school to build skill expertise and understanding in SEND and how to commission an assessment.

We also need to up-skill parents to learn more about the assessment process, who to contact and how to get support. We want all EHC Plans to genuinely reflect children and young people's wishes and aspirations and to hear first-hand if things are not working for them or they want things done differently. A new programme of work to speak directly with children and young people began in August 2016 which includes one-to-one engagements with children and young people with EHC Plans.

We know a lot about the progress and achievements of the children with SEN Support at Sir John Cass Primary School but very little about those at the independent schools. We want to know how they fare when compared with their peers and whether there are services we could provide to support them.

Periods of transition can be bumpy, whether that's transition to school or through different phases through a school career. We want to plan well for changes so that the transition times are smooth.

If and when a child or young person's needs change, we need to be able to step up or step down services, provide additional support or resources

Priority 3 – Improving long-term life outcomes

Planning early for and with our children and young people is critical to securing high-quality life outcomes. We need to encourage our children and their families to be ambitious, set challenging goals and aspire to great futures. As professionals, we need to wrap around the goals and put things in place that make those aspirations a reality for every child.

Every young person is entitled to have their transition to adulthood supported through an assessment of their needs in which their voice is clearly heard and their wishes are paramount. The package we will consider includes:

- advocacy
- independent travel training
- work experience
- training/FE/HE education options
- career coaching
- independence skills training
- personal budget
- longer-term need for adult services.

If we want our children and young people to have high aspirations, we must be ambitious for them; we need to broker opportunities that change their horizons, and build their confidence to fully participate in the activities that they find fulfilling. And we must never lose sight of the fact that there are many aspects other than disability status that make up social identity – we need to enable our children to celebrate all of them.

Priority 4 – Communication and engagement

Our work on communication and engagement is far reaching. It encompasses:

- providing accessible information for our children, young people and families;
- providing a forum for families to come together with each other and the professionals working on their behalf – to have an active and productive dialogue in the interests of improving the quality of services;
- enabling children and young people to have a voice through advocacy, through membership of the SEND Implementation Board, through video diaries and mystery shopping;
- enabling parents and families to use alternative services to communicate with the City of London or their CCG through KIDS Mediation Service.

Families

Families of children and young people with SEND tell us they are generally very satisfied with the services they receive. Most of those we've spoken to tell us they have everything they need and some say that they haven't had to think about what they needed, it was just all arranged for them, with agencies working well together. However, a small number of families say that they have found it difficult to know what else is available (other than the services that they are offered). Others commented that they wanted their child to be able to participate more in social activities and that the City play facilities are not all accessible.

Children and young people

Across the partnership, we meet with our children and young people regularly. We understand their views about their own needs and the way they are met. But so far our conversations with children, young people and their families have been focused on those children who have had a statutory Plan. We know much less about the views of those children and young people who have additional needs but who do not meet the thresholds to have a Statutory Plan.

During 2016/17, we want an active dialogue to build with these young people. Engagement through video booths (similar to those used in the popular TV show *The X Factor*) which will be located at four City schools in September starts off this programme. Young people with SEND will be asked questions about their priorities, their views about services they already receive and those that they would like to have when using the video booth.

Children and young people will be central to strategic planning, prioritising through advising each working group of the SEND Implementation Board, and the Board itself. Mystery shopping of City of London services, facilities and opportunities, which has begun already, will become a key element of the way we quality assure our work. Advocacy services will be offered to all children and young people with SEND as a matter of course.

Local Offer

The City of London has a published comprehensive 'Local Offer' which comprises all the services, facilities and opportunities available to children and young people with SEND and their families. We want the next development of the Local Offer to be an offer shaped by our children and their families, in which their voice is loud and strong. Work during 2016/17 will see a complete overhaul of the SEND Local Offer web pages as a consequence.

Priority 5 – Working in seamless partnership

Our children with EHC Plans and their families tell us that on a personal level they do not experience any gaps or barriers between services provided by different agencies. On a practical level, City children and families do receive the full complement of the services they require and express a high level of satisfaction with them.

One of the challenges the City faces is that its families receive services from the City of London for early years, education and children's social care but health services come from either Tower Hamlets CCG or City and Hackney CCG. This means our shared strategies need to align with two CCGs and in both, the City has far fewer children than the other authority with which it shares services.

Going forward, the City and its CCG partners will work on new strategies together from the outset and devise strategies and services that are targeted specifically for City children and their needs.

Health Service information will play a more prominent role on the City's Local Offer web pages as well as signposting assistance about which CCG to contact.

The SEND Implementation Board is designed to be jointly owned with partners and in particular the CCGs and this strategy is a joint strategy, owned by all.

Priority 6 – Removal of barriers to participation

A child with SEND is a child first with many aspects to their identity, their own hopes and dreams and a need to develop as an individual. We are committed to making sure that our children and young people are able to access all the opportunities that are available to their peers, and to participate in society on their own terms. This means we must reduce and remove barriers to their participation where they exist. These barriers may be:

- physical – services/facilities are not made sufficiently accessible to be able to be used;
- communication/informational – methods of communication are not accessible, including accessing enough information about accessible services;
- attitudinal – other people’s attitudes, their limited understanding of people’s needs and/or poor training make participation difficult or impossible.

Over recent years, because of the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and then the Equality Act 2010, awareness of what barriers are has increased a great deal. Many barriers have already been removed and accessibility has improved because of this understanding. The confidence of disabled people to participate has perhaps not increased at the same rate and there is a gap between the steps already taken and genuinely equal participation. We need to close that gap.

Our families and the young people themselves tell us they find it difficult to socialise in the City. They feel there are too few children with SEND for them to have a sense of belonging and that there isn’t enough for children and young people to do, particularly older children. We must change this.

Steps to take are:

- identifying what steps remain to remove barriers created by organisations or individuals;
- working with our families with children with SEND and in particular the children and young people themselves to mystery shop City of London facilities to understand their real experiences and what can be improved;
- working with partners and providers to understand the user experience and increase opportunity to participate;
- focusing our attention on the ‘whole child’, exploring the things they want to do and see, and how they wish to develop so that we can find activities, groups and opportunities that match;
- building confidence in participation by phased introduction to new activities and opportunities.

Priority 7 – Governance

The small number of children with SEND in the City of London means that the teams of professionals who support them and their families know them very well indeed and some have worked with them for much of their lives. The partnerships between multi-agency professionals are also very close and positive. This makes good governance very important.

The progress of all children and young people with SEND is reported to the Children's Executive Board which meets on a six-weekly cycle. As we learn more about the children receiving SEN Support in City Schools, their data will be included in this reporting.

There are forums which meet regularly where children and young people are the main focus of discussion.

Targeted Education Resources Panel (TERP)

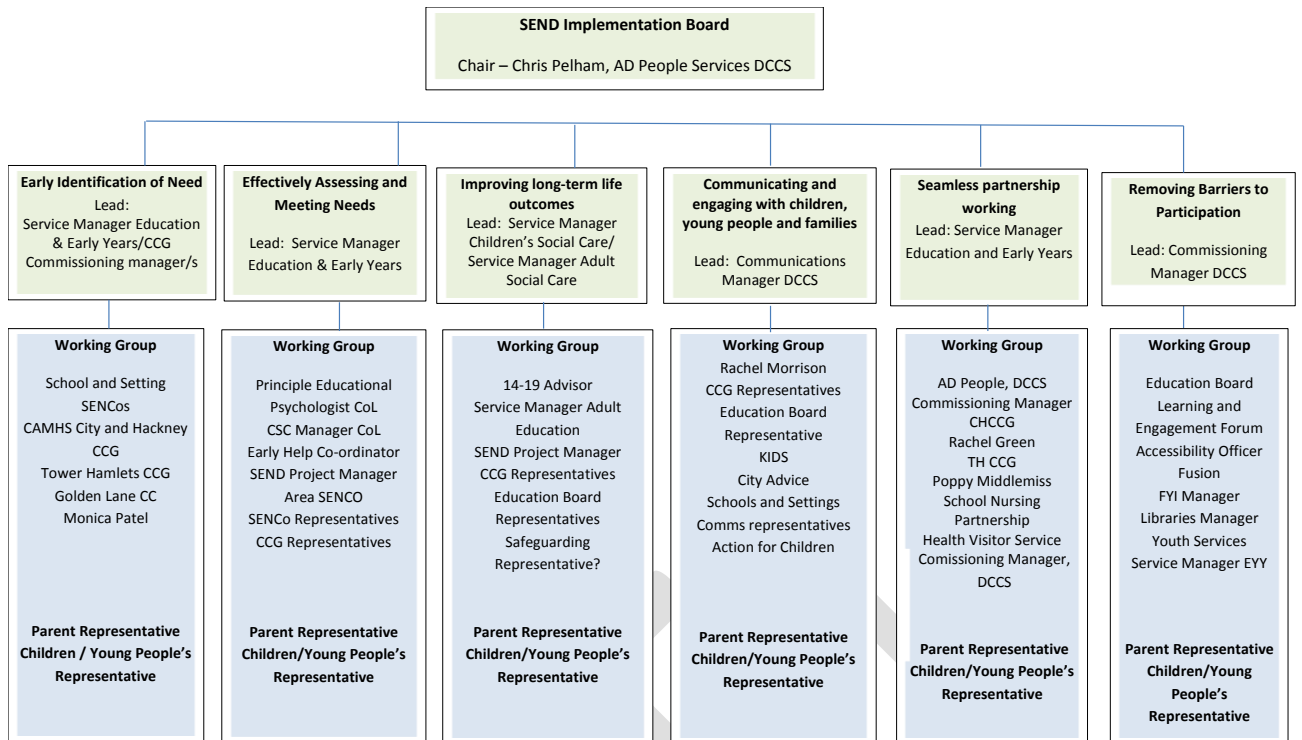
This is a panel of multi-agency professionals who consider cases for allocating financial and other resources to support individual children and young people. This panel considers requests for assessment for an Education Health and Care plan. All applications for places at an independent special school are also discussed here as well as applications for short breaks or requests for additional specialist educational support. Not all requests made to the panel are for resources for children with SEND but most are. The Panel is chaired by the Service Manager Education and Early Years. The Panel makes recommendations to a Resourcing Board chaired by the Assistant Director People from the Department of Community and Children's Services and is attended by the Lead Member for Community and Children's Services periodically.

Transitions Forum

This Forum looks closely at the transition of vulnerable children to adulthood. On a case-by-case basis, the Forum discusses the needs of those young people becoming young adults and evaluates their need to continue to receive services in adulthood. At the heart of this assessment are the wishes of the young person themselves. The Forum is chaired by the Service Manager for Education and Early Years.

Work with children and young people with SEND is also reported on regularly at the Early Help Sub Group, the City and Hackney Children's Programme Board (CCG) and the Mental Health Programme Board (CCG) and the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The new SEND Implementation Board, which is shown in the structure below, is designed to manage the workstreams in this strategy. Each workstream is led by a senior manager from one or more agencies, and the Board itself which oversees the workstreams is chaired by the AD People Services. Crucially, parents and young people are part of each workstream and the main board. The structure is shown below.



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