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26 July 2024

Deborah Bell
Strategic Director of Education and Skills – City of London Corporation

Sent via email: Deborah.Bell@cityoflondon.gov.uk

Dear Deborah

SEND Engagement Meeting held on 9 July 2024

In attendance:

Deborah Bell	Strategic Director of Education and Skills
Tim Godsmark	Parent Carer Forum representative
Mark Cossey	Parent Carer Forum representative
Judith Finlay	Executive Director of Community and Children’s Services
Chris Pelham	Assistant Director of People
Kirstie Hilton	Head of Service Education and Early Years
Sarah Darcy	Strategic Lead for Children and Young People, NHS North East London
Hannah Hickman	Speech and Language Therapy Service Manager, Homerton University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and Designated Clinical Officer for City and Hackney
Amy Wilkinson	Director of Partnerships, Impact and Delivery NHS North East London ICB & City and Hackney Place Based Partnership
Montserrat Pérez-Parent	Senior HMI for Further Education and Skills, Ofsted
Daniel Carrick	Children Service’s Inspector, CQC

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss SEND provision in your local area and: how the local area partnership is meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND in the local area; how you are improving services for children and young people with SEND and their families; to identify any issues of concern and how the partnership is remaining up to date with any changes to the local SEND system.

You provided us with an update on the City of London context, focusing on SEND. There are small numbers of resident children with education, health and care (EHC) plans as a result of the City’s small overall population. However, you noted that the proportion has increased by 64% since 2019. The most common primary need is autistic spectrum disorder. You also report an increase in the complexity of cases. You

have the capacity to know these children and their families well. You pride yourselves on the fact that parents and carers have the knowledge that their child's EHC plan will be completed in 20 weeks and with their involvement.

Only 15% of resident children attend school in the City, with the rest attending schools in 11 other local authorities. You told us that you have focused on identifying children with SEND needs who are educated outside of the City and have developed a tool that tracks their support and attendance. You want to develop this further to allow you to monitor their outcomes too.

You told us that you have strong relationships with parents and carers and listen to them. You gave us an example of how your libraries now have longer opening hours and close late on certain days in response to requests from parents and carers. Representatives from the parent carer forum told us that they get a good service and are involved in decision making processes. They particularly welcome having a named and consistent case worker and the range of activities available to children with SEND, such as swimming classes.

Parents and carers recognise that not everything can be delivered in the City, but they highlight that getting to appointments by public transport is a challenge. You are working together to help parents and carers navigate the complexities of how to access support for each of the different pathways. There is already ongoing work to improve access, including to the local offer. For example, speech and language therapists and occupational therapists visit families at home where possible.

You reported that you do not want to be complacent and have recently commissioned a peer review to give you an external assessment of how you can continue to learn and improve the services you offer. You are pleased that this review has validated your own assessment of what you do well and provided constructive feedback on areas that you can improve further, such as co-production and better co-ordination of the parents' and carers' views you collect. You will be using the outcomes of the review to inform your new SEND strategy for 2024-2029.

You have been working with health colleagues across the City and Hackney since 2018. This allows you to analyse data and trends for a larger area. You have used the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment process to report better on SEND needs and you are developing an integrated dashboard to improve the use of data to inform service commissioning.

You reported strong outcomes for children and young people with SEND needs who attend the one primary school located in the City of London.

An area you want to improve is your local offer. Parents and carers have told you that they would like more access to short breaks and health services, and better ways for finding out what the offer is and where services are located. You plan to involve children and families in the re-design of your local offer.

You are proud of the high levels of personalisation you offer to meet the needs of children with SEND and their families, and your person-centered approach to commissioning services for them. You gave us an example of an online speech and

language therapy tool designed locally by Homerton Healthcare Foundation Trust Speech and Language Therapy Service that enables schools to screen children, identify targeted support and identify methodologies to support them effectively.

You provided us with a list of the many and varied ways in which you measure the impact of your work on children and young people with SEND. You use a range of information, including internal and external multi-agency audits to evaluate and inform your work.

Thank you again for a very constructive meeting.

Yours sincerely

Montserrat Pérez-Parent
Senior HMI, London

Daniel Carrick
Children's Services Inspector, CQC

Please note: This letter is not published by Ofsted and the comments made have not been evaluated as part of an inspection.