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| Committee(s): City of London Health and Wellbeing Board - for information | Dated: 07/02/2025 |
| Subject: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City and Hackney Health Needs Assessment for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) • SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29 | Public For information |
| This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse engaged communities • Providing excellent services |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | No |
| If so, how much? | N/A |
| What is the source of Funding? | N/A |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | N/A |
| Report of: | Dr Sandra Husbands, Director of Public Health Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services |
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Summary

This paper presents two pieces of work related to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Firstly, the key findings and recommendations of the City and Hackney Health Needs Assessment (HNA) for Children and Young People with SEND 2024. The HNA for Children and Young People with SEND was carried out between August 2023 to September 2024. The findings and recommendations of the HNA provided evidence and insight that informed the development of the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29. The HNA includes recommendations that are aligned with the action plan that sits underneath the strategy and can be used to support additional

activity that supports the best outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

This paper also presents the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29 for information. This was approved by the Community and Children's Services Committee on 16 January 2025. The strategy sets out the strategic priorities for the Local Area Partnership and guides our activities in relation to children and young people with disabilities aged 0-25 and their families who live in the City of London. The strategy was developed with parent carers, children and young people with SEND and professionals. An 'easy read' version has been produced to widen accessibility of the strategy. An overview action plan sits beneath the strategy and a 'you said, we did' document sets out what the Local Area Partnership has done in response to ideas and feedback from children, young people and parent carers.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- **Note** the HNA for Children and Young People with SEND and its findings and recommendations. Also to make any further recommendations with regards to next steps
- **Note** the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-2029

Main Report

Background

1. A HNA for Children and Young People with SEND was carried out between August 2023 and September 2024. A multi-stakeholder steering group was set up to oversee progress.
2. The HNA aimed to improve local stakeholder's knowledge and understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people with SEND aged between 0 and 25 years living in the City of London and Hackney.
3. The objectives were:
 - To describe the population of children and young people with SEND.
 - To identify the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people with SEND.
 - To identify current gaps in local knowledge and understanding of the needs of children and young people with SEND.
 - To provide a high-level overview of the relevant national and local policy context on children and young people with SEND.
 - To develop recommendations based on the findings of this needs assessment to inform future services and commissioning plans for children and young people with SEND.
4. The assessment employed a mixed methods approach incorporating:

- Understanding the level of need: Examining the prevalence and characteristics of children and young people with SEND at national, regional, and local levels, including age, gender, ethnicity, and deprivation.
 - Comparative Analysis: Comparing SEND prevalence and trends with North East London, London, and England.
 - Qualitative insights: Gathering stakeholder insights through extensive engagement with 200 residents, including children and young people with SEND, their parents and carers, and 17 service providers.
5. The stakeholder engagement was conducted using qualitative methods including interviews, focus group discussions and online surveys. As a non-random subset of the population were engaged, the findings will not be representative of the entire population. Additionally, there is likely to be a large degree of self-selection bias as respondents that are the most active in forums or meetings, and those that have had a negative experience of SEND services will have been more likely to participate.
 6. The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29 (Appendix 2) is a statutory document and replaces the SEND Strategy 2020-24. Alternative provision (places that provide education for children and young people who cannot go to school) has been added to the remit of the strategy to reflect a shift in national government policy.
 7. An 'easy read' version of the strategy has been consulted on and produced.
 8. The development of the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy involved engagement activities and evidence gathering including two facilitated workshops with 30 professionals and two parent carers, plus a session with the City Parent Carer Forum. A facilitated arts session enabled children and young people with disabilities to share their experiences and views. A public consultation on the draft strategy and easy read version ran between July and September 2024.
 9. A parent carer Reference Group formed part of the oversight and governance process during the development of the strategy. Five parent carers representing a range of needs and experiences met three times during the development of the strategy. This provided invaluable oversight and input; influencing the type of involvement activities delivered as well as the narrative and content of the strategy and action plan. Learning from this new approach has been shared internally.
 10. A 'you said, we did' document summarises the Local Area Partnership's responses to feedback from parent carers.
 11. The 'easy read' version, action plan, summary of engagement and consultation and 'you said, we did' documents are available on the Community and Children's Services Committee [website](#).

Current Position

12. The findings from the HNA for Children and Young People with SEND are relevant across the City and Hackney as a whole. It was not possible to disaggregate findings for the City of London separately due to small sample sizes and the need to protect the confidentiality of those who participated in the engagement process. Therefore, the HNA's findings and recommendations

should be read in conjunction with other strategies and SEND work being led by the City of London Corporation.

13. A summary of the key findings from qualitative insights is as follows:

- Young people's perception of being healthy includes having nutritious food, good sleep, exercise and personal hygiene. Their perception of good mental health included engaging in art and creative activities.
- Parents and carers shared enabling factors supporting health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND:

School environment and support: Parents valued the support provided by school staff to their child and shared examples of different types of schools having a positive influence on their child's educational attainment and overall development. Support provided by the Education Team to children and young people who are home schooled has also been reported as an enabling factor.

Parents and carers: Parents and carers themselves play a huge role in enabling good health and wellbeing for their child as they are the main carers.

Training: Training offered to parents and carers in supporting their child with autism was found useful.

Well-coordinated services and timely assessment and diagnosis: children and young people with SEND are more likely to have better health and wellbeing outcomes when services are well coordinated and different service providers identify their needs at an early stage, with timely interventions offered. Parents appreciated when their child was diagnosed early and referred to the right services. Communication with parents from diagnosis to ongoing treatment or support was found to be a very important factor in meeting the needs of their child.

Social care support: Parents and carers of children and young people with SEND who were supported with social care services found it extremely useful.

- Parents and carers shared the following areas that need further development and improvements:

Communication, information and advice on SEND: Feedback from both parents and services identified this to be an area that can be developed further to make it more accessible, inclusive, clear and consistent. Making a visual map of the SEND pathway and services available would help families navigate the services. Community networks used and trusted by parents and carers will be a useful way of disseminating information and advice on SEND.

Timely diagnosis of health and wellbeing issues: 45% of parents and carers who participated in the online survey said that the health and wellbeing needs of their child were not diagnosed on time.

Improved access to GP and hospital services for both physical and mental health needs.

Improved knowledge amongst health professionals about SEND needs and services.

Transition to Adult Mental Health Services.

Addressing the impact of health issues amongst children and young people with SEND on their educational attainment and school attendance.

Social determinants of health: Housing, transportation, sports, leisure and creative services were reported to be important determinants for maintaining good health and wellbeing for children and young people with SEND. The majority of parents have requested for an increase in the provision of leisure, play and creative activities for children and young people with SEND. This has been identified as a huge gap in provision. Access to housing and transportation was raised as an area of improvement by some parent carers.

- Service provider and professionals' feedback on factors affecting health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND and areas of improvement included school exclusions; higher need for special school places; access to health services; training for parents on understanding diagnosis and use of available resources; and supporting safe social interactions for children and young people with SEND.
- Areas of improvement included reducing referral and assessment timescales; supporting parents and family's well being; mapping SEND pathway and services; greater engagement between stakeholders; addressing social determinants of health like housing, leisure and poverty; joint working through family hubs and neighbourhoods and promoting annual health checks for young people with learning disabilities.

14. Recommendations based on the insight and data gathered as part of the HNA are:

- **Communication, information, and advice:** enhance communication strategies to ensure clear, accessible information for families and professionals.
- **Diagnosis and early intervention:** improve early identification and intervention processes to ensure timely support for children and young people with SEND.
- **Access to services:** increase accessibility and availability of health and wellbeing services for children and young people with SEND.
- **Addressing inequalities:** implement targeted strategies to address health and social inequalities affecting children and young people with SEND.
- **Data and records:** improve data collection and sharing practices to ensure comprehensive and accurate records of children and young people with SEND.
- **Social determinants of health:** address broader social determinants impacting the health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND, including poverty and housing.

15. The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy sets out principles of how the Local Area Partnership will work together to deliver the priorities set out in the strategy. The principles are:

- **High ambition** - support and helpfully challenge each other to achieve the best possible outcomes for all children and young people accessing alternative provision and/or with SEND and their families.
- **Trust and honesty** - deepen trust between all partners, including families, by being open and honest about our priorities, challenges and what we can achieve.

- **Mutual respect and acceptance** - value each other's experiences and expertise, including those of families.
 - **Partnership and transparency** - create positive, transparent partnerships that keep children and young people with SEND and/or accessing alternative provision and their families at the centre of all we do.
 - **Co-design and engagement** - co-design and engage with children and young people with SEND and their families from the start and provide feedback along the way.
 - **Inclusive communities** - support communities that are inclusive of all.
16. Government statistics highlight the national trend that the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) has increased each year since their introduction in 2014. Research evidence highlights the experiences of families with children with disabilities which can involve fighting to access support they are entitled to and dealing with the emotional toll that comes if they do not receive that support.
 17. The engagement and consultation activities provided the Local Area Partnership with valuable insight into the lives of children and young people with SEND and their families and what is important to them. These experiences and views informed the development of the strategy and are reflected in the narrative, priorities, case studies, quotes and artwork.
 18. Children and young people with SEND shared their experiences of living in the City of London and how it can be hard to find accessible places and activities. Parent carers shared their experiences of trying to navigate a complex system to get their child the right help at the right time. Parent carers also highlighted their own emotional wellbeing needs, and stated that support for the whole family during transition points is key, such as moving between school years or from children's to adult services. Parent carers want the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy to be a lever for positive change, not only within the SEND system, but also across the City of London.
 19. The insight gathered informed the **five strategic priorities** in the strategy. The order does not relate to importance; they all contribute to our shared vision for children and young people. The priorities are:
 - Children and young people with SEND and their families get the right help, at the right time.
 - Children and young people with SEND and parent carers are supported during transitions, including preparation for adulthood.
 - Children and young people with SEND and their families are supported and enabled by a skilled, valued workforce.
 - Children and young people with SEND and their families feel recognised, valued and part of their local community.
 - Children and young people experience high quality, appropriate alternative provision when needed.
 20. The strategy includes key actions for the Local Area Partnership under each of the priorities. An action plan sits below the strategy providing more detail to the strategy's priorities and actions, including outcomes.

21. The priorities and actions align with recommendations in the HNA for Children and Young People with SEND including: continuing with the focus on early intervention and ensuring children and young people with SEND get the right help, at the right time, including those from global majority communities; strengthening the information, advice and support offer for families; and continuing to develop a skilled workforce around SEND.

Key Data

22. The HNA for Children and Young People with SEND presents data gathered between August 2023 and September 2024. It found that the City of London has the lowest proportion of children and young people with SEND attending school (12%) compared to Hackney (19%), the North East London average (15%) and the national average (17%).
23. In 2023, the City of London had 67 children and young people with SEND who attend schools locally and 77 children and young people with SEND who live in the City of London. The table below (bullet 24) provides a breakdown of children and young people with SEN support and those with EHCPs who attend schools locally and those who are City of London residents but attend schools outside of the City of London.¹
24. **Children and young people with special education needs and disabilities in the City of London, 2023**

| Breakdown of children and young people with SEN Support and EHCP in the City of London | City of London |
|--|-----------------------|
| Pupils: number of children and young people with SEND attending schools locally | 67 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people with an EHCP | 8 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people with SEN support | 59 |
| Residents: number of children and young people with SEND living in the local area | 77 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people with an EHCP | 24 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • children and young people with SEN support | 53 |

Source: Department for Education, Special educational needs in England, SEN phase type by SEN provision, type of need and school type, 2023 City of London Corporation. EHCP caseload anonymised (not publicly available), 2023.

25. Independent schools had the lowest SEND prevalence in the City of London and Hackney. When independent schools were excluded, Hackney moved from having the seventh to the third highest proportion of children and young people

¹ Note that there is likely to be an element of double counting between the number of pupils and the number of residents with SEND.

with SEND in London, while the City of London moved from the lowest to the highest position. The City of London's variation is bigger as there are a small number of children.

26. Projection data of the children and young people SEND population was not available for the City of London. However, despite its small population, there was a 77% increase in the number of children and young people with an EHCP in the City of London between September 2017 and September 2023.
27. Compared to the general population, SEND prevalence is higher amongst boys than girls attending primary schools, both in the City of London (31% vs 17%) and Hackney (26% vs 14%) in 2022/23. This was in line with the England average (21% vs 11%).
28. SEND prevalence was higher among English speakers than among speakers of other languages in both the City of London (28% vs 21%) and Hackney (21% vs 19%). This is also the case for London (19% vs 14%) and England (18% vs 13%).
29. In 2022/23, SEND prevalence was higher among children and young people eligible for free school meals than those not eligible in the City of London (33% vs 23%) and in Hackney (27% vs 16%). This aligns with the averages for London (25% vs 14%) and England (28% vs 14%).
30. Breakdown of the ethnicity data of children and young people with SEND wasn't possible for the City of London due to small numbers.
31. Primary educational needs varied by the phase of education and provision of SEN. The primary educational need for children and young people with an EHCP was autism, whereas the needs of children and young people with SEN support were related to speech, language, and communication.
32. Although the total number of referrals into Speech and Language Therapy (SaLT) for children and young people living in City of London and Hackney has remained relatively stable since 2018 (around 1,000 per year), between 2018 and 2023 there was a noticeable increase in the proportion of those who were referred at a younger age.
33. The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy cites various data sources to provide a snapshot of children and young people with SEND in England and the City of London.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

For the HNA Children and Young People with SEND:

Strategic implications

Recommendations of the HNA Children and Young People with SEND align with the City of London Corporate Plan.

Financial implication

None.

Resource implications

None.

Legal implications

None.

Risk implications

None.

Equalities implications

Equalities and equity considerations are central to the data analysis and extensive stakeholder engagement conducted within the HNA Children and Young People with SEND and the recommendations in the HNA.

Climate implications

None.

Security implications

None.

For the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy:

Strategic implications

The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy aligns with the Corporate Plan 2024-2029 objectives of 'providing excellent services' and 'diverse engaged communities'. It also aligns with aims of the Department for Community and Children's Services Business Plan: safe; potential; independence, involvement and choice; health and wellbeing; and community. The alternative provision element relates to the City Corporation's Alternative Provision Statement. The strategy sits alongside other City Corporation strategies including those for Early Help, Carers, Education, and the Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. It also sits alongside the City and Hackney All Age Autism Strategy 2022-25 and City and Hackney Strategy for Learning Disabled People 2019-24 (to be reviewed in 2025). SEND is one area prioritised by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services, which the City Corporation is represented on. The strategy sits within the context of national Government policy and legislation.

Financial implications

The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy sets out a range of priorities and actions. Financial implications will be considered within each discrete project or any support or services commissioned as part of the strategy. It is also important to recognise that nationally there is increased pressure on High Needs Funding for SEND but as it stands the City Corporation can meet residents' needs within our budgets. The pressures on the City Corporation will likely increase in 12-18 months based on current needs trajectories. Impact and risks around this can be monitored and mitigated against. The City Corporation joins local authorities across the country in advocating for more sustained national funding based on current legislation.

Resource implications

Members of the Local Area Partnership have jointly developed and agreed the strategy and the action plan. Discrete projects or actions within the strategy may require additional resource consideration and this will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Legal implications

The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy sits within the context of SEND legislation and statutory guidance.

Risk implications

The SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy brings no major risks to the City Corporation or Local Area Partnership. Risk analysis will be completed for each discrete project that comes from the strategy as appropriate.

Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Strategy. Available on the Community and Children's Services Committee [website](#).

Climate implications

None.

Security implications

None.

Conclusion

34. Children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers shared their experiences and insight to inform both the HNA Children and Young People with SEND and the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy. Their voices will remain heard during the implementation of the strategy and continue to inform delivery.
35. The SEND Programme Board will monitor progress against the action plan which sits beneath the SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy on an annual basis.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: HNA Children and Young People with SEND report
- Appendix 2: SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29

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