

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Community and Children's Services	Dated: 28/01/2026
Subject: Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) City of London Local Area Inspection outcome – December 2025	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes• provides statutory duties• provides business enabling functions	Providing Excellent Services Engaged Communities
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	The Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	Yes
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Kirstie Hilton, Head of Education and Early Years Service

Summary

His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) gave notification on 15 September 2025 to the City of London Local Area of an inspection under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004 from 29 September to 3 October 2025. Fieldwork began on 25 September 2025, and inspectors undertook onsite work from 29 September to 3 October 2025.

The City of London Corporation and the Northeast London Integrated Care Board (ICB) are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) in the City of London.

The inspection provided an independent external evaluation of how well the City of London local area carries out its statutory duties in relation to children and young people with SEND and/or in receipt of Alternative Provision to support their development.

Ofsted and the CQC published their final inspection findings on 1 December 2025. This report summarises key findings and appends Ofsted's and CQC's findings in full.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The duties on local areas regarding provision for children and young people with SEND are contained in the Children and Families Act 2014. The Minister of State for Children and Families has tasked Ofsted and the CQC with inspecting local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling these duties. The Ofsted/CQC Inspection Framework sets out the legal basis and the principles of inspection.

Context

2. HMCI and the CQC gave notification on 15 September 2025 to the City of London Local Area of an inspection under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004 from 29 September to 3 October 2025. Fieldwork began on 25 September 2025, and inspectors undertook onsite work from 29 September to 3 October 2025.
3. The inspection team comprised five inspectors, led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, and included an additional two Ofsted inspectors and two inspectors from the CQC. There was an additional inspector shadowing the team, along with two inspectors overseeing quality assurance.
4. The inspection took place over three weeks, from the point of notification on 15th September to the feedback meeting on 3rd October with inspectors onsite during the last week. They undertook a range of sessions over the period they were in the City and spoke with children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, parents and carers, local authority, and Health colleagues. They visited a range of providers, including The Aldgate School and Smithfield Nursery to see how they were implementing arrangements for SEND.
5. Inspectors looked at a range of information about the performance of the local area, including the local area's self-evaluation. They reviewed performance data and evidence about the local offer and joint commissioning alongside several other relevant documents, including those relating to the governance of the SEND work in the City.
6. The inspection provided an independent, external evaluation of how well the City of London local area carries out its statutory duties in relation to children and young people with SEND to support their development and Alternative Provision arrangements. The evaluation identified strengths and areas for development.
7. Ofsted published the inspection findings on their website on 1 December 2025. The report sets out the context of the inspection, what it is like to be a child or young person with SEND in the local area, any strengths and areas recommended for improvement (see Appendix 1).

Inspection Outcome

8. There are three possible outcomes following any Area SEND Inspection:
 - Outcome 1: The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.
 - Outcome 2: The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.
 - Outcome 3: There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND, which the local area partnership must address urgently.

9. The City of London received the most favourable outcome – outcome 1:

“The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed. The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately 5 years.”

10. At the time this report was prepared, a total of 73 local areas had undergone Area SEND inspections (including the City of London). Out of these, 22% received the most favourable outcome, with the majority (49%) of local areas receiving the second outcome (outcome 2), and 29% receiving the least favourable outcome (outcome 3).

Summary of Main Findings

11. Children and young people with SEND, including their families, are central to the work of the City of London's local area partnership. Leaders champion reflective practice, have a shared commitment to delivering excellent services, and the partnership fully understands the children and young people we support. The local area partners place high importance on co-production, working with children and young people and members of the Parent Carer Forum.
12. Children and young people's needs are routinely identified in a timely manner, and young people with SEND are supported to explore the opportunities available to them as they transition into adulthood.

Strengths

13. There is strong leadership and governance across the area partnership, with a deeply embedded culture of collaboration among professionals in education, health, and social care. This enables sustained improvement and transformation across the SEND service, leading to high-quality provision for children with SEND. Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) are routinely completed without delay and reviewed for quality and effectiveness. This results in plans that reflect the needs of the children and young people's strengths, needs and

required provision. Therefore, children and young people typically achieve the outcomes specified in their plans.

14. Therapy services operate open referral systems, allowing parents to directly access support when they have concerns about their children. Children and young people who meet the referral threshold are offered specialist services tailored to their specific needs. Many children and young people benefit from well-regarded short break services. Highly effective early help practitioners demonstrate curiosity and creativity in understanding and responding to individual needs. Assessment processes are flexible and needs-led, with multi-disciplinary clinics prioritising children with functional needs – especially those already in EHCP assessment or recently seen by relevant specialists – for neurodevelopmental evaluation.

Areas for Development

15. The report cited that “partnership should improve communication with parents”. This involves:

- a. making sure families understand and can navigate the local offer so they can access the full range of support services and resources available in their communities
- b. parents being well informed about decision-making processes and the rationale for decisions made
- c. in relation to health services, interpreters are routinely available, enabling children and families to have open and transparent conversations with professionals.

Next Steps

16. The local area partnership will publish an action plan based on the recommendations set out in the inspection report.

17. We will continue to deliver on our overarching SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy under the oversight of the SEND Programme Board, ensuring alignment and accountability at every stage. We will ensure that every action within it is systematically reviewed and updated. This review will incorporate the key areas for improvement identified during the inspection, embedding them into our plans to strengthen outcomes and drive continuous improvement across all priority areas.

18. The SEND self-evaluation framework will be updated to reflect our strengths and areas for improvement following the inspection, to ensure that we have a clear vision and show impact of our service delivery. Our SEF is closely aligned with our strategy, which sets out our shared vision and priorities over the next four years.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

19. **Strategic implications** – Corporate outcome: **Providing Excellent Services** – Supporting people to live healthy, independent lives, and achieve their ambitions

is dependent on excellent services. Vital to that continued pursuit is enabling access to effective adult and children's social care, outstanding education, lifelong learning, and quality housing, and combatting homelessness. **Diverse Engaged Communities:** Across our residents, workers, businesses, and visitors, everyone should feel that they belong. Connecting people of all ages and backgrounds will help build diverse, engaged communities that are involved in co-creating great services and outcomes.

20. **Financial implications** – the SEND functions are resourced through the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block.
21. **Resource implications** – the SEND functions are resourced through the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block.
22. **Legal implications** – the duties on local areas regarding provision for children and young people with SEND are covered in the Children and Families Act 2014. This legislation sits in the context of the Equality Act 2010. The Ofsted/CQC Inspection Framework 2025 sets out the legal basis and the principles of inspection.
23. **Risk implications** – if children's SEND issues are not identified early, assessed, and supported, this will likely have a negative impact on young people's educational attainment, progress and wider lifetime chances, and the wellbeing of their parents and carers.
24. **Equalities implications** – Children in UK schools are protected by the Equality Act 2010, which ensures that they are not discriminated against based on characteristics such as disability, race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. Schools must: treat all pupils fairly and equally; make reasonable adjustments for disabled children; provide inclusive education for those with special needs; ensure equal access to learning and activities; and promote diversity and positive relationships between different groups. They also have a legal duty to remove barriers, advance equality, and foster inclusion in all aspects of school life.
25. **Climate implications** – n/a
26. **Security implications** – n/a

Conclusion

27. We are proud that our efforts in delivering SEND services to families have been acknowledged. This recognition reflects the dedication of our teams and the positive impact of our work. However, we know there is more to do. We remain committed to continuous improvement, striving to enhance the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of our services so that every child and young person with SEND – and their families – receives the support they need to thrive. We also appreciate the support of parents, children and young people, partners, and NHS colleagues in enabling us to demonstrate our effectiveness during the three weeks of the inspection.
28. The summary of findings and the development areas will be implemented and monitored by the SEND Programme Board. SEND report updates are a standing

item on the Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee. The Action Plan will be reported on to the Sub-Committee at regular intervals over the next year.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Area SEND inspection of City of London Local Area Partnership

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