



City of London Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy 2013-17

1. Background

This describes the City of London's (the City's) strategy for children and young people aged 0-25 years with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). It replaces the previous SEND policy and strategy produced in 2002.

The strategy contributes to the City's commitments outlined in The Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2015¹. It will also ensure that through this strategy the City's policy and practice will reflect the many changes and recommendations made at national level. These include the Equality Act (2010) and the government Green Paper, Support and Aspiration: a new approach to special educational needs and disability (2011). Many of the changes resulting from the Green Paper will need to be implemented as a result of the Children and Families Bill, due to become an Act of Parliament in Spring 2014.

Whilst being clear in this strategy about what the City wants to achieve with partners over the next four years, it will be flexible in its approach so that it can respond to on-going legislative and funding changes. This policy and strategy is a sub set of the City's overall Education Strategy and feeds into strategic objectives to promote and support excellent education and access to higher education.

2. Who are the children and young people that this strategy is aimed at?

In this strategy the City recognises that SEND encompasses children and young people with a broad range of needs. For some the focus of support will be wholly educational. For others their families will need support from a number of statutory services and this may continue throughout their childhood and into adulthood. A child or young person may have special educational needs or a disability or both. In 2012 SEN and Disability are respectively defined by the SEN Code of Practice² and the Equality Act³.

3. The City's Vision for SEND

The City has a clear vision for all children and young people, especially for those with SEND. This includes children and young people who are the most vulnerable particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities. The vision is to ensure that:

¹ Children and Young People's Plan 2013-2015, Unblocking aspirations and fulfilling potential.

² Special Educational Needs Code of Practice 2001

³ Equality Act (2010)

“Every child and young person will have and enjoy 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.”

To achieve this, the City will support and encourage professionals and local communities to work effectively together. It will want to ensure that parents and carers have greater confidence by giving them better access to information and greater opportunity to participate in decision making. The City will strive to make SEND processes more flexible and transparent and will encourage parents and carers to be more involved.

The City also wants to provide “seamless” support continuing through to adulthood aimed at accessing provision and service delivery from 0-25 years of age. This will replace the staged approach of early years-school-further education which creates problems and anxieties about transition. It will also be aligned with the proposed government reforms.

The City is ambitious for children and young people with SEND and it will strive towards this vision by achieving the following over the next four years:

- an inclusive community welcoming to all
- tailored solutions to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities
- sustainable resourcing for pupils with SEND
- implementation of education, health and care plans for those with the most complex needs
- a published local offer, clearly setting out all the provision and support available for children and young people with SEND in the City
- a defined personal budget option for all parents who have an Education, Health and Care Plan
- increasingly skilled professionals, able to meet the needs of children and young people with a wide range of needs
- a transparent funding mechanism and criteria for decision making which meets new national requirements and is widely communicated

4. Achievements so far

This strategy will build on developments the City has achieved so far:

- Investment in services which are open to all children and families to prevent children and young people’s needs from escalating into difficulties. - Prevention and Early Intervention was the first strategic priority of the City’s Children and Young People’s Plan 2009-2012. Investment in prevention has resulted in lower levels of referrals to specialist services. This investment continues to be a priority for the City.

- Improved ability to identify children and families with high risk factors and low protective factors. - The City has been able to intervene to support children at a much earlier stage, which will prevent them from requiring more specialist services at a later stage in their life.
- Sustained improvement in the levels of achievement of children and young people with SEND in the City. - At primary age they consistently achieve at levels above the national average in school exams.
- Funding mechanisms for the future in implementing the government's National Funding Formula. – The City has adapted its funding allocations to meet the High Needs funding process, strengthening the commissioning-provider relationship
- Successful working practices between education and health practitioners.
- Robust and comprehensive induction, support and training for early years practitioners.
- Individualised packages of support for 19-25 year olds with SEND. - This has built valuable experience which will assist in improving seamless support for transition to adulthood.

5. The challenges ahead

This provides a good basis for addressing the considerable challenges that lie ahead for the City resulting from both local and national developments.

Local

- A significant change management programme will be needed to respond to the requirements of the Children and Families Bill. This will need to be achieved within existing resources.
- Relationships with an increasing number of schools in neighbouring authorities and in the independent sector are variable and will need to be actively developed. This will be necessary to achieve a more mature commissioner-provider understanding around quality of provision.

National

- The major government review on SEND (SEND Green Paper) will introduce legislative changes through the Children and Families Bill in spring 2014 with the intention of introducing the changes in September 2014. These changes will:

- replace SEN statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (for 16-25 year-olds) with a single, simpler 0-25 assessment process and education, health and care plans.
- provide statutory protections comparable to those currently associated with a statement of SEN to up to 25 in further education – instead of it being cut off at 16 or 19 years of age.
- require local authorities to collaborate with health and voluntary services to publish a Local Offer showing the support available to children and young people with SEND and their families.
- give parents or young people with education, health and care plans the option of receiving a personal budget for their support.
- introduce compulsory mediation for disputes and trialling giving children the right to appeal if they are unhappy with their support.
- require local authorities and health service agencies to link up services for children and young people with SEND so that they are jointly planned and commissioned.
- extend the legal right for children to seek a place at state Academies and Free Schools as well as maintained mainstream and special schools.

The legislation will draw on evidence from twenty Pathfinder projects set up in September 2011.

- A new national funding formula was implemented in April 2013 which will continue to have significant implications for SEND funding in schools which will need to be monitored.
- The Lamb Enquiry proposed ways for strengthening parental confidence in the SEN system which need further development.
- There are a number of other major reviews and guidance on good practice (Ofsted, Rose, Berrow) for identifying and meeting the SEND of children generally and specifically those with communication and literacy difficulties.
- Local authorities will continue to have the legal responsibilities for SEND in the context of a broader and more diverse school and college system.

6. Consultation and involvement

The implications of these local and national changes and challenges need to be fully considered and planned for in a new four year strategy that wins the support of all partners and stakeholders. The strategy will only succeed with this level of support.

An essential start to achieving this is to involve the City's partners and stakeholders including children and young people and their parents and carers in the process of developing the strategy. The City embarked on this process in April 2013 by asking these groups for their views about the essential principles and priorities that should

underpin a new strategy. This **consultation** process, based on a consultation paper,⁴ lasted for five weeks ending in early May 2013.

89 per cent of the responses to this consultation showed support for the suggested Vision and Principles and 83 per cent showed support for the key priorities that were identified. There was strong support for continuing to develop inclusive practices in mainstream schools, developing more individualised solutions and packages of support, continuing to improve the closeness, immediacy and quality of communication, encouraging the closer involvement of parents and strengthening the numbers and skills of SEND staff.

A more detailed analysis of the consultation summarising the comments and ideas that were received is available at (*location on website to be decided*).

Although there was not a significant response (18 returns) to this consultation the quality of responses in comments received was good. However the level of engagement by partners needs to be better to ensure that there is the required understanding and commitment necessary to make progress over the next four years. The draft strategy will therefore be put to all partners and stakeholders requesting comments and ideas on actions to implement the priority areas for development.

7. Principles and priorities

Principles

There was overwhelming support from the initial consultation for the underpinning principles that were suggested in the consultation paper. These are:

- 1. Receiving the right support at the right time. - Preventative approaches; early identification of educational needs and the rapid deployment of support to underpin the provision of SEN services.**
- 2. Involving children, young people and their parents and carers at the centre of all decisions about them. - Ensuring that they are included and supported to participate fully in planning as partners in the process.**
- 3. Improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. – Continuing to support and challenge schools to drive improvements in the achievement of children and young people with SEND.**

⁴ Consultation on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy – City of London, Education and Early Years' Service, April 2013.

Priorities

There was also overwhelming support from the initial consultation for the priorities suggested in the consultation paper.

	Priority	Examples of recognised best practice
1.	To ensure the early identification and intervention of children with SEND.	<p>Access to specialist support is clear and transparent for parents and carers and other professionals</p> <p>Children, young people and parents and carers have easy access to the information that they need to make informed decisions and where possible choices</p>
2.	To ensure families have confidence in the professionals supporting their child's learning and care.	<p>All those involved with children and young people with SEND are aware of the full range of local activities and resources available to them and how they are accessed</p> <p>Services work together to ensure children and young people are safeguarded and protected from harm</p> <p>The use of jargon in any communication is avoided wherever possible and abbreviations are explained.</p>
3.	To improve learning and life outcomes for children and young people with SEND	<p>There is awareness and knowledge of the reasonable adjustments that need to be made to ensure inclusion</p> <p>The child or young person is seen as an individual with personal interests and strengths as well as particular difficulties</p> <p>Success and achievements are celebrated</p>
4.	To support children and families at each transition point	<p>Meetings are welcoming and there is an ethos of mutual respect</p> <p>Provision and support is personalised to the child or young person's individual needs</p>
5.	To develop new ways of multi-agency working which reflect the Government's plans for reforming the SEND system	<p>Where there is a team around the child, those who are involved, maintain excellent communication with the lead professional who will promote joint working through the action plan</p> <p>Education, social care and health governance is co-ordinated to ensure effective commissioning of services to meet needs in the education health and care plan</p>

	Priority	Examples of recognised best practice
6.	To develop the best systems possible for implementing all national reforms	Co-ordinated planning arrangements in place to develop new ways of working based on best practice emerging from Pathfinder areas The child or young person and parents and carers are actively involved in any plans made about them

8. What the City, with its partners, will do to meet these priorities

Early identification and intervention

The City will:

- Work with schools and settings with effective diagnostic tools to support the earlier identification of very young children with SEND
- Use the Early Support Framework as a model of excellent practice within Children's Centres to enable the early identification of SEND and provide local support for families
- Use the Common Assessment Framework to support a more holistic assessment to address needs of children in the early years
- Review assessment strategies in the early years in line with identified best practice
- Strengthen guidelines for working with parents of very young children
- Ensure the best training on SEND for early years practitioners
- Promote more effective communication and coordination between services

Family confidence

The City will:

- Increase the opportunities for parents to participate in decisions in relation to changes to policy, strategy or service delivery
- Ensure parents contribute to the decisions made about their child and are confident that the right support, at the right time will be available
- Ensure parents and schools know about the range of provision in the City to support children with SEND
- Improve communication with parents and carers
- Work with schools and settings to ensure that parents receive quality information on the progress and attainment of their child
- Ensure that reports and information from professionals are written in plain English and where necessary available in a range of languages and formats
- Develop more outreach processes for parents of children with SEND
- Publicise case studies about different types of SEND to reassure parents and develop support networks where possible

- Develop an increased range of parent communication channels e.g. coffee mornings, face to face meetings
- Monitor the implementation of its strategy and provide feedback based on data and other sources of evidence

Learning and life outcomes

The City will:

- Commission specialist provision to support pupils with the most complex needs; including behaviour
- Monitor and evaluate the impact of SEND services
- Work with schools that have City children and young people with SEND to improve outcomes and skills, as required
- Improve City provision for children and young people with SEND
- Work jointly with families and schools to address needs of children with complex learning and behavioural needs
- Develop good practice in personalised planning
- Identify training and support needs on specific disabilities such as Autism and Dyslexia
- Actively promote the inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream settings where appropriate

Transition

The City will:

- Work with settings and schools to ensure that effective and supportive 'person-centred' transition plans are in place
- Ensure the 14+ Annual Review and Transition Plan support the child from school into adulthood involving all relevant partners and professionals
- Extend 14+ transition planning to support vulnerable children and those with SEND who do not have statements
- Ensure a joined up approach from school to post school settings
- Develop an increased range of options for post school education and training for young people with SEND

Multi-agency working

The City will:

- Improve the Statutory Assessment process; develop joint working between education, social care and health
- Work with partners to reduce the time taken to complete the Statutory Assessment Process by 6 weeks

- Ensure that support received by the child and their family is brought together in a single holistic plan which is clear and easy to understand
- Work with partners in health and social care to make joint planning less complicated and more efficient for Looked After Children and those with complex needs / disabilities
- Trial a new single plan with particular groups of children and young people with SEND

Implementing national reforms

The City will:

- Engage with national and regional support networks in implementing reforms and developing good practice
- Identify partners to work with on developments where appropriate
- Ensure that the SEND workforce is supported to deliver changes through good communication, awareness raising, training and support
- Establish strong joint commissioning processes to ensure that the needs of Education Health and Care Plans are met to a high standard

9. Resourcing context

The strategy will need to focus sharply on developing approaches to ensure children and young people with SEND in the City have the best opportunities for achieving their potential within affordable and sustainable resourcing constraints. In the current economic climate the financial pressure on public sector services is acute. The City will be required to review budgets for many services over the next four years. It is imperative that there is a real emphasis on achieving value for money and realising the best quality for every unit of resourcing that is committed.

It is recognise that within these financial constraints there is a genuine opportunity to reduce bureaucracy and increase effectiveness. This strategy must ensure that the right children and young people are targeted at the right time in order to achieve this. It must also maximise the skills of those working with children and young people and streamline efforts across services through joint working practices.

10. Dependency on other policies and strategies

- SEND commissioning strategy – with consistent joint commissioning framework across SEN, social care and health
- Transport policy
- Children with disabilities strategy/14-25 transition
- Language and communication strategy.

11. Communicating the Strategy

To be fully effective it is important that this strategy is well understood, easily available and is clearly informed by other policies plans and strategies such as the City's Education Policy and Strategy, Disability Equality Scheme and the Children and Young People's Plan.

It will be disseminated through a rigorous information and engagement plan to ensure that there is maximum awareness and commitment amongst all partners and stakeholders.