



Children's Autism: Statutory Background and Local Arrangements

1) Background Information

In December 2018, the Government announced plans to introduce an updated national autism strategy which would cover people of all ages in England.

Ministers acknowledged that there were too many children on the autism spectrum who were held back from achieving their potential and that a national approach is needed to improve the support that is offered to children and their families.

2) Children's Services

i) Special Educational Need and Disabilities (SEND) & Inclusion Service

The SEND reforms of 2014 implemented a new approach which sought to join up help across education, health and care from 0-25, with children and young people with SEN and their parents/carers fully involved in decisions about their support and what they wanted to achieve, and a strong focus on securing positive outcomes.

Within the London Borough of Hillingdon, the SEND & Inclusion Service consists of three strands

SEND

The SEND Service coordinates several statutory processes aimed at helping children and young people (CYP) meet their potential at a holistic level. Hence, working with educational settings SEND Service aims to ensure inclusive practice.

The ASD provision put in place stems from properly identified educational, health and social care needs and aims to prepare for adulthood, with particular emphasis on employment, independent living and being a member of community.

In Hillingdon we have a number of educational settings that meet the needs of CYP with ASD. There is a primary special school – Hedgewood, 4 primary Special Resource Provisions (SRP) which are: Hayes Park Primary SRP, Cherry Lane Primary SRP, St.Martin's Primary SRP and Lake Farm Park SRP.

Meadow High and Moorcroft are secondary special schools that meet the needs of many children with ASD who also have Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) or Profound Learning Difficulties (PLD). The secondary SRP with specialism of ASD is Oakwood. Pentland Field School is both primary and secondary provision that has a large number of children with ASD.

Hillingdon Manor Independent School also meets the needs of many CYP with ASD and Field Heath House has CYP with a range of needs including some with ASD.

We are currently exploring additional resource provision within secondary settings to meet the needs of our CYP with ASD.

The SEND Panel members share the expertise to signpost and advise all parties involved in the Education Health Care Needs Assessment (EHCNA) process to improve inclusion of children with ASD. This involves holistic Outcomes and review of consultation process with a suitable educational setting to ensure that more children with ASD are educated in local settings, mainstream schools if appropriate and that they are not a subject to exclusion related to their ASD diagnosis and challenging behaviour.

The co- production linked to CYP with ASD starts with the EHCNA process and continues through Annual Review (AR) process. The SEND Service is working with other agencies especially social care and health to ensure the assessments are holistic and that there is transition to Adulthood where appropriate. The emphasis is on a planning process to support CYP with ASD through discussions with educational settings about understanding specialist support and provision in the EHCP.

Overview of the primary needs of children and young people with EHCPs

Primary Need	2016	2017	2018	2019
ASD	639	742	880	867
Total	1818	2103	2285	2129

**Source BSL Database February 2019*

The table above illustrates an upward trend in ASD need and associated demand for provision. It should also be noted that there is a correlation between this area of need and the associated social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) need category.

Available information suggests that the following require specific attention in terms of provision planning and development as well as promoting inclusion with existing provision.

SEND Advisory Service

The SEND Advisory Service (SAS) is a multidisciplinary service that is intended to do just that, provide a wealth of expertise to support children and young people with SEND who reside within the London Borough of Hillingdon to make progress and to support settings to be more inclusive when meeting the needs of this particular cohort of children and young people.

The SEND Advisory Service consists of Early Years, Autism, Language and Principal SEND Advisors, Key workers, Hearing, Visual Impairment and Multisensory Specialists.

A vital role for our specialist Autism Advisors is to provide support, guidance and appropriate challenge to schools and educational settings in relation to provision required for meeting the needs of children and young people diagnosed with ASD at the earliest opportunity. This is delivered through an identified ASD Pathway that consists of whole setting training, parent training and individual support on a 1:1.

Educational settings are encouraged to refer into our service as soon as needs are identified to ensure that we are able to intervene early and work towards the best possible outcomes which is evidenced through the use of a non-statutory My Support Plan. If identified needs

are complex but not severe and or long term, there is additional funding available called Early Support Funding.

Educational Psychology Service

There are two primary referral pathways into the Educational Psychology (EP) Service. These are:

1) Statutory:

Reports are typically produced for contribution toward an individual child's Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment, following the decision to assess arising from the SEND Panel. EPs may sometimes be asked to contribute further statutory advice via the SEND Panel where appropriate (for example, contribution toward the conversion of a Statement to an EHC Plan, or Statutory Re-assessment of needs).

In total, 208 EHC needs assessments have been completed by the EPS in the six month period between July 2019 (when the current system for recording contributions was introduced) and February 2020. Of these, it is estimated that 35-40% (i.e 72-83) involved children/ young people (CYP) who had been diagnosed with Autism, or who had associated social communication needs. It is likely that the current demand for EHC needs assessment will continue. Therefore, based on the existing data, across a 12 month period it is estimated that the EPS will complete between 144 - 166 EHC needs assessments for this population of CYP.

2) Traded:

Schools are able to purchase EP time directly from the Hillingdon service, usually in the form of sessions, each equating to a half day in school. Currently, 49 schools in Hillingdon are directly purchasing time from the EPS (approximately 50%). EP time is negotiated between the school (usually SENCO) and the individual EP, and may be used for activities across three levels:

a) Individual casework: Where EP specific activity to support CYP with Autism has included Therapeutic story writing, Motivational Interviewing, Therapeutic play, Cognitive Behavioural based Therapy approaches, and Assessment.

b) Parent/carer support: Where EP specific support has included specific parenting interventions (e.g. contributions to parent training), informal consultation, drop-ins, and coffee mornings,

c) Systemic: Where EP support in schools has included advice/ guidance on differentiation and supporting children with Autism to engage in the curriculum, training, learning walks, Group supervision for teaching and pastoral staff, and ELSA (which will commence in May 2020, in response to requests from school staff).

Improving outcomes for Children and Young People with ASD

The London Borough of Hillingdon's SEND & Inclusion service have been active partners in local Supported Internships for more than four years. These internships have been provided to young people aged 17 -24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan who have a diagnosis of ASD or learning disability. The Supported Internship model is a pathway supported within the context of the Preparing for Adulthood agenda which promotes; employment, independent living, good health and community inclusion for young people with SEND.

Based on the information held for five cohorts of interns, approximately 50% of participants have had a diagnosis of ASD.

These programmes have provided daily structure and routine within a supportive host business environment, specifically aiming to provide young adults with the skills they need to achieve employment. Task analysis, job coaching and performance of repetitive, familiar tasks helps to improve confidence and work skills. Employability Skills lessons explain the appropriate behaviours required in the workplace and encourage interns to transfer their learning into their everyday practice. Being fully immersed in a workforce on a full time basis assists interns' understanding of what is required in the world of work and improves their self confidence.

These supported internships have facilitated a smooth and gradual transition from education into work, which would otherwise not be possible for many young adults with ASD. Currently workforce statistics specifically for adults with ASD are not captured in England, although the government has pledged to change this. An indicative study by the National Autistic Society has indicated that only 16% of adults with ASD are in full time employment. This figure can be compared to approximately 80% in full time employment who have graduated from the supported internships that the SEND & Inclusion service in Hillingdon have been partners to. This employment success has also been maintained year on year by these young people following the programme due to ongoing support funded by Access to Work.

As part of its further commitment to providing employment opportunities for young people with ASD, Hillingdon council has become the host business to a Project Search transition to work programme this year, partnering with local organisation Hillingdon Autistic Care and Support who will provide the job coaching element of the programme.

Children's Social Care ii) Statutory Services

The first point of contact for families in the Borough is the Early Help Hub within the Multi Agency Support Hub (MASH).

Early Help Hub consists of 5 social workers and senior practitioners supported by a manager who all have a thorough knowledge of support services throughout the borough for children with autism and their families. Alongside providing relevant information and advice to ensure the most appropriate services are accessed in a timely manner the Team around the Family process will be promoted to ensure children with additional needs have the required level of support from their family and professional support network. Additional support from specialist trained key workers is also available from the outreach team, based in the wider MASH, who support children with additional needs as a result of their learning disabilities.

Where a child has a disability which meets the eligibility criteria for specialist or statutory intervention, the cases are referred to the Children with Disabilities Team (CWD) (0-19 years).

Where mainstream social workers hold cases of children who do not meet the CWD eligibility criteria, appropriate advice, support and in some cases joint working can be made available from the Children with Disabilities Team.

The Children with Disabilities Team consists of 8 qualified social workers and two family support workers who are supported by an experienced team manager. The Team provides a borough wide service for children with disabilities, including those diagnosed with autism. All members within the team have received training aimed at understanding autism and tailoring services to working with young people and families who fall under this category.

Following an assessment and identification of need, families are supported via a bespoke Child in Need Plan that is reviewed 6 monthly with all significant people and professional present to inform the plan.

A package of support is considered within this Plan. This can take the form of :-

1. Statutory Social Worker support, advice, advocacy and guidance
2. Direct Payments/ Agency Packages
3. Short Breaks
4. Holiday and Weekend Programmes
5. Referrals to targeted services

We utilise a number of community resources to support families, offer short breaks or activities. Amongst them are;

1. Fiesta - there is however limited provision for children with disabilities
2. HACS
3. Harrow Mencap
4. CASS
5. You can ask Angels
6. Leisure Centres - sessions specifically aimed at children and young people with Autism(gymnastics, disability judo, sporting activities)
7. Hillingdon Mencap - Open Swim Sessions
8. Turtle Swimming Club

Transition to Adulthood

Transition can be challenging for everyone but even more so for people on the autism spectrum, their families, parents and carers.

Children's services will continue to provide services and progress a transition into Adult Services. This will be informed by a transition assessment (Care Act Assessment).

Any transition therefore needs careful planning. If the young person meets the eligibility criteria for transfer to Adult Services, from 16-18 the social worker will work in partnership with Adult Services to ensure that the young person has a smooth, well managed transition into adult services. The children's social worker will remain the young person's allocated social worker until they turn 18, continuing to monitor, update and review their children's support package and support plan. From 18 up to 25 case responsibility will be taken over by the Adults Team.

Where a young person's needs are not eligible for adult services, families are provided with information and advice about how those needs may be met and the provision and support that young people can access in their local area. Guidance for 'Think autism' suggests that even where young people with autism are not entitled to adult social care services, under the Care Act 2014 they should be signposted to other sources of guidance and support in the community

In the case of care leavers with disabilities, the Staying Put Guidance states that we should consider to extend foster placements beyond the age of 18. This is activity supported to ensure transition from care to independence and adulthood that is similar for care leavers to that which most young people experience, and is based on need and not on age alone.

Transition Panel

This panel exists to support operational children's and adult's services in identifying appropriate pathways for young people with complex needs who do not fit obviously into usual team criteria. The panel consists of representatives from Children's Social Care, Adult's Social Care, Health, CAMHS and Continuing Health Care . The panel meets monthly and will take an overview of cases and the progress being made to achieve transition from children's services into adult services. The panel will also provide input in relation to young people who do not have eligible needs under the Care Act but for whom the local authority has a Corporate Parenting responsibility.