

Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) provision within Hillingdon

Committee name	Families, Health and Wellbeing Select Committee
Officer reporting	Vikram Hansrani, Director of Service – Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
Papers with report	None
Ward	All

HEADLINES

The purpose of the report is to provide the Committee with an update on Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) provision within Hillingdon and to provide an update on the support available for children and young people with Special Educational Need (SEN) Support. This report comes following the completed transformation of the SEND and Inclusion Service and response of the service in light of COVID-19.

Despite the on-going financial pressures over the past few years, compounded by the challenges of COVID-19, the transformational work has continued to develop at pace, with more education settings now accessing pre-statutory pathways. The service is now starting to realise some of the benefits from the foundations being put in place to support early intervention with an increase in children and young people accessing pre-statutory support.

Whilst an increase in early intervention is being evidenced, there are still systemic funding pressures in SEND which are being challenged locally and nationally.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Committee note the contents of the report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1 Introduction

Context

Since the SEND reforms of 2014, there has been a national growth of 82% from Statements of Special Educational Needs to Education, Health and Care Plans (237,111 to 430,697). This has been in part due to reforms and the expansion of age range from compulsory school age to 0-25 and the rise in number of children with a growing complexity of SEND.

In Hillingdon, the rate of growth between 2014 – 2021 is 90% (1,480 to 2,819) compared to

London which has seen a rate of growth of 79% over the same period (40,340 to 72,193). The rate of growth seen in Hillingdon led to the full service transformation that took place in 2019. This transformational change was underpinned by implementing and embedding a new operating model across the service area, resulting in a tiered pathway of support for children and young people with SEND. The pathway provides 3 tiers of support:

- (1) The non-statutory 'My Support Plan';
- (2) Extra Support Funding – supported via the SAS
- (3) Education, Health and Care Plans.

As part of the transformation, core functions included the development of the:

- SEND Advisory Service (**SAS**) - created by integrating elements of the previous Inclusion Team, Early Support Team and Sensory Intervention Team. This newly established service works closely with the Educational Psychology Service.
- Educational Psychology Service (**EPS**) - maintaining the statutory delivery in relation to Education, Health and Care (EHC) needs assessments whilst refreshing and extending the traded offer to schools. This service is working to provide systemic support to schools and work closely with the SEND Advisory Service.
- SEND Casework Team - the existing **SEND** Team was restructured to create additional capability and capacity to meet the requirements of the proposed new ways of working. Roles were enhanced to provide greater advice and guidance to schools with the expectation that officers would provide a more in-reaching approach.

Following the successful mobilisation of the workforce in 2019, services, pathways and guidance was launched in February 2020 to over 90 external stakeholders, including school leads and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs).

Responding to COVID-19

There is growing evidence of the significant impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on children and young people with SEND and their families. The National Network of Parent Carer Forums (NNPCF) and the Information, Advice and Support Services (IASS) for the Council of Disabled Children have reported parental concerns to include SEND provision not being in place for their child, delays in assessments for Education, Health and Care Plans and annual reviews, and a lack of support for transitions in readiness for September 2021.

The London Borough of Hillingdon responded with pace to mobilise services to support children, young people and families. This included:

- assigning every school in Hillingdon with a named key worker;
- supporting schools with risk assessments for pupils with EHCPs;
- providing telephone and video support and signposting to appropriate agencies for children, young people and families;
- providing extended educational psychological support to settings and families;
- continuing to discharge responsibilities (including the processing and assessments of new requests for Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans);

- a flexible and responsive SEND Transport service, providing transport to pupils initially in similar groups to the 'bubbles' created by settings.

Throughout the new academic year and beyond, the service will endeavour to build on what has worked well during the pandemic and identify any gaps or greater areas of need that have resulted from the pandemic.

2 – SEND Service

There has been a 10% net growth in EHCPs over the past academic year (September 2020-August 2021). This growth includes the EHCPs that have been/ are due to be ceased throughout the year. Although this growth is in-line with national figures, pre-statutory pathways have also been highly effective in meeting needs prior to statutory assessment. Without the development of these pathways, forecasted growth would have exceeded this figure.

If the Local Authority agrees to carry out a statutory assessment of special educational needs and following the assessment agrees to issue a Draft EHCP the Final EHCP should be issued within 20 weeks from the request for the assessment. The 20 week is a statutory deadline and Hillingdon performance to comply with this time frame has increased significantly in recent months.

In 2020 Hillingdon's 20-week compliance performance was 34%, 11% higher than the previous year, however 22% lower than the national figure in 2020.

Since then, in part due to continued implantation of service transformation, there has been a significant increase in compliance in adhering to the 20 week timescale. The cumulative year to date position for 2020/21 stands at 79% (up until July 2021). This has been supported by an established workforce and internal training offered to all officers, as well as strong oversight and supervision from team managers.

There are still challenges with placing children and young people at an appropriate setting throughout the academic year, which can impact statutory deadlines and can create delays with finalising an EHCP with named setting.

For those children and young people with EHCPs who are transferring into a new phase of education in September, their new setting must be named in their EHCP by the 15th February of the same year.

For those young people who are 16 and older, EHCPs should be amended naming their new setting by the 31st March of the same year.

To ensure that EHCPs were amended in time, the SEND serviced established a new protocol in 2020.

This included the following stages:

- *Stage 1: Annual Reviews were collated via the new annual review inbox in the Spring and Summer term.*
- *Stage 2: SEND officers amended EHCPs following Annual Reviews - from September 2020*
- *Stage 3 : Parental preferences were captured by SEND officers - September 2020*
- *Stage 4: consultations were sent out to parental preferences/ local authority preferences - October -November 2020*
- *Stage5: Special Schools and Specialist Resource Provision (SRPs) Panel took place in order to discuss places for all pupils who required specialist provision in September 2021- November 2020*
- *Stage 6: phase transfer leads continued conversations with schools and supported with open days and assessments - November 2020 – February 2021*
- *Stage 7: amendment EHCP notices were sent out - January-February 2021*

The success of this meant that 96% of this cohort had a confirmed setting in place for September 2021 by the 15th February 2021. SEND officers worked with parents and schools to identify suitable settings for the 4% of the cohort without a confirmed place in February 2021, which led to 100% of the phase transfer cohort having a confirmed place for September 2021 prior to the end of the academic year.

Out of all pupils in Year 11 who were transferring to the next stage of their education 93% had amended EHCP issued by 31st March 2021. All placements for September for the remaining students have now been confirmed. For the pupils in Year 14, 90% were processed with 58% confirmed settings in March 2021 in readiness for September 2021.

Pupils awaiting a school placement

As of August 2021, there are 17 pupils with a new EHCP that are without a placement for September 2021, all of which are in Year 9 and below. For these 17 pupils, all requests for statutory assessment were provided to The London Borough of Hillingdon after the February 15th deadline for Phase Transfer. The majority of this cohort are nursery children requiring a special school reception placement in September.

It has been recognised nationally that COVID-19 contributed to the delay in applications for EHC needs assessments being submitted for children between 0-5. Officers are working with the SEND Advisory Service (SAS) to engage more Private, Voluntary, and Independent (PVI) settings with submitting applications earlier in the academic year. This will support forward planning for school places.

Officers have worked innovatively with a maintained primary special school (Hedgewood School) to provide additional specialist capacity. Specialist support will be provided to a small number of pupils through the use of a children's centre in the first term before pupils transition into Hedgewood School.

The service is also developing a tracking panel for 2-year-old children which will monitor all Early

health notifications to decide on the most appropriate support pathways they will require for a more integrated and joined up approach. In addition, this will support SEND sufficiency forward planning.

Officers are working with families to put in place packages of support that will meet their child's needs for those children where a place has yet to be confirmed for September 2021.

Children with EHCPs electively home educated

0.6% of children and young people with EHCPs are educated at home as per parental request (Electively Home Educated). In addition, 0.3% of children and young people with EHCPs are Educated Otherwise Than At School (EOTAS) in their EHCP, meaning that an educational setting is not the most appropriate provision for these pupils due to their current needs, hence bespoke packages have been created to support their education.

As of August 2021, 1.2% of all children and young people with an EHCP receive tuition (either at home or at tuition centre or HACs). These students have a named type of special school in their EHCP and officers are actively looking for a suitable provision for them. Of this, 47% of these pupils will have a school place by September 2021.

Autism – support for families pre/post diagnosis

Within the SEND Advisory service (SAS), there are specialist practitioners who support children and young people with a diagnosis of autism, including ASD, language, Social Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) and Early Years advisors, all of which provide 1:1 support for children with associated ASD difficulties

As part of The SEND Advisory Service's offer, they provide support to families for children who are both awaiting an autism diagnosis and those with a recent diagnosis. SAS have developed links with the CDC and have provided a leaflet to be given to families, following the initial assessment. This includes information on the following programmes of support:

1 - The National Autistic Society EarlyBird programme which is a 10-week training course for parents whose children have received a diagnosis of ASD or are on the pathway to receiving a diagnosis of autism and is not yet in full time education.

Moving forward, the service endeavors to utilise these workshops to support sufficiency planning by sharing information to SEND officers, following parental consent.

2 - Barnardo's Cygnets programme is a 6-week training course for parents whose children are aged 4 to 18 years with a diagnosis of ASD or presenting with social communication difficulties.

As a result of COVID, the service saw a backlog of families waiting for support. Virtual Cygnets was prioritised, and 72 families accessed this programme between January 2021 and June 2021.

As well as support and guidance provided to schools and families through the SEND Advisory Service, the service is currently updating its offer to include, in collaboration with Hedgwood school, Autism Education Trust (AET) training for all interested schools and settings across the borough. This will be available in the Spring Term 2022. The purpose of this training is to foster a

solid understanding of autism, combined with practical strategies and resources for all practitioners working directly with autistic learners.

3 – SEND Advisory Service & Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

With a focus on pre-statutory support, The London Borough of Hillingdon introduced non-statutory funding in order to provide early intervention for children and young people with SEND. This was introduced in the form of Early Intervention Funding which was superseded by Early Support Funding (ESF) in March 2020. This was introduced with the hypothesis that early support would improve long-term outcomes for children and young people with SEND and would therefore reduce the rate of growth seen in EHCPs.

As part of the pre-statutory offer, successful applications for Early Support Funding are allocated a SAS Advisor who supports the school/setting to implement effective provision and evaluate the impact of ESF on pupil progress.

To-date there have been 248 successful applications for Early Support Funding since its inception in March 2020.

The ESF initiative was implemented with the intention to review the efficiency and effectiveness following a 1-year pilot. This review has been completed in conjunction with internal and external stakeholders and a working party formulated recommendations for enhancing efficiency of processes and suggestions on how to build upon the foundations of flagship practice.

Preliminary feedback relating to the impact of funding was very encouraging considering some learners may have only accessed the funding recently.

Respondents were asked to rate statements on a score of 1 to 6 (strongly disagree to strongly agree).

*1. Has the ESF funding positively impacted on the level of SEND support you are able to offer? **4.53***

*2. Has the ESF funding enabled the CYP to make increased academic progress (in 1 or more curriculum area)? **4.44***

*3. Has the ESF funding enabled the CYP to make increased progress in other areas e.g. emotion regulation / independence skills etc? **4.41***

As the average score (1-6) relating to clarity of guidance was fairly low (**3.76**), the guidance was critically evaluated and redesigned to provide clarity on application expectations, provision mapping and eligibility criteria.

The Educational Psychology Service developed a traded offer with schools in 2019. Since this time, 60% of schools have purchased the traded offer. This has helped to develop systemic support to schools, focusing on larger, sustainable changes as opposed to directly linked to statutory work focusing on individual Education, Health and Care need assessments.

As of August 2021, the service currently has 55 schools buying into the traded service, which gives a total of 466 days of EP time, with the average of 8.5 days per year, per school.

It is likely that this figure may alter at the beginning of the school year as school staff changes have had an impact on some schools taking up the service before the end of the summer term. Officers have built in contingency days within EP team allocations to account for this.

As the Educational Psychology Service continues to develop and expand, the service's aspirations are that it continues to grow to support a wider range of schools and service areas including; The Youth Justice Service (YJS); Virtual School (VS) ; Early Years settings and Further Education (Post 16) establishments.

In order to expand the traded offer to schools and specialist services, such as the YJS or VS, the service will need to work hard to retain and recruit more EPs when there is a national shortage. Additional responsibilities and projects will make the service area an attractive option in terms of specialist work and development opportunities.

EHCP Psychological advice

Statutory advice for Education, Health and Care needs assessments from Educational Psychologists increased from 32% in 2019 to 97% in 2020.

Returns remained at 100% for January to April 2021 with a slight dip to 91.3% in July 2021.

The decline in figures was due in-part to the increasing numbers of EHC needs assessments processed and short term staffing shortages.

The Children with Disabilities Service (CWD)

Children and young people who do not meet threshold for statutory intervention through CWD, should be able to access short break services available through universal and targeted support offer (for instance through HACs, Mencap/Community Connex). Additional services can be found via the Hillingdon Local Offer.

However, if children are unable to access these services, presently there are no alternative options in place. This is something the CWD will need to consider under the service's responsibility to offer a short break service to all children with additional needs living in Hillingdon area.

SEND Transport

Percentage growth increases in EHCP's typically result in similar percentage increases in the number of applications being made for travel assistance. The net growth in EHCP's of 10% in the academic school year 2020/21 resulted in a 9% increase in the number of pupils authorised for travel assistance in the same period.

Whilst Travel Assistance for SEND pupils is primarily evaluated on the basis of specific criteria where the needs of the pupil are measured in relation to being able to travel (assisted as necessary) to/from school, pupils who meet a "distance criteria" will always meet criteria and be eligible for Travel Assistance.

The placement of children to a suitable school that is less than the minimum "distance criteria" significantly reduces the likelihood of pupils being eligible for travel assistance by 35% and in

transport cost terms this supports SEND children who attend mainstream provisions that meet their needs as parents are able to take their children to/from school in the same way as children without SEND.

Pupils who meet eligibility criteria are now offered a variety of travel assistance options that enable children and families to be more independent and less reliant upon council provided “transport” that are more costly. These include Personal Travel Budgets (PTB), Independent Travel Training (ITT) and an increase in the number of centralized pick up locations.

Whilst an increase in the number of pupils authorized for travel assistance increases the overall cost of the service provision, by placing more children at a suitable school that enables more parents to be able to take their children to school, combined with a targeted approach to the travel assistance options available for eligible pupils, the average cost per pupil can be made more manageable.

Predicted increases in travel assistance demand as a consequence of EHCP Growth for the 2021/22 academic year was forecasted at 10% with an annual increase in the transport contract line of the 2021/22 financial budget of 8% being allocated.

Future budget requirements (2022/23) for transport contract provision will be evaluated in line with the initiatives outlined above to minimize the reliance on “transport” for eligible pupils outlined above.

Next steps:

Over the coming months, there will be a continued strategic drive to improve service delivery and build on the strong foundations that have been set with the development of refreshed strategies, including both an update to the SEND Strategy and SEND Sufficiency Strategy (formally Additional Needs Strategy).

A new governance structure was established in April 2021, consisting of a re-developed Strategic Partnership Board, Operational Group and 5 priority groups (Early Intervention & Inclusion, Co-production, Health & Social Care Engagement, Transition Planning and SEND Sufficiency & Placements) to ensure that all of the work that is being carried out within the local area in regards to SEND is captured and reported on.

With education settings returning to a level of normality, as part of the service’s drive to support inclusion and standardise good practice, there will be a strong emphasis on rolling out the National Association for Special Educational Needs (NASEN) accredited SEND Review in partnership with settings to address strengths and areas for development.

The long awaited national SEND Review is due to be published imminently by the Department for education (DfE) which will highlight a focus on early intervention, improving specialist placements and improving the mainstream offer for children and young people with SEND.

The new round of Local Area SEND inspections will be due to start in the Spring term of 2022. Although the new framework has yet to be released, it is likely that the new framework will:

- Have a greater focus on the impact of local area SEND arrangements on children and young people
- broaden the scope of the inspection to include all children in alternative provision (AP), not just those with SEND
- Have a stronger focus on Strategic leadership, practice and focusing on the improvements in the experiences, progress and outcomes for children with SEND

Implications on related Council policies

None at this stage.

How this report benefits Hillingdon residents

The continued rollout of this new service operating model will seek to ensure that residents receive support at the earliest intervention whilst also supporting a 'tell us once' approach. This will help to provide support to schools in a timely manner.

Financial Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

Legal Implications

None at this stage.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.