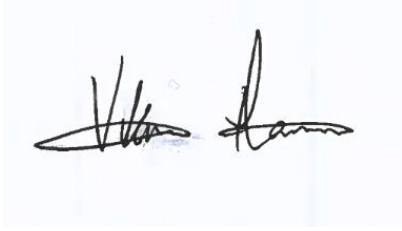


<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy implementation update	
<b>REPORT OF</b>  The Director of Education Commissioning & Inclusion	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> The Disability Oversight Panel	<b>DATE</b> 15.10.24
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report provides an overview of support for children and young people with SEND. It provides a summary of the self-evaluation that has taken place over the last year to highlight the strengths of the local system, our areas for improvement, and how we are taking these forward.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>The following documents have been used in the preparation of this report:</p> <p>The SEND Strategy 2022-2027 Local Area SEND Partnership Self Evaluation Form Camden SEND JSNA</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Di Osbourne Head of SEND &amp; Inclusion <a href="mailto:di.osbourne@camden.gov.uk">di.osbourne@camden.gov.uk</a> London Borough of Camden 5 Pancras Square N1C 4AG</p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>That the committee notes the report. That the Committee considers our assessment of strengths, areas for development and plan for the next 12 months and provides feedback on these.</p>	

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vikram Hansrani', is centered within a light blue rectangular box.

Signed:

Vikram Hansrani – Director Education Commissioning & Inclusion

Date:

07.10.24

## 1. Purpose of Report

Nationally and locally, we are seeing increases in the number and complexity of the population of children with SEND. Funding is set nationally and local authorities across the country are struggling to meet needs within the budget provided.

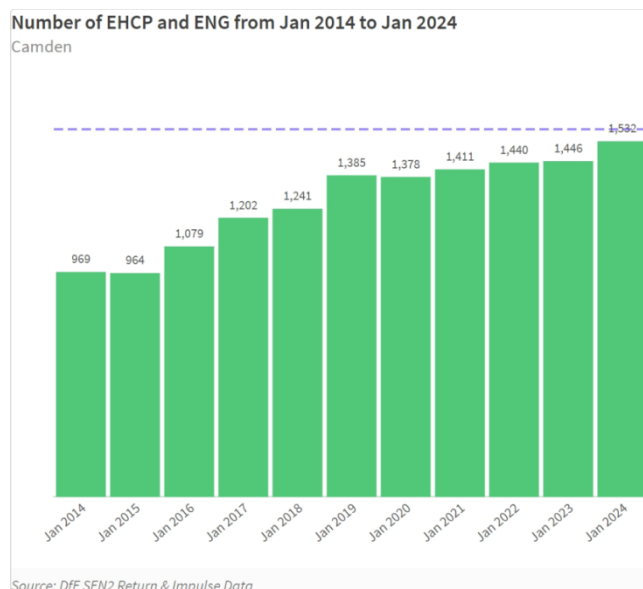
In Camden, we are proud of the services we provide for children and young people with SEND, while also recognising that there are areas for improvement. This report provides an overview of the local SEND system and a summary of the strengths of our local system as well as our plans for improvement.

We are starting the process of developing our Year 3 Implementation Plan for our SEND Strategy. Feedback from the panel will inform the development of this plan alongside a range of other activities.

## 2. Local Context

Camden Council currently maintain 1,562 Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) (as of July 2024) for children and young people who reside within the borough. From January - July 2024, 76.3% of new EHC Plans have been issued within 20 weeks which whilst is above the national average of 54%, is lower than previous years in Camden where 90-97% of new plans have been issued within 20 weeks.

This in part is due the council seeing the largest increase in EHC Plans since the introduction of legislative changes in 2014 over the past year.



Camden has had a strong tradition of proactive planning and collaborative work with schools and settings to promote inclusion. The Exceptional Needs Grant (ENG) pathway was developed with settings as an alternative to the EHCP pathway, allowing for funding to be received by settings more quickly, by ensuring 'the right provision at the right time' for our children in mainstream settings and reducing

reliance on statutory services. This has been positively featured in Department for Education (DfE) publications.

ENG requests are submitted, considered and moderated through five clusters across the borough, led by school professionals in collaboration with the Local Authority. As of July 2024, there were over 220 pupils accessing ENG.

The development of this local pathway to meet needs has featured positively in a number of DfE reports as an innovative approach to support schools to meet needs earlier.

Our improvement work is guided by our five year [Local Area SEND Strategy 2022-27](#). This is a local area strategy, which means that it involves all the key partners in Camden who have a contribution to make to supporting children and young people with SEND. This includes our children, young people and their families, council services, Camden Learning, education settings, health providers, the voluntary and community sector and employers. It was a journey of co-design between parents, carers, young people and professionals from across the partnership.

It identifies three priorities:

- 1) Make life easier for families of children or young people with SEND
- 2) Support children and young people with SEND to thrive in learning, health and wellbeing
- 3) Enable young adults with SEND to build a good life locally

Sitting beneath our Local Area SEND Strategy is the SEND Strategy Implementation Plan which sets out the specific work we are undertaking to deliver on our strategy priorities. The Implementation Plan is an active document refreshed annually in response to changes in the system and a range of data and information sources.

The Inclusion Board oversees delivery of the strategy and hears reports on progress at every bi-monthly meeting. Each priority has a sponsor and workstream lead to work with the partnership to develop and deliver an implementation plan. Annual progress reports and implementation plans will be published on our website to increase transparency of the strategy delivery.

Camden are also apart of the London Change Programme Partnership, a DfE funded programme to test the reforms proposed in the SEND and AP Improvement Plan (2022).

Over the last year, we have undertaken a number of different activities that have helped us to build an in depth understanding of the performance of the local system:

- Published our SEND Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) providing up to date information about our SEND population
- Completed a Self Evaluation Form (SEF) as part of our preparation for Ofsted inspection
- Commissioned a review of how we are using our High Needs Block (funding to support SEND & Alternative Provision)
- Developed a Local Area Inclusion Plan (LAIP) detailed the current picture of SEND provision and identifying areas for action (part of our role in the Change Programme Partnership)
- The Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee have run a panel investigation into SEND services locally and made recommendations for how these can be improved.

- Run bi-monthly thematic engagement sessions with the Camden Special Parents Forum.

### 3. Strengths of the local offer

We have a strong education offer for children with SEND in Camden, with 97% of schools in Camden rated good or outstanding, including 37% of Primary Schools rated outstanding. We prioritise mainstream inclusion and a high proportion of Camden pupils with EHCPs (nearly 50%) attending mainstream settings<sup>1</sup>. While we know that there are significant pressures on some mainstream schools from the high level of SEND needs they are meeting, we are well placed to work with schools to meet these needs. We have a unified local education system facilitated by Camden Learning, our innovative and successful schools-led and area-based partnership.

The success of this offer is shown by educational attainment of children with SEND locally outperforming regional and national averages. At KS1, compared with the national average, a higher percentage of Camden pupils receiving SEN Support and EHCPs attained an expected standard or above in Reading, Writing, Maths and Science in 2023. This was also the case for children with no SEN. The group of children receiving SEN Support were most notably above the national average, with a difference of +10% in Reading, +9% in Writing, +5% in Maths and +11% in Science. At KS4, Camden's attainment for children on SEN Support is consistently above England averages. For children with an EHCP, there has been a steady increase of attainment at this level (roughly doubling between 2018 and 2023), bringing Camden above the National benchmark and very close to the London average in 2023.

We have a range of specialist provision in borough through additionally resourced provision (ARP) in mainstream schools and two outstanding special schools at Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children and Swiss Cottage School, Development and Research Centre. These schools work in partnership with other local mainstream schools to improve inclusion. We have a strong Alternative Provision offer, providing outreach, in-reach and time limited placements to support children and young people who are experiencing emotionally based school avoidance, have additional social emotional and mental health needs or are at risk of exclusion to stay in school or transition to their next stage. This is part of a focus on supporting young people at risk of exclusion, poor school attendance or isolation, including through our Rebuilding Bridges project (Department for Education funded) and the Konstam Centre to support emotionally based school avoiders to improve attendance.

We have effectively managed our High Needs Block (HNB) funding in recent years so that we have surplus that can be invested to support longer term approaches to supporting outcomes for children with SEND. We have taken an innovative approach to use of this funding, including through the introduction of Exceptional Needs Grants which provide a flexible alternative to EHCPs. They provide agile and timely support for children and young people, and are administered through Cluster Inclusion Forums, putting schools at the centre of decision making. A higher proportion of HNB

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<sup>1</sup> Camden Local Area Partnership SEND and Alternative Provision Self-Evaluation

is directly devolved to schools to enable them to take whole school approaches to inclusion, with greater security of funding.

Partnership working and early intervention are at the heart of our work. An effective community health service fully embedded in children's centres and schools - 99% of families say that their confidence and/or knowledge to support their child at home has increased because of support from the service. Best Start for Baby provides additional health visitor contacts which will help identify any developmental delays and Camden Kids Talk provides universal support for speech, language and communication, including the WellComm assessment tool to help identify delays. This tool is used to assess from 12 months meaning that support can be provided early for families. This is showing positive results, with 83% of children assessed as amber at their 12 month Health Visiting review moving to green following intervention. The WellComm assessment tool and interventions are used across the whole of the Integrated Early Years Service meaning there are multiple opportunities to recognise and address developmental delays.<sup>2</sup>

#### **4. Recent progress**

Earlier in the year, we published a [Year 1 Progress Report](#) on the implementation of our SEND Strategy. Highlights from that report included:

- Establishing a Quality Assurance framework and board
- Increasing Special Education Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) capacity to enable more outreach and training to families
- Continuing to develop inclusive Family Hub services
- Increasing funding for SEND places at our Holiday Activities and Food programme
- Driving renewed focus on coproduction
- Delivering autism awareness training including in schools, early years and leisure settings
- Refining Waiting Room website and support offer for families while waiting for diagnosis
- Increasing support for phase transfer to primary school with outreach
- Establishing our Disability Job Hub to provide tailored support to young people with SEND
- Holding our annual Preparing for Adulthood engagement event
- Refreshing our coproduced Preparing for Adulthood booklet
- Implementing our named social worker model so families have a consistent support

Delivery of the strategy has picked up pace as we have progressed through year 2 with a permanent Head of SEND and Inclusion now in role. We have completed further evidence gathering and self-assessment which means that we now have confidence in where the local system is performing well and where we need to focus our improvement work. We have already made a number of meaningful changes to the way that local services are functioning as part of this improvement journey,

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<sup>2</sup> Camden Local Area Inclusion Plan

underpinned by a redesign of the SEND and Inclusion service run by the council. This restructure invests an additional £1.3 million into the service. The reorganisation prioritises moving officers closer to the community and the families that we are working with. We have also introduced a SEN Duty line and regular SEND & Inclusion Surgeries to make it easier for families to get updates or information about their cases. This will be underpinned by service standards setting out exactly what families can expect from the SEN Service. This marks a culture shift within how we are providing services and responding to families.

Some schools are facing pressures in meeting the needs of children with SEND. We are working in partnership with schools to support them to be able to meet these needs. We have set up a High Need Sub Group to Schools Forum, with school leaders, to steer the spend of the High Needs Block to best meet needs. We have awarded c.£2 million in capital grants to schools to enable them to improve accessibility and inclusion spaces.

Before the end of this year, we will kick off the second phase of this redesign which will look at advisory and support services we provide. This will be a key pillar in improving the support we provide to schools to enable them to meet increasing levels of needs. Over recent months, we have built our evidence base of local needs so that we can make sure that we are providing the right services to meet these needs. We commissioned a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (SEND JSNA) that provides us insight into the local SEND population. This will be used to enable us to commission the right services to meet their needs, supported by qualitative work to understand needs and how best to meet them.

During the Autumn term, we published our refreshed Local Offer website, where we hope that it will be easier for families and professionals to find information about local services and support. We know that it can be hard to navigate the SEND system and so a high quality Local Offer is integral to enable families to be able to access the information they need as easily as possible.

## **5. Areas for development**

We recognise that there is still further work to be done to improve outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND and their families. The following areas will form the key areas for action in our year 3 implementation plan, continuing work from this year.

### **Right education place for all children**

In order to ensure that all children are able to access the right education for them, we are taking a holistic approach to improving the education provision continuum in Camden. Inclusion is at the heart of our offer, and so we are reviewing the support that is available to mainstream schools to enable them to ensure children thrive in education. This includes: advisory and support services provided by the council SEND teams; commissioning of community health services and therapies; reviewing High Needs Block (HNB) funding to schools; working with schools to provide clarity around ordinarily available provision; workforce development; and developing an alternative provision strategy. We are also reviewing LA commissioned specialist

provision to ensure the offer is meeting needs into the future, informed by JSNA and other data sources. We are also looking at innovative approaches to meeting need through work to set up test and learn pilots with groups of schools.

### **Young person voice**

We want to ensure that children and young people's views and experiences are informing how we design and deliver services and support. We will continue to improve how we work on both a case level and a strategic level, so that they are leading decisions on their own care. This work will be launched this autumn through a competition to design a logo for our local area partnership and will be an ongoing workstream.

### **Reduce waiting times for diagnosis and improve support while waiting**

We recognise that families are currently waiting too long to get a diagnosis. We will continue to work with Integrated Care Board (ICB) colleagues to reduce these waiting times. We will also look for ways to redesign our offer so that support follows need rather than diagnosis and families are able to access the services they need with or without diagnosis.

### **Relational practice**

We hear feedback from families that they do not feel that they are effectively worked with as partners by professionals.. We will maximise the opportunities available from the newly formed Centre for Relational Practice to provide high quality workforce development and ensure that we are meeting high service standards.

### **Post 16 offer**

While there is a wide range of providers available to young people in Camden, we want to ensure that young people are able to understand the offer and access the education or training that will be most effective in helping them to meet their needs and aspirations.

### **Information provision**

Publishing our refreshed Local Offer is the first step in making sure that families are able to access the information they need to be able to navigate the system and understand the support and services that are available to them. We will continue to improve the Local Offer and promote widely to families.

### **Equity within the system**

We will improve the information that we gather on protected characteristics and use this to analysis differential experiences. Our SEND JSNA provided important information on inequalities and intersectionality within the SEND space which we need to build understanding of and address.

## **6. Finance Comments of the Executive Director Corporate Services**

No finance comments to add.



## **7. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

Under Section 30 Children and Family Act 2014, the local authority must publish and maintain a local offer. The local offer must provide information regarding education, health and social care provision that the local authority arranges for disabled children and young people and those with SEN.

## **8. Environmental Implications**

*No environmental impacts identified.*

**REPORT ENDS**

