

Children's Services  
222 Upper Street, N1 1XR

Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 18 May 2023

Ward(s): All

## Subject: Response to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transitions

### 1. Synopsis

- 1.1 Between July 2021 and March 2022, Children's Services Scrutiny Committee undertook a [review of provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities \(SEND\)](#), with a particular focus on transition points. The overall aim was to assess the ways in which the council supports young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and their families at various points of transition: early years to primary school, primary to secondary school, secondary school to the world of work or further education as well as the transition from Children's Services to Adult Social Services. The report made thirty-four recommendations.
- 1.2 This report gives an update on local and national developments in SEND since the review was undertaken, and on progress made against the recommendations.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the responses to Scrutiny recommendations.
- 2.2 To note the further work proposed to consolidate and build on the improvements to date.

## 3. Background

### Local Area SEND Inspection

3.1 In November 2021 and during the conduct of the above review, Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) also conducted a full Local Area SEND Inspection as part of a national programme, publishing their [report](#) in January 2022. The inspection found many strengths in Islington, including:

- Strong strategic leadership and well-established teams
- Strong and well-established joint working relationships
- Very effective use of data
- Partnerships with parents and children and young people are meaningful and effective
- Children and young people with SEND achieve well
- Education, Health and Care Plans are of a consistently high quality and provide an up-to-date and clear picture of each child and young person's needs
- Partnerships between the Islington SEND Team and schools are very positive
- Short breaks are used effectively to support families
- The area-wide approach to meeting children and young people's SEMH needs is strong
- Case officers know young people and their families very well
- Procedures to identify needs in the early years are very well embedded
- The work of special schools, including through outreach services, makes a real and demonstrable difference to children and young people's lives and achievements
- Clear oversight of children and young people who are electively home educated
- Children and young people receive comprehensive support while they await diagnosis

3.2 Regarding transition arrangements, the report specifically found:

*'Transition planning is strong. Parents reported that when their children move from early years to school and from school to college, the transition is smooth and effective. At annual reviews, professionals consider future pathways to ensure that these are well matched to individual needs. Partnerships between the Islington's SEND team and schools are very positive. School leaders spoke highly of the support they receive from case workers, for example. They work well together to support pupils when they move from one phase of their education to the next.'*

*The 'outcomes framework' makes clear the expectations of professionals in planning children and young people's next steps. An effective 'transition to adulthood' protocol has been co-produced with young people to ensure their move to adult services is well planned. Youth careers advisers attend annual review meetings. They provide support and guidance to staff and young people. Young people with SEND achieve highly in post-16 settings. The proportion of young people in education, employment or training has been consistently high.'*

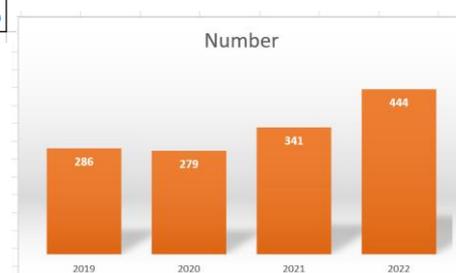
## SEND Green Paper – Right Support, Right Place, Right Time

- 3.3 In March 2022, shortly before the Committee finalised its report, the Government published the [SEND Green Paper 'Right Support, Right Place, Right Time'](#) in response to growing national concern that the SEND reforms of 2014 had not delivered the intended outcomes.
- 3.4 The Green Paper acknowledged growing pressures across a SEND system characterised nationally by delays, frustration, and increasing financial pressure, and a 'widespread recognition that the system was failing to deliver, that parental and provider confidence was in decline, and the system had become financially unsustainable.'
- 3.5 At the time of publication of the Green Paper, high needs revenue funding had increased nationally by more than 40% over 3 years, but spending was still outstripping funding. Two thirds of local authorities had budget deficits in as a result of high needs cost pressures. More than 50% of local areas inspected by April 2022 had received a written statement of action notice to improve.

### Increased SEND demands and local impact

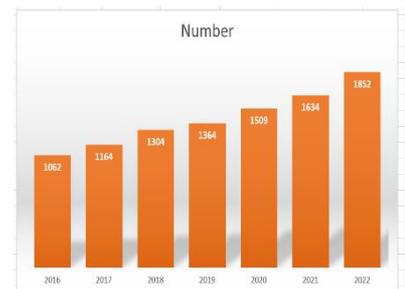
- 3.6 Although Islington is not among those local areas in deficit, and with a strong inspection outcome, local pressures are nevertheless evident, and have become more so in the last 12 months:
- Increasing numbers of EHCPs is putting high pressure on staffing numbers, places and provision available whilst meeting statutory expectations.
  - As the DfE acknowledge, the adversarial nature of the system created by 2014 reforms is causing significant tension and conflict within the system
  - The huge financial strain at LA level is not helped by broader reductions in public funding generally
  - There is a lack of skilled SEND staff for very skilled roles across education, health and care
  - Mainstream schools in particular are struggling to cope with an increase in numbers and increasing complexity of need.
- 3.7 We have seen the following increases in requests for Education, Health and Care Assessments in the last 3 years and in particular, the last 12 months:

Increase in EHCP Requests				
Year	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number	286	279	341	444
% increase		-2%	22%	30%



3.8 The number of Education, Health and Care Plans maintained by Islington has increased by 74% since the first full year of the SEND reforms in 2016:

Number of EHCPs							
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number	1062	1164	1304	1364	1509	1634	1852
% growth		10%	12%	5%	11%	8%	13%
Growth since 2016							74%



- 3.9 The reasons behind this increase in demand are complicated, but include rising levels of deprivation, an increase in children born with complex needs, an increase in knowledge and diagnosis of autism, raised awareness of sensory needs and pressures on school budgets. The Covid-19 pandemic, long periods of children being without nursery or school has also had a huge impact on children’s communication and development skills and this is also showing in an increase in demand for our services. Post pandemic we have also seen a significant increase in incidence of children’s mental health, including self-harm and emotionally based school avoidance, particularly among girls.
- 3.10 Despite this, we retain excellent specialist provision, with many very satisfied parents and children. Our workforce remains committed and hardworking, for the most part over and above expectation. We retain close working relationships across the partnership, and with Parent Voice groups whilst recognising the limits of co-production on unpaid volunteers’ time. And we are fortunate that senior officers and members continue to be committed to service improvement in this area at its time of greatest need.

## Islington SEND Strategy 2022-27

- 3.11 Our SEND Strategy 2022-27 approved by the Executive in October 2022, has been coproduced taking full account of the above context, and forms our local response to the challenges set before us.
- 3.12 It has four Ambitions:
- **Ambition One: Fully inclusive education for all:** We will support all schools and settings in Islington to be inclusive and welcome children and young people with SEND
  - **Ambition Two: Right support in the right place at the right time for parents and carers:** We will transform parents’ experience of the SEND system by delivering the right support in the right place at the right time

- **Ambition Three: Equity and excellent education provision:** We will deliver new, ambitious and innovative provision that enables children and young people with SEND to receive excellent education in their local community
- **Ambition Four: All young people are well prepared for adulthood:** We will enable all young people to achieve independence, build good relationships and have a meaningful occupation

- 3.13 The recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee's report have been incorporated into the delivery programme sitting beneath this strategy. The delivery plan is a live document that will be further amended to take account of the SEND Green Paper delivery plan which is anticipated before the end of March 2023.
- 3.14 The remainder of this report gives an update on progress against the recommendations of the committee to improve the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families at key transition points.

## **SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan**

- 3.15 On 2 March 2023 the Government's long-awaited response to the SEND Green Paper – [SEND and AP Improvement Plan](#) – was published.
- 3.16 The plan describes the steps that will be taken over the next three years to rebuild an effective, sustainable, and inclusive national SEND system. This will start with improved mainstream provision, that builds on high quality teaching and prompt access to targeted support when needed. Measures will be put in place to ensure greater national consistency in the support that should be made available, how it should be accessed and how it should be funded. This will mean that most children and young people should be able to access the support they need without the need for a statutory Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- 3.17 Key deliverables of the Improvement Plan include:
- **Publication of National Standards** by the end of 2025 that will clarify what types of support are available (based on evidence of what works), whose job it is to make different types of provision available, and which budgets should be used to pay for support.
  - **Introduction of local SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) partnerships** that bring together partners to plan and commission support for children with SEND and in AP, meeting the National Standards.
  - A requirement on local SEND and AP partnerships to **create evidence-based local inclusion plans**
  - **A standard national EHCP template**, with supporting processes and guidance from 2025.
  - **Digital requirements for EHCP systems** to improve experiences for parents, carers and professionals, reduce bureaucracy and improve DfE ability to monitor the health of the SEND system
  - **Create a three-tier AP system**, focusing on targeted early support within mainstream school, time-limited intensive placements in an alternative provision setting, and longer-term placements

- 3.18 The Department for Education intend to establish nine *Regional Expert Partnerships* to co-produce, test and refine key reforms, including new local SEND and alternative provision partnerships, local inclusion plans, strengthened accountabilities and new inclusion dashboards. They will use the findings to inform future legislation to deliver reforms. This would include new burdens assessments and consideration of the capacity required to manage delivery.

## 4. Children's Services Scrutiny: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Transitions: Recommendations and progress to date

### Communication

- 4.1 Recommendation one: Parents/carers struggle to find out what inclusive events are going on across the borough. The council should raise the profile of its online "Things To Do" calendar for children and their families with SEND**

[lzy-info.com](http://lzy-info.com), our website for young people in Islington, includes a lot of information, advice and detail about local youth organisations. There is also the [Islington Life](http://Islington Life) on-line magazine. We have asked the recently appointed Youth Council for 2023-24 to help us by suggesting ways that the website could be better promoted and made more accessible to children and young people with SEND. We are also considering this through the SEND Co-Production Group. Suggestions will be passed on to the Council's central communications team. We are also currently advertising for a part time SEND Parent Parliament Coordinator, who will manage communication with parents and children and young people with SEND through our Local Offer website to make sure that the information contained there is up to date and relevant to their needs and interest of all communities.

- 4.2 Recommendation two: Each year there is a SENCO network day when primary and secondary SENCOs come together to share information. It is not limited to Islington schools and out-of-borough receiving schools should be encouraged to attend.**

Because of their location (tangential to the Islington boundary) Acland Burghley School in Camden have a significant intake of Islington resident children for whom they are the most local secondary school and are regular attenders at the network day. No other out-of-borough secondary schools are significant importers, but we continue to promote the event to all schools that will receive Islington residents at secondary transfer and specifically target any school expecting three or more children with SEND from Islington. Our primary SENCOs link directly with receiving schools of children with SEND in any event as part of our transition protocol.

- 4.3 Recommendation three: Islington Council's Local Offer website (co-produced with parents) is where current information, advice and services for children with SEND can be found. The Council's Corporate Communications Team should work with the Children's Services team to consider how it can better publicise the Local Offer and a translate facility should be made available on the Council's website so that the Local Offer can be accessed by non-English speakers.**

Extensive work has already been undertaken to improve the look and feel of the Local Offer website. Further work is programmed for April 2023 to consider publicity to coincide with the recruitment of a parent champion to specifically promote the website. The Corporate Communications Team have been asked to investigate a translate facility. Google Translate is not an option due to accessibility problems which don't meet the correct legal standards, but there is potential to link to a Google Translate add-on for SEND Local Offer users to add to their browsers which will allow them to use the programme to translate the webpages. This option is being looked in to.

## **Education Health and Care Plans**

### **4.4 Recommendation four: Islington Council do not require an Educational Psychologist report to be submitted with a request for an EHCP assessment. This is not widely known. The council should communicate this to families and schools thinking about submitting requests.**

While it is not a statutory requirement to include EP advice as part of an EHC assessment request, we do consider it best practice. The SEND Code of Practice is explicit that any request for statutory assessment should normally be considered only when all the supports and purposeful interventions normally available to a child or young person have been exhausted. Advice from an EPs (who would normally observe over time to provide the most helpful formative advice) makes an important early contribution to the development of suitable provision, and gives a helpful baseline for the child, parent, and school. We would therefore normally expect to see evidence of consultation and advice from an EP as part of 'normally available' provision. The Council **must** seek advice from an EP as part of a statutory EHC assessment; this advice is most helpful when the child has been observed in different contexts and in response to various interventions over time, rather than as a one-off assessment. This is the advice we give to schools and parents but are making it clearer that while highly desirable to have had EP involvement prior to any consideration of a statutory EHC assessment request, it is not mandatory.

### **4.5 Recommendation five: Some parents/carers found EHCPs overly long and unwieldy with many strategies and interventions recommended. Every effort should be made to make sure EHCPs are concise and bespoke to individuals.**

The Ofsted LA SEND Inspection (Nov 2021) commented that '(Islington) EHC plans are of a consistently high quality. All plans focus on preparation for adulthood. This means that no matter what the child's age, professionals consider future pathways, independence and physical, social and emotional well-being. Practitioners from a range of settings agree that EHC plans have improved over time. Plans provide an up-to-date and clear picture of each child and young person's needs.'

We are committed to continuous improvement however, and our most recent focus has been on not including in EHC plans those interventions and supports 'normally available' to all children but only those that should be made additionally available. This not only makes the plans shorter, but also helps to target and therefore identify and measure progress more easily, including where sufficient progress has been made so that the child / young person may no longer needs the support of an EHC Plan to continue to make progress.

- 4.6 Recommendation six: Some parents/carers found EHCPs difficult to understand. This is even more difficult for parents for whom English is not a first language. Islington Council should (i) make every effort to use simple, non-technical language and provide explanations of words/phrases not in common use and (ii) offer workshops to parents of children with EHCPs to explain the process and answer questions.**

See response to 5) above. We also continue to focus through our quality assurance processes on the use of language and accessibility of EHC plans. SEND Keyworkers have been provided with additional training in sharing plans with parents and reporting any issues or themes. Our Parents Carer Forum and Independent SEND Advice Service (funded through DfE) provide workshops on a range of themes including EHC assessment and plans on a rolling basis. Parent Champions, supported through the London Mayor's Violence Reduction Unit also organised a workshop for parents across Camden and Islington on the SEND Process which took place in October of last year and was well attended.

## **Transition: from Early Years to Primary School**

- 4.7 Recommendation seven: Islington Council should continue its ongoing work with a group of Headteachers to establish a protocol to ensure that children with SEND not known to services are identified as early as possible so that the relevant early years setting can be informed.**

This work is ongoing.

- 4.8 Recommendation eight: Primary schools sometimes receive no prior notice that a child with SEND is about to join. Sometimes information is provided but it is incomplete or provided very late. This makes it difficult for the receiving school to plan appropriately. The council should create a "transitions toolkit" to provide guidance to early years settings of what information about a child with SEND should be provided to the primary school the child is moving to. The toolkit should set out best practice in terms of what information should be provided, when and in what format.**

Our [Early Years to Primary Transition Support Planning framework](#) has been revised to provide more explicit advice to both early years and school settings. The expectation is that the setting-based SENCO will coordinate a meeting in a professional and timely way using the above framework and documentation. For transition to reception for all 4-year-olds, settings are now asked to also complete a Revised Early Years Transition Record to provide a baseline for reception class teacher.

**Early Years Transition Record - 4YO**  
 This form is to be completed in addition to the Early Years to Primary Transition Support Planning document. To complete the sections below the Birth to Five Matters tracking tool has been used as an example to record emerging (e), working within (w) or secure (s). Your settings tracking tool can also be used to draft your leavers report.

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of setting: \_\_\_\_\_ Admission date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Attendance %: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's home language: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal, social and emotional:**

**Communication and Language:**

**Physical development:**

**Moving and handling:**

Range 1	Range 2	Range 3	Range 4	Range 5	Range 6	Range 7		
e	w	s	e	w	s	e	w	s
e	w	s	e	w	s	e	w	s
e	w	s	e	w	s	e	w	s

**Health and self-care:**

Range 1	Range 2	Range 3	Range 4	Range 5	Range 6	Range 7		
e	w	s	e	w	s	e	w	s
e	w	s	e	w	s	e	w	s
e	w	s	e	w	s	e	w	s

**Literacy:**

Current progress and strengths:

**Mathematics:**

Current progress and strengths:

**Understanding the world:**

Current progress and strengths:

**Expressive arts and design:**

Current progress and strengths:

**Parent/Carer comments:**

**Child's comments:**

The tracking tool referenced in this template is <https://www.islington.gov.uk/early-years-to-primary-transition-support> which can be replaced by your settings tracking tool.

**Names, contact details and signatures:**

Teacher/Keyperson	Name	Signature
Parent/Carer	Name	Signature
Child	Name	Signature
Head/Manager/SENCO	Name	Signature
Professional/Services providing support	Name	Email
Date		

## Transition: from Primary School to Secondary School

### 4.9 Recommendation nine: Similar to recommendation eight above, there should be a “transitions toolkit” for children with SEND moving from primary to secondary school.

We have introduced the Nurture UK ‘Transition Toolbox’ to several Primary Schools to trial for September 2023-4 cohort and already receiving positive feedback. The toolbox is designed to support children by helping them to build the confidence and skills they need to ensure a smooth, successful transition. It also provides a range of resources for parents and professionals. The materials can be used flexibly to suit the learning context and individual student need and are organised in six sections:

- Making the transition
- Building self-esteem and confidence
- Developing resilience and problem solving
- Managing stress and anxiety
- Being a learner in high school, and
- Building strengths and setting goals.



The annual SENCO network day (see 2 above) is where primary and secondary SENCOs come together face to face to share information.

All schools maintained by a local authority are required to send a Common Transfer File (CTF) to the new school on transfer. This also applies to pupil referral units. This is a statutory obligation. Academies (including free schools) are ‘strongly encouraged’ by the DfE to send CTFs when a pupil leaves to attend another school.

A working group (SENCOs and Officers) are developing a protocol for SEND information exchange.

**4.10 Recommendation ten: Islington Council should promote the guidance set out in its Transition Good Practice booklet which sets out expectations of schools to ensure there is a consistent transition offer.**

The booklet is published on our Local Offer and presented to all new SENCOs as part of their induction.

## **Transition: Secondary School to Education, Employment, Training Opportunities and Adult Services**

**4.11 Recommendation eleven: Islington Council and Islington secondary schools should ensure that all partners work together to consistently begin joint planning for this important transition for children with SEND when the child is 14 years old.**

A detailed programme of work is underway to drive ambitious education, employment and training outcomes for all Islington's young people, including those with SEND. The aim over the next three years is to build consensus around what a 14-19 curriculum offer that provides for the aspirations of all young people while reflecting pathways into central London's unparalleled range of employment sectors looks like. The Council is working with education, business and community partners to support all young people to establish aspirational career goals and achieve positive progression, irrespective of their starting point. The plan is underpinned by the mapping the existing Key Stage 4 and post-16 landscape and consultation with employers representing key local and regional employment sectors (including growth sectors) to identify current and future skills needs.

The 14-19 plan is equitable and inclusive, building on the individual talents and potential of all of the young people who live and study in Islington. There are three strands to this work:

**1. Understanding the profile of young people likely to become NEET (where those with SEND are over-represented) so that relevant stakeholders can support them in active NEET prevention:**

Work already undertaken includes shaping and development of an integrated early intervention approach, using risk of NEET indicators (which include SEND) to help schools identify young people at risk of becoming NEET and formulate rapid response interventions to support them. The approach is currently being piloted in two schools secondary schools with a working group monitoring progress against an action plan. Adjustment, launch and roll out to all schools is planned over the coming months.

**2. Expanding our Youth Employment Services to provide borough wide support for young people not in employment, education, or training into positive destinations through our programmes and spaces (incl. Youth Employment Hubs):**

Work already carried out includes internal consultation to establish a framework for engaging growth sector businesses and the opening of two Youth Employment Hubs in Caledonian / Barnsbury and Finsbury Park to increase community engagement and provide localised employability and employment support. Ongoing work is

focusing on the development of tailored progression pathways for young people (particularly those at risk of NEET) into work experience, internships, apprenticeships, and employment, with particular focus on growth sectors. We are continuing to work with businesses to identify skills gaps and create programmes of learning which respond to labour market need.

**3. Shaping a curriculum that prepares young people for the changing landscape of the labour market and that all, no matter what their starting points or additional needs, can access pathways to quality careers:**

From September 2022 work has been taking place with our secondary schools to review the current careers education offer to ensure all pupils from Year 7 have access to world of work opportunities. Primary schools are also being supported with lighter touch careers activities to build awareness of emerging sectors and skills needs and increase participation in the World of Work programme, which is being expanded to include work activities with clearer alignment to growth sectors. Schools will be supported to develop a clear approach to assessing the impact of careers education by introducing a skills framework that establishes pupils' level of knowledge and skills, whilst recoding and evidencing new skills, experience or knowledge gained.

**4.12 Recommendation twelve: For any child with SEND who has a social worker, a Transitions team member should attend the annual review that takes place when the child is in Year 9.**

**Recommendation twenty-seven: Islington Council should roll out the Progression to Adulthood framework in Adult Services.**

Work is underway to develop the transitions offer to ensure more robust oversight and support for those with SEND from the age of 14, which can include support (including careers advice) through schools and colleges, the Progression Team, Specialist SEND Keyworkers, and Social Workers, where allocated. There are close working relationships across this wider stakeholder group to ensure an inclusive assessment and transition review processes.

There is also a dedicated transition social worker that works across the Disabled Children's Service and Adults Transitions Service who supports Young People who are looked after with a disability, working alongside the young person from the age of 14 to 25 years to ensure a seamless transition assessment and care planning process is achieved for the Young Person.

Committee members will also recall the [Health Support Transitions Pathways](#) for young people with SEND which were presented as part of the Scrutiny process.

The current configuration of services means that social worker attendance at all reviews from Year 9 would be challenging to resource. Adults and Children and Young People departments have however begun a joint piece of work to consider the design of the services that support transitions, in recognition of the current challenges in resourcing timely support.

A Progression to Adulthood Framework workshop across Children and Young People and Adult Services was held in February 2023 to identify areas of strength and challenge. Consideration was given to:

- ***A review of operational teams and structures*** to ensure that they are best configured to meet the growing number and level of complexity of young people with learning disabilities and / or other special educational needs;
- ***Aligning the current accommodation needs analysis with strategies to better manage the market and cost*** including the use of 'Care Cubed' in Children's and Adult Services and effective brokerage
- ***Further development of the pathways and systems to ensure young people transitioning into Adult Services are appropriately supported to achieve the four 'Progression to Adulthood' outcomes:*** being supported to take up opportunities for employment, education or training, preparing for independent living, staying healthy and being an active part of the community

The outputs from the workshop have informed a 'project initiation document' that will outline a shared vision for Islington's young people in transition, how we progress work to develop the support we give young people in transition, detail clear aims and objectives and the governance arrangements and accountability required to deliver.

While this work is underway, Children's and Adult Services have put in place more immediate measures to ensure that there is clear sight of the number of young people that could be reasonably be expected to be eligible for Adult Service and their needs to ensure early planning and making available adequate provision.

The development of future models and/or ways of working will explore how we can continue to deliver statutory outcomes and facilitate earlier planning collaboratively by supporting the assessment processes, which in turn will help people to prepare more proportionately for the future.

#### **4.13 Recommendation thirteen: The council should develop a specific strategy to support young people with SEND who are transitioning from Pupil Referral Units and alternate provision into Education, Employment or Training opportunities.**

Their most recent Ofsted Report judged New River College's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare as outstanding. They found 'a comprehensive programme for pupils' careers guidance and advice' was preparing pupils well for their next steps when they leave school. This includes visits to universities as well as a wide range of businesses to raise pupils' aspirations for their future. In 2022, every pupil went on to appropriate placements, including further education, employment or training and/or apprenticeships. Students from New River College will also be able to access an extended Supported Internship offer from September 2023 where this may be appropriate.

#### **4.14 Recommendation fourteen: Islington Council should work with City and Islington college (CANDI) and with young people and their families to ensure that the college is meeting the needs of young people with SEND and providing what is required by their EHCPs.**

The College has been a full and active partner in the newly established (March 2022) Islington Secondary School and College Leaders (ISSCL) forum. A major focus for the Forum has been the further development of inclusive practice and addressing some of the barriers to this, for example in-year pupil movement. This agenda is being taken forward by a Deputy Headteacher sub-group.

Part of the CANDI response has been to extend their offer to include accredited alternative education provision for Key Stage 4 pupils, aged 14-16 years old at their Camden Road site from September 2022. Courses will provide knowledge, experience and employability skills in an inclusive, safe environment. The offer has been successfully running in Haringey for several years with high achievement rates that exceed national averages. The courses meet DfE, Council and schools' requirements for Alternative Provision and can help to re-engage and motivate some young people who may be struggling in school. The courses can support students from Year 10 into Year 11, and in turn onto Further Education, employment, or an Apprenticeship. The offer includes both one day per week 'day release' courses from Entry Level to Level 2 along with full time courses. Students can choose subject areas according to their interests, abilities, and intended career aims, with an individual learning plan prepared for them. Early feedback from participating student has been positive.

SEND Keyworkers will follow up directly with the college any concerns about the individual progress of students with an Education, Health and Care Plan, and there are positive relationships with the Colleges SEND Team.

**4.15 Recommendation fifteen: Islington Council should undertake a longitudinal study of a subset of young people at 1 year, 2 year and 5 years after completion of the Progression to Adulthood programme to measure the long-term success of the programme.**

A sample of students has been identified, consent sought and obtained. First interviews will take place in June-July 2023.

**4.16 Recommendation sixteen: Islington Council should consider becoming a Business Partner in Supported Internships.**

**Recommendation seventeen: Members heard the council had a supported employment programme and as part of this disability-friendly jobs were created or found and a disability-friendly recruitment process was used to fill the roles. This had stalled during lockdown as it was not possible to operate the programme virtually. The council should restart the programme as soon as possible.**

Several building blocks are either in place, or in development.

A new DfE grant ringfenced for developing supported internships (£12,800 to March 2023) was announced in October 2022. Our agreed outputs with the DfE against this grant are to:

- Establish an employment forum made up of supported internship providers, the LA and parents, and develop an action plan
- Double the number of supported internship places available by March 2025

A sub-group of the Autism and Learning Difficulties Employment Group is being established with a focus on Supported Internships. There has been liaison with HR colleagues who are developing an early careers strategy for employment opportunities for young people to ensure that those with SEND and the option of Supported Internship are included. We are in conversation with local Education providers to assess options for the most flexible offer that would support the 'job sampling' model that most young people tell us they would prefer. Work has also started on disability awareness training across the Council workforce. This will be reinforced through a 'Child Friendly' borough approach.

## **Transition: General**

- 4.17 Recommendation eighteen: Islington Council should support schools to establish electronic databases to store reports prepared in respect of children with SEND. There should be a specified day each year when all such reports are transferred electronically to the receiving school.**

This has not been progressed and will be challenging as there are several different commercial and bespoke programmes / systems used by schools to capture and record SEND interventions and progress. Advice within our Transitions protocol is that information should be exchanged by the end of the Spring Term, and the date for the annual SENCO network day (see 2 and 9 above) is set well in advance. There is no date set by the DfE for transfer of the Common Transfer File (see 9 above) and a local transfer date may be difficult to enforce.

The SEND and AP Improvement Plan does however make a clear case for all SEND services to move to digital systems and will develop digital requirements for all Local Authorities to adapt to as part of delivery.

## **Other**

- 4.18 Recommendation nineteen: Islington Council should complete the audit of school buildings currently underway, so that improvements to create a more SEND-supportive schools' estate in the borough can be planned and prioritised, as and when funding becomes available.**

This audit remains in progress as part of the Council's School Organisation planning and sits alongside implementation of the Council's Education Plan 2023-30 and SEND Strategy 2022-27 with the collective objective of delivering high quality education for all through an inclusive and sustainable school system.

- 4.19 Recommendation twenty: When any physical space intended for use by children and young people is being designed, commissioned, or refurbished, Islington Council should ensure that the space is as inclusive as possible.**

There is a comprehensive SEND Needs Assessment and SEND Sufficiency Plan which are updated annually and reported to the Education Capital Board. The Head of Pupil Services and Lead Member for Children attend this board. This ensures that relevant that the needs of all children are considered in capital planning.

**4.20 Recommendation twenty-one: To embed inclusion, Islington Council should work with schools to ensure all teachers and not just SENCOs, understand attachment theory and trauma informed approaches.**

This aim is central to the delivery of the SEND Strategy 2022-27, approved by Executive in October 2022. Delivery is supported by a detailed action plan.

**4.21 Recommendation twenty-two: During the covid pandemic some services stopped visiting schools. All services should return to in-person delivery as soon as feasible.**

All Council Services are now performing in accordance with the Council's workstyles and flexible working arrangements and guidance and based on sensible decisions on the best approach for teams considering the needs and preferences of service users. Guidance for health services varies, however.

**4.22 Recommendation twenty-three: On a visit to The Bridge it was noted that the swimming pool at Beacon High next door was not available to be used by students at The Bridge. The possibility of offering sessions to students the Bridge should be explored by Islington Council.**

The Bridge School can use the pool but are not given priority for booking slots. They are also finding use prohibitively expensive. In an ideal world, the school would like to be asked first which sessions would work for them, and for the cost to be more manageable. Discussion is on-going.

## **Children Looked After**

**4.23 Recommendation twenty-four: Islington Council should produce local guidance outlining guiding principles it will use and that it will encourage other local authorities to subscribe to in respect of children looked after with EHCPs. Such local guidance should set out the circumstances in which Islington Council will retain responsibility for an EHCP in respect of a child who is moving to another authority.**

The local authority looking after a child will always be financially responsible for any special educational provision made through an Education Health and Care Plan, irrespective of where they may be 'ordinarily resident' or where (geographically) they attend school. The matter of who retains responsibility for ensuring that the plan is delivered, and progress reviewed annually will always be considered in the best interests of the child. For the purposes of Part IV of the Education Act 1996 and Section 24 of the Children and Families Act 2014, a local authority is responsible for a child if he or she is in their area. This phrase is usually used to mean 'ordinarily resident in their area'. This means that a SEND assessment and responsibility for making and maintaining any EHCP. This would normally be in the best interests of the child because this is where the best knowledge of the local SEND offer would sit and would also ensure equity of access to local services.

However, given the complexity of children looked after lives it is open to local authorities to make 'ad hoc' arrangements in individual exceptional cases, which are in the best interests of the child. The local authority placing the child could agree to accept the

responsibility for assessing a child or making and maintaining an EHC Plan where there are practical reasons for doing so (e.g. where children move placement in quick succession or have a long term plan to move to a permanent placement, it can be in the best interests of the child for the care authority to 'hold' the assessment or EHCP, at least for a short time, even though the child is living out of authority). Clearly both authorities must agree before such arrangements can go ahead. Normally, however, it is in the child's interests to be monitored and supported in accordance with arrangements local to the area in which they are living by professionals with up-to-date knowledge of local services and issues.

These are the arrangements and principles set out in our [Guidance on Looked After Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) document, which can be shared with other local authorities.

#### **4.24 Recommendation twenty-five: Islington Council should consider whether all young people entering care should be assessed for SEND screening.**

All Children Looked After on becoming Looked After are allocated an Advisory Teacher. All local authorities have a statutory duty to promote the education of children looked after and all local authorities are required to have Virtual School Head (VSH), who has the responsibility to ensure the local authority carries out their statutory duty. Within Islington the VSH manages a team called the Virtual School, who are central to supporting all children looked after and the professionals around these children, to ensure they receive the best education possible and achieve the best possible outcomes. This includes ensuring that if children have SEND this identified and assessed in collaboration with schools and CAMHS. All children looked after are allocated a specialist Advisory Teacher in the Virtual School, whose responsibility is to ensure that all children looked after education is promoted and supported. This includes ensuring that if children have SEND this identified and assessed in collaboration with schools and CAMHS.

The SEND Code of Practice describes the detailed planning that will be done around the care, health and education needs of children looked after. They will have a Care Plan, which sets out how the local authority will meet the care needs of the child, addressing all important dimensions of their developmental needs. These include health, education, emotional and behavioural development, identity, family and social relationships, social presentation, and self-care skills.

Each child's Care Plan will specifically include a Personal Education Plan (PEP) and a Health Plan (both are a statutory requirement) which will particularly assess and set out the child's education and health needs. The Advisory Teacher leads on ensuring that all children have a timely and effective PEP. It is through the PEP meeting, and the Advisory Teacher's contact with the Team Around the Child, that a child's SEND will be identified. If there is need to carry out a formal assessment of the child's SEND it will be the Advisory Teacher who will take the lead this, through either supporting the school or social worker to make a request for statutory assessment of SEND or supporting school within the SEN Support framework. The Advisory Teacher will also attend the Annual Review for those children with an existing EHCP. Additional CAMHS and Educational Psychology resource is also allocated to the Virtual School to make individual assessment in response to specific concerns available.

- 4.25 Recommendation twenty-six: In relation to a child not in a stable placement, Islington Council should liaise with the relevant Clinical Commissioning Group with a view to an Islington mental health professional being allocated to that child, if appropriate, until the child is in a stable placement.**

Our Motivational Practice Model encompasses CAMHS embedded within the Children Looked After service. Every child when they come into care has a trauma formulation meeting with all the professionals led by a clinician to ensure the child's journey is understood and the right intervention is put in place for the child. This helps to ensure placement stability. Children in care who are experiencing placement instability are discussed in consultations with CAMHS clinicians which assist to inform the work the network and specifically social workers undertake with the child and the carer and support the placement. These children are also discussed within group supervision where clinicians are present. A clinician is based within our Fostering service who supports foster carers and Supervising Social Workers to support the stability of the placement. If needed individual therapy is offered to children and young people.

## **Support for Families**

- 4.26 Recommendation twenty-eight: Members heard that there is currently one disability swim session per week at one swimming pool in Islington for children with SEND and their families. Islington Council should extend this model across all Islington swimming pools and leisure facilities such as trampoline parks, adventure playgrounds and encourage cinemas to provide viewings for SEND children and their families.**

Disability swim sessions are currently available at Archway Leisure Centre, Iron Monger Row and Cally pools. Details of these sessions and all other accessible leisure facilities can be found through the [SEND Local Offer](#).

- 4.27 Recommendation twenty-nine: Islington Council should promote more social events for adolescents and young adults with SEND.**

The Head of Pupil Services and the Director, Young Islington will have further discussion about the current local offer for this group, including and any further adjustments that could be considered to the universal offer to extend reach.

- 4.28 Recommendation thirty: The SEND Parent and Carers Forum already exists but consideration should be given by Islington Council as to (i) how to make more families aware of its existence and (ii) how the Forum can help fathers and siblings connect with each other.**

We are working with the new chairs of the Islington Parent / Carer Forum through our co-production group and contributing to their plans develop the Forum and extending their reach. The Forum is directly funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and supported by the Council for Disabled Children through a contract awarded by the DfE.

- 4.29 Recommendation thirty-one: Members heard that in general, parents welcomed social care assessments to look at the needs of the whole family. However, consideration should be given to the wording of the form to ensure that it is not the same as is used in the context of child protection.**

This have been incorporated as part the Motivational Practice Model and different ways of working with families for example language has been changed to children subjected to a Child Protection to children supported by a Child Protection Plan.

The Disabled Children's Services have now adapted their social care assessments for children with disabilities who are accessing a personal budget where there are safeguarding or parenting capacity concerns. These assessments are now called 'Children with Disabilities Early Help Assessment' and are no longer completed by a qualified social worker. We are also now in the process of transforming how we review personal budget plans in a more simplified and less intrusive way for families.

**4.30 Recommendation thirty-two: Members were advised that the wording of the short breaks form currently referred to "severe and complex needs" which could prevent some entitled families from completing the form. Islington Council should therefore review the wording of the form.**

We are working with our Co-production Group to agree wording that is within the remit of the scheme and target towards the families who need a break from caring responsibilities for those with very complex needs and does not set false expectations of entitlement for a wider group of families.

**4.31 Recommendation thirty-three: Some Islington Council and Islington School SEND support groups had stopped meeting due to the Covid pandemic and where possible these groups should be restarted post-Covid.**

Those groups able to reopen have done so.

**4.32 Recommendation thirty-four: Members heard that there was a Camden transition pack that Islington might be able to learn from. The Council should work with the Family Carers Action Group to produce transition packs including case studies of families of children with SEND who were willing to share their stories. This would enable parents and carers to imagine future options for their child and help them gain knowledge from others who had been in similar situations. Work should also take place to distribute packs more widely.**

This work is underway, with some very positive case studies including work place experience and supported internship opportunities.

## 5. Further action planned

- 5.7 Narrowing attainment gaps and securing equality in outcomes for all pupils remain central to our work and have been reflect in the development of our Education Plan. There is concern that the COVID-19 disruption has exacerbated existing inequalities and / or created new ones, as we now know that the pandemic has impact more heavily on disadvantaged communities. We will also need to support families and schools in responding to the cost-of-living crisis, which will inevitably hit hardest on our most vulnerable families. Promoting inclusion and belonging for all children therefore retains the highest priority.

- 5.8 Our Education Plan and SEND Strategy place inclusion at the heart; both are supported by a detailed delivery plan involving collaborative working across all services, as well as the support of elected members.
- 5.9 Our approach is system led, which means all schools regardless of their status (academy, maintained) working together with a shared ambition to improve outcomes for ALL children. It also reflects the priority for Islington to become an exclusion-free borough by taking a 'no need to exclude' stance and promoting the 'Islington approach to Inclusion' as set out in our Education Plan / SEND Strategy.
- 5.10 Other action planned includes:
- Promoting inclusion and belonging through our direct and targeted work with schools e.g., through School Attendance Support termly Targeting meetings
  - Capturing and sharing best practice (e.g., schools that have shown a significant improvement) through the Education Board
  - Supporting schools towards earlier intervention through better use of data
  - Making best use of whole school transformation (e.g., trauma informed practice)
  - Updating of our behaviour handbook to reflect new DfE guidance
  - Training for Governors on shaping school culture and ethos
  - Developing locality-based networks to share good practice

## 6. Implications

### 6.1 Financial Implications

6.1.1 There are no financial implications from this report. All recommendations are being implemented within existing budgets.

### 6.2. Legal Implications

6.2.1 A child or young person has Special Educational Needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability which calls for Special Educational Provision to be made for him or her. Where, in light of an assessment of their needs, it is necessary for Special Educational Provision to be made for a child or young person in accordance with an Education, Health and Care Plan (an EHC Plan), the responsible local authority must secure that such a Plan is prepared and then maintained for the child or young person.

6.2.2 The legislation which provides for EHC Plans is Part 3 (Sections 19-83) of the Children and Families Act 2014 (CFA 2014). EHC Plans replace, but are substantially similar to, Statements of Special Educational Needs under the Education Act 1996.

6.2.3 The principal Regulations are the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014, Statutory Instrument No 1530 of 2014. The other key document is a Code of Practice issued by the Secretary of State.

6.2.4 An important duty is to publish and keep under review information about available provision, pursuant to Section 30 of CFA 2014 and Regulations 53 and 54 of and Schedule 2 to the above Regulations and the Special Educational Needs (Provision of Information by Local Authorities) (England) Regulations.

### **6.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

6.3.1. No implications

### **6.4 Equalities Impact Assessment**

6.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

6.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed on 21 June 2022. The main finding is that there are no negative implications arising from the Strategy.

## **7. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

8.1 This report details the response to recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

### **Final report clearance:**

Signed by: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Date: 5 May 2023

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