

Children's Services

222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director of Children's Service

Meeting of: Children's Service Scrutiny Committee

Date: 26 February 2024

Ward(s):

Subject: SEND Transitions update

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. In 2020-21, the Committee decided to focus on the ways in which the council supports children and young people with SEND and their families were supported through key changes in their lives (transitions).
- 1.2. In June 2022, the committee made 34 recommendations for ways that the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families could be improved. Some were general and other pertained to specific areas such as Communication and Education Health and Care Plans. Some recommendations were also specific to key transition points (Early Years to primary school, primary to secondary school and secondary school to the world of work or further education). The committee also made specific recommendations relating to children with SEND who are in the care of the local authority.
- 1.3. This report provides an update on progress against those recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To note progress against the recommendations.

3. Background

- 3.1 Meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families is a key priority across all agencies in the local area. This includes a commitment to improving outcomes and ensuring value for money.

- 3.2 Islington is one of the very few Local Authorities across the country to receive a positive SEND inspection in November 2021. Islington is recognised as having significant expertise within this area and, as such, receives funding from the DFE to support several other Local Authorities through the national SLIP programme.
- 3.3 As a partnership, services have worked tirelessly against a backdrop of significant increased demand to ensure the best recovery possible following the challenges of the global COVID pandemic in 2020/21. Our SEND Strategy 2022-27 was co-produced and published in October 2022, setting out the Council's vision and key priorities over the next five years for ensuring impact and improved outcomes and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. The SEND Strategy was agreed at Exec alongside the Education Plan, 'Putting Children First' and the School Organisation Plan recognising that to create welcoming inclusive schools, we must also work alongside our ambitions to drive educational excellence for all through. To achieve this, we need to build resilience into your school estate through the phased implementation of the School Organisation Plan.
- 3.4 Our ambition is for all children with SEND to have the right support at the right time in the right place. Delivery is supported by detailed implementation plans that focus on action to promote an inclusive and sustainable system.
- 3.5 Officers across all services, including our early years settings, schools and Post 16 establishments are working within a difficult financial climate and there are constraints across the whole system. We have a statutory duty not to exceed our financial allocation while at the same time committed to delivering our statutory duty to identify and meet SEND. As the number of children with complex needs continues to rise, and demand for services exceeds resources currently available in some areas, commissioners and leaders are faced with difficult challenges around how to work differently while maintaining high quality, ambitious and responsive services that are impactful and support improved outcomes.
- 3.6 Despite this challenging context, we remain confident that the energy and enthusiasm of leaders to improve early identification and provision, observed in our inspection of Nov 2021, will continue to result in positive change for children and young people with SEND and their families.
- 3.7 Work to improve transitions for children and young people with SEND has been an important contributor to improving their experience of the system, following the recommendations made by Children's Services Scrutiny Committee made in July 2022. Progress against those recommendations is detailed in the remainder of this report.
- 3.8 Our Local Offer website (co-produced with parents) is the go-to place for current information, advice and services for children with Special Educational Needs and / or disabilities: www.islington.gov.uk/localoffer (as required by statute). The information / detail referred to in many of the recommendations is contained here. We are constantly considering how we can better publicise the Local Offer as the go-to place for SEND information, and welcome support from members of the committee in using and promoting the site.

4. Progress against recommendations

Communication

1) **Navigating the EHCP process can be difficult for parents. To make things easier, Islington Council should:**

a) Provide a central point of contact (preferably a named individual) for the families of children with SEND to help co-ordinate interactions with the council and its partners and advocate for parents.

The school or nursery SENCO is the first point of contact for parents of children with SEND. A SEND Keyworker is now allocated to each family of a child who is receiving a statutory Education, Health, and Care assessment. Because of the rapid increase in the numbers of assessments and EHCP's, we have needed to review our structures and expand the Council's SEND team. There were unfortunately some gaps in service during this period of change, but the team is now fully staffed and functional.

The recently established Family Hubs bring together lots of different services for children and families to make a single 'front door,' making it easier for families to get the help they need at the right time. Family Hubs offer help and support to families from pregnancy up until age 25 for those with SEND.

The Council also commission [Islington SENDIAS](#) (Family Action) to provide impartial information, advice and support on SEND for parents/carers and children and young people aged up to 25, who live in Islington. They offer:

- Advice, information and support on education, health, and social care issues.
- Support for parents/carers and children/young people to express their views and wishes.
- Support at meetings with schools and the Local Authority.
- Help to complete Special Educational Needs and Disability related paperwork.
- Support around the Education Health Care plan process.
- Support with applying for disability related benefits.
- Signposting to other services.

Islington SENDIAS link with a range of organisations including the Islington SEND Parents Carers Forum to hold regular meetings, coffee morning and workshops helping to link families with advocates, and others who can help them to navigate and understand the systems.

b) work with families to develop a short guide on the local SEND system and the support that is available. The guide should include a summary of the EHCP process and timeline and should be available in different languages. It should be readily accessible online and in hard copy (at schools, libraries, GPs surgeries etc.)

The SEND Team worked with parent representatives to develop [leaflets](#) and a web-page - [Education, Health and Care Assessment – Parent Carers Guide](#) for the Local Offer Website, which carries the 'parent approved' badge.

The leaflets are also made available through schools, health and social care colleagues and SEND Keyworkers in hard copy and translated versions.

- 2) **Parents/carers struggle to find out what inclusive events are going on across the borough. The council should establish a digital events calendar of all related performances, SEND leisure activities, and SEND events in Islington.**

The Council's approach to listing events is to coordinate them through the Directories. The Family Information Service plays a key role in helping to ensure the information is accurate and inclusive. The directory includes the SEND Local Offer. See the online [Things to do Calendar](#), SEND category.

People can also sign up to get the latest news and updates from the council direct to their email inbox. ([Islington Council \(govdelivery.com\)](#))

We also have the [SEND Parent Parliament](#) which regularly sends information to over 2000 families of children with SEND. This can include significant events and activities.

- 3) **Each year there is a SENCO network day when primary and secondary SENCOs come together to share information. This is currently limited to Islington schools. Islington Council to consider inviting SENCOs in neighbouring boroughs.**

The Transition Conference is no longer limited to Islington schools; neighbouring secondary school expecting Islington children to join them in Year 7 are now also invited. Acland Burghley School – as our main out-borough receiving school – have attended for the last two years.

- 4) **An up-to-date list of contact details for all primary and secondary SENCOs should be maintained by Islington Council and shared with Islington SENCOs to encourage collaborative working.**

The Islington SENCO Network meets termly after school; coordinated by schools for schools, as well as sub-groups (e.g., secondary); it supports:

- Sharing good practice
- Keeping informed
- Sharing information and resources
- Developing materials and approaches

SENCO contact list is updated and circulated to SENCOs termly by the School Area SENCO, employed centrally.

In the last 6 months we have also piloted a South Locality Inclusion Hub to bring SENCOs, inclusion leads, attendance leads and safeguarding leads together to exchange

practice, ideas and challenges. This has been so successful, that we are now rolling out to the Central and North Locality Areas.

Education Health and Care Plans

- 5) **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.**

See [Education information required by the LA to consider an EHC needs assessment request](#) on the Local Offer website.

The form for parents to use to request a EHC assessment does not require an EP report but does ask that the most recent report from an Educational Psychologist employed or commissioned by the Local Authority (if available) is submitted with the request for assessment.

The form for schools does expect that an Educational Psychologist employed or commissioned by the Local Authority will have seen the child within the last 6 months however, as part of 'ordinarily available provision', and asks for any relevant reports to be attached.

- 6) **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 SEND Change Programme is a national programme to test and refine some of the changes the Government wants to make to the system for supporting children and young people with SEND. It is being delivered by twenty Change Partners across England and were pleased that Islington was invited to be one of twenty Change Partners in September of this year.

One of the things we have been asked to test is a new template for Education Health and Care Plans, designed to improve readability and focus. We are therefore currently working closely with families willing to be part of the test. We are due to report back to the DfE on this part of the programme in April.

- 7) **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.**

The approach set out within our SEND Strategy is one of inclusive practice and so accessibility to support is central to this. We are aware that some communities need more support to ensure they get the right support at the right time and we are constantly refining the way we work with our parents and carers to ensure that we do

this appropriately. The chair of the Parent/Carer forum is a member of our SEND Partnership Board and champions parents and carers views to ensure we are routinely considering how we effectively engage with all families in an appropriate way.

See 6. above. See also '[Jargon Busting](#)' on the Local Offer.

Transition: from Early Years to Primary School

- 8) **To help identify children with SEND as early as possible Islington Council should establish a system to ensure any concerns raised by professionals before a child enters an early year's setting are shared with the Early Years SEND team/local authority so they could inform the relevant early years setting.**

A multi-disciplinary Early Identification Working Group meet regularly to prioritise children known to education, health and care services who may require additional support at transition – either through full statutory assessment or a support plan. The main challenge is with children not previously known to services and we are currently working with a group of Head teachers on a protocol to cover these circumstances.

- 9) **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.**

Children with SEND are supported across our Early Years provision by well trained staff, with advice and guidance from Area SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, CAHMS, Therapists and other support services.

There are also 36 specialist (additionally resourced) places across Early Years; early years providers can also apply for additional funding to put in place additional support for identified children.

Early years, the SEND Team and Health colleagues work closely together to identify those children who may have special educational needs that will require support over and above what is normally available, and therefore may need an Education Health and Care Plan to support them when they transfer to school through well-established multi-agency systems.

Transition is carefully planned and managed between the Early Years provider and destination school, with support from the Area SENCO Team. The team have published an Early Years Transition Toolkit which is shared annually with schools and Early Years settings. This toolkit includes guidance on exchange of information, visits and joint planning that fully involves parents and carers.

For those children who may require an Education Health and Care Plan, every effort is made to ensure this is in place before they transition to school so that the school has a clear understanding of needs, outcomes, and provision for that child as well as any Top-up funding assessed as necessary to support the delivery of the plan.

The school will always be consulted before they are named in a plan, but as for all cases, the local authority must comply with parental preference unless there is concrete evidence that this would not be compatible with the efficient use of resource or the education of others.

The rapid increase in the number and complexity of children with SEND in Early Years has led to more demand for specialist places at transition however, placing both immediate and longer-term implications for the local offer and available funding.

Transition: from Primary School to Secondary School

- 10) Similar to recommendation [7] above, there should be a “transitions toolkit” for children with SEND moving from primary to secondary school.

To support the transition process, we have also shared with primary schools in Islington the '[Transition Tool Box](#)' (Nurture UK) - designed to support children through the process by helping them to build the confidence and skills they need to ensure a smooth, successful transition to secondary school. It also provides parents and professionals working with young people with a range of resources for supporting children during this transition.

- 11) **Where parents and professionals had differing views on the type of secondary setting that would be best to meet the needs of a child with SEND, Islington Council and Islington primary schools should have a discussion with parents to manage expectations and minimise the risk of an unsuccessful transition.**

We have a dedicated SEND Keyworker who deals only with primary to secondary transfer and has direct communication with every family of a child in the transfer cohort each year. She is very experienced and presents information in an honest and open way. There is more work to do with some professional groups however to ensure that they understand the EHCP statutory framework and their role in providing advice on **need** rather than provision.

See also [Secondary Transfer for Children with SEND](#) on the Local Offer Website:

- 12) **Islington Council should ensure there is a consistent transition offer from secondary schools which should include: a) holding a meeting with the primary school SENCO, parents and the child, where appropriate; b) sending a member of staff to visit the child in their primary school; c) inviting the child to tour the secondary school and meet key staff; and d) providing age appropriate booklets including timetables and photographs of the school in advance of the child attending.**

Our Transition Good Practice guidance sets out expectations of schools. We have added the above process as a flow chart.

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

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

A Progression to Adulthood plan is in place, setting out a long-term vision for progression or adulthood for children and young people with SEND with needs defined in line with the four broad areas of need referenced in the SEND Code of Practice (Communication and interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social, emotional mental health; and Sensory and / or physical needs, which locally includes young people receiving continuing care services).

The purpose of the plan is to ensure all young people with SEND and their carers have sufficient information to make informed choices and understand their rights in relation to the Care Act; and Parents have access to a wide range of information in one place, to avoid them getting passed around the system and minimise the risk of delay.

Our Multi-Agency Preparation for Adulthood Protocol has been refreshed, and there are effective information sharing processes in place to support young people's transition to adulthood.

Processes are now in place to identify and track children at risk of NEET from year 11 onwards, leading to targeted interventions. We are now moving to 'Risk of NEET' screening at an earlier stage so that we can be more effective in managing down that risk. We will evaluate the impact of this work, particularly on those with SEND, during 2023/24.

A Project Officer has recently been appointed to manage an in-depth review of our Transition to Adulthood arrangements, informed by of the changing profile of need. Adult Services are also undertaking a Peer Review, which will also be considering ways of working with younger adults, including alternative life-long learning opportunities.

A social worker from the Transitions team should attend the annual review for any child with SEND who has a social worker, each young person from Year 9 remains an aspiration.

Since January 2024 Childrens Social Care have rolled out the SEND Transition Progression to Adulthood (PTA) Outcomes Framework across all assessments, plans and reviews to ensure that all Young People who have SEND and an EHCP aged 14+ years open to CSC are supported to identify their own PTA needs and outcomes and are supported to meet these and are reviewed regularly.

- 14) A social worker from the Transitions team should attend the annual review for any child with SEND who has a social worker, each young person from Year 9.**

See 13 above.

Social Workers and Family Support and Reviewing Practitioners supporting Children with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are attending annual EHCP/Education Review meetings. There is a Children's Social Care SEND and EHCP practice guidance in place which sets out the practice standards for practitioners in Children's Social Care, including referring children with disabilities to Transition teams on their 17th birthday.

15) Islington Council should ensure there is an early screening process in place to identify those young people who do not meet the threshold for adult social services and begin working with families to devise a plan for how their needs will be met once they transition out of children's services.

An annual screening meeting with relevant services takes place in September of each year to consider the new Year 9 cohort along with any Year 11+ young people in their last year of education to ensure appropriate plans are in place.

The Disabled Children's Team are also developing a screening tool (pre-assessment) tool to indicate a young person's likelihood of eligibility for support from adult social care and where this suggests this is 'unlikely', sign post the young person and the family to universal services including Islington's Bright Lives.

Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care have created a Transition PTA Tracker and meet monthly to ensure that Care Act Eligible Young People are added to the tracker at 14 years and their progress to adulthood journey and referral and assessment is tracked.

We are also currently exploring the opportunity to create a Transitions Drop-in Service for Young People and their families to be delivered by partners across the SEND partnership.

16) The council should develop a specific strategy to support children transitioning from Pupil Referral Units and alternate provision into Education, Employment or Training opportunities.

New River College (NRC) is Islington's main Alternative Provision provider. The college operates from four sites as three separate Pupil Referral Units (Primary, Secondary, Medical, and the Whittington Hospital Class).

NRC are high performing compared to other AP providers and the positive trends in most areas are well established over several years. This covers attainment, attendance and progression, with some of the lowest NEETs across London. NRC are one of only two schools in Islington to receive a national Quality in Careers Standards Award.

Pupils are taught in small form groups of generally no more than six pupils, with a high ratio of support from specialist teachers, learning assistants and pastoral mentors. They access a broad and balanced personalised curriculum that includes a strong emphasis on literacy skills, personal development, academic subjects, and vocational courses.

The College aim to provide pupils with the tools and resources they need to make a positive transition, reintegrating into mainstream schools, or moving on to a specialist

education establishment that will meet their needs, or into post-16 education, employment, or training.

17) Islington Council should work with local colleges and with young people and their families to ensure that colleges are meeting the needs of young people with SEND and providing what is required by their EHCPs.

Ofsted told us when they visited in 2021 that: 'Leaders work effectively with colleges and post-16 providers. They ensure these settings have the information they need when pupils transfer from one phase to the next. Colleges praise the work of Islington SEND Team. This is because case officers know young people and their families very well...'

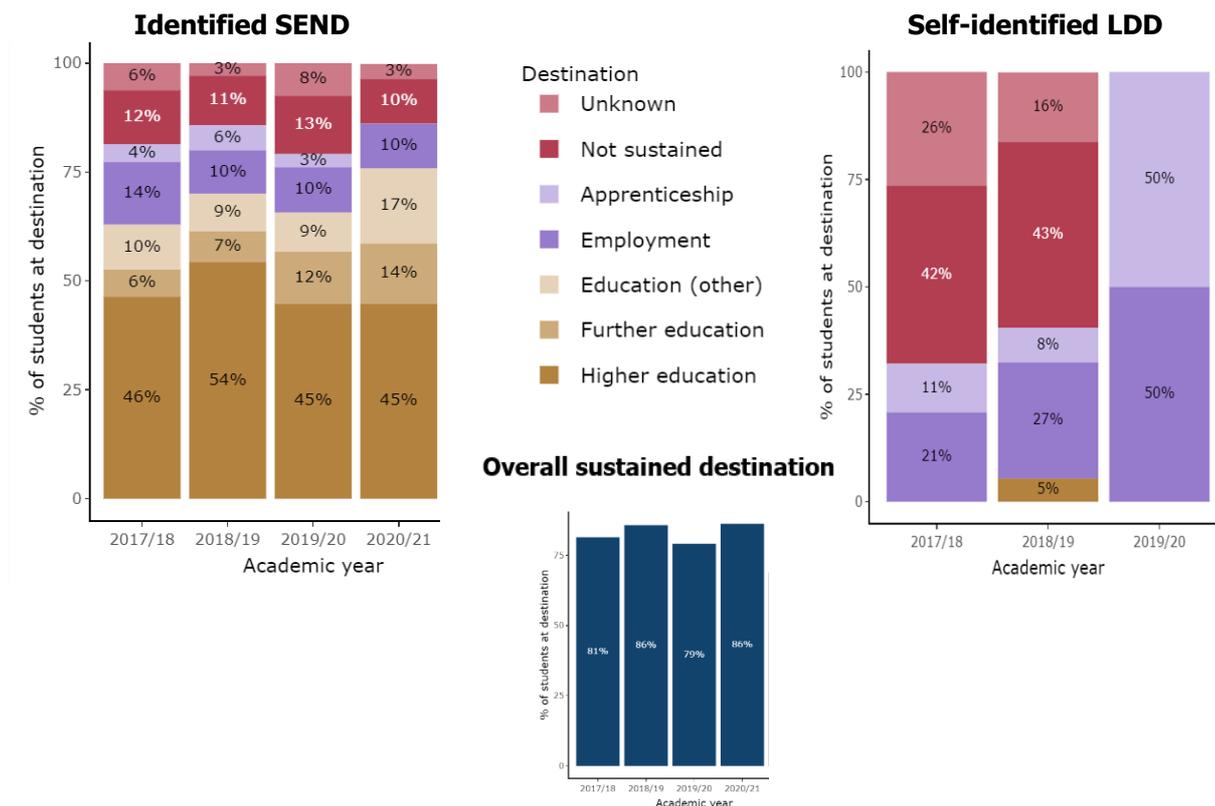
Our students attend over 20 different colleges, but we work collaboratively with the Capital City College group, who are setting up a Steering Group later this year, to which Islington is invited, to share best practice around SEND and especially pathways to employment.

18) Islington Council should undertake a longitudinal study at 1 year, 2 year and 5 years after a young person has been through the Progression to Adulthood programme to measure the long-term success of the programme.

We are doing this for a sample of ten cases. At the end of 1 year, all of the sample remained in education, employment or training.

The latest overall published shows the following:

% post 16-18 in employment, training or higher education for pupils identified with SEN or self-identified with learning difficulty or disability (LLDD)



19) Islington Council should consider becoming a Business Partner in Project SEARCH.

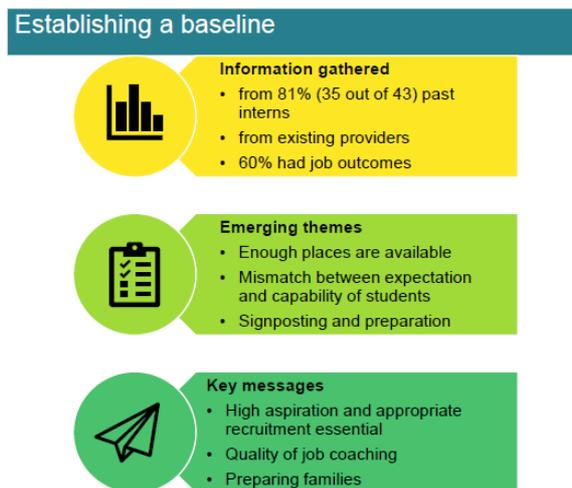
The Council has been involved with DFN Project Search since 2018 and was a key partner in establishing a Supported Internship programme at Moorfields Eye Hospital.

We work with a range of supported internships across the area and can refer people to 13 Supported Internships. Of these five are based on the DFN Project Search model.

This includes work to establish a Supported Internship across the Council and other Anchor Institutions. Different models / brands of Supported Internships including DFN Project Search are being evaluated and considered.

We worked with the National Development Team for Inclusion and other partners in 2022/23 to establish a baseline of our Supported Internship offer and work collaboratively to create an action plan. This included presenting to the Council as the largest employer in the Borough.

We continue to work with partners through the LD and Autism Employment Subgroup to develop our Supported Internship offer. and has worked collaboratively to create an action plan to increase the number of people accessing them.



12 young people have benefitted from Islington’s Independent Travel Training offer, and 27 from Supported Internships over the last 12 months. Since we began the Supported Internship programmes in 2018, 79 young people have been placed.

20) 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 post-covid.

The programme has restarted.

Transition: General

- 21) 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.**

Safe electronic exchange a logistical challenge as schools use different systems and keep info in different forms etc. The established deadline for exchange is the last week of June, which is also the date of the Primary/Secondary Transition Conference. SENCO Network meetings are used to remind and support all schools to comply with this.

- 22) School admissions forms should ask parents/carers (i) whether a child has received additional support in their existing setting (ii) if so, what kind of support; and (iii) if an application for an EHCP has been made. This will help a receiving school to be better prepared to support incoming children with SEND.**

We are not allowed to do this by law ([School Admissions Code of Practice 2021](#)), Applying for places in the normal admissions round: para 2.4)

Admission authorities must not ask, or use supplementary forms that ask, for any of the following:

- a) any personal details about parents and families, such as maiden names, criminal convictions, marital, or financial status (including marriage certificates);
- b) the first language of parents or the child;
- c) details about parents' or a child's disabilities, special educational needs, or medical conditions;
- d) parents to agree to support the ethos of the school in a practical way;
- e) both parents to sign the form, or for the child to complete the form.

This is to avoid disability discrimination in any school admission.

Other

- 23) Islington Council should undertake an audit of school buildings, 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 is currently underway as part of the current School Organisation programme of work. We have SEND capital funding available and will be targeting adaptation of physical space in mainstream schools – see 24) below.

- 24) **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.**

Our current SEND work programme includes adaptations to the physical environment; a Task Group of headteachers are working with advice from the Head of Education Asset Management and making use of available SEND Capital funding to ensure our schools can meet 21st Century SEND need.

- 25) **To embed inclusion, Islington Council should work with schools to ensure all teachers and not just SENCOs, understand attachment theory and trauma informed approaches.**

To date 35 schools have completed whole-school **iTIPS (Islington trauma-informed practices in schools)** training with a further 10 currently being supported.

- 26) **During the covid pandemic some services stopped visiting schools. All services should return to in-person delivery as soon as feasible.**

This has happened.

- 27) **On a visit to The Bridge it was noted that the swimming pool at Beacon High next door were 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 have access at agreed times to ensure suitable staffing.

Looked After Children

- 28) **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 looked after children 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.**

This is prescribed in law through the Belonging Regulations ([The Education \(Areas to which students and pupils belong\) Regulations 1996](#)). Difficulties can arise when professionals try to reinterpret or ignore these rules.

- 29) **Islington Council should consider whether EHCP screening should be undertaken for all young people entering care.**

The Virtual School become involved with young people when they become looked after and will straight away hold meeting and draw up a Personal Education Plan (PEP). PEP meetings are held 3 times a year and PEP is also updated 3 times a year. SEND is included in the PEP. The Virtual School maintain very close oversight of the educational needs of these young people.

- 30) **In relation to a child not in a stable placement, Islington Council should allocate an Islington mental health professional if appropriate, who will stay allocated until the child is in a stable placement.**

We have taken this up with Health colleagues who assure that continuity of staff is always a priority, including for those who may be looked after or have moved to a different address / school.

Islington Children Looked After Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) Clinicians support our children who are looked after in the Islington area, and if they are placed outside of Islington, ensure they refer on to CAMHS in their local area.

- 31) **Islington Council should roll out the Progression to Adulthood framework in Adult Services.**

This is now in discussion with adult social care and will be taken forward as part of the PTA programme task and finish groups as there would need to be complex system changes on the adult social care recording platform.

See 13 above.

Support for Families

- 32) **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.**

See Local Offer. Disability Swim sessions are currently available at [Cally](#), [Archway](#) and Ironmonger Row pools. These are specifically timed sessions so that children who need hoist and other equipment / support with changing facilities can be supported by trained staff and access managed. All other pool staff are trained in disability awareness.

- 33) **Activities such as a disco or Christmas party for SEND children and parents should be arranged by Islington Council. There should also be events for adolescents and those to 25 years old with SEND, not just young children as EHCPs were in place until the age of 25.**

Centre 404 hold Friday Night Disco, which is well attended. See video link [here](#).

The Disabled Children's Service are currently reviewing the way we deliver and manage personal budgets for children with disabilities to introduce a new 'choice and control' model for families, so they have more flexibility over how they spend their budgets. This will promote more creativity encourage children and young people to access more personalised activities in the community.

The Disabled Childrens Service and Adult Social Care Service has set up a joint commissioning group to enable them to work together to begin joint commissioning new

services that can support children with disabilities who are transitioning through the use of their Personal Budgets.

34) **Consideration should be given by Islington Council to how to help families connect with each other especially fathers and siblings.**

SEND Parent and Carers Forum is very well attended, including by fathers. 'SEND Friends' at the Parent House are another well-attended group. Centre 404 have a sibling group every Monday for children aged 8-12 and on Wednesdays, the 'Aiming High' Club for young people aged 16-25. Information is available through the local offer. Officer attend parent group and school SEND group meetings and promote the Local Offer as the place to find more information about the services available.

The Disabled Childrens Consultation and Advice Team are now delivering a monthly drop service for global majority families where their child has SEND, which has been very successful in terms of improving accessibility for Asian and Black African families. Going forward we are planning to set up a drop-in group for fathers who have a child with a Disability. As part of the work of these groups we will be exploring how families can be supported to be more strength based and build relationships across families and friendship support networks.

35) **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 the form used was not the same as for child protection.**

The Disabled Childrens Team have their own bespoke needs assessment proforma, which also has a Supported Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) embedded into it as well as a carers assessment. Embedding the SAQ and carers assessments into this assessment ensures that they are proportionate and focused on the needs of the child, as well as the impact on the parent / carer and the family.

The Disabled Childrens Service have also recently rolled out a new proportionate Children with Disabilities Personal Budget Annual Review for families who access a Personal Budget. This new proforma has brought together the annual review and assessment process to reduce the amount information we need to gather from families to continue to access a personal budget. This new form is more proportionate to the needs of families and less invasive for families as a process to engage with.

36) **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.**

['Short breaks for carers of disabled children'](#), is the relevant guidance around short break entitlement, and members may be aware that 'The Islington Ruling' is specifically cited in this guidance in terms of eligibility criteria, ('Section 4 - Eligibility (and the Islington judgment)') following a High Court judgement in 2009. We must therefore be explicit in

the wording of all eligibility statements. We have raised your comments with legal services, but they confirm that the current wording is advisable.

The website information published about the Islington short breaks offer does mention severe and complex needs in relation to the targeted level of short breaks and remains appropriate. The Universal and Universal Plus levels do not however.

The assessment and referral form does not use that wording, and in practice families of children with lower level SEND needs do apply for short breaks using the referral and assessment tool available [here](#).

- 37) **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.**

All pre-Covid groups are now fully operational.

- 38) **Members heard that there was a Camden transition pack and pathway 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 with other families of children with SEND. 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.**

Regular termly meetings are held between the Camden Lead SEND link in schools and our SEND Support Team. This is creating opportunities for sharing good practice, training and resources including those supporting transition.

Background papers:

- None.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Corporate Director of Children's Services

Date: 14th February 2024

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