

## **ALDCS: Sector-led Improvement: Improvement Plan 2018**

### **Theme 2: SEND**

#### **1. Introduction - ALDCS Sector-Led Improvement:**

Sector-Led Improvement is overseen by ALDCS, which act as a Regional Improvement Alliance (RIA) covering the 33 London Authorities. The aims are:

- Securing a journey of continuous improvement to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people.
- Building on existing capability in children's services, corporately and with partners to identify good practice, diagnose improvement challenges and identify risks to performance.
- Systematically sharing knowledge about what works across the sector and ensuring that there is effective brokerage of best practice solutions.

For the 2018/19 SLI cycle, London has been divided into four sub-regions, North, West, East and South, each of which have developed improvement priorities, which have been shared across London. Three pan-London themes have been identified;

- Theme 1: Adolescent / Contextual Safeguarding
- Theme 2: Special Educational Needs and Disability
- Theme 3: Workforce – recruitment and retention
- Theme 4: Financial analysis and understanding demand

#### **2. Identifying and describing the challenges – the case for improvement:**

The Children and Families Act 2014 and subsequently amended SEND code of practice outlined significant changes to SEND; the biggest change to affect this cohort of children and young people for some considerable time. Reforms intend to provide:

- A clearer focus on the participation of children and young people and parents in decision-making at individual and strategic levels;
- For Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan) replace statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments (LDAs) from 0-25 years;
- A stronger focus on high aspirations and on improving outcomes for children and young people;
- A graduated approach to identifying and supporting pupils and students with SEN (to replace School Action and School Action Plus);
- A greater focus on support that enables those with SEND to succeed in their education and make a successful transition to adulthood;
- Joint working across agencies - promoting integration and joint commissioning and planning of services between local authority education and social care services and CCGs to improve services and to reduce inequality in education, health and social care provision; and
- Personalisation and personal budgets to give parents and young people greater choice and control over support and how their needs are met.

Reforms are well intended and welcomed by parents, partners, young people and carers. The early identification of children and young people's needs across education and health and early intervention to support them are consistent with a person-centred approach of good practice.

The shared and joint responsibility between local authorities and CCGs is reinforced by the CQC and Ofsted inspection framework, with 'local areas' being subject to scrutiny rather than just the local authority.

### **3. Understanding the problem (including performance data, national data and benchmarking):**

The pupil population in England has increased in the last 10 years. An increasing birth rate, migration to and movement around London (as a result of the economy and welfare reforms) have led to an increase in demand for school places (and SEND services) in London.

The SEND reforms of 2014/15 and demands on school, health and local authority budgets have had the most significant impact on provision for children and young people and this can be seen in national benchmarking data. The number of children and young people with a statement of SEN grew each year from 2010 but it is from 2014/15 when the pressure (problem) began to increase.

According to [DfE figures](#), in 2015 when the reforms were first introduced there were 250,000 statements of SEN in England. By January 2018 there were 285,722 children and young people with statutory EHCPs and a further 34,097 with statements. This gives a total of 319,819, an increase of 80,000 (28%) from 2015.

This is driven by large increases in the 16-19 and 20-25 age groups. Beyond these figures are a further group of children who were assessed for an EHCP but not progressed to a plan. Their needs are met in the school setting.

Regulations set out that the overall time it takes from the local authority receiving a request for an assessment and the final EHC plan being issued (if one is required) should be no longer than 20 weeks. In England, 64.9% were issued within 20 weeks, excluding exceptional cases. The timescales to complete assessments has proved to be challenging for many local areas, often because health information reports are required prior to sign-off.

Permanent exclusions of SEND children (both with and without EHCP or statement) as a percentage of all pupils has increased since 2014. Children with special educational needs are four times as likely to be excluded than other pupils.

The High Needs block of funding has experienced significant pressure in recent years, with changes to funding formula impacting also. A London Councils survey of London LAs in October 2018 regarded SEND (inc High Needs) amongst the top three pressures on children's services funding.

### **4. Financial implications:**

The government grant to local authorities has reduced by almost 40% since 2010 and the pressures on children's services are well known. Schools and local authorities are coping well with the Children

Act reforms but many of these were unfunded, at a time when demand has increased by at least 28% (refer to data above).

An ADCS survey in late 2017 cited three main areas, specific to the high needs funding block that carried significant financial implications for local authorities:

1. There has been a significant increase in the number of children with SEND who require high needs support due to the extension of support to young people up to the age of 25 (previously 19 when statements were in place). This has resulted in the demand for both post 16 and post 19 support rising considerably.
2. Complexity of need. The needs of children with SEND are becoming more complex and this is driving increased financial pressures across the system. There is a shortage of local specialist educational provision to meet need, particularly in relation to ASD and SEMH, and this is resulting in increased use of specialist placements with independent providers, some of which are located outside of the local area. In London, the average cost per place in independent special schools is over double the average cost per place in maintained/academy special schools.
3. Inclusiveness of the system, with a lack of capacity within mainstream settings to provide a graduated response to additional needs before turning to statutory processes. Many schools are facing financial pressures and do not have the capacity to provide additional support to students.

Some of the most expensive SEND placements can be found in state funded special schools and in England, the number of pupils on roll at these schools has increased from 94,000 in 2013 to 115,000 this year (an increase of 22%).

## **5. Practice Implications and impact on families and children:**

SEND reforms (rightly) place children and young people at the centre of planning and decision-making and with the reforms we have seen a rise in demand of both requests for EHCPs and parental requests for high cost placements. The tribunal process, which is costly and time consuming, also provides a route for parental preference to further drive up demand, particularly in the high needs block.

The reforms have expanded the SEND cohort considerably (not only 19 to 25s but to early years also) and raised expectations of parents at a time when funding is squeezed across the health service, schools and local authorities. Market forces have responded, with specialist placements becoming rarer, further away and therefore more expensive. The impact on home to school transport budgets is also significant, with three quarters of London boroughs indicating an overspend on transport in this financial year.

Implications for practice include how we seek to reduce the number of pupils with moderate learning difficulties attending special schools and therefore enable special schools to support the growing numbers of children with more complex needs. Local areas can achieve this by increasing the amount of Alternative Resource Provisions and also, crucially, working with schools to ensure they provide adequate support to those children and young people with moderate learning difficulties in their schools.

## **6. What is working; what is there to build on?**

<p><b>In spite of challenges, there are many aspects of SEND reforms that are successful:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attainment of SEND pupils (both with and without statements) has increased (e.g. at KS2 reading, writing and maths and GCSE English and Maths).</li> <li>• The use of independent special schools has decreased, with fewer children placed in 2018 than any time in the last 10 years.</li> <li>• More children with SEND are therefore being educated in mainstream schools and their needs being met via EHCPs.</li> <li>• The reforms intended to bring health, schools and local authority services closer together and implemented a statutory timescale for assessment. This is working for the vast majority of parents, carers, children and young people.</li> <li>• Evidence shows strong partnerships in health, education and care as a result of the reforms, in particular impact in evaluating provision and outcomes for children and young people from 0-25 years.</li> <li>• Nationally, the number of first tribunal appeals has increased significantly since reforms were introduced but in Outer London the number has increased only slightly, suggesting that parents and carers are more happy with the decisions made. Around 80% of tribunal cases last year found in the favour of the parent / carer.</li> </ul>
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**7. Aims and key areas of focus (probably best set out in a basic peer challenge skeleton for each priority)**

Aim	Measure
Greater cross borough collaboration on high needs placements	Reduction in cost.
Better outcomes and measurement of impact particularly for the 19-25 cohort and preparation for adulthood.	Benchmarking and attainment.
Ensure greater quality and consistency of EHCPs, greater focus on outcomes rather than interventions and provision.	Level of co-production in plans.
Better local offers – a common theme of inspection findings. Not enough parents know about or use it to find advice and help.	Parental satisfaction.
Reduce incidence of exclusions and absence of SEND pupils.	Local and national data.
Efficient use of special schools – ensure moderate learning difficulties are met in mainstream settings.	

**8. Identifying options for improvement**

Proposal	Action	Outcomes and success criteria

Paper 1

Improve quality and consistency of EHCPs	Exemplar / good practice examples to be identified and disseminated	
Opportunity for education placement planning across borders		Greater financial efficiency
Peer review and support on specific SEND reforms (transition to adulthood?)	Develop a SEND peer review process	

<b>9. Next steps</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Timeline</b>