

## **Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision in Tower Hamlets**

### **Scrutiny Challenge Session Report**

**Chair's Foreword**

**Councillor Hassell**

To follow

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Recommendation 1:**

The Children's Services directorate to:

- a) organise the consultation process around re-designating Ian Mikardo as a co-educational school that accepts a regular intake of girls throughout the academic year.
- b) investigate the potential for co-educational primary provision, following initial consultation with primary headteachers and Cherry Trees School.

### **Recommendation 2:**

Monitor the comparative costs of providing out of borough SEMH specialist school places, especially for girls, to ensure they remain competitive. If the Council develops local provision in borough schools it should be on the basis that this is better value in terms of cost and quality than paying for out of borough school places.

### **Recommendation 3:**

Produce comprehensive data and address gaps in service information, to help identify hard to reach groups who have been under represented in the data used to establish overall need.

### **Recommendation 4:**

Develop effective data sharing protocols with partner organisations, such as Tower Hamlets Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group, and put key data on a single database.

### **Recommendation 5:**

Promote early, whole family multi-generational working to ensure interventions by the relevant agencies are effectively joined up. Encourage more integrated and co-ordinated outreach work from the different agencies.

### **Recommendation 6:**

Monitor the outcome of the "fairer funding" government consultation process and assess the impact this will have on the funding available for the education authority and local schools to maintain current levels of SEMH specialist services.

### **Recommendation 7:**

Ensure the outcome of the internally commissioned strategic review of special educational needs takes into account the recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session; and where the conclusions reached are consistent they are implemented in a complementary manner.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Scrutiny Challenge Session specifically looked at Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision within the borough. SEMH needs form a discrete part of general Special Educational Need (SEN) provision and the service is provided by a dedicated team within the Council's Children's Services directorate.
- 1.2. SEMH is an umbrella term to describe a range of complex and chronic difficulties experienced by many children and young people. SEMH encompasses a wide range of issues including: withdrawn, depressive or suicidal attitudes; obsessive eating habits; school phobia; substance misuse; hyperactivity; immature social skills; disruptive anti-social and uncooperative behaviour, frustration, anger, making threats or actual violence. There is no established link between SEMH and a specific social factor. However, evidence suggests that the incidence of SEMH is higher amongst people experiencing socio-economic deprivation and affects more boys than girls. Young people who have other learning or development difficulties, such as speech or language problems, are also more at risk, as are young people who experience family problems, such as parental conflict, separation, neglect or poor discipline.
- 1.3. SEMH services form part of broader Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision in the borough. The Learning and Achievement service, in the Children's Services directorate, have recently commissioned an external consultant to carry out a strategic review of general SEN provision, with a brief to examine if the current delivery model is viable with the resources available and how service priorities can be protected in future.
- 1.4. The challenge session was arranged because concerns had been expressed by some parents, and schools, to Members about gaps in and pressures on, existing provision for children and young people with SEMH needs. The session aimed to achieve a better understanding of the full spectrum of SEMH need in the borough, the range of specialist services available, the key partnerships with other providers and if provision was effectively aligned with need - especially in relation to services for girls.
- 1.5. The challenge session was underpinned by three core questions:
  - a) Is the level and sustainability of current SEMH support services provided by the statutory agencies to schools adequate?
  - b) Does the way provision is organised -especially those for girls- ensure that all need is properly recognised and resourced?
  - c) Is there sufficiently reliable data available on need to plan and provide services in future and is this data effectively shared between partner agencies?

1.6. The challenge session was held at the Conference Room, Ian Mikardo High School on 9<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

The challenge session was attended by:

Cllr Danny Hassell	Chair and Scrutiny Lead for Children's Services
Cllr Rachael Saunders	Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
David Carroll	Chief Educational Psychologist, London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Jenny Miller	Manager, Tower Hamlets SEND Information, Advice and Support Service
Percy Aggett	Psychological Therapies and Clinical Team Lead, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
Bill Williams	General Manager, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
Nozrul Mustafa	Co-opted Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Victoria Ekubia	Co-opted Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Di Roome	Chair, Cherry Trees School
Stuart Walker	Headteacher, Cherry Trees School
Jill Baker	Headteacher, George Green School
Joanne Clensy	Headteacher, Malmesbury Road School
Claire Lillis	Headteacher, Ian Mikardo School
Julie Pierzchniak	Deputy Headteacher, Ian Mikardo School
Dinah Morley	Tower Hamlets resident (invited by Councillor Hassell)
Sarah Vallely	Strategy, Policy and Performance Officer

1.7. The agenda for the session included an introduction to the key issues under review, followed by presentations and discussions on the salient issues. These presentations included: the continuum of SEMH services in the borough; how joint working between the partner agencies works in practice; and the breakdown of need and support provided to different categories of client.

## 2. Statutory and Policy Context

2.1. If parents or guardians so choose their child should be able to attend their local primary or secondary school as long as they

and the local authority are clear that the provision is able to meet the child or young person's special educational needs. This has been local policy for many years and is now a legal requirement. The provision of SEMH services are now delivered within a new legal framework set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. Local authorities and schools have clear policies and processes to support young people with SEMH needs, based on DfE guidance. Local authority responsibilities include identifying and assessing a child's special educational needs and working with parents, carers and schools to make sure these needs are met.

- 2.2. Councils have overall responsibility for children with SEN needs (including SEMH) in their area. They have a duty to review the special educational and social care provision made for local children and young people up to 25 years old, including those in the criminal justice system. Councils are required to publish information about the SEN services available in their area for young people known as the "local offer". SEN statements are being replaced with a single Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan for children with complex and acute needs. These plans set out the specific needs of individual students and the input and interventions required from a range of professionals across the spectrum of specialist services to address their problems and improve their condition. These plans must take into account the needs and aspirations expressed by the young person themselves and their families and, foster a sense of ownership and focus on outcomes, rather than just service outputs.
- 2.3. There is also a strong theme within the Act to empower pupils, parents and carers so that they are able to express their views clearly and are full partners in co-producing EHC plans. It remains the Council's responsibility to ensure that any provision proposed for individuals makes best use of resources, whilst increasing choice and opportunities for greater inclusion locally.
- 2.4. The system for assessing and supporting children and young people with complex needs whilst they are taking part in education has also been reformed. The aim is to support greater integration of pre and post 16 arrangements into a single 0-25 EHC plan. The intention is to provide a consistent approach to improve the transition of young people between the different phases of their education, training and personal development as part of the Preparation for Adulthood framework.
- 2.5. Schools are responsible for ensuring their staff are trained to be aware of SEMH needs, and where appropriate, staff develop specialist skills that may be necessary should a child with severe SEMH needs wish to attend their school.

### **3. Local Context**

- 3.1. Tower Hamlets aims to provide a range of solutions for addressing individual SEMH needs. A fundamental principle that underpins SEMH services is that every student experiences as much inclusion as possible in the mainstream educational setting. While recognising the particular learning, emotional and social needs of some children, it is important that all children have the opportunity to study and play together if they are to become successful and independent adults.
- 3.2. The evidence from the Special Educational Needs Team is that there has been an increase in the number of children and young people referred for SEN or EHC assessments over recent years. Nearly a quarter of all new statements or plans have SEMH as a pressing need though not always the main presenting need. However, overall the number of students- under 5's to 16 plus- with SEMH statements or plans has remained stable over recent years (a total of 254 in 2013, 245 in 2014, 240 in 2015 and 261 in 2016). According to Department for Education (DfE) statistics, in 2015 the number of pupils who attended schools in Tower Hamlets and had an SEN statement or EHC plan was 1,754 or 3.8% of students schooled in the borough. This is above the national average of 2.8%. There has been an increase in requests for statements and plans year on year and a high number of assessments lead to plans. If the trend of increasing numbers of EHC requests for assessments continues in the future there will be an increasing administrative burden on the Council.

### **4. Mainstream school provision in Tower Hamlets**

- 4.1. The Council's Children's Service aims to ensure every pupil experiences as much inclusion as possible within mainstream schools. Therefore the majority of pupils with a SEN statement or an EHC plan attend their nearest primary or secondary school, wherever possible, providing the provision available is best able to meet their specialist educational needs. Based on 2015 data, there are 87 mainstream schools within the borough who have pupils with SEN statements or EHC plans and there are 42 student placements outside the borough.
- 4.2. At present, in line with the requirements of the Children and Families Act 2014, individual SEN statements are being converted into EHC plans. The Educational Psychology Service in line with other service providers does not provide advice automatically on conversions. It is the responsibility of each school to request advice from professionals who are working with the child and family, so that they contribute to new EHC plans. The code of practice guidance available to all schools and the Council will issue further

guidance on the role of educational psychology in the conversion process.

- 4.3. Delegated funding is provided to schools based on the complexity of each student's difficulties. Planning meetings for new EHC plans should include a member from one of the statutory support services so all schools receive help to organise their provision for students with acute needs. Schools are also able to access additional advice from the Support for Learning Service Behaviour Support Service, Educational Psychology Service, Harpley Pupil Referral Unit or the special school outreach teams based at Cherry Trees Primary and Ian Mikardo Secondary Schools (two specialist schools located in the borough). The outreach teams assist schools in managing problem behaviour of primary and secondary aged students with SEMH and other SEN needs. The team uses co-operative problem solving, early intervention and help schools in the development of effective systems and strategies. Referrals are made directly to the outreach teams. Teachers may request support to develop class systems, where the general dynamic appears poor, or support in planning to meet the needs of individuals (boys and girls) or groups of pupils, especially those at risk of exclusion.
- 4.4. Support for mainstream schools in making the reasonable adjustments required by the Children and Families Act 2014, in developing or evaluating a school's own disability equality scheme, is available through the Support for Learning Service, the Educational Psychology Service or the outreach teams from Ian Mikardo and Cherry Trees Schools.

## **5. Council support**

- 5.1. Educational psychology is central to the support provided and many interventions (such as consultations, referrals, assessments, observations, advice, therapy, training) take place in a school environment, or at a local children's centre. Every state funded school in the borough has a named educational psychologist and the Council funds a core service across schools that helps ensure they fulfil their statutory duties in relation to supporting students with special educational needs. The Council's Educational Psychology Service is fully staffed and there are no vacant posts at present. Schools have the opportunity to buy-in services using their own delegated budgets. Around 97% of local schools use their delegated budgets to buy-in (through a Service Level Agreement) Council educational psychology services and they are now very experienced in securing value for money. Educational psychologists and individual schools agree a work programme, usually for each school term, to set how services are allocated across local schools.
- 5.2. In partnership with the Tower Hamlets Parents Advice Centre, the educational psychologists also offer monthly surgeries for parents



of children with SEN including SEMH needs. The Learning Behaviour Support Team also works with schools, early year's provision, parents / carers and other professionals to reduce permanent and fixed term exclusions of students. The work of the Team helps schools develop capacity to manage challenging and difficult behaviour and to promote inclusion.

- 5.3. The Behaviour Support Team, Cherry Trees and Ian Mikardo Outreach Teams can assist school in managing the SEMH needs of primary and secondary aged pupils. The teams follow a cycle of assess-plan-do-review and use co-operative problem solving and early intervention strategies. They help schools in the development of more effective management systems and strategies.
- 5.4. These teams aim to provide a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the child/young person and the school through multi agency involvement and the provision of INSET (IN Service Training). INSET are compulsory training days which staff are required to attend.
- 5.5. Referrals are made directly to the Support for Learning Service or Outreach Teams. Teachers may request support to develop class systems, where the general class dynamic appears poor, or support in planning to meet the needs of individuals and or groups of pupils, especially those at risk of exclusion.
- 5.6. Harpley Inclusion Support Centre provides support for young people in Key Stage 3 and 4 who are at risk of permanent exclusion. Pupils are referred via the Fair Access Protocol. The Inclusion Support Centre runs an eight week programme which aims to effect a smooth transition to a new school with five sessions of reintegration support at the pupil's new school. This programme is also available as a Reintegration programme (RIG) with a return to the referring school. A RIG is agreed via the Social Inclusion Panel or the SEN Panel, where pupils have a statement or an EHCP of special educational needs. The Centre also supports young people who cannot currently access education due to reasons of long term illness, either mental or physical.

## **6. Clinical Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) support**

- 6.1. The Council works closely with several agencies to ensure that information about numbers and cases are shared across agencies, so that the planning and provision of support can start as early as possible and gaps in provision are avoided. A key partner for the Council is CAMHS, which is delivered by the East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) and commissioned jointly by the Council and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group. CAMHS provides a therapeutic service for children and young people who have experienced emotional and mental health problems. The

service seeks to include the parents and carers and where appropriate, the wider support network. Staff members include clinical psychologists, family therapists, nurses, psychiatrists, social workers and psychotherapists. CAMHS has an active working relationship with the Ian Mikardo and Cherry Trees schools, including targeted support to both schools. Through the specialist CAMHS School Liaison Links Programme, each primary, secondary and specialist school has a named link from specialist CAMHS staff in order to support schools in helping children with special educational needs.

- 6.2. Over recent years CAMHS has seen a rising trend in the number of clients in the up to 19 age category who have urgent, complex and compelling needs. CAMHS operate a “duty and triage” system which empowers front line staff to redirect clients to other services which has helped reduce waiting times for an appointment from around eight and a half weeks, to an average of five weeks now. CAMHS has 37 full time equivalent staff and to date in 2016 has received 1,750 referrals or 47 referrals per member of staff. Assessments need to happen quickly and CAMHS has a significant number of low risk referrals which can be redirected. CAMHS has adopted a “return ticket” option so parents who have used the service can come back anytime without needing to go through a re-referral.
- 6.3. Five families in the borough receive intensive Multi Systematic Therapy (MST) support at an annual cost of £120,000 per family. CAMHS are looking to set up a pared down MST model that works with the Family Intervention Service to strengthen family support. A persistent problem experienced by the Service is clients referred to parenting services who simply do not attend, which represents a waste of resources and a failure to reach these parents in most need of support.

## **7. Specialist school provision for Tower Hamlets students**

- 7.1. Where provision in mainstream schools is not suitable there are three specialist SEMH schools, who work closely with the Council to meet the needs of students with the most acute SEMH difficulties. All students at these schools have a statement of special educational need or EHC plan.

These schools are:

- 7.2. **Ian Mikardo School** caters for boys aged 11-18 with severe and complex behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has funded places for 40 students. The school occupies purpose built accommodation on its original site as part of the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. Almost all of its students are supported through the pupil premium. This additional

government funding is for students who are in care or eligible for free school meals. All of the school's students are boys. A third of the school's pupils live outside the borough. The school was graded Outstanding by Ofsted at the last inspection in June 2014, the third consecutive outstanding award achieved. The last Ofsted report also recognised the role of the local authority in supporting the school which offers help on developing effective behaviour strategies to mainstream schools in its local area. Feedback from these schools confirms the extremely positive impact of this support.

- 7.3. **Cherry Trees School** caters for boys aged 5-11 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school has 26 funded places. All of the students presently on the roll are supported by the pupil premium. The school was graded as Outstanding by Ofsted in March 2015 and Good at their previous inspection in May 2012. Most students are on a dual roll with a local mainstream primary school, spending at least half a day a week at the mainstream school. The school runs a highly regarded outreach service- funded by the local authority- which supports local schools with students with behavioural issues. Of the 44 students referred to the Cherry Trees Outreach Team in 2014/15, 38 were boys (86%) and 6 were girls (13%). This service helps teachers in mainstream schools improve their skills in managing the behaviour of students.
- 7.4. **Bowden House School** is a weekly residential school located at Seaford in East Sussex and caters for boys aged 9-18 with severe behavioural, emotional and social disabilities. The school has 29 funded places. Almost all the students are supported by the pupil premium. Most students come from the borough, although an increasing number live in a neighbouring local authority area. The school was graded Good by Ofsted at their last inspection in July 2014. The school moved to its present site in 2012 and was built under the BSF programme, the original largely Victorian school having been part of the ILEA legacy.
- 7.5. All of the Ofsted reports for the three schools acknowledge the highly effective support provided by the local authority and their excellent working relationship. All of these schools admit pupils throughout the school year in response to often very immediate demand, as this is a feature of all special schools, but in particular SEMH schools. A vacancy factor of 25% is built into the funding available to reflect this variation in roll numbers and the expectation that pupils join the school throughout the school year. Other local authorities have similar formulae for specialist educational provision.
- 7.6. In Newham, the Coburn Adolescent Service provides an in-patient mental health service and associated day provision within an

educational setting, for young people from East London including a proportion from Tower Hamlets.

## 8. Gender breakdown for SEMH needs

- 8.1. An important feature of SEMH services is the gender balance in terms of need. As stated earlier in this report, the numbers of students with a special educational need statement or EHC plan where SEMH is the main presenting need has remained stable over recent years. However, because girls tend to manifest need at a later age than boys, some professionals believe there is an issue of under-reporting for girls and therefore their needs are underestimated when it comes to planning provision. Identifying girls with issues and providing effective early interventions is recognised as a big challenge for all the agencies involved.
- 8.2. In January of each year all Councils complete a SEN survey for the DfE recording a snapshot of data on SEN statements or EHC plans. This allows the comparisons in the tables below.
- 8.3. The tables show a breakdown of the number of children and young people with SEN statements or EHC plans, where their main presenting need is SEMH for the last four years. The first table is a breakdown by gender:

	Boys	Girls	Total
2013	204	50	254
2014	194	51	245
2015	190	50	240
2016	204	57	261

- 8.4. These figures show there has been little change over the last four years regarding the ratio of girls to boys (1:4) whose primary need is SEMH. The number of boys and girls identified increases from primary to secondary years, although this has slowed down over the past two years. In 2016 there was a significant increase in the number of boys and girls who continued in education post 16 (65 in 2016 compared to 23 in 2015, 12 in 2014 and 18 in 2013).
- 8.5. The table below gives a breakdown of where these children and young people were being educated at the time of the DfE survey:

	Boys	Girls	Total
2013	111 mainstream 6 PRU 78 special 9 other <b>204 total</b>	27 mainstream 1 PRU 20 special 2 other <b>50 total</b>	138 7 98 11 <b>254</b>
2014	106 mainstream 7 PRU	35 mainstream 1 PRU	141 8

	78 special 3 other <b>194 total</b>	15 special <b>51 total</b>	93 3 <b>245</b>
2015	103 mainstream 4 PRU 74 special 9 other <b>190 total</b>	32 mainstream  14 special 4 other <b>50 total</b>	135 4 88 13 <b>240</b>
2016	106 mainstream 7 PRU 70 special 21 other <b>204 total</b>	35 mainstream 3 PRU 13 special 6 other <b>57 total</b>	141 10 83 27 <b>261</b>

- 8.6. These figures show there has been a small decrease in the number of students placed in special schools over the four period (from 98 in 2013 to 83 in 2016). The ratio of girls to boys in mainstream or special schools is relatively consistent over the period. In 2016 there was a small, but growing, number of students out of school compared to the previous year (rising from 13 in 2015 to 27 in 2016).
- 8.7. The table below gives a breakdown of the age of children and young people with a SEMH need who were attending specialist provision at the time of the DfE surveys:

	Boys	Girls	Totals
2013	0 under fives 25 primary 50 secondary 3 over 16 <b>78 total</b>	0 under fives 4 primary 16 secondary 0 over 16 <b>20 total</b>	0 29 66 3 <b>98</b>
2014	0 under fives 24 primary 52 secondary 2 over 16 <b>78 total</b>	0 under fives 3 primary 12 secondary 0 over 16 <b>15 total</b>	0 27 64 2 <b>93</b>
2015	0 under fives 22 primary 48 secondary 4 over 16 <b>74 total</b>	0 under fives 3 primary 7 secondary 3 over 16 <b>13 total</b>	0 25 55 7 <b>87</b>
2016	0 under fives 20 primary 42 secondary 8 over 16 <b>70 total</b>	0 under fives 3 primary 6 secondary 4 over 16 <b>13 total</b>	0 23 48 12 <b>83</b>

- 8.8. There are a smaller number of girls identified as needing specialist provision within each age group. In the secondary sector the

number of girls increases in line with the increase seen for boys. However the number of girls remains significantly less than boys. The number of girls in each year group means they do not create a viable teaching group by year. Fewer students have been in special schools each year.

## 9. Conclusion

9.1. The scrutiny challenge session drew on the evidence of the evening session and the statistical data provided by the specialist agencies involved in providing SEMH services in the borough. The recommendations made reflect the views and priorities expressed at the session.

9.2. The conclusions reached in terms of the three core questions posed at the challenge session were:

- a) Is the level and sustainability of current SEMH support services provided by the statutory agencies to schools adequate?

The session believed the agencies provided many excellent services ( such as outreach, family support, early interventions) and work well together. However, funding pressures and rising demand would place greater emphasis on increasing the pace of innovation in future and new models of delivering service would need to be introduced.

- b) Does the way provision is organised -especially for girls- ensure that all need is properly recognised and resourced?

The session believed that more can be done to offer specialist school places for girls in the borough, especially where this would be more cost effective than going outside the borough. There were also issues of under reporting of needs for particular hard to reach communities and the need to adopt whole family approaches in providing support.

- c) Is there sufficiently reliable available on need to plan and provide services in future and is this data effectively shared between partner agencies?

The session thought there was considerable scope for improvement, both in the coverage of the data, especially in identifying hard to reach groups, and how this data is collected, recorded and jointly acted upon.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### Recommendation 1

**The Children's Services directorate to**

- a) organise the consultation process around re-designating Ian Mikardo as a co-educational school that accepts a regular intake of girls throughout the academic year.**
- b) Investigate the potential for co-educational primary provision, following initial consultation with primary headteachers and Cherry Trees School.**

The challenge session felt that the lack of specialist school places for girls with SEMH needs in the borough was a problem - despite the many excellent specialist educational services provided locally - and places for girls should be found at specialist schools in the borough. Ian Mikardo currently has eight vacancies and therefore can accommodate a number of girl students, but existing provision would not be sufficient to meet all potential demand. The Educational Psychology Service believe that because there are significantly fewer girls than boys with a SEMH statement or plan (a ratio roughly 1:4) and this disparity has remained stable over several years, current provision is adequate and the number of girls in each year is insufficient to create a viable teaching group. There are also safeguarding issues for girls being taught in a predominantly male environment, which means their personal safety is a paramount consideration for the service. Any specialist school that wanted co-educational status would need to demonstrate how they would meet set safety criteria.

The session recognised there were legitimate concerns around safeguarding and the Chief Educational Psychologist affirmed the need for an effective risk assessment to meet safeguarding criteria, before girls could be admitted to Ian Mikardo School. The general view was that the right provision can have a real impact on individuals and girls should be able to access places at specialist schools in the borough. The point was made by some of those who attended the session that Youth Offender Institutions are co-educational and a small cohort of girls are co-educated at specialist schools in the London Borough of Redbridge. The Headteacher of Cherry Trees School also asked if the feasibility of running primary school SEMH provision for girls on a co-educational and cost neutral basis, could be established.

The Headteacher of Ian Mikardo School will contact the Director of Children's Services at the Council and request that introducing co-educational provision at the school is properly considered. Over recent years several former directors at the Council have recognised that the school has a claim to become co-educational, but the matter has not been taken further. In 2014 it was agreed to pilot co-educational post 16 provision and the school enrolled one female student who made excellent progress. A pilot for key stage (sixth form) is now being progressed by the Council working closely with the school. Discussions are now underway between different services within the Council

to evaluate the pilot and therefore determine if it should be established as a permanent provision.

The re-designation of status will involve the directorate consulting key stakeholders- including all local schools and young people with SEMH needs and their parents- to establish if there is support for any change to the status of Ian Mikardo to a co-educational school, as well as demonstrating clear evidence of unmet need and producing an SEMH improvement plan. The Council does not have the powers to open a completely new school. Only new free schools that everyone can bid for can be built and opened. However, the expansion of an existing school can happen where this is in line with the regulations.

### **Recommendation 2**

**Monitor the comparative costs of providing out of borough SEMH specialist school places for students, especially for girls, to ensure they remain competitive. If the Council develops local provision in borough schools it will be on the basis that this is a cheaper and better option than paying for out of borough school places.**

At present all SEMH needs girls who attend specialist schools do so outside the borough. Those headteachers who attended the challenge session suggested the financial cost to the Council of paying other London boroughs for school places outside the borough is expensive and often cause parents problems, as their child has to travel a considerable distance to get to school. Additional transport also has to be provided which considerably increases costs. The challenge session discussed the cost of out of borough placements and several attendees suggested that the average annual cost was around £50,000 per pupil, not including travel costs. When the Council reviewed out of borough placements in 2013 an average unit cost of £35,000 per placement was arrived at. Clearly there is a significant variance between the two figures and the concept of average cost is problematic in any case as places are spot purchased and so costs can vary very considerably, even for similar provision.

If several girls are placed in schools outside the borough at any one time this will have a significant impact on costs. The general view was that it made more sense to use spare capacity at specialist schools in Tower Hamlets if this provision is suitable.

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Council produces comprehensive data and fills any gaps in service information, especially where this identifies hard to reach groups who have hitherto been under represented in the data used to establish overall need.**

Council services recognise there are some gaps in data because in completing returns some fields are optional for example, demographic data on



ethnicity. The SEN Service has already agreed to check available data on ethnicity and is reviewing methods to gather data so partners are more willing to share personal information regarding key equality indicators. The system of collecting and sharing data is too complex and fragmented as sometimes eight different agencies can be involved in the support of one child or family. The Council has a “single view of the child” system in place which links data across the Council at the level of the individual person.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Develop effective data sharing protocols with partner organisations- such as Tower Hamlets Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group- and put key data on a single database.**

There are huge challenges in information sharing as many agencies cannot share data unless there is an exception request. Many health trusts are channelling requests through a rapid requests protocol route. As well as the better integration of systems, a culture of effective leadership and shared responsibility for making data sharing arrangements work are key if the necessary improvements are to be made.

The Clinical Commissioning Group is piloting small groups of professionals, drawn from different agencies, working together with complex families to develop data sharing agreements. This pilot will contribute to identifying the needs of complex families at an earlier stage, developing joined up solutions regarding the quality and accessibility of shared data and making it available in a standard format.

#### **Recommendation 5**

**Promote early, whole family multi-generational working to ensure interventions by the relevant agencies are effectively joined up. Encourage more integrated and co-ordinated outreach work from the relevant agencies.**

There was a general consensus at the challenge session that more should be done to change the culture of how clients were referred to specialist services. There is a need to move away from targeting individual behaviour and introduce more outreach to establish relationships with groups who otherwise- would not access specialist services. Early family Intervention is important as many problems are multi-generational, unresolved issues with fathers and mothers exacerbate as they get older and are passed on to their children which adds to their own negative experiences and attitudes. For boys, behavioural problems are often evident before the age of five, whereas girls are more likely to manifest symptoms of SEMH needs in adolescence. Professionals need to work together more effectively and develop a sense of shared responsibility for their clients. There is also a need to build trust with certain families and communities and dispel negative myths about therapy. One example of this, based on evidence provided by CAMHS at the challenge

session, was the underuse of services by certain ethnic minority groups such as the Bangladeshi community, especially as there is growing evidence of rising need in support for Bangladeshi boys and girls.

Over recent years, with the aid of Bangladeshi co-workers, Tower Hamlets CAMHS has run Bangladeshi Girls' and Boys' groups at local schools to address issues of concern. There is increasing concern about a minority of Bangladeshi boys who engage in gang related behaviour, are disaffected, have low educational life chances and are likely to be both victims and perpetrators of gang violence. Most of these boys are known to the multi-agency professionals working in Tower Hamlets, including CAMHS, the Youth Offending Team and the PRU.

#### **Recommendation 6**

**Monitor the outcome of the “fairer funding” government consultation process and assess the impact this will have on the funding available for the education authority and local schools to maintain current levels of SEMH specialist services.**

Government funding for SEMH services reflects the levels of need and deprivation within the Borough and historically Tower Hamlets benefits significantly from the pupil premium arrangement. SEN statements or EHC plans frequently have an allocation which brings additional “top up” resources to the schools delegated funding budget. This “top up” funding means individual schools can afford to buy in extra specialist support from the local education authority or another provider. The Government are now consulting the sector on introducing a “fairer funding” formula which is likely to work to the detriment of the borough, as it could reduce the level of funding available to local schools based on deprivation related factors such as eligibility for free school meals. A new formula that results in a more even distribution of funding across the country will have a big impact on local schools, who are accustomed to having a strong resource base on which to plan and provide special needs education. According to the Educational Psychology Service there is anecdotal evidence that families with children with the greatest SEN need move into the borough, to take advantage of the range and quality of the service available, which acts to increase overall demand and cost.

The headteachers of the Ian Mikardo and Cherry Trees schools are concerned that a further squeeze on budgets will put at risk the future of their outreach teams, as they are directly funded by the Council and the service is now costing more to run, as demand is increasing and outstripping the income available. However, the Council confirmed there are no planned reductions to the service.

#### **Recommendation 7**

**Ensure the outcomes of the internally commissioned strategic review of special educational needs, takes into account the recommendations of the scrutiny challenge session; and where the conclusions reached**

**are consistent they are implemented in a complementary manner.**

The SEN strategic review, which is now underway, will include addressing issues around early years' services including SEMH needs and the provision of school places within and outside the borough. The external consultant appointed to lead the SEN review has now started work and aims to produce an interim report by mid-May and the final report by July or August. The active involvement of the SEN Inclusion Lead in both reviews should ensure the effective co-ordination of outcomes resulting from the scrutiny challenge session and the review by the external consultant.