
Tower Hamlets

Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Inclusion Strategy 2024–29

Consultation draft

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Foreword

On behalf of our Children and Families Partnership, thank you for taking the time to read our draft Special Educational Needs, Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion strategy for Tower Hamlets.

We are personally committed to making sure that we provide the very best services for our children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Delivering SEND improvement is a Mayoral priority. The council is making additional investments in SEND improvement, and we know that the borough's excellent schools and our colleagues in the NHS work every day to do their best for children and young people with SEND. Community, voluntary and faith groups also make a big contribution. All organisations, families and communities must work together to provide the support our children deserve.

Over the past few months, we have listened to what parents, young people and professionals have to say about our SEND services in Tower Hamlets. We have discussed how we can do more of the things that work well, and how we can tackle problems together where services fall short.

The strategy needs to be built around the things that matter to children, families and young people with SEND. Please take part in our consultation and help us to make sure that this really is a strategy for all our children and young people with SEND. We look forward to hearing from you.

Lutfur Rahman

Executive Mayor Tower Hamlets

Councillor Maium Talukdar

Deputy Mayor and Cabinet Member
for Education, Youth and Lifelong Learning



Tower Hamlets Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Inclusion Strategy: 2024–29

As a Children and Families Partnership we want Tower Hamlets to be:

A child-friendly borough where children and young people from all backgrounds thrive, are listened to, achieve their best, and have opportunities.

We are so proud of our children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). We are determined that our vision of a child-friendly borough is inclusive, where the focus is on meeting children's needs, and children of all abilities are welcome, and are nurtured to fulfil their potential.

To achieve this, our SEND and Inclusion Strategy sets out six priorities for 2024 – 29 that we believe will deliver the right support at the right time for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and their families.

These priorities were developed in discussion with young people, parents, carers and the professionals who make up our SEND Local Area workforce. They told us that there is lots to celebrate. We have great schools in Tower Hamlets and pupils with SEND achieve well. The young Our Time Ambassadors are passionate advocates for the rights of young people with SEND. Working together, we have made progress in meeting statutory requirements for assessments, Education, Health and Care Plans, and annual reviews. Families and professionals strive to do the best for children and young people, and there is a wealth of expertise and professionals who have worked in Tower Hamlets for many years.

But we don't always get things right for children and young people with SEND. Our overriding priority is delivering the right support at the right time, working closely with children and young people, and those that know them best – their families. We will focus on providing early support so that children can fulfil their potential. We have also listened to what young people have told us and included a focus on the things that make for a good childhood : fun with friends, and inclusive play, sport, leisure and youth services.

At the same time, this strategy looks to the future. As a partnership we need to make sure we have the right services, staff and funding for the next ten years. The number of children and young people needing SEND support has been rising in Tower Hamlets and beyond. Through early support and the right education placements in local schools and colleges, our strategy sets out how we intend to meet this growing need with high quality and financially sustainable services for our children and young people with SEND.

Inclusion is everyone's business. Our SEND Improvement Board brings together young people and family representatives in partnership with local decision makers from education, health and children's services. The Board is accountable to the Tower Hamlets' Health and Wellbeing Board. It will lead delivery of our SEND strategy and work with other organisations to make sure Tower Hamlets is an inclusive and child-friendly borough for every child and young person.

Priority 1: **Timely, effective and well-coordinated support for children and young people with SEND**

What we want to see

1. Strong leadership and governance, positive relationships and clear communications which build confidence and drive improvements for children with SEND and their families.
2. A whole system approach to delivering the right care, in the right place at the right time for early years, school-age children and young people through graduated pathways which everyone understands.
3. High quality case management and comprehensive management reports that are used by all partners to improve performance and make strategic decisions.
4. Statutory timelines met for all children and young people who need assessments, EHC Plans and annual reviews, with improvements in quality and the voice of the child reflected throughout.
4. Develop and implement a proactive SEND Improvement Communications plan to build parental confidence and ensure that families and professionals feel part of our improvement journey.
5. Through the new Designated Social Care Officer, deliver and implement a social care and SEND quality assurance framework and ensure high quality social care input into early intervention strategies, needs assessments and EHC plans.
6. Invest an added £400,000 to deliver high quality Education, Health and Care Plans for children who need them within statutory timeframes, with a co-production meeting as part of every EHC plan from 2024, and amendments at each Key Stage and during education transitions.
7. Improve our case management system through a 'hosted' system and an online SEN module which can be accessed by the SEN Service, parents and carers, and selected professionals in the Local Area.
8. Improve the SEND Management Information Report to inform decision-making, with performance measures across the partnership, benchmarked to assess progress
9. Use data from health visitor reviews and section 23 notifications to develop an understanding of emerging need and plan for future service provision.
10. Based on our Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and management information data, identify, understand and address inequalities in identification and support.

What will we do together?

1. Reform the SEND Improvement Board to provide strategic and focused leadership.
 2. Co-produce a shared understanding of a graduated response and inclusion across the local partnership. This will inform the universal offer, targeting of additional support, strategic commissioning and a consistent approach to growing needs.
 3. Improve joint working between health, education and social care to achieve more strategic and efficient commissioning and a greater focus on prevention.
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Priority 2: **User-friendly services for children and young people with SEND and their families**

What we want to see

1. Everything from individual plans to the strategic ambition for Tower Hamlets is shaped by the voices and views of children and young people with SEND and parents and carers.
2. Families and young people from all backgrounds can find out what they can expect from services and how the SEND system works, particularly at important moments for them.
3. All professionals have a good understanding of the support on offer and the role of different organisations
4. The number of times families and young people have to repeat information to different professionals and services is reduced.

What will we do together?

1. Launch and roll-out our SEND Co-production Charter, and review annually with professionals, parents and young people to ensure that meaningful coproduction at strategic and individual level is happening.
2. Introduce a new SEND 'front door' so that schools can access support for children easily and appropriate support can be identified systematically.
3. Develop our Local Offer so that it is accessible and supported by increased engagement, use of new technologies, and regular 'Let's Talk SEND' events.
4. Increase the impact of the independent Tower Hamlets and City SEND Information, Advice and Support Service through work with Family Hubs to ensure staff working directly with families have information about SEND services.
5. Develop support for 16 – 25-year-olds as laid out within the Minimum Standards for Information Advice and Support Services
6. Develop proposals for health passports for children and young people with SEND.
7. Gather annual feedback from children and young people with SEND about their lives, experiences and aspirations.

Priority 3: **Early identification and support for the under-fives**

What we want to see

1. Children's needs identified earlier and more consistently across different needs and characteristics.
2. Evidence-based support for young children so that needs do not escalate while they wait for an assessment
3. Parents and carers of babies and infants with SEN are supported by a confident, skilled workforce and through peer support, including before birth.
4. Fewer families feel they need to undertake lengthy statutory assessment procedures to secure the support their child needs.



What will we do together?

1. Develop and sustain a SEND Early Intervention approach and front door model, building on Family Hubs and bringing together different services in multi-disciplinary teams to meet children's needs as early as possible, through a graduated approach and increased use of group based interventions.
2. Develop and roll-out early identification and support programmes for infants as part of our Start for Life programme including a universal 12 month review, and a programme of parent-led therapy to support social and communication development in infants displaying early signs of autism.
3. Adapt and extend the Inclusion Framework and self-assessment tool to early years education settings.
4. Co-produce and implement a programme of speech and language therapy for 3 to 5 year-olds.
5. Development of pathways, skills development and communication for parents and professionals for supporting children, to include children with social communication needs as well as other areas of development

Priority 4: **A great education and support for every school-age child with SEND**

What we want to see


1. Expanding Tower Hamlets' successful inclusion model so that even more children with SEND are educated in a local mainstream school.
2. Education in state-funded settings for children who need specialist placements.
3. Well planned and supported transitions when children start primary, secondary and post-secondary education.
4. Reductions in rates of absence, suspensions and exclusions for pupils with SEND.
5. Effective planning for the long term so that current and future needs for specialist placements can be met through high quality provision in state-funded schools.

What will we do together?

1. Implement an Inclusion Framework and self-assessment tool to support inclusion for children with SEND in mainstream primary and secondary schools for whole class and SEN support levels.
2. Introduce a more consistent approach to top-up funding and expected levels of support in mainstream schools.
3. Introduce and pilot SEN Units attached to mainstream schools: specialist Additionally Resourced Provision – in key areas where there is a shortfall in specialist placements – including in Autism, Communication and Interaction; Social Emotional and Mental Health; and Severe Learning Disabilities.
4. Continue work to develop and deliver a pipeline of appropriate support and placements for children and young people with more complex needs.
5. Support and learn from programmes such as the Phoenix Specialist Classrooms project where expertise in the borough is shared to benefit children and professionals.
6. Introduce an integrated therapies package for children in school, delivering a core offer with quality-assurance and monitoring.
7. Work together to deliver evidence-based interventions and advice to support attendance and reduce suspensions and exclusions for pupils with SEND.

Priority 5: **Opportunities and support for young adults with SEND**

What we want to see

1. Planning for adulthood starting at age 14 for young people with SEND.
 2. More local education places for young people aged 16 and over with SEND.
 3. More options for vocational learning or part-time alternative provision for young people with SEND
 4. Timely and well-planned transitions for young people who will need support from adult social care services.
 5. Support for life skills such as travel training, welfare entitlements and wellbeing for young adults.
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What will we do together?

1. Increase in-borough places available to young people over the age of 16 years, especially in Autism, SEMH and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.
2. Review the offer in sixth forms to ensure inclusivity for young people working below level 2.
3. Extend the Inclusion Framework and self-assessment tool to 16+ education and college settings.
4. Increase our investment in support for 18 to 30 year-olds with SEND as they transition to adulthood.
5. Implement the Transitions Protocol and pathways for young people with EHCPs who will transition from support from Children's Social Care to Adult Social Care, with oversight by the Transitions Board, and learning from regular quality assurance audits.
6. Conduct and implement the recommendations from a Preparing for Adulthood Audit with key stakeholders.
7. Develop a wider range of support options for young people with EHCPs who do not receive support from Children's Social Care.
8. Develop and implement a three-year action plan for supported internships and apprenticeships to meet the demand from young people with SEND for pathways to employment.

Priority 6: **A borough that welcomes and celebrates children and young people with SEND and supports them to thrive**

What we want to see

1. Children and young people with SEND are visible and celebrated in Tower Hamlets
2. A SEND workforce that promotes inclusion and has appropriate skills to enable children and young people with SEND to meet their potential.
3. Children and young people with SEND and their families feel connected with friends, peers and the wider community.
4. Children and young people have fun and improve their wellbeing by taking part in play, youth, leisure, and holiday activities.
5. Children and young people with SEND feel safe and supported.

What will we do together?

1. Support for the Our Time SEND Ambassadors forum, Independent SEND Parent Carer Forum, and Parent SEND Ambassadors to advocate for inclusion at a local, regional, and national level.
2. Recognise and celebrate our children and young people with SEND.
3. Agree a coordinated workforce development plan to enhance appropriate skills and capacity for all professionals across the SEND partnership.
4. Consider how best to meet the needs of children and young people who may have undiagnosed SEND and use other local services.
5. Work with partners to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND as part of the borough's Child Healthy Weight Programme.
6. Co-produce and implement an inclusive play programme which covers infrastructure, play sessions and communications.
7. Ensure a minimum of 50% of new play equipment in park upgrades is accessible.
8. Co-design and deliver an inclusive Young Tower Hamlets service which is open to all abilities, and offers dedicated sessions for young people with SEND, supported by well-trained staff.
9. Improve accessibility to leisure services through environmental improvements, workforce development and more inclusive and holistic offer for people with disabilities, as part of bringing leisure services under council management.
10. Increase the number and range of free and low cost holiday activities that are accessible for children and young people with SEND.
11. Ensure the needs and experiences of children and young people with SEND are addressed in the Tower Hamlets Safeguarding Children Partnership's work programme around keeping children safe.

How we will measure change

	Priority	Measures
1	Timely, effective and well-coordinated support for children and young people with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent EHC plans completed within 20 week timeframe (including and excluding exceptions) • Number of SEN appeals • Number and time on waiting lists for ASD assessments. • Children and young people assessed by CAMHS within 5 weeks. • Therapy Referrals (all therapies excl. CAMHS): average waiting time after referral (weeks) • Number children on learning disability register that have received an annual health check. • Families and professionals' knowledge/feedback on outcomes achieved
2	Services that are user-friendly for children and young people with SEND and their families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual feedback survey from children, young people and parents • Percent young people and parents who rate the Local Offer as good or excellent.
3	Early identification and support for the under-fives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percent of children with good level of development at EYFS
4	A great education and support for every school-age child with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of children and young people with EHCPs being educated in Tower Hamlets. • % of children and young people with SEN support and EHCPs who are excluded, subject to fixed term exclusion or on a reduced timetable. • Absence and persistent absence rates for children and young people with SEN Support/EHCPs • Attainment for children and young people with SEN support and EHCPs
5	Opportunities and support for young adults with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit against Transitions protocol • % young adults with EHCPs receiving education in Tower Hamlets
6	A borough that welcomes and celebrates children and young people with SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people with SEND at a healthy weight. • Annual Feedback from children and young people with SEND. • Number of Children and Young People with SEND accessing Young Tower Hamlets services.

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