

Response to Tower Hamlets Local Area SEND Inspection

Children and Education Scrutiny Sub-Committee
February 28th 2022



TOWER HAMLETS



North East London
Clinical Commissioning Group

EVERY
CHANCE
for EVERY
CHILD



Our Commitment

- Leaders in Tower Hamlets are committed to delivering improvement for our children, young people and families.
- In Autumn 2020 we took stock of the severe impact of the pandemic and we reaffirmed SEND as a core and a higher priority for the Council, for the CCG and for our partners.
- We continue to increase investment in this key area as demand exceeds resources available.
- Inspectors have described our self-evaluation as accurate, clear and honest giving us confidence we know what needs to be done.



Local Area Inspection



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- Took place from the 28th June to the 2nd July 2021
- Undertaken jointly by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- Inspectors met with staff from across the local area who have responsibility for SEND.
- Parent surveys were collected and inspectors met with a number of parent groups and young people.
- Inspectors visited a selection of schools and settings.
- Outcome was that the Local Area had to produce a Written Statement of Action



Inspection Findings – system strengths

- Pace of improvement has accelerated since 2018 – notable that we have been able to maintain this through the pandemic.
- Children with SEND achieve well at school and young people are supported into employment.
- Good support to schools and early years providers for children with SEND.
- Parents and young people are involved in strategic meetings and influence decision making.
- Therapists and mental health professionals measure the effectiveness of their work with individual children and young people.
- Many services are highly regarded including SENDIASS, Behaviour and Attendance and the Sensory Service.



Inspection Findings – areas of weakness

Written Statement of Action required in respect of 4 areas:

- **Quality and oversight of EHC Plans including the annual review process**
- **ASD assessment and diagnosis waiting times**
- **Speech and language provision**
- **Communication between area leaders and parents**



Written Statement of Action



- Senior leaders accept the findings within the inspection letter and have redoubled their commitment to improvement.
- Our existing improvement plan covers most of the weaknesses identified and is reviewed regularly by the SEND Improvement Board to ensure progress is made.
- We have ensured synergy between our ongoing Improvement Plan and the WSoA.
- We welcome external challenge and support, and want to ensure maximum impact from improvement partners.
- The WSoA was submitted by 24th December 2021 deadline to the Department of Education and NHS England.



Written Statement of Action



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- The LA received confirmation on the 6th January 2022 that the WSoA was ‘deemed fit for purpose’ in setting out how the Local Area will tackle the significant weaknesses identified in the published inspection letter.
- WSoA is published on the Local Offer ([SEND Written Statement of Action \(localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk\)](https://localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk)) and is monitored by the SEND Improvement Board.
- Other areas of improvement to the SEND system remain within the SEND Improvement Plan.



Education Health and Care Plans

Objective: *Improve the quality and oversight of EHC plans including the annual review process.*

- EHC Needs Assessments and Annual Reviews have clear monitoring and tracking in place to ensure all statutory deadlines are met; and the Recovery Plan is completed in respect of all out of date assessments.
- Increase capacity of the SEN Service to ensure that Annual Reviews are monitored and processed according to statutory timescales.
- Develop internal EHCP Quality Assurance processes, including annual reviews, involving all stakeholders and partners to ensure quality continues to improve in line with the best examples seen in the inspection process.
- Set up a co-production pilot to ensure that the experiences of parents and young people input into SEN processes and improvement work.
- Improve the phase transfer process to ensure that all children and young people moving to their next stage of education have updated EHCPs, informed by a co-produced annual review, with clear Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes where required.
- Monthly reporting of EHCP performance and quality; accountability to the SEND Improvement Board; Children & Families Executive; and Health & Wellbeing Board.



Autistic Spectrum Disorder

Objective: *Reduce waiting times for ASD assessment and to review & improve the full holistic pathway for children and families pre, during and post diagnosis*

- CCG have invested an additional £278k over two years to support the ASDAS to increase capacity to complete assessments backlog and reduce the overall waiting times for children and families which were greatly impacted by Covid-19 pandemic.
- Barts Health have submitted a 'recovery plan' set over two years utilising the additional investment to bring the waiting time for assessment inline with NICE guidance.
- ASD Pathway Review Group will have oversight of the delivery of the recovery plan and report back.
- ASD Pathway Review Group has two subgroups and includes parent representatives:
 - **Subgroup 1 - ASD Assessment Timeliness and Diagnostic Pathway:** focus on streamlining processes within a revised pathway which parents, families and professionals can clearly understand.
 - **Subgroup 2 – Family Support Pre/Post Diagnosis:** Map existing support across all agencies, highlighting gaps and artificial barriers to families receiving support, then fill gaps, remove barriers and communicate clearly with families how to access support.



Speech and Language Therapy Commissioning

Objective: *Design and implement an integrated commissioning model for therapies across the local area and to increase SLT provision to ensure the existing in gap for children aged 3-5 is resourced to ensure they are able to receive an intervention when a need is identified*

- Children's Integrated Therapy Steering Group (CIT) is tasked with producing a systemwide commissioning model across all therapies (SALT, OT, OH), which will either pool or align TH/CCG budgets to commissioning joined up therapy provision within a 0-25 integrated pathway.
- The focus of the model to date is to identify and intervene at an earlier stage to ensure children receive the right support at the right time and to reduce acuity of needs by the time children enter statutory school age.
- A strand of the group has been expedited for immediate attention, this being the gap in service for children aged 3-5, where currently there is not formal commissioned service to carry out an intervention.
- An initial business case has been considered by TH/CCG which would meet the identified gap. The second iteration of the business case will focus on ensuring parent and families agree with the model(s) to address the gap, the projected impact is modelled into the entire therapies pathway and to ensure the resourcing is commensurate with the principles of the CIT to drive an integrated model with Health, Education and Early Years services.



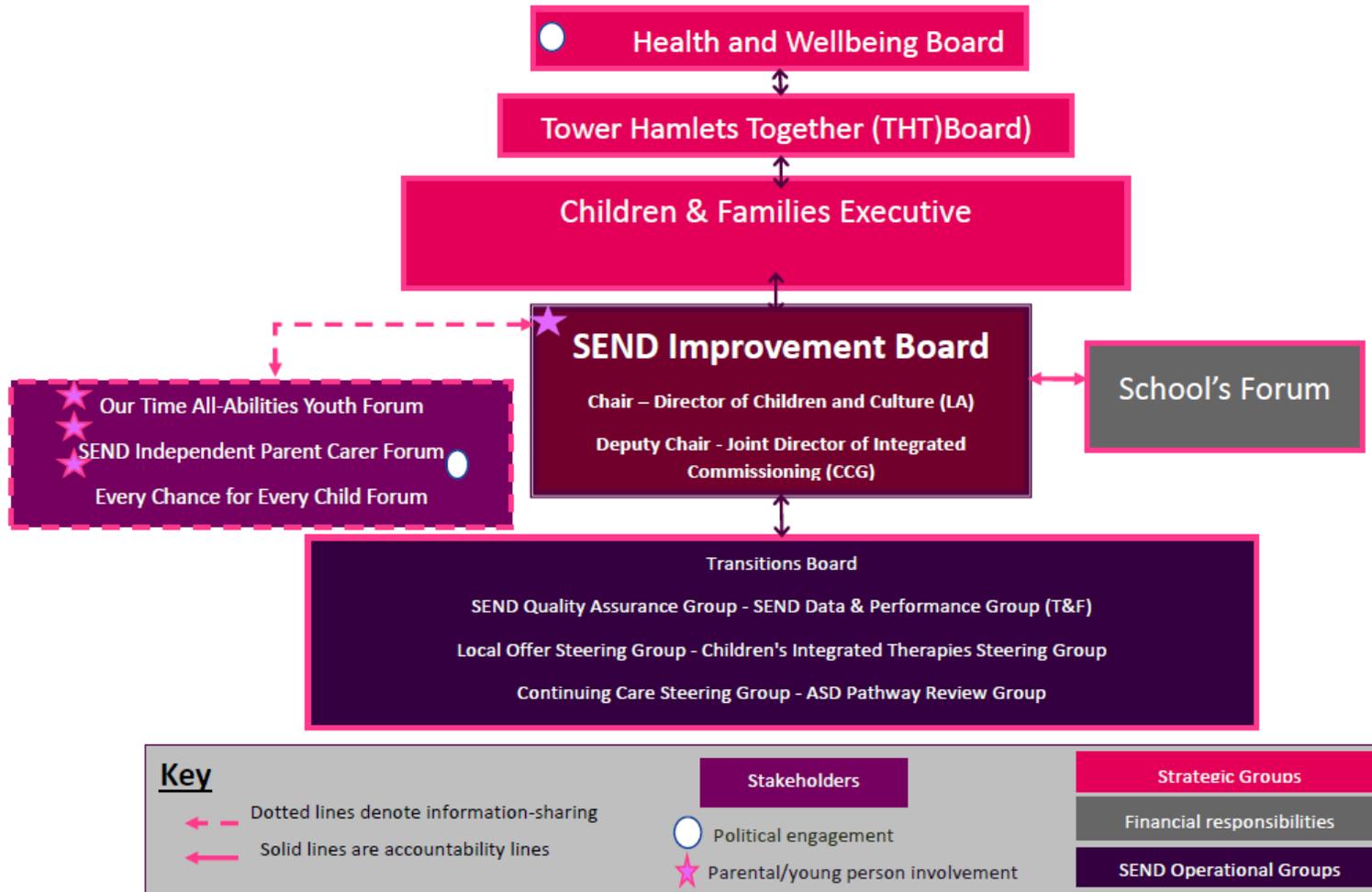
Communication between parents and area leaders

Objective: to develop and co-produce a Parent Engagement strategy across the local area

- A clear communication strategy which encompasses the Local Offer, social media, *Let's Talk SEND*, SEND Newsletter (with *spotlight* contributions from parents/carers) and parents/carers' 'evenings' for children at key transition points.
- Termly *Let's Talk SEND* listening events (with Director of Education, DMO, DCO, PCF, PFSS, SENDIASS) with parents/carers, children and young people to continuously update them on services available and provide progress reports on the local area's strategic plans
- SEND champions promote key messages on the local area's improvement activities and provide feedback on service delivery and the 'lived experiences' of families
- Progress of engagement activities captured through 'You said - We did', are shared with parents/carers at least quarterly/termly
- Regular reports and feedback to parents from the SEND Improvement Board to include progress on the areas for development in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA)



Governance and Accountability



SEND Improvement Board



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Accountability



- Progress on the actions in the Written Statement of Action are being reported to the SEND Improvement Board
- Local Area leaders will meet regularly with the DfE and NHSE, informally and formally, to update on progress. Formal meetings will take place every six months.
- A new inspection framework is being introduced and this means that the Local Area will next be inspected under the new inspection framework and will not be subject to a revisit under the current inspection framework.

