

Heads of Services Q&A panel session

Below is a summary of the questions discussed at the Our Voice Parents' Conference on 28th November 2019, with a panel composed of the Heads of Service areas from across the Local Authority and Health Services. Additionally, we have included further questions which were submitted by parents, and which we did not have time to cover within the session, which have subsequently been answered by the respective Heads of Service.

SEN Services and Education

1. Q: I have been told that if a child is in the sixth form, the LA will not fund any subsequent Further Education if they deem that the child has had 'enough education'. Is this correct and on what basis would such a decision be made? What legislation is this approach based on? Advice from IPSEA suggests that this is not lawful.

A: We clearly do not have a high needs funding policy that sets out such an approach. All young people have an entitlement to education up to age 19, with or without an EHCP - as set out in the Raising of the Participation Age legislation introduced a number of years ago. The DfE funding guidance however suggests that at 19 it is anticipated that a large number of young people in possession of an EHCP will have achieved their educational targets and will no longer require an EHCP. At age 19 we expect that all learners in possession of an EHCP have educational targets set within the context of Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) outcomes: employment, further/higher education and/or independent living skills. Where these PfA outcomes are clearly set out we would continue to fund educational programmes, monitored for suitable progress each year for a further three years when we would expect all educational outcomes linked to PfA to have been achieved. All cases are considered individually. It is with this funding framework that we should introduce curriculum aimed at supporting those PfA pathways as early as possible, this will help to eliminate any perceived cliff edge at 19 and 22.

2. Q: How is the LA ensuring that as many pupils who are home educated, really wish to be home educated, and are not just staying at home because schools don't want to or say that, they can't meet their needs? How are you bringing these pupils back in to a school placement?

A: The choice to Electively Home Educate lies with the parent. When we are advised that a parent has chosen to Home Educate with an EHCP, we contact the parent and meet with the school and parent to discuss the reasons for Home education. If it is agreed that the parent wants to go ahead, then there is a review carried out by the Learning Consultants and review the Plan. When a parent indicates that they wish their child/young person to return to education, then the normal process applies.

In some cases, the SEN team may feel that the move is not at the parents' request but is as a result of the school trying to move a child on (for example, where it is challenging for them to provide the required support) or parents may feel that they have no choice but to remove a child from a school (for example, where a child is being bullied and not adequately supported by the school). In these cases, the SEN team is happy to challenge the school. If a parent is not happy and feels their child is being forced out of a school it is important that they should get in touch with the SEN team as a matter of urgency, whilst the child is still on the school roll, as it is much easier for them to effectively challenge at that point.

3. Q: Legislation states that provision in the EHCP should be SMART and must state who is doing what, when and for how long/often. However, in many Plans wording around provision uses phrases such as “access to” or “will need adult support”. Will the SEND team ensure that going forwards, provision in Plans are more specific?

A: We aim to make the provision specific as far as possible but fall short, at this time, of directing schools regarding the length of time allocated to a specific activity as it can restrict the school’s deployment of staff and resources. Access to adult support could be the teacher/another staff member. The difficulty remains that the SEN Service do not know all staff personnel/roles in all schools for them to name an individual or role (including Out of Borough) and if a specific amount of time is dedicated to all provision, this could lead the school to refusing to admit because they are unable to meet the needs.

The SEN Service takes provision from the Advice that is completed by the professionals and this should be matched to the outcomes in the Plan. There would be a difference in provision between the mainstream and special school Plans as so much is embedded in the Special School.

There is an EHCP Review group that is working on the whole statutory time-frame and the Plans to ensure Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) outcomes are included and look at specificity.

4. Q: SEN Services department does not adhere to any time scales and will not answer the phone, reply or acknowledge emails or return messages left on the answer machine. Basically, the SEN Services Department in Enfield is not fit for purpose. Why is that?

A: It is disappointing that you are finding this to be the case. The timescales regarding the statutory assessment have greatly improved to an average of 60% completed on time. This previously sat at 3.5%. the 60% is lower than actual on account of the backlog which accumulated during the conversion process.

Over the past year there has been a concentrated effort to raise the level of communication by the SEND Service with all stakeholders. We have a generic phone number which is manned by three staff at any one time. Unfortunately, there is no option on this line to have a voicemail service or an engaged tone. If a message is left for individual officers, they aim to return calls within 24 hours of the message being left – if you have left details.

At this time a regrowth structure has been agreed by the council which will increase to staffing to about 25 staff – there are 14 staff at present. The demand for EHCPs has risen significantly – about 25-30 requests weekly for a statutory assessment. The Advisory Officers currently hold a case-load of between 350-400 each.

UPDATE: Following the conference, a change has been implemented to the phone system. Callers will now hear a recorded message so that they know that they are being held in a queue (or that the department is closed for the day and they need to ring back). The team will also be getting a separate phone line for calls from professionals, which should make it easier for parents to get through on the main line.

5. Q: When children are given a specified number of hours support as part of their EHCP, why do the school not use this for 1:1 support for the child, but instead use the funding for staff already on the school payroll? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: Children are given “resources equivalent to x number of TA hours”. How this funding is spent is at the discretion of the school. It may be used for a variety of resources: TA, programmes or interventions – for example. It is not always used for TA support. Remember that all the research

from the Education Endowment Funding Project showed that 1-1 support resulted in a dis-enabling of pupils and they became too dependent on the TA.

6. Q: What is Enfield Council doing about the lack of school places for High functioning autistic children as there is currently little or no provision, and mainstream schools are not supporting their needs appropriately? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: Children are given “resources equivalent to x number of TA hours”. How this funding is spent is at the discretion of the school. It may be used for a variety of resources: TA, programmes or interventions – for example. It is not always used for TA support. Remember that all the research from the Education Endowment Funding Project showed that 1-1 support resulted in a dis-enabling of pupils and they became too dependent on the TA.

7. Q: My child has not had an annual review for more than 2 years now. What is happening and what are the plans to get this sorted out? What training and support are schools and SENCOs getting in order to get this right? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: We appreciate that there have been some difficulties around the Annual Review process Annual Reviews are a priority within the Service. There is a programme underway currently which has been shared with all schools – focus remains on transition points although all years are incorporated

Recruiting to the SEN Service to a separate team in order to process these (approx. 2800 to process annually) Work flow developed for the IT system in Service

Schools have received Notes of Guidance and been offered training 3 days every week for the whole month of November on a drop-in basis. Hope to refresh this training later in the year

Services have also been offered training

There has been a clarification of terminology for schools to clarify an Annual Review and a Placement Review

We have co-ordinated with SENDIASS and shared our training. Also linked in with Our Voice

8. Q: Our Voice recently worked with the Local Authority to put guidance in place in respect of Dyslexia and other Specific Learning Difficulties. How is that guidance being implemented in an environment where schools are facing a serious funding gap? We are aware of schools who have recently cut their additional support groups due to lack of funding. Is there any way schools can be held accountable when they fail to provide the support that is needed? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: The guidance was developed and is being shared with schools. A lot of the reasonable adjustments for dyslexia can be covered by schools without a lot of expense.

Aware that schools are doing their best with the level of austerity and they will prioritise their funding. If a school is not offering the provision outlined on an EHCP – this needs to be drawn to their attention. Schools have a responsibility to meet the needs and put the provision into place. If they cannot – or if the provision is no longer required – this should be dealt with at the Annual Review. Schools should be advising SEN Service.

9. Q: At the last conference parents raised concerns around out of borough provision and lack of SALT, OT and Physio even when written into the Plan. What action has been taken since February to resolve this issue? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: The SEND Service have been commissioning extra Health Services to meet this provision

10. Q: (See Joint response under Health) Parents seem to be bounced backwards and forwards between Health and Education, with neither addressing the issue. E.g. for provision of SALT, or OT support or equipment needed both in school and at home. What can be done to rectify this? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: from SEN Services: The SEN Service have a salaried OT working with them – although on maternity leave to return later in the year.

I personally have agreed equipment to meet needs for schools. The equipment follows the child. Consideration has to be given to whether it is meeting a Health need or an Educational need – if in school, it is an educational need.

Short breaks

11. Q: What are the criteria for a Carer's assessment? Does the child we are caring for have to be profoundly disabled to qualify?

A: A Carers assessment can be undertaken when requested by parents of disabled children. The definition of a disabled child is set out in the Children's Act 1989 " a disabled child is defined as someone under 18 years who is blind, deaf or dumb or who suffers from a mental disorder of any description or who is substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disabilities as may be prescribed"

There are several assessments that gather information about parent's needs. The Joint Service referral/assessment form details information about the parents physical and emotional wellbeing, the family's support networks, the suitability of the living accommodation and access to benefits.

Where the needs of the child and family are complex, and it is likely that extensive specialist support and services might be required, it may be appropriate for a Child & Family Assessment, completed by a social worker, to be undertaken. This is a holistic assessment which makes recommendations about the support a family may need. The needs of the parent/carer are addressed within this assessment.

If a family is in receipt of services and support and feel that these no longer meet their family's needs, a short break review can be requested, again this addresses the parent/carers needs.

So, while parents can request a carers assessment we want to minimise the burden of ongoing assessments and aim to address parent/carers needs in the assessments outlined above.

12. Q: Why has the Short Breaks entitlement not increased during the last 10 years, at least in line with inflation?

A: All Local Authorities are experiencing significant financial challenges.

In many Boroughs the short breaks offer has reduced, and we are pleased that in Enfield we have been able to maintain the short breaks offer.

There is an increasing pressure on the short breaks budget. In 2018/19 the JSDC received 180 new referrals for short breaks and from April 2019 to Sept 2019 we have received 132 new referrals

The JSDC continues to respond to the needs of disabled children who are at risk of harm and to families that require intensive services and support due to the complexity of needs with the need to continue to provide a range of short breaks.

The introduction of Short break grants has allowed parents to be flexible and creative in how they use the grant funding to meet their child's needs. The short break grants are a contribution from the Local Authority towards the cost of services and activities for your child.

Another pressure on the short breaks budget is requests for transport, transport costs are high, and this reduces the funding available for short breaks.

If a parent feels that the current short breaks does not meet their needs, they should contact the Joint Service for Disabled Children and ask for a review to be undertaken.

Information about Short Breaks can be found on the Local Offer website – www.enfield.gov.uk/SEND the main source of information about all SEND Provision in the Borough. Work is currently ongoing to improve the clarity and accessibility of information on the Local Offer.

13. Q: There seems to be very limited provision for Short Breaks for children aged under 8 – what is in place?

A: Many providers don't cater for children under 8 years of age because this means they will need to be registered with Ofsted.

Play schemes tend to offer services to children aged 8 years plus.

Children aged 5 – 7 years, that are eligible for services and support from the JSDC, are offered a short break grant 'Activityplus', are invited to attend family fun-days and stay and play sessions during school holidays.

There are some local play-scheme providers that offer services to children under 8 years. Some schools do have after school and holiday clubs for children under 8 years.

Parents need to encourage their schools to consider extending their provision to include after school and holiday schemes. For example, at West Lea school, following requests from parents, a rich offer is now available for children including those under 8 years. However, extended school funding has been reduced in recent years.

14. Q: There doesn't appear to be enough providers for Short Breaks – what are the LA doing to attract new providers? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: We are working with the SEND Commissioner to continue to extend the range of short breaks available in Enfield. We have contacted neighbouring boroughs to consider whether there are providers who could deliver services in Enfield.

The introduction of short break grants has enabled parents to be creative about the activities and services that their child accesses and we have seen many examples of how funds are being used to build a personalised short breaks plan.

The JSDC supports local providers by offering specialist training to their staff teams at no cost.

Enfield's special schools continue to work in partnership with the JSDC and offer venues for schemes at a reduced rate.

We are delighted that the ALWA scheme opened in October half term and will be delivering play schemes during all school holidays.

Health

15. Q: What actions are being taken to speed up the diagnoses of conditions such as Autism. In some cases, it has taken school exclusion and suicide attempts to lead to a diagnosis?

A: There has been a national increase in the number of referrals for ASD –in Enfield like elsewhere the demand has had an impact on the waiting time. Increased funding in the CDT for additional posts is helping with reducing this waiting list so all the children waiting for a diagnostic clinic will be seen by the end of March 2020. We are streamlining the diagnostic process so children waiting for their first appointment with a Paediatrician for a General Developmental Assessment will also be seamlessly assessed if ASD is a concern. At present there is a waiting list for General Developmental Assessments and plans are being discussed to also promptly manage the list. If parents have increasing concerns, the child will be prioritised to be seen earlier. Whilst waiting for diagnosis, children are getting, and families are accessing, interventions through SLT which includes parent groups, OT and Psychological Therapy.

16. Q: There still seems to be a significant lack of support in several areas e.g. speech and language. What is being done to address this and who is accountable?

A: The joint commissioners monitor the current arrangements and are aware of the increase in the level of need. As a provider of services, we report monthly on referrals /activity and the partnership works closely to maximise the use of finite resources

There is also more flexibility with schools able to commission a range of support directly from delegated budgets.

SLT support is in place for all children including children with EHCPs. For children with an EHCP the SLT provision is planned reviewed and delivery monitored consistently. For CYP with additional support needs we provide direct input but also work with settings to enable prompt identification and intervention with a training offer and joint working so settings /parents can confidently deliver the support.

However, there is recognition that there is more to be done in early provision for CYP with SLCN. Currently, a local area review is taking place to assess the local needs and where more needs to be delivered. The recommendations will inform a plan on how to redesign a model that addresses any current gaps. This plan will be designed with parents and partners.

17. Q: Parents are still experiencing difficulty in getting support for children placed out of Borough. What is being done to address this problem? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: For Children and Young People placed out of borough the local authority and the CCG oversee the provision. The general rule is that the responsible CCG is where the child is registered to a GP practice.

When health is a special educational provision the local authority will make suitable arrangements for provision to be in place.

If it is a health provision, then the health providers will liaise and work collaboratively to deliver the provision and provide continuity of care especially during school holidays.

Across North Central London, partners are working together to develop mutual agreements so that cross border provision is accessible to any children with an EHCP.

18. Q: There seems to be a lack of Occupational Therapists with sensory processing experience to support children on the Autistic Spectrum. Is anything being done to address this? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: Sensory difficulties are often part of a developmental profile in ASD /ADHD /Mental Health and OTs will always consider sensory factors as part of a comprehensive occupational therapy assessment in the context of skills development, improving performance and participation. OT intervention is to help manage the sensory needs of the child/young person by adapting environments, modifying tasks and developing self-management strategies.

Studies on the value of Sensory Integration Therapy remain inconclusive and are therefore not considered justifiable and cost effective. Sensory processing disorder is not recognised as a distinct diagnosis by the Professional Body or the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual

19. Q: (See Joint response under SEN/ Education) Parents seem to be bounced backwards and forwards between Health and Education, with neither addressing the issue. E.g. for provision of SALT, or OT support or equipment needed both in school and at home. What can be done to rectify this? (Question not discussed at conference)

A: SLT /OT is jointly funded and arranged .The LA funds an OT post and a number of SLT posts. The provision is recommended by the OT/SLT as part of the Needs assessment. We work collaboratively with the LA and CCG to make sure the child/young person's needs are being met in relation to provision

Equipment at school, home adaptations and home equipment are provided by the LA;
Health provides medical equipment

Integrated Community Equipment services jointly funded supply specialists beds /wheelchairs /seating systems /mobility equipment

Alternative and Augmentative Communication high tech devices are provided by NHS England – Enfield has a highly specialist SLT who works with the Central Hub in the assessment /provision of Devices

CAMHS

20. Q: There is a particular problem at transition – if a YP is referred at 17, they could be waiting until they are 18 and then have to move to the adults waiting list, where they are at the back of the queue again – this can't be right. Why can't the wait time in Children's be accepted and go straight into adults ahead of the queue (proportionately).

A: We are aware of this being an issue, and we now encourage individuals to go directly to adult services when this is likely to be the case. We are working hard to encourage schools, GPs and parents to think about the impact of transition, as it is better to have continuity with the same therapist providing support. It should be noted that there are very different thresholds of support between the child and adult services. Our Voice noted plans to change this, contained within the NHS Long term plan.

Transport

22. Q: How are escorts being trained to support the children on their routes, particularly those with challenging behaviour? We understand that Positive Behaviour Support training has now been agreed for escorts – how will you ensure that this is mandated for all appropriate staff?

A: We are working closely with schools to look at training and are planning for all 300 escorts to receive training over the next couple of months.

23. Q: Every year there seem to be changes to our transport services and the escort that accompanies our child. These changes are particularly difficult for a child with autism (who needs stability) to deal with.

A: The Transport operation is a very complex one, involving large numbers of children and we do need to think about routing efficiency as it is important for us to get children to school on time. Changes will be needed as children move school and home, and new children qualify for Transport. However, we are mindful of the need for consistency and aim to achieve this as far as possible. We are trying to bring as much of the service back in house as possible (as opposed to using contractors) and this should help to improve consistency.

24. Q: We have heard about drivers being given additional training. Does this mean that there are plans to get rid of escorts?

A: No, absolutely not.

EPS

25. Q: How does the EP service support those children on SEN support in schools and other settings?

- A: We expect that at the point of our involvement, schools and families are already working together to understand and meet individual children's needs in the school environment.
- The EP Service would first join the school and family in a meeting (this might involve the child where appropriate). There would be a discussion about that child's strengths/areas for concerns and interventions, key areas that we want to develop (usually written as a target or outcome) and strategies that are helpful or could help. The school will usually include this information in a Support Plan. Following this meeting there would be agreement about the next steps. This might involve further EP involvement (observation, assessment or meeting with the teacher or parent or other professionals) but what is needed will depend on each individual situation. Any work would be carried out and then there would usually be a further meeting with the school and family to review the progress and discuss new information. A Summary of Involvement or Report would be provided.
- EPs, in their schools, will have various conversations with teachers in order to support schools with their SEN practice generally. This can involve training on different areas.
- In the Early Years (before a child has started school), we meet with children/families at home/settings on a termly basis to think through their progress and what next steps might be. Our assessments at this stage can take many forms, mainly observation. We also often link with other services to ensure that there is a collective approach to understanding a child's needs. We then collaboratively put together a plan for how we will help over the next term.

26. Q: At what point is a child able to see an Educational Psychologist? This is still not clear.

- A: In order for an EP to see a child, a formal Request for EP Involvement will need to be made by a school (if they purchase our service). To allow this to happen, a parent/carer must give written consent. The timing of this is always dependent on individual schools and individual cases. There are planning meetings that take place in all of our schools to discuss priorities for EP involvement.

27. Q: We have been told that we need an EP report for Transition – is that correct? For example, we have heard that an EP report is needed when a child moves from a Mainstream school to a Special

School – is that correct and is it always the case?

- A: It depends on the circumstances. For children with an EHCP, the Local Authority requests EP involvement for instances where there are significant changes to a child's SEND or whether there are concerns around a provision's ability to meet a child's needs. A report is needed if there are significant changes needed for the EHCP and that this is reliant on information from the EP Service.

IDLS

28. Q: My child meets the criteria for Child Services, but I have been hearing that the threshold for Adult Services is much higher. Is this true and how do you make sure that the young person's needs are met?

- A: Threshold for adults is defined under the Care Act 2014. The Care Act says that if a child, young carer or an adult caring for a child is likely to have needs when they, or the child they care for, turns 18, the local authority must assess them if it considers there is 'significant benefit' to the individual in doing so. In Enfield, we complete a Moving On assessment for those who are likely to have support needs as they transition into adulthood
- The Care Act places a duty on local authorities to assess adult carers before the child they care for turns 18, so that they have the information they need to plan for their future. This is referred to as a transition assessment.

29. Q: How are you supporting and engaging colleges to support children with special needs effectively?

A: We have a comprehensive transition process and a series of events that involve parents and carers. We start working with schools and pupils at the age of 16, working closely with teachers and individuals, their parents and carers. We attend reviews from 17 and start our assessment and support planning at that point.

30. Q: How do you support independence skills for young people with special needs?

A: we support young people to be as independent as they can through considering, for example, transport and travel; supported living and identifying what support is needed for each person through assessment and support planning which promotes independence. We involve parents and carers in assessment and planning for the transition into adulthood, current and future wants and needs.

31. Q: We hear about Moving On events through Our Voice, but others don't know about them. How do they find out, especially if they are currently in a mainstream school?

A: We have published a booklet this year, which contains information about Moving On events. You can look on the Enfield Council Website at the My Life Enfield page which provides information about Moving On, what you can expect, and the events scheduled in for the year.