

**Brent Self-Evaluation for SEND
January 2024**

**We want our children and young people to be able to:
'Dream big, achieve well, have choice and control, and lead
happy, fulfilled lives' (SEND Strategy 2021-2025)**



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in England, with significant communities of Black and Asian heritage. In the context of high levels of deprivation, increasing demand for services that support children with SEND has highlighted inequalities and vulnerabilities across the borough. The local area partnership is very aware of what needs to be done to ensure that all children with SEND get access to the support that they need through a number of identified priority programmes.
- 1.2 Building on the outcome of the previous inspections of local authority SEND services in 2017 and 2019, this SEF has been developed with input from a range of partners, including parents and carers through the Inclusion Strategic Board.

2.0 Children and young people's needs are identified accurately and most are assessed in a timely and effective way.

- 2.1 A significant increase in EHCPs over the past 5 years demonstrate that children's needs are being identified (see paragraphs 9.2-9.5). In December 2023 there were 3435 children and young people with an EHCP compared to 3235 in December 2022. In 2022 there were 468 initial requests for EHC assessment, of which 116 were refused (24.8%) and 182 plans ceased. In 2023 there were 601 initial requests for EHC assessment, of which 179 were refused (29.8%). In 2022, 321 new plans were issued of which 62% started by the age of 4), whereas in 2023 there were 460 new plans issued of which 39.8% were for under 5s and 48.5% were for children aged 5-10. An increase in the number of under 5s issued with an EHCP aligns with the rapid increase in numbers of under 5s diagnosed with ASD (the need identified in 33.9% of new EHCPs in 2023). While the quality of decisions to assess for an EHCP are appropriate in most cases, through the DFE's Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme, work is underway to consider how the needs of under 5s may be better met through alternate early intervention approaches (see paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3).
- 2.2 There are several routes for early identification in Brent, which includes the Early Years Panel that administers the Early Years Intervention Fund from the High Needs Block. The Panel is a multi-disciplinary panel with representatives from the Early Years Inclusion team, the Children with Disabilities team, therapy service providers, Brent Outreach Autism Team (BOAT), Primary SENCOs and from the Brent specialist nurseries or enhanced provision. All children with high level SEND from their 3rd birthday can apply for 15 hours of funding support per week for 38 weeks of the year at one of the specialist nurseries to provide an increased adult: child ratio. A total of 276 children were supported through the Early Years Panel in the 2022/23 academic year, which included 135 children who were in their second year of support funding; 77 requests were declined, demonstrating rigour in the funding allocation process. Health professionals provide regular support to children attending the specialist nurseries and enhanced provision. These professionals include occupational therapy, physiotherapy, community nursing and speech and language therapy. There are currently 3 Brent specialist provisions at the Curzon and Fawood Federation, Granville Plus Nursery School and at

the Willow childcare enhanced provision. The specialist provisions provide high quality pre-booked spaces for children with a range of SEND.

- 2.3 A multidisciplinary Section 23 panel was established in September 2022 and, in supporting earlier notification of children with SEND, is allowing for earlier strategic planning and commissioning of services. This is proving effective at identifying children with additional needs – there were 131 health notifications in the 2022/23 academic year compared to 81 at the same time in 2021/22. The main identified needs were ASD, global developmental delay and speech, language, and communication needs.
- 2.4 The increase in demand has not impacted on the timeliness of decisions to move to an assessment for an EHCP (100% at 6 weeks and 98% at 2 weeks) but has impacted on the timeliness of finalising EHCPs due to pressures on social care, Educational Psychology (EP) and health teams. To address this, the Council has invested an additional £1.2m investment in the EP and SEND 0-25 Teams. A focused workshop with key staff has looked at the barriers to achieving good assessment reports in time and a new management dashboard has been developed to track the timeliness of assessments. Despite this the percentage of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks by the end of 2023 remains an area of concern with 37.6% achieved in 2023. The local authority is focusing on EHCPs being issued as soon as possible. Management oversight has increased so that plans are finalised by senior officers within 24 hours of all assessments being completed. The average annual performance over the past year has been impacted by delays over the summer/early autumn term. This is in part due to a peak in EHCP requests towards the end of the summer term from nurseries and PVI's. The Early Years Inclusion team is supporting the early years sector on the ECHP process and how to identify needs and the Early Years Panel is promoting early identification and fast-tracking of pre-school children with complex needs who are likely to require an ECHP assessment. In the context of the DBV programme, a new quality assurance team has been established to help to ensure that children and young people's needs are identified accurately and effectively.
- 2.5 Whilst demand pressures have caused delays in the proportion of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks, additional support is given to vulnerable children including looked after children (LAC) and those with a social worker via an allocated Educational Psychologist (EP) to the Virtual School. In the 2022/23 academic year 18 children were supported, most of whom were in Key Stage 4. The predominant areas of need identified at referral were cognition and learning, social and emotional concerns and mental well-being. 12 LAC were supported at SEN support and 4 for EHC assessment. Emergent themes have been emotionally based school avoidance, gender identity, behaviour traits rooted in trauma, and neurodiversity. Consequently, there has been direct work with designated teachers and foster carers to ensure that children's needs are met appropriately. Additionally, the Educational Psychology (EP) service has led on Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) training across all settings and schools funded by the Council and the delivery of an Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) programme.
- 2.6 The 0-25 Children with Disabilities Teams received positive feedback in the ILACS inspection of February 2023, which noted the high-quality support that disabled children

received. The staff in the team identify and assess children's needs well and ensure detailed action plans are in place to help them progress. The 0-25 Team currently has 795 open cases, of whom 613 are children and young people with an EHCP. 16 of the open cases are LAC and 33 are being supported by a CP plan, with the remainder supported by a CIN plan. Of those young people currently known to the 0-25 Team, 108 are aged 19-25 Further work is being undertaken with health colleagues on processes to ensure an effective transition protocol for those young people qualifying for adult social care services and continuing health care and those who do not.

- **Feedback on services**

Children with Disabilities

'It was a pleasure to read such an informative CFA with a clear plan of support for Child C moving forward' (professional)

'I wanted to email you on behalf of (Provider Home) to express our appreciation for X (Social Worker). It's very seldom when you come across a social worker, who genuinely cares for the children they support, the social worker shows her compassion through her work, the families express to me their admiration and love they have for her. She is efficient, professional and just an all-round amazing person to work with.' (Residential home)

- **Evidence sources:**

SEND 0-25 Management Dashboard; Brent Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2022/23; Monthly Performance Report and dashboard 2022/23 and 2023/24; Inclusion Board papers 2022/23 and 2023/24; Inclusion Board Dashboard 2022/23 and 2023/24; Report on Development Options for the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service February 2022; Report on Education Psychology Service Recruitment and Retention June 2023.

3.0 In Brent children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

3.1 The voice of parents and children/young people is a key element in the quality assurance of EHCP assessments, plans and reviews. Brent SEND caseworkers actively support children and their families to shape or amend their child's plans and support in both EHCP development and annual reviews. During phase transfer the local authority works with families and children and young people to explore the options of school transfer and 100% of children passed through the year 6/7 phase transfer process in February 2023 with an agreed destination. To ensure the most appropriate fit of school placement, the SEND 0-25 team provide advice to parents/carers about provision and how well it might meet the needs of a child/young person. In some cases, parental confidence in and knowledge of schools and how the system operates can present challenges to finalising plans and securing provision that will support a child to thrive in a timely way. In one case, a school felt unable to meet a child's needs despite the school being named and a referral was made to the Secretary of State (August 2023). In November 2023, the Brent Supported Employment Forum hosted a system wide careers and post-14 information event called 'Branching Out' to ensure that young people and parents/carers can make effective decisions about their child's post-16 education pathway as part of

the post-14 annual review. Around 300 Brent residents, which included 100 young people attended the event to speak to over 30 local organisations.

- 3.2 To ensure that the LA understands parental experience in decision-making, parental feedback was independently collated on behalf of the SEND 0-25 Team through contacting parents four weeks after the issue of their child's initial finalised EHCP for their views on the assessment process between May 2021 and October 2022. 151 parents/carers were contacted, 89% of the feedback indicated that parents were more than satisfied. The main areas of negative feedback are that processes take too long, there are too many delays and parents are not kept updated. Positive feedback included complimentary comments about SEND Officers, that they were regularly contacted and communication from the SEND 0-25 team was good and that, while the process was difficult, they were satisfied with the outcome. The local authority has been implementing changes based on the feedback, for example a refresh of the information provided on the EHCP decision making process and development of a new EHCP template. Further parental feedback will be collated in 2024 to assess effectiveness.
- 3.3 In March 2021, a new EHC decision making panel was introduced to enable system wide decision making for EHC assessments and plans, ensuring transparency. A weekly panel, chaired by the Statutory SEND Service Manager, is attended by representatives from across health, schools and settings and social care, including the DCO who provides clinical oversight for assessments and plans. Where assessments or plans are not progressed, a 'way forward' meeting is held with the referring agency, school and parents/carers to discuss the findings of the panel and the reasons why at that time an assessment or plan is not progressing. In 2022/23 there were 69 way forward meetings. Themes arising from these meetings include pupils requiring a healthcare plan and health support but not educational support; schools and parents seeing an EHCP as the route to access CAMHs and schools not considering how the full resources available to them could meet the needs of children at SEN support. Feedback from these meetings has fed into training for SENCOs and whole school training, interventions, graduated approach reviews and provision mapping reviews through DBV programme and training for mental health professionals on SEND.
- 3.4 The low number of complaints and tribunals in Brent provides evidence that parents feel involved in decision-making. The SEND 0-25 Team received 41 complaints from residents during the 2022/23 academic year. 13 were not upheld, 11 were upheld and 17 were partly upheld. Themes arising from complaints include communication with parents, Annual Review delays, delays in securing special school placements or access to therapy provision. A further 45 MP/Members enquiries in 2022/23 academic year raised questions about operational services and how decisions are made; queried decisions taken on behalf of some parents and raised parent requests for special school placements.
- 3.5 In the period September 2022 to August 2023, there were 52 appeals regarding decisions on EHCPs, with 37 closed during the academic year. As of 15 January 2024, there were 16 live appeals at first stage tribunal of which 6 related to a refusal to assess, 3 related to not issuing an EHCP and the remainder related to placements and/or provisions. Mediation, commissioned from an independent provider is in place and available for parents/carers to access. In addition, SENDIASS offer independent support to families and training to parents and carers via the BPCF.

3.6 SENDIASS provides an effective service and service feedback continues to evidence high levels of satisfaction in the independent advice received, through the training offer, helpline and individual case support. Data shows Brent SENDIASS is seen as impartial by the vast majority of those accessing the service. The number of calls received increased in 2022/23 from 2021/22 from 822 to 1194; and referrals increased during the same period from 516 to 534. In the main these reflect an increase in 'no to assess' decisions and the need for formal mediations. 7 out of the 9 mediation sessions held, which were supported by SENDIASS, record the service as having actively prevented the need for an appeal to be lodged as an agreement was reached through mediation.

- **Feedback on services**

SENDIASS

'The support received was a great relief, even more when you are dealing with unfamiliar procedures.' (parent)

'I got in touch with you through my son's social worker and from then I was able to resolve any problems with you.' (parent)

Impact of the EHCP

'My child was mute in hospital but now he is talking and expressing himself.' (Parent)

'EHCP has been instrumental to my child's change.' (Parent)

'Make the EHCP plan clearer for parents. Provide more details. Would like more dedicated support for her child. Want the support as detailed on paper.' (BPCF)

'I have made a complaint about the lack of support, the delay in diagnosis and writing the EHCP report.' (Parent)

'Would like to move child to a school which can support her child as she wants a positive outcome. Wants support to find her son a suitable school and activities for her child' (SENDIASS)

- **Evidence sources:**

Response to a school's referral to Secretary of State; Terms of Reference, Action Plan, Project Plan and minutes for Supported Employment Forum; EHCP Multiagency Quality Assurance Report 2022/23; Overview of Brent EHC Need Assessment and revised EHCP template; Complaints, Tribunals and Compliments Annual report 2022/23; Brent SENDIASS Annual Report 2022/23

4.0 Children and young people in Brent receive the right help and support at the right time.

4.1 Overall children and young people receive the right support at the right time. The starting point is effective assessment for EHCPs and SEN support to ensure that children's needs are understood (see section 7). The consideration of feedback from parents/carers, timeliness of assessments, measurement of performance against targets for health, quality assurance of alternative provision, and assessment of outcomes, including NEET figures provide leaders an opportunity to understand the system developments needed to ensure that all children's needs are being met through the right support at the right time. The challenges the partnership faces, for example, with commissioned services such as CAMHS, are well understood (see section 10).

4.2 The DFE Delivering Better Value (DBV) programme has provided partners with an opportunity to remodel and align key strategies and commissioning priorities to drive forward improved outcomes and to meet the needs of children at the right time and in

the right place. Working with a cluster of schools in Harlesden the development of multiagency teams in localities across health, care and education that will focus on early intervention to maximise the chances of good long-term outcomes is being piloted. Currently the majority of EHCA requests (averaging 65% over the last 5 years) are presented before the age of age 4 which indicates that the targeted support or targeted funding at SEN support across pre-school and Key Stage 1 has not always been effective at meeting young children's needs. Brent is working to increase take-up of 2 and 3 year-old Nursery Education Grant funding entitlements as uptake is lower than national (77% compared to 93% nationally for 3–4-year-olds); and early years providers identify over 25% of children have SEN characteristics. The DBV research identified that Brent experienced an increase of under 7s impacted by the pandemic, presenting with issues linked to social interaction, speech language and communication skills, emotional regulation and transactional skills. There is a recognised gap in provision for under 7s regarding child development which has been substantiated in the research undertaken as part of the DBV methodology and in some areas, for example speech and language needs, demand exceeds current capacity. This will be addressed through the DBV programme and in particular Elements 1,3 and 4 as detailed below.

- 4.3 Using 25 case studies the SEND partners met in November 2022 to consider what could have been put into place instead of an EHCP or, in the context of a time limited EHCP, and what an alternative package of support would look like. The outcome of this was that 52% of children could have been supported through a SEN support package if a pre EHCP programme was available. The proposals identified below were scoped at two workshops with over 80 headteachers and health leaders and 295 early years SENCOs and leaders at the Brent Early Years conference in February 2023. There is a consensus across the partnership that the key challenges are managing personal and social development and language and communication needs. The research also identified that, despite Brent funding for EHCPs being higher than the London average (£160 compared to £113 in 2019/20) and the allocation of hours of support and the average length of a plan being higher than statistical neighbours, outcomes for this age group have not improved (GLD rate 2.2% compared to 3.7 % nationally and KS1 4.9% compared to 6.5% nationally). Consequently, a six-point system wide plan has been developed that will pilot new approaches to commissioning and service delivery:

Element 1: Workforce development and evidence-based interventions rolled out across provisions in early years and primary. Development of a whole borough approach including Social Communication Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports (SCERTS) training, embedding the graduated approach and reviewing speech, language and communication needs support.

Element 2: Inclusive environments in settings and schools.

Element 3: Targeted Support bridging across early years and primary through neighbourhood-based multi-disciplinary teams to triage and ensure efficacy of assessments, provide short-term intensive support for children including time limited respite placements; parent workshops/home learning and a transition support programme across academic years linking to specialist teams.

- Element 4: Aligning resources across the system through system wide remodelling of speech, language and communication needs.
- Element 5: Reviewing use of the Early Years Improvement Fund (EYIF) and EY SEN funding including enhanced provision; and developing banding in mainstream including pre-EHCP
- Element 6: Review all children aged 0-7 with EHCP for outcomes, provision, support as part of an Annual Review assessment.

- 4.4 The local authority has matched the £1m DBV investment from the DFE with £1m of capital funding and £1m of SEND support funding over two years to realise this ambitious change programme. The outcome will be more children sustained in inclusive mainstream settings before the need for an EHCP, with additional pre-EHCP support funding where needed.
- 4.5 The Virtual School and the SEND 0-25 team ensure LAC needs are met on time through effective co-working. This includes undertaking a combined assessment when relevant, and a combined annual review and PEP process for the 42 looked after children with an EHCP. This joint working and single line of sight at practitioner and manager level ensures children are placed in good and appropriate provision. Reliance on other local authorities for children placed out of borough or who have placement moves, however, can make it difficult to ensure that Brent children are supported quickly and effectively. To mitigate this a nominated SEND 0-25 case officer for LAC ensures oversight of response times and escalates to the Head of Inclusion and Virtual School Headteacher for intervention when required, including taking back the responsibility for the EHCP. This occurred on 2 occasions in the 2022/23 academic year.
- 4.6 For all children and young people with an EHCP any changes to their educational offer outside of the annual review process, including exclusion, parental decision to home educate, a reduced timetable or managed move, triggers an emergency annual review. This allows the local authority to maintain oversight of the needs of the child and ensure children are receiving the right support at the right time. Joint assessment by the SEND 0-25 team and the elective home education officer has resulted in low numbers of children with an EHCP being electively home educated (17 as at end of December 2023).
- 4.7 A total of 2293 young people with LD aged 14+ are registered with a Brent GP (December 2023). 54% of young people with LD (aged 14 and over) received an annual health check by December 2023. This reflects a rolling 12 month cycle from April 2023. Brent is on track to meet the national end of year target (67%). The ICB has on-going engagement with GPs through the fortnightly GP forum where performance on annual health checks and additional support needs are discussed. The ICB has also provided LD awareness training to GPs and this is on-going. This way the area partnership can ensure there are no unmet medical needs.
- 4.8 Processes and systems are set up to support practitioners to work together and share appropriate information in a timely manner, including strong systems for identifying and responding to risks to children and young people with SEND, as can be seen by the following examples:
- Currently 21 children and young people are being monitored through the Dynamic Support Register with a further 3 referrals to be added. The roll out of a key worker programme as a direct product of the work of the Dynamic Support Register (DSR)

panel for young people with ASD/LD at the point of crisis admission has had a positive impact.

- A Positive Behaviour Support pilot is building local capacity and providing training and advice to families and support providers on a behaviour-led suicide prevention model to support autistic CYP at risk of serious self-harm and suicide.
- The CYP department is embedded in the Local Area Emergency Protocol Meetings (LAEP) and Care Education and Treatment Reviews (CETR). This has contributed to preventing children's admissions to hospital as well as planning safe discharges to the community following in-patient treatment. 7 young people have been supported by LAEP this academic year, ensuring that support is provided to families to prevent breakdown.

4.9 Partnership work between Brent Council, schools and settings has identified supporting children at SEN support a shared strategic objective. In response, a new creative approach has been adopted to ensure that pupils can remain in mainstream where possible. This has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of pupils with SEND in mainstream schools. Schools Forum agreed in 2021 to support the roll out of the new Brent graduated approach framework through a ring-fenced annual £0.5m SEND Support Fund from the High Needs Block. Working with the five school clusters across Brent, the LA SEN Outreach team created an action plan to build the capacity of staff in schools to support children and young people to remain in mainstream education. A training programme comprising of Autism awareness in schools, EKAN, Makaton and Dyslexia has been established. Whilst a full impact assessment is planned based on 2022/23 academic year, evidence captured to date of its effectiveness is demonstrated by the following case studies:

- A Voluntary Aided Primary School in Brent undertook a review of their approach to pupils with SEND. The school has 19% of pupils at SEN support and 4% of pupils with an EHCP. The review found that the curriculum has been adapted to be inclusive for all young people.
- A community primary school recognised that speech and language was the key need in Reception. In autumn 2022 the school brought 55 parents together to discuss a programme of home learning and strategies for the development of language and communication skills in all Reception classes, giving all pupils the best start on their education journey.
- Roll out of AET Autism awareness has begun in two Brent secondary schools with funding from NHSE. Feedback from the Brent/Parent carer forum (BPCF) from 13 parents within one of the schools was very positive, using words such as flexible, welcoming and supportive of autistic young people and parents. BPCF undertook a sensory audit of the school and BPCF are supporting the school to establish a SEND parents forum for all parents; a welcome pack for all parents with SEND; and the ASD specialist teacher has started weekly hourly support and advice sessions for parents. Additionally, BOAT have established 44 autism champions across Brent schools.
- Parents and Carers note the impact these strategies are having on the outcomes of their children. The AET and autism champion programme is being rolled out across 2023/24 academic year. Alongside this the AET whole school competency framework has been combined with the NASEN Whole School

SEND approach, to support all schools and settings in Brent to be SEND and autism friendly.

- 4.10 Through the DBV programme and the roll out of SCERTS across the borough to support needs earlier, a coherent SEN support offer across the primary phase will be realised. This will include a targeted SEN Support Plus offer and remodelling of speech, language and communication services. This work will complement the impact of the innovative provision delivered by the West London Zone, commissioned by the local authority and 15 schools over the last three years to support vulnerable children in Brent who have demonstrated emotional regulation needs. The programme leverages in significant additional funding through Corporate Social Responsibility and third sector support through mentors and key workers in schools along with specific therapy groups, such as art therapy, that have helped to significantly improve the attendance and behaviour of children. A whole school training programme for secondary schools has been developed and implemented in the autumn term as part of the Inclusion Plan.
- 4.11 Service improvements are informed by evidence-based practice to drive forward good outcomes. A neighbourhood model of service delivery is established in Brent through Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC) that deliver services in the community and this is being built on by the development of paediatric and health focused hubs. FWCs offer a range of co-located multiagency and multi-disciplinary services for children and young people with SEND. In 2022/23 456 children and young people with identified SEND were registered with the FWCs, 160 of whom were under 5s, 158 were 6–11-year-olds, 120 were 12-18 year olds and 18 were 19-25 year olds. Ante-natal and post-natal clinics are provided along with healthy living provision and Cygnet and Stepping Stones parenting programmes. In 2022/23 67 parents out of 106 completed the Cygnet programme (63% completion rate) and 8 parents out of 14 completed the Stepping Stones programme (57% completion rate). The Council outreach teams for autism, early years intervention, deaf and visual impairment services all deliver out of the FWCs as well as in schools and settings. In August 2023, the ICP Health Inequalities Executive approved the funding of a localities approach to addressing key health inequalities including asthma, immunisations and vaccinations and the mental health of young people. The focus is on the most deprived wards in Brent (Harlesden, Stonebridge and Dollis Hill). These wards are the highest presenting wards for SEN and exclusions and are the focus for the work on the DBV, integrating with the health inequalities programme. Recruitment is currently underway for the programme.
- 4.12 The local area partnership has worked hard to ensure that parents and carers know how to access services. In May 2022, all FWC staff were trained as SEND navigators, to support all parents/carers in Brent to access the right support at the right time. This training was refreshed in Autumn 2023. The FWCS also facilitate opportunities through BPCF for parents/carers of children and young people with SEND to meet, including a monthly group for Children of Deaf Adults (CODA). In March 2022 at a meeting with the lead member for Children, Young People and Schools and the Corporate Director of CYP, CODA parents shared the challenges they were facing in supporting their children to succeed in education and in accessing services in Brent. The outcome of this was the establishment of a CODA homework club delivered by Brent Start, Brent Deaf and

Hearing Impairment Service and BPCF, which received a 'highly recommended' at the GLA Inclusion Awards in 2022. Subsequently a CODA youth club has been commissioned and CODA parents also have access to BSL supported sessions with all local services delivered via the Brent Hubs.

- **Feedback on services**

STAR

'STAR gave me greater understanding and equipped me with the tools to help my grandson. Thank you so much.' (grandparent of a child with an EHCP).

SEN Outreach Services –

'Your ongoing support has really been gold!' (Secondary school SENCO)

'It has been a great pleasure working with you both throughout this academic year 2022-2023. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you both for all your support. It has not been easy at all. Your support is much appreciated!' (Secondary School SENCO)

BOAT

'I want to thank you for the amazing opportunity to get more information about the transition for secondary school. It clarified many things.' (Parent)

'I know your involvements with my son will be coming to an end soon, however it would be unfair not to appreciate your extensive support. You have been our lifeline especially when we felt all hope was lost. Your knowledge and honest professional view have helped us made informed decision about our son's progress, future, and right placement.' (Parent)

Early Years Inclusion Support Team

'Thank you for all the support, guidance and advice you have given us over the years. All of it has helped us develop and evolve our practices and provide better support for all children.' (Brent Early Years Provider)

- **Evidence sources:**

Delivering Better Value (DBV) proposal; Terms of Reference for the DBV Board; DBV Implementation Plan and DBV Board minutes; Dynamic Support Register; Minutes from LAEP and CETR meetings.

5.0 Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

- 5.1 The area partnership SEND Strategy 2021-25 was co-created between parents, carers and those who work with them across the partnership, with a focus on ensuring that 'all children and their families have the fullest possible range of support and opportunities available to them in order to improve their life chances and realise their aspirations.' Over 500 parents/carers and young people co-produced the strategy that focuses primarily on ensuring effective education, employment and training opportunities are available, that outcomes at GLD and Key Stages 2, 4 and 5 are equal to or above national and there are training and meaningful employment opportunities post-16.
- 5.2 Table 1 provides the data from Brent's Annual School Standards and Achievement Paper 2021-22 presented to the Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee in March 2023. It demonstrates the level of achievement for SEND children in Brent compared to all Brent children and national levels. By these measures, Brent schools EHCP cohorts' rates

for 'achieving the expected standard' were lower than national rates at EYFS, KS1 and KS4, while Brent schools SEN Support cohorts' rates for 'achieving the expected standard', were higher than national rates. Work to improve the quality of the curriculum through investment in staff and training with Brent schools and settings will begin to translate into the improvement in outcomes for Brent children and young people in the coming years to close the gap. The Setting and School Effectiveness Partnership Board provide direction and oversight over this work.

Table 1: Headline achievement data 2022, Brent Schools

	% attaining GLD = good level of development	(% achieving the expected standard for KS1)	(% achieving the expected standard for KS2)	Attainment 8 %
Cohort	EYFS	KS1 Reading Writing Maths	KS2 Reading Writing Maths	KS4 (Attainment 8)
All pupils	66.1 (65.3 national)	53.8 (53.4 national)	62.2 (57.8 national)	52.4 (48.7 national)
SEN Support	32.8 (22.9 national)	24.8 (17.1 national)	31.8 (21.1% national)	38.6 (34.8 national)
EHCP	2.2 (3.7 national)	4.9 (6.5 nationally)	8.5 (7.1 national)	12.0 (14.3 nationally)

- 5.3 There is a drive to ensure that EHC plans are outcomes focused and that reviews reflect children's ambitions. Significant work has been undertaken as part of the quality assurance of plans and reviews of EHCP plans to ensure that the aspirations of young people are clearly captured as well as parental aspirations. 90% of the 60 dip sample audits of new plans over the autumn term 2022/23 were found to have captured aspirations well. The multiagency audits undertaken during the 2022/23 academic year, focused on annual reviews of young people over 14 and found that aspirations post-16 had not been captured well. Four multi-agency audits of completed EHCPs were undertaken in the 2023/24 autumn term of which one was rated as good and three as requires improvement. Strengths and areas for improvement for education, health and social care colleagues were outlined in the first 2023/24 audit outcomes report. Future multi-agency audits are planned in February 2024 focused on secondary EHCP plans, the effective of annual reviews for phased transfers in May 2024 and new EHCP plans for Early Years in June 2024. This comprises an annual multi-agency audit programme of at least 20 audits. Internally the statutory SEND team quality assures 5 new EHCPs per month and findings are reported to the Inclusion Board every six months. A workshop is planned for 31 January 2024 with the DfE SEND Adviser on EHCP quality and smarter outcomes.
- 5.4 Young people access impartial information, advice and support that enable them to make informed choices about their future through a variety of mechanisms including the Careers and Enterprise Hub delivered via schools. Additionally, the local authority commission a third sector provider, Prospects, to support career development options for young people who are not engaged in education, employment, and training or who are looking for the next step on their career pathway. The provider works as part of the wider employment and skills partnership led by Brent Works offering impartial advice and guidance and access to a range of employment and training pathways via the Brent

Hubs, and a specific provision is available at the Willow Family Wellbeing Centre for young people with SEND. This joint work means that Brent has a high rate of participation for 16-18 year-olds. The December 2022 participation rates return to the DFE identified that 94.8% of the SEND 16-18 cohort (330 young people) were participating in EET including 0.3% in supported internships, compared to nationally (86.6% and 0.1% respectively). The December 2023 participation rate for the SEND 16-18 cohort (464 young people) is 84.1%. with 3.2% NEET. The commissioned provider is following up on the destinations of those currently not known (10.8%). The NEET rate for the Brent general population is 3% compared to 7% nationally, with the unknown rate at 0.6% for Brent compared to 3.5% nationally. This compares to 96.6% of the non-SEND population in Brent participating in EET, 1.6% NEET and 1% with an unknown destination.

- 5.5 A Supported Employment Forum brings together providers with parents/carers and young people to ensure a system wide approach is adopted. The Forum includes the Imperial Hospital Trust, West London Alliance, Compass Learning Trust, Wembley supported internship programme led by Brent Works, College of Northwest London, Shaw Trust, Mencap, Careers and Enterprise Hub and Brent Council adult learning service Brent Starts. A young people's forum is currently being established to ensure their voice shapes the offer. A survey has been circulated to young people to shape what the forum will focus on, with the first session scheduled for mid-February 2024. Providers in the forum have successfully supported an annual average of 30 young people on internship programmes and led over the last three years to 40 young people's permanent employment. In 2022/23 Brent had 30 supported interns across 11 settings in programmes ranging from hospital settings, Brent Council, hospitality, Transport for London and retail. Employers included Wembley Park, Goldman Sachs and Mencap. A further 30 supported interns have been recruited for 2023/24 with 12 starting on the Civic Centre/Wembley Park programme. This is led by Brent Works and supported through the Disability Confident Employer group and all Brent Council departments. To support the continued growth in the number of supported interns, the Council has rolled out autism awareness training. There is a disability staff equality network to provide a safe place supporting staff with disabilities to discuss how to improve the lives of residents, service users and employees. In November 2023, the Forum held a careers and information event to increase the numbers progressing into meaningful employment. All are being supported through the supported employment partnership.
- 5.6 There are some cohorts where further work is needed to achieve strong outcomes. Post-14 transition planning through the PFA outcomes remains a focus. Whilst this is successfully applied across special schools, it is yet to be fully applied across mainstream settings and work is underway to implement a new child profile page that is rooted in the PFA outcomes. Similarly post-18 engagement in education and training is an area of focus for the Supported Employment Forum and developing the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre. The Centre will support young people to develop skills across the other three PFA outcomes with a focus on independent living including travel training, healthy lifestyles, activities addressing social isolation. This is being developed alongside an enhanced pathway provision for young people with more complex needs, in partnership with the Compass Learning Trust (see paragraph 5.5).

- **Feedback on services**

After getting a permanent role at Brent Civic Centre a young person who was on the supported internship programme said:

'I am really delighted I have been offered a job. When I told my mum she was speechless with happiness! She was really worried about me travelling because I was not an independent traveller, but I am now. I am happy because I will be more independent and will have a job I love.'

- **Evidence sources:**

Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Report on School Attainment (2021/22) March 2023; Cabinet report on Post-16 Skills Resource Centre May 2023; Schools Capital Board papers 2022/23; Supported Employment Forum papers/minutes 2022/23; Annual Report on Exclusions; Annual Report on Alternative Provision Sept 2023; Prospects Contract Monitoring reports 2022/23.

6.0 Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities.

- 6.1 The core theme and objective of the SEND Strategy 2021-2025 is that children and young people with SEND are valued and visible members of their communities. The action plan of the Strategy sets out how this is being achieved. The publication of a new short breaks statement co-produced with young person advisors and the BPCF clearly outlines the offer in Brent. The Local Offer and PFA websites list a breadth of activities available and through BPCF the local authority is aware of the activities that are popular with families. However, feedback through the BPCF parent/carer survey indicates that not all parents/carers are aware of what is on offer locally and, working with the BPCF, the local authority is exploring how the Local Offer can be better publicised.
- 6.2 Examples of activities to support children and young people to be active in the community are the SEND 25x25 Challenge, which promotes young people's friendship groups and access to cultural events, discounted physical sports provision through the take-up 'B Active Cards' and 'Registered Disabled Yellow Cards' for young people aged 17-25 with EHCP. The Ade Adepitan Centre continues to provide high quality services to children and young people with a disability and respite provision. Last year the centre was successful in a funding bid to secure a new minibus from the Variety Club of Great Britain. Additionally Dare, a third sector provider, is commissioned to deliver day respite activities for children with disabilities. Dare is also commissioned through the Brent Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme, which successfully delivers holiday clubs for children and young people across the Easter, Summer and Christmas school holiday periods, working with a range of providers. All HAF providers are expected to be fully inclusive and accessible to all pupils, but specialist places are also commissioned. In 2022, 511 SEND HAF programme places for children with SEND or additional needs were accessed across a mixture of specialist and mainstream provision. In 2023 432 SEND places were accessed in the Easter and summer holidays. Data for Christmas 2023 is in the process of being collected and from the 50% return so far, 95 SEND places were accessed. This means a current total of 524 SEND places were available in 2023 with the final figure expected to be significantly more than 2022.
- 6.3 To expand the local offer, the Council has encouraged third sector organisations to access the £1m of NCIL available annually in Brent. A third sector event was held on 5

September 2023 to raise the profile of the grant programme and to support providers to access training so that they have the relevant skills to deliver youth activities to young people with SEND especially the development of friendship groups. The outcome of grant applications will be known in March 2024.

- 6.4 There is recognition of the contribution that young people with SEND make to their local communities. The winner of the Pride of Brent Youth Awards 2022 Young Disability Champion was a 12 year old boy who has been an amputee since a very young age. He won the award for his positive attitude despite his disability and the support he provides as a young carer for his mother who has a range of health conditions and his younger sibling who has ADHD and diabetes.
- 6.5 The local area partnership support children and young people to develop their confidence to participate in local activities. Schools, especially the special schools, are active in ensuring all children and young people with SEND can participate in borough wide activities. During Brent's year as London Borough of Culture (2020) Brent Music Service worked with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and children and young people to compose and perform a Brent Anthem. This choir was and continues to be comprised of children from across all schools including specialist provision. A bi-annual inclusion concert brings together children and young people to perform in the Wembley Arena. In 2023 Manor School's choir won 3rd place in the Brent School Choir of the Year event. The partnership is proud that all schools' councils in Brent are inclusive school councils. In June 2023, the Brent partnership hosted a SEND celebration event at Brent Civic Centre. During the week of 26-30 June 2023 the local area partnership celebrated children and young people with SEND through an exhibition of over 200 pieces of artwork and poetry, which have been collated into a virtual book. Over 300 children/young people and their families attended a reception where children and young people nominated by their school were presented with certificates by the Deputy Mayor of Brent, the Corporate Director for Children and Young People and the NHS Borough Director.

- **Feedback on the Celebration event**

'It was so to see all the children's achievements today including my daughter. Thank you for this event!' (Parent)

'A wonderful celebration of our SEND children. It was so nice to see a mixed profile of SEND children/youth. Please continue this as an annual event.' (School)

'I got a certificate. I went on stage and felt like I was going to have a heart attack. It's been kind of fun. I would give it a 10. It's like having much fun with new friends.' (Student nominee)

- **Evidence sources:**

SEND Strategy 2021-25; Statement of Purpose – Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre; Short Breaks Criteria 2018; SEND Celebration Event Photo Gallery; London Borough of Culture 2020 YouTube video; Holiday Activities and Food Programme annual reports 2021 – 2023; Local Offer and PFA websites.



7.0 Leaders in Brent are ambitious for children and young people with SEND.

- 7.1 Creating an inclusive Brent is a key priority for the local area partnership. This is expressed through the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027, Borough Plan 2023-2027, and the SEND Strategy 2021-2025 that defines the outcomes leaders in Brent are working collectively to achieve for all children and young people with SEND. An annual action plan for the implementation of the SEND Strategy, which is regularly reviewed by the Children's Trust, sets an aspirational culture of high expectations and quality across services and provision and identifies areas for development to improve the experience of children, young people and their families with SEND.
- 7.2 There is strong oversight of SEND through the Corporate Director for Children and Young People, who holds the statutory responsibility for SEND alongside the Chief Medical Officer, NHS NWL at the NWL Executive Board, the Programme Director Maternity and Children Young People NWL ICS and the Borough Director for the ICP. Clear governance structures and reporting mechanisms are in place that cover all aspects of SEND and Alternative Provision through the Brent Children's Trust (BCT), the Inclusion Board that reports to the BCT and the ICP Executive. Processes for making decisions are structured, so that partnership leaders can swiftly agree to changes that are required to improve services or address funding issues. The partnership's proactive and effective response to the challenge of the High Needs Block overspend through engagement in the Delivery Better Value Programme is an example of how leadership across the partnership works together to tackle key issues.

- 7.3 Through the Inclusion Board, parents (Brent Parent Carer Forum) and practitioners collectively review practice impact. Recent thematic reviews considered by the Inclusion Board include the Quality and Impact of EHCPs, Preparing for Adulthood, Voice of Children and Young People, Health Transition into the Integrated Care Service and Sufficiency of Places. Quarterly reviews of performance give the partnership the opportunity to provide high support and high challenge to service providers. using a refreshed SEND dashboard. This oversight has driven improvement in the quality of EHCPs and annual reviews. The current focus is on SMART outcomes, including PfA at post 14, and ensuring that the voice of the child is embedded in all reviews. This has led to the development of a new EHCP template and annual review template. A lens remains on the timeliness of plans within 20 weeks, with enhanced oversight through management meetings and weekly performance checks. An average of 37.6% excluding exceptions of plans issued in 20 weeks was achieved by the end of December 2023, which is lower than the previous year (40.2%) (see paragraph 2.4 above).
- 7.4 An Executive Board oversees the local ICP arrangements for Children and Young People. The Covid-19 pandemic and the health economy restructure temporarily impacted on the partnership's ability to drive forward priorities to improve services for children and young people with SEND within a joint commissioning framework. However, in September 2022 the Brent Children's Trust and ICP agreed a new set of joint priorities, which are being delivered through CYP sub-groups reporting to four ICP Executive Groups. For children with SEND, priority areas of focus are:
- To support children and young people to achieve good mental health and resilience through addressing CAMHS waiting times and implementing the 'Thrive' model.
 - To build whole system pathways to support children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs through early intervention, and to manage rising demand at statutory levels.
 - To ensure that neurodiverse children and young people and their families and carers can live well and receive appropriate and timely support when required.
 - To address health inequalities.

The borough team of the ICB is currently being restructured in order to meet a national NHS requirement to meet a 30% reduction in operating costs, which could result in a reduction in capacity to take forward ICP programmes in the future.

- 7.5 Leaders in Brent continually evaluate services against parent/carers feedback and use performance indicators to understand the areas for service improvement and development in commissioning. The SEF is jointly owned across partners and clearly expresses area of success and areas for development. Accountability sits across the partnership and monitoring enables leaders to jointly evaluate whether services and provision are improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, not only whether children and young people have received the services.

- **Feedback – BPCF**

BPCF statement (August 2023): Brent Parent Carer Forum CIC is the commissioned participation forum whose role is to reach out to parent carers and feedback on services, offer constructive challenge to current services along with working together to co-production future services. To do

this effectively and meaningfully there is a need for regular two-way communication between ourselves and the local authority and health, which we have. We feel we are on the same journey together all wanting the very best outcomes for our children and young people. There are no closed doors in Brent and we are listened to with openness and responded to with a solution focused ethos.

We are treated as equal partners with a place on Brent's Inclusion board with a regular agenda item allowing us to feedback what parents are telling us. Brents SEF is owned by us all and acts as a live work plan where together we work what next, how and by when. We feel involved welcomed, valued and respected.

• **Evidence sources:**

SEND Strategy 2021-2025; Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027; Brent Borough Plan 2023-2027; Brent Children's Trust Terms of Reference; Brent Children's Trust Governance Overview; ICS Governance; ICB overview; IC Community Services Executive minutes 2022/23 Brent Children's Trust Papers 2022/23; Health and Wellbeing papers 2022/23; EHCP Multiagency Quality Assurance Report 2022/23; Inclusion Strategic Board papers 2022/2023; Inclusion Strategic Board Dashboard 2022/23 and Q1 2023/24

8.0 Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people and families

- 8.1 In preparing the SEND Strategy the most significant leaders in the conversation were young people and a new young person advisors' network was established. Young advisors from Brent Special Schools Councils have more recently been engaged in shaping the neurodiversity pathway and in developing the PFA website. The winner of the Pride of Brent Youth Awards in 2021 was a young autistic person who attended a mainstream secondary school. She was and remains on Brent's Youth Parliament executive group, had a leadership role in her school and was an active member of the IThrive forums that have played a critical role in shaping the SEND Strategy, as well as being on the decision-making panel for selecting the MHST schools in NHSE's Waves 4 and 5. The NWL ICS is exploring how the 'treat me right' programme can be cascaded to 14+ young people with LD and ASD so that they have a clear awareness of their rights within health settings. In addition, individual health providers capture parental and child/young person feedback to support service development. Young people with additional needs have also been on senior staff recruitment panels including the appointment of the Corporate Director of Children and Young People in April 2022. The new Youth Forum will allow young people to feedback on the progress of the SEND partnership in delivering the SEND Strategy. While children and young people are actively engaged in developing the Brent approach to SEND, it is recognised that there remains a need for consistent and regular engagement with children and young people.
- 8.2 The 2019 Ofsted/CQC joint local area SEND revisit evidenced that there was a culture of partnership with parents that was established and embedded, with parents an integral part of service development and decision-making. Work with parents and carers as a strategic partner has not only been sustained but has been strengthened. The Brent Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) is an integral member of the ISB. The commitment to inclusion of the parental voice is also evidenced in parent/carers participation in the recruitment of senior local authority staff responsible for SEND services. The BPCF now has 534 members and a team of 12 parent champions who promote parental

participation for parents/carers of children with an education, health and care plan and those being supported at SEN support. The first SEND celebration event in June 2023 hosted by the Brent partnership was an ambition expressed by parents/carers as part of the SEND Strategy 2021-2025 (see paragraph 6.4).

8.3 The table below provides a snapshot of BPCF workshops available for parents and carers of children with SEND from August 2022 to date with those in bold available from January to July 2024:

Existing and repeating sessions	New sessions requested by parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to challenge effectively to create better outcome for your children • The role of SENDIASS • Understanding behaviours in your child that may challenge • The importance of good dental care • Understanding and managing behaviours that may challenge • Understanding the importance of section A on an EHCP • Moving to secondary school • Wetting the bed – toilet training and enuresis – incontinence service • Health and wellbeing for parent • Sleep hygiene • Bullying what are the signs to look at for and how to support • Applying for an EHCP • Understanding SEND support /Graduated approach • BOAT Supporting Year 5 parents • Person Centred planning • Money matters • Annual reviews • Personal budgets and direct payments • Send review session • Young person’s transition review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role of social care • Understanding and supporting puberty • LPA • The role of the inclusion service • The thrive model • New inspection framework • Sensory communication • The role of health therapists • The role of community school nursing • SLT tips – communication • Money matters • The role of family wellbeing centres • Understanding the Resource Allocation System (RAS) in social care • New beginnings – supporting the move to big school for parents (Early Years) • The role of the SENCO

8.4 BPCF are central members of the Inclusion Board. They have a standing item on every agenda to give and receive feedback and ensure they shape decision making. In July 2023, for example, they raised concerns about the breadth of free activities located in Brent for young people with SEND. In response the Council has made projects that support children with SEND a priority for NCIL funding for 2023/4 with a specific workshop for BPCF and Third Sector providers held on 5 September 2023. There is an ‘open door’ between BPCF and the local authority, which ensures that feedback is continuous and BPCF can help to shape creative responses to emerging need. An annual survey is undertaken by the BPCF that helps partners to understand areas of satisfaction and concerns to ensure that improvement plans are co-produced. Initial findings from the 2023 survey include requests for support for the whole family including siblings and more transparency in relation to referrals, eligibility and thresholds. Concerns raised include waiting times, communication between professionals for young people who are eligible for adult services, support for parents whose children are anxious about school and having to go out-of-borough to access leisure activities. Headline strengths are STAR (Waiting Well programme for supporting autism referrals) and BOAT (Brent Outreach Autism Team) that some mainstream schools support children well, that Brent hubs/FWCs provide support for young people with additional needs who are seeking

employment, provide families with access to specialist parenting programmes and specialist health practitioners; and specialist groups such as the CODA group.

- 8.5 A steering group of parents/carers has been established to maintain the oversight of the Local Offer and young people to continue to improve communications, with the links being strengthened with the CFIS. The steering group are driving forward and own the Preparing for Adulthood website through the young people advisor network. Three workstreams (Health and Wellbeing, Navigation and Flow, and News and Events) are ensuring that both provide detailed information on what to expect and where to access support for parents/carers and young people is available. Positive comments have been received from parents about how easy it is to access and how useful the information is to them in making decisions about their children. The 'Preparing for Adulthood' [PfA] website launched in October 2021 and continues to be developed to ensure it remains a valuable resource to young people looking at their next career step. Together with Brent Youth Zone, this resource has had over 5,000 unique page hits from January 2023 to January 2024. Young people from Woodfield School designed the video that explains what the Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) website is all about. Further work on the website with parents/carers and young people has led to a new neurodiversity portal. <https://www.brent.gov.uk/children-young-people-and-families/send-local-offer/neurodiversity>. Preparing for adulthood | Brent Council.
- 8.6 A workshop in May 2023 provided an opportunity for members of the BPCF to ask questions of the DCS and area leaders from across health, care and education. BPCF are also part of the Brent Disability Forum which meets quarterly. A continuous theme that has arisen at the BPCF Big Conversations and workshops, and surveys has been improved communication so that parents/carers and young people are able to navigate the system. Co-production of the refreshed education, health and care decision making process and policies, such as the personal budget and direct payment policies, is well underway. Whilst communication is improving at child level, a priority for 2023/24 is to enhance the experience of young people and their parents/carers once a child is in the system or on a pathway. This is a priority for the ICP as evidenced in all-age autism board that is steering the development of the Thrive model for neurodiversity.
- 8.7 Of equal importance is how parents/carers of young people at SEN support or where children do not have an EHCP but might have a health diagnosis, are meaningfully informed and able to navigate the system. A new 'Supporting children with health needs in school' policy has been coproduced to ensure there are clear expectations of school, health providers and the local authority particularly in relation to EBSA.
- 8.8 The BPCF directors' team have worked tirelessly over the last 5 years to establish the forum and the development and delivery of a community interest company. However, the BPCF CIC, like many other parent voice organisations, are experiencing a change in their leadership and in March 2023 engaged with Contact to seek support in changing the director team. To ensure continuity, the local authority has funded a director to lead the coordination of Brent Parent Carer Forum and this individual has been a consistent presence through the period of transition. Going forward a Management Advisory Board will be established by the end of this academic year.

- **Feedback**

'Working with the LA and health is a partnership, as we truly act as the critical friend. The success is seen as our success so we are able to assist them to deliver services for the family.' (BPCF Director)

'Families are now feeling they are heard, but there is still work to do. the LA are willing to work in a reflective manner to continue to improve and I am happy to be a part of this journey to develop a better Brent for all.' (BPCF Director)

- **Evidence sources:**

CLCH report on services; Memorandum of Understanding with BPCF; BPCF Parent Participation Report to ISB July 2023; SEND Celebration Event Photo Gallery; BPCF Workplan; ICB Thrive Implementation Report, Thrive mapping and Thrive Project Plan; Terms of Reference and Minutes of All-age Autism Board; Supporting Children with Health Needs in School Policy; SEND Strategy 2021-2025.

9.0 Leaders in Brent have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people

- 9.1 Leaders use data effectively to help the wider partnership identify and respond to issues. Whilst an updated JSNA is in development, leaders in Brent draw on SEN 2 data, health data, school census data analysis, EHC referral and assessment data and referral data for diagnoses and therapies to shape the strategic direction of both service delivery and commissioned services. Data is shared annually and quarterly through the Inclusion Board (ISB) that reports to the Brent Children's Trust. This is triangulated with the ongoing and annual cycles of feedback and engagement sessions with parents/carers and young people who help leaders to understand the needs of children and young people.
- 9.2 The annual growth rate of the number of maintained EHCP Plans is 11% since 2019 (compared to 9% for England and 12% for statistical neighbours). The number of initial requests for assessment in Brent increased by 6% in 2022, of which 25% were refused. In December 2022 there were 3235 children and young people with an EHCP (2245 aged 5-16). 62% of all EHCPs start by the age of 4, and 41% have an ASD need. In July 2023 there were 3363 children and young people with an EHCP. In December 2023 3435 children and young people had an EHCP (2545 aged 5-16), with 43.5% of the maintained cohort having had their EHCP issued before the age of 5. ASD is the most common type of special educational need, accounting for 36.7% of maintained EHCPs. The increase in EHCPs reflects both better identification of and responsiveness to children and young people's presenting needs.
- 9.3 Between January 2023 and December 2023 the number of EHC Plans increased across all age groups except for those aged under 5 which has seen a reduction of 12.6%. In Brent, the age groups with the largest number of EHCPs are the 5-10 age group (37% of cohort) and the 11-15 age group (32%) in line with statistical neighbours, with the 20-25 age group accounting for 9%. Nationally the largest pupil population is the 11-15 age group (36%). Children aged under 5 are the smallest group with an EHCP at 4% (England 4% and statistical neighbours 5%).

- 9.4 2157 children and young people with an EHCP are in Brent Schools. There is a strong focus on working collaboratively to create inclusive schools so that children can remain in mainstream (80% of children with a new EHCP in 2023 are in mainstream settings compared to 63% in 2018). Mainstream schools are supporting a greater number of children with a range of complex needs, which has placed some pressure on schools in terms of resources and staff.
- 9.5 In addition to 3435 children and young people aged 0-25 in Brent with an EHCP as at December 2023, there are over 5200 identified as needing SEN Support, which equates to 10.6% of the school population. An annual £0.5m fund established in 2021 is developing the capacity of mainstream schools to support children with SEND and SEN Support. Further work is planned with schools on how to support children at SEN support and children in Additional Resourced Provisions (ARPs), with local special school trusts commissioned to provide training.

- **Evidence sources:**

SEN 2 2023 Analysis; Brent JSNA 2019; School Census data 2022/23; Inclusion Board Dashboard 2022/23 and Q1 2023; Inclusion Board papers 2022/23; Children's Trust Papers 2022/23; SEND reports to Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 2022 and 2023.

10.0 Leaders in Brent commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people including alternative provision and evaluate the impact of these services

- 10.1 Services and systems are designed around the needs of children and young people to achieve the principles in the SEND Strategy, around the needs of children and young people and are informed by evidence of what works in achieving good outcomes. Whilst joint commissioning arrangements have become more complex due to the establishment of the Integrated Care Board/System that operates across 8 boroughs, close working at a local level within the ICP and engagement in the ICB programme enables partners to make best use of all the resources available to improve outcomes for children and young people in the most effective way. Focused work under the Delivering Better Value programme (see below) is looking to improve how these resources become more sustainable and efficient in supporting the area partnership to meet needs and improve outcomes.
- 10.2 Leaders understand that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse and ensure that this is carefully considered when commissioning and evaluating services. Effective safeguarding arrangements are considered in the multiagency response to tripartite funded packages of provision, the DSR, LEAP and CETR panels and in the commissioning of residential settings or commissioning alternative provision. An example of effective oversight of safeguarding arrangements is a November 2022 report from the local authority to the Corporate Parenting Committee and safeguarding partners on children in residential settings who are LAC with complex needs.
- 10.3 Over the last five years an increase in the identification of needs has led to an increase in demand pressures that is impacting on commissioned services. Partners are very

aware of pressures in the system and are working together to develop a sustainable offer. In the health provider workforce, for example some areas are running at a 40% vacancy rate. A particular pressure area is the commissioning of therapists for pupils in out-of-borough school placements or for those who are registered with an out-of-borough GP. The ICP Executive has established working groups to address the workforce related issues and joint commissioning of services to meet need. For example, in relation to neurodiversity (ND) and mental health and wellbeing, leaders are jointly evaluating the service provision in Brent with a direct focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Focused work on improving mental health and wellbeing has begun to gain traction. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Sub-group is tracking the number of children and young people waiting for assessment, with a focus on reducing assessment and treatment waiting times (54% seen within 4 weeks by end of Q1 2023/4). There are circa 300 children waiting for CAMHS treatment, with an average wait of 2 years. As of end of September 2023, there were 94 over 5 year olds waiting for an ASD diagnosis and 216 waiting for an ADHD diagnosis (with a total of 188 combined, taking into account dual diagnosis). Whilst the average waiting time is long, there is significant variation in waiting times depending on the treatment required. The waiting list is triaged and support for conditions such as sleep difficulties, anxiety, depression and OCG are offered whilst waiting for a diagnosis. The Children's Trust has lobbied the NWL ICB for levelling up funding for Brent, with the Chair having written to the Mental Health Lead in the ICB, seeking addition to the proposed investment plan and recovery plan for mental health services to ensure parity with other NWL ICB authorities. There is currently a workstream being undertaken to analyse demand and capacity within the service and to consider what additional services the ICP could bid for at NWL level to offer greater preventative capacity and support young people through waiting well provision. Dialogue continues between the local ICP Executive and the senior leadership of the ICB on how resourcing can be improved.

- 10.4 Since its inception, the Integrated Care Partnership in Brent has recognised that children need to be given a greater priority in terms of service development and population healthcare. The ICP has built closer links between health, social and education teams and in addition to the Children's Trust has set up a dedicated Children's workstream for the ICP. This means that each of the four ICP sub-groups has a set of children's priorities, cutting across physical and mental health, including neurodiversity. The priorities include, neurodiversity, the development of paediatric hubs, asthma, CAMHS, the promotion of better mental health and childhood vaccinations through the "Brent Health Matters" model, developing the THRIVE model and addressing capacity gaps in the Special School Nursing service.
- 10.5 The local authority has taken a lead on supporting the development of early intervention and preventative mental health and wellbeing support for children and young people through a commissioned contract that provides clinical support for children and young people in targeted vulnerable groups delivered by the Anna Freud Centre. The service also supports parents, carers, and professionals working with children and young people with mental wellbeing issues. Brent is the lead local authority for a project funded by the ICS CAMHS Provider Collaborative on behalf of the 8 boroughs in the ICS that provides early intervention support for children and young people who are admitted to A&E due to mental health issues. A specialist complex behaviour support service has been

procured to provide support to this cohort and a project called the Looked After Children's Resilience Service is being developed as a preventative strategy against placement breakdowns for looked after children.

- 10.6 There are currently 302 children under 5 on the waiting list for a social communication assessment (SOCA), with an average waiting time in May 2023 of 87 weeks primarily due to paediatric clinician vacancies. To address this, from May 2023 CLCH commissioned an external company operating from Family Wellbeing Centres to undertake assessments. The average waiting time by July 2023 was down to 68 weeks. This service is linking with the Child Development Centre and local speech and language and occupational therapy services where appropriate. To support the 'waiting well' agenda the NWL ICP and Brent Council have jointly funded STAAR, a pre-diagnostic neurodiversity programme, for those children who have not received a diagnosis. STAAR delivers a 6-8 week intervention programme combining evidence-based practice, including parenting and child development initiatives (fine and gross motor skill development, speech language and communication development) and social competency. There is ongoing support via a STAAR network. Year 1 evaluation identified that 100% of service users found that the strategies helped them at home; 67% stated it helped them to understand their child's needs and how to support their development (e.g. executive function, language development, interoception) and 65% stated that they now knew about neurodiversity and how it presents in their child. Learning from Year 1 has led to amendments in delivering the service into Year 2.
- 10.7 At the end of 2021/22 academic year, ongoing staffing gaps in CLCH meant that therapist resource was diverted from the non EHCP school-based pathway to the EHCP pathway to ensure statutory provision was delivered. An alternative consultative model was put into place for two terms for children without EHCP in mainstream school until staffing improved. In terms of timely access to services, the 8-week assessment timeliness is being met for 88% of children requiring occupational therapy; 91% requiring treatment for physiotherapy receive it within 8 weeks and 99% of children whose referral is accepted are seen for speech and language therapy. However, the number of special school nurses is not yet at the level required to meet the expanding cohort of children with an EHCP. A business case to support the extension of the special school nursing service was presented to the ICB for approval in July 2023. It was recognised that this was an issue across all 8 boroughs and approval has been paused whilst awaiting assessment need across the ICS. The Local Services Team within the ICB plans to develop a North West London-wide business case to enhance the service, since this issue affects multiple boroughs. In the meantime, the ICP Executive has approved non-recurrent funding to be made available to CLCH to recruit agency staff to address the issue on an interim basis. A recovery plan has been established to ensure all those needing an annual health assessment will receive one.
- 10.8 The central challenge in accessing NHS therapist support is where children are either educated out-of-borough, are educated through EOTAS or have a GP in another borough due to contractual arrangements. To mitigate some of these challenges private therapists are commissioned, although workforce capacity issues remain a challenge within both the NHS and for private providers. 125 young people have their therapy provision commissioned from non-NHS providers due to being placed in out-of-borough schools. There have been delays for some children in accessing spot-purchased

therapy support due to capacity issues which has in some cases led to parents/carers seeking redress through complaints and tribunals. Having reviewed commissioning options to improve access, in 2022/23 there was a full review of spot purchasing and a new commissioning arrangement is being established and as a result there are currently no young people waiting for services. The local authority is developing a preferred provider list to enable some block-commissioning arrangements.

- 10.9 Effective decision-making by a Joint Funding Panel ensures that, where appropriate, joint funding across agencies is applied for children with complex needs, including looked after children needing residential and/or residential school placements, and children requiring Continuing Health Care. Development of the NWL ICB has resulted in a centralised Continuing Health Care Team covering all 8 boroughs, resulting in a review of complex care and continuing health care case funding.
- 10.10 The School Place Planning Strategy (2024-2028) outlines the approach to meeting SEND sufficiency. Responding to the need for demand for local places, the Council is investing £44m in 10 new ARPS and an expansion of the special school estate, including a new special free school. The new school will cater for secondary aged children with ASD and will be delivered by a local academy trust, following a presumption process. The capital programme will add over 400 special provision places into local schools, with delivery from 2024. This is a signal of the local area's forward planning and commitment to children with SEND.
- 10.11 Recognising the growing need for post-16 provision the Council has agreed investment in the creation of a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre based at Welsh Harp reservoir with investment of £3m approved by Cabinet for 16-25-year-olds. It will focus on pathways into supported employment and will include a horticultural centre. Consideration is also being given to a second site of the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre alongside the development of a new 14+ campus, that would provide additional special school places as well as post-16 facilities.
- 10.12 In response to increased demand for EHCPs, in February 2022, the Council agreed additional investment of £1.2m in SEND caseworkers. This supported a doubling of the SEND caseworker team, which has halved caseloads, and appointment of a dedicated mediation officer, a short breaks officer and a designated social worker (DSCO) post to improve the quality and timeliness of social work reports in EHCPs. The team was not fully established until March 2023, and it took time to embed new staff as most were previously employed by schools and early years settings. A focus of the team has been on assuring quality, communications and workforce development. The team is currently at full capacity with the exception of an Assistant SEND Officer post. Changes in personnel, alongside a shortage of therapists and EPs, has caused issues in the timeliness of completing EHCPs as described above.
- 10.13 Due to demand pressures, SEN support services have been recommissioned, moving from a child to a setting-based model. Over the last four years the Brent Outreach Autism Team (BOAT) caseload increased by 400% due to the increase in the number of children diagnosed with autism. As funding through the HNB cannot be increased, a number of service changes have been necessary, including moving some support online and the team focusing on work with schools and settings to support children to thrive in education. The national shortage of Educational Psychologists (EPs) has meant

prioritising assessments for EHCPs over other work. The authority is currently reliant on locum EPs and to address this, consideration is being given to a new recruitment and retention programme for SEND professionals supported by the London Improvement and Innovation Alliance (LIIA) that seeks to mirror the incentivising approach adopted for the social care workforce.

- 10.14 The Inclusion Service works closely with schools to avoid exclusions, where possible, and where this cannot be avoided commissions appropriate provision to meet their needs. Since September 2023 there have been 51 permanent exclusions and 36 have been avoided in Brent schools through partnership working between the local authority and schools and the use of managed moves. Schools also arrange managed moves directly and, whilst a lens has been placed on the use of part-time timetables for children, further work needs to be undertaken to better understand how schools use dual registration and managed moves to offset exclusions. This activity is keeping permanent exclusions low. In the academic year 2022/23, 25 pupils were permanently excluded from Brent schools. 1 was of primary age and 24 were of secondary age, of whom 17 were Brent residents. Additionally, 18 Brent resident pupils of secondary age were permanently excluded from schools located in neighbouring authorities. There were no permanent exclusions for looked after children. An EHC Plan emergency annual review is held where there are concerns about placement stability for looked after children and young people with an EHCP and resources, training and integrated working around the pupils are established to address any emerging needs. Of 2206 fixed term exclusions in total in 2022/23, 221 were for pupils with an EHCP. There were 5 fixed term exclusions given to 3 pupils with an EHCP from out-of-borough schools in 2022/23, and 1 permanent exclusion. Between September and December 2023 there have been 1065 fixed term exclusions from Brent schools, 128 of primary aged children and 937 of secondary aged children. To date this academic year there have been no permanent exclusions of pupils with an EHCP from Brent schools.
- 10.15 Commissioned provision includes two local authority pupil referral units, a free school alternative provision and out of borough alternative provision. For those children who are excluded, Brent River College, the LA's Pupil Referral Unit, provides effective support. In 2019 Brent established an alternative provision school to meet SEMH needs through the free school presumption route. The Roundwood School has been operating since January 2021 and works closely with schools in Brent to offer respite provision. Where a child with EHCP or SEN needs are referred for respite, the school works closely with the LA to ensure the placement is appropriate. For children across KS1-KS3 with more complex behavioural needs Brent Council continues to commission six places a year at The Pears Family School for respite. The respite is dual registered and combines curriculum provision with therapeutic intervention with the child and family. This provision has successfully been used to prevent primary and KS3 exclusions for pupils with complex needs who have subsequently transitioned back into their home school or been supported to transition to a new school. Pupils placed in dual registered provision by Brent Council have clear SMART intervention plans in place.
- 10.16 The Inclusion Support Team provides effective oversight of the placement of young people attending alternative provisions. A panel oversees the referral and placement process for the 6-day statutory exclusions timeline and for health needs provision. To improve decision-making for children with health needs, a separate panel called the

Health Needs Panel has been established from September 2023 that combines education, health and care specialists to oversee medical needs and emotionally based school avoidance. This will support the roll out of a new policy regarding the health needs of pupils in schools, as well as a coproduced toolkit and training programme. Most young people with a health need are supported through dual registration with Ashley College, the LA's medical PRU. A monthly meeting with both PRU headteachers maintains oversight of young people who are placed in the provision and their transitions. An AP coordinator and an Inclusion Support Team Manager are responsible for commissioning in and out-of-borough provision arranged by the local authority for those unable to attend local PRUs and undertake robust quality assurance prior to commissioning and through the academic year. The Fair Access Process is effective and all secondary schools work in partnership with the local authority to ensure a successful return to mainstream settings for those pupils who are ready.

- 10.17 Addressing disproportionality remains a focus for the CYP department and schools through the monitoring of fixed term and permanent exclusions and working together to understand disproportionate levels of exclusions for Black young people and developing relevant responses. In 2022/23 for secondary pupils 38% of all permanent exclusions were for Black or Black British pupils and 60% at primary. Additionally Black young people do less well in their educational outcomes and are 6% more likely to have a diagnosis of autism. The local authority is funding anti-racist training for school leaders in 2023/24 and actions to address disproportionality will be developed with schools for the Brent Inclusion Plan.
- 10.18 There were 355 fixed term exclusions out of 2894 children that are known to social workers in 2022/23 - 100 children and young people were subject of a child protection plan, 26 were known to the Youth Justice Service and 79 were known to Early Help. Of the 355, 116 were referred due to persistent disruptive behaviour. In 2022/23 4 pupils who were excluded went onto be registered as Elective Home Education (EHE) due to parents not wanting their child to go to a PRU. All relevant safeguarding and provision maps are checked on a termly basis. There are currently 17 children and young people registered as EHE with an EHCP and 38 supported by education other than at school commissioned by the local authority. This includes a number of alternative arrangements to full time education to ensure that children are accessing appropriate education. 20 young people are currently being supported by tuition provision whilst they are waiting for a school place (all provided with 15 hours of learning). In terms of children missing education, repeated attempts to contact and track parents have identified that 1 young person with an EHCP is most likely to be overseas, and investigations continue to ascertain if they are expected to return.
- 10.19 A working group has been set up with schools to develop an Inclusion plan, which will focus on vulnerable children and explore how even closer working across education, health and care can support young people to thrive in mainstream, developing an agreed three tier alternative provision approach and addressing disproportionality. The plan will be consistent with the SEND Strategy 2021-25.

- **Feedback on services:**

Speech and language therapy:

'Well explained and told me what I need to do to improve. All excellent.' (Young person)

Occupational therapy:

'Therapist gave us lots off advice and special cutlery and adaptations for toilet training. Excellent advice, thank you so much'. (Parent)

'I could not believe that my child could sit and play for 5-10 minutes, I am, very glad that I attended OT sessions, gave me lots of useful ideas to take. Excellent therapist.' (Parent)

WEST - Anna Freud centre

'Being able to discuss different cases was a really positive experience.' (Deputy Head/Safeguarding Lead, Secondary)

'Thank you so much for the sessions you have had with O for the last few months. I feel that these sessions have really had a positive effect for O and we have really seen a change in O's anxiety and I believe that a lot of this is to do with the connection that she has had with you together with all your kindness and support'. (Parent)

'I was listened to, and my worries were listened to. The practitioner worked with my mum and school to help me, and it was helpful with my worries. I did not feel rushed, I could build a step at a time.' (Young person)

Inclusion Support Team

'The practitioner has been an amazing support for our school community. She has provided the staff with wealth of advice on how to implement strategies and how to move things forward in the classroom to ensure consistency in approach' (Primary Headteacher)

'I just want to say on behalf of child C and family how much we appreciate your help and support. It was more than your duty as his inclusion officer you really cared and listened even to myself when I felt overwhelmed. Every time I've called you have given us a call back and you always listen then give us the support and you know how difficult it was with Child C and the hard time we went through and the tears I cried and how hard I worked with each school.' (Parent)

'I would like to say a massive thank you to Practitioner for supporting my son. He has been able to explore all the options available, helping us to make the right choice regarding my son and stopped a permanent exclusion from being finalised at Secondary School. It is well appreciated all the hard work that he has put in for my son to be in education regardless the end outcome.' (Parent)

• **Evidence sources:**

Brent ICP Overview and Priorities; ICB Commissioning Structure; Dynamic Support Register Terms of Reference, Minutes of LEAP and CETR Panels; Report on Placements Commissioning, National Safeguarding Review Report of Children with Additional Needs Placed in Residential Educational Provisions to Corporate Parenting Committee February 2023; Special School Nursing Business Case; Joint Funding Panel Terms of Reference 2018; School Place Planning Strategy 2019-23; Draft School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28; Report on Expansion of Education Psychology Service 2021; Development Options for the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service February 2022; Education Psychology Service Recruitment and Retention Report June 2023; Workforce Development Plan 2023-24; Refreshed Graduated Approach Framework 2023; SCERTS Plan 2023; Alternative Provision Annual Report 2023; CYP Commissioning and Procurement Board papers regarding SLT, OT, Procurement options for spot-purchasing of Therapies June 2023; Authority to Implement the SEN/Inclusion Support Fund Programme September 2021; Health service logic models – Asthma, ND, SLT; Cabinet Report on SEND Capital Programme January 2022.

11. Leaders in Brent create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish.
- 11.1 The local authority maintains a strong and effective local partnership with special and mainstream schools working collaboratively to support children and young people

through the Setting and School Effectiveness Partnership Board and through regular school planning meetings with the Corporate Director and Director of Education. A specific session with schools was held on SEND in January 2023 focusing on the development of services and school concerns, including resourcing for SEND pupils and training of staff. The local special multi-academy trusts presented on the support that they could provide to mainstreams schools, which is being commissioned by both schools and the local authority. The Harlesden cluster of schools is working closely with the local authority to test a new approach to support for under 5s (part of the Delivering Better Value Programme), and a specialist assessment centre is being established in one school which will include a range of multi-disciplinary professionals providing early intervention support in place of EHCPs where appropriate.

- 11.2 A key focus of the local area partnership is improving the quality and impact of the education, health, and care assessment, planning and review process, ensuring that the plan is rooted in the voice of the child and is delivered through a strengths-based approach. Whilst significant progress has been made to ensure that these values underpin practice, work to improve assessment, plans and reviews so they are based on SMART outcomes and a consistent in the approach to capturing the voice of nonverbal children continues.
- 11.3 To provide assurance on the quality of EHCPs and annual reviews an audit framework is in place that draws on: a) audits of referrals to panels; b) quarterly multiagency auditing chaired by the DCO c) monthly dip samples of new plans via the SEND 0-25 team; d) closing the learning loop through SEND champions; e) feedback from parents and f) learning from tribunals and complaints.
- 11.4 Twenty-one multiagency audits were undertaken in 2022/23 and 4 in the 2023/24 autumn term. A number of strengths have been identified; contributions of parents' views and concerns were consistently considered; there was consistent inclusion of the voice of the child, including exploration of their communication strengths and how they like to communicate; advice from NHS Therapy services was of a good quality; the child's strengths and needs were clearly communicated; plans incorporated a range of sources of advice to form a clear picture of the child's needs; there is good information gathering and recording, exploring the child's journey and clearly shows amendments following annual reviews and preparation for adulthood is mostly considered and included in annual reviews.
- 11.5 The overall key areas for development were a) ensuring that outcomes are consistently SMART in EHCPs; b) that EHCPs consistently capture the child's views when children are very young or non-verbal and c) that updated EHCPs focus on SMART outcomes, progress and the voice of the child. Specific areas of learning were identified for health services, children's social care teams and educational services, as well as for audit practice:

Areas of Improvement for Health Services

- Child voice should be in the first person
- Health advice is sometimes jargonistic; the responsible clinician should include more detail regarding treatment, provision or whether a health history and care plan is required in school

- Medical and CAMHS advice can lack detail in terms of how a diagnosis affects a child's access to school and what monitoring provision will be in place going forward

Areas of Improvement for Social Care Services

- The quality of social care advice should be more detailed for children who are known to Children's Services.
- Signposting to suitable universal provision could be more consistent.
- Children's Services should give an overview of the expected outcome not just a description of provision
- No exploration of social care or early help needs in 50% of EHCPs audited

Areas of Improvement for Education Services

- Occasionally the child's journey is limited, whereas it should incorporate major milestones in the child's life
- Elements of the annual reviews that offered clear progress measures and incorporated the child's view were not incorporated into updated plans
- Plans include some conflicting statements for example how to communicate with children and young people and how they would like to communicate
- Not all information from recent reports and importantly from schools at the point of the annual review were incorporated or reflected in the EHCP

Auditors - Areas of Development for the EHCP Audit Process

- Auditors should score all areas and not rely on N/A
- Audits should consistently provide detail on what was good and areas for improvement.

11.6 A number of actions are being undertaken to respond to identified areas of development. This includes ensuring system partners are using the SEND Induction Pack for all new starters. The SEND Induction Pack was circulated to the 0-19 Service in January 2024 and meetings have now commenced with the service to discuss how the integrated checks at age 2.5 can be used for the EHCNA process as a vital assessment for early identification and prevention. The integrated 2.5 years checks document is being reviewed with 0-19 Service to improve how information is collated into an action plan that can be agreed with parents. A multi-disciplinary team will carry out the Age and Stages Questionnaire focused on developmental progress, including early detection of social-emotional challenges.

11.7 A comprehensive training programme on producing good outcomes is being rolled out. The SEND 0-25 Team in the Inclusion Service has completed outcomes training and similar training will be delivered to social care and health teams (mental health professionals and health SEND champions) by March 2024. Social workers and early help teams will be helped to understand specificity in the context of SEND and the link to social and personal development for children and young people (CYP) outside of school. The SEND 0-25 team include quality assurance in individual and group supervision to ensure there is good management oversight of cases.

- 11.8 Each provider agency is responsible for ensuring that practitioners are clear on their individual roles and how they can best work together to improve outcomes for children and young people. Ongoing training is provided to all practitioners to create consistent multi-agency working. This includes safeguarding children training provided through the Brent Children Safeguarding Forum and multi-agency SEND champion training has been effective for multi-agency development; lunchtime learning hours have been particularly successful for social workers and practitioners in early years settings on the EHC process; and buddy systems help SEND caseworkers improve casework. More specialist learning such as that provided by external providers including training in SEND law contributes to a comprehensive training plan. Additionally, all practitioners are pointed to national websites for learning and development including those provided by NASEN and Council for Disabled Children. As noted above a SEN support training grant has been provided to all Brent schools, and workforce development is a key feature for the DBV programme.
- 11.9 Service days and team meetings for local authority and health staff include learning from complaints, compliments, tribunals, and local ombudsman reports and from positive feedback about what is working well. The main themes emerging from complaints are communication, delays in accessing therapist provision, decisions not to assess or move to a plan, and educational placements (see paragraph 10.8). Training has focused on supporting practitioners to work with parents and providers to improve the experience of the SEND system including how to deliver a 'way forward meeting', how to have difficult conversations and SEND law. Partners actively respond to recommendations that come from the Ombudsman or tribunals.

- **Feedback on services**

- SEND 0-25 Team

- *'I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Child A allocated SEND Officer, for her tireless dedication and unwavering support not only for A's but for all the children and young people in our community with diverse challenges.'* (parent)

- *"I want to genuinely take a moment to thank and appreciate the practitioner for the support and guidance she has provided during our journey of looking for a special school for our son. Since the time she stepped in to help us, things started moving quickly and effortlessly. At every step, she advised / informed and clearly explained the procedure and realistic timelines. She was very calm and professional yet very friendly and empathetic towards to our situation"* (parent)

- *"I just wanted to thank you for your guidance and support on my child's case. I know we still have some things to do but we feel we are in a much better place."*

- *"Make the EHCP plan clearer for parents. Provide more details. I would like more dedicated support for my child and the support as detailed on paper"* (parent)

- **Evidence sources:**

- Brent Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2022/23; Complaints, Tribunals and Compliments Annual Report 2022-23; School Effectiveness Board Minutes 2022/23 and 2023/24; Delivering Better Value Project Plan January 2024; Multi-agency Audit Framework; Slides from Inclusion Service Away Days 2022/23; Notes from ICB Priorities Review meetings 2022/23 and 2023/24; Inclusion Board report on ICB Priorities.