

## 1.2 Joint Commissioning

Leaders across all services have responded to unprecedented and sustained increase in demand for assessments and services with a continued emphasis on quality of delivery and mindful of the needs and aspirations for children and young people. Strategic planning has placed equal emphasis on supporting children whose needs place them at risk of exclusion, with building works for a High Dependency Unit and Family Resilience Centre at North Birkbeck Road and expected to be completed for September 2024, with bespoke provision for children excluded from school. This is part of our Alternative Provision Capital Delivery Plan continues to progress and is operationalising our Inclusion and Alternative Provision Strategy and Operating Model. Social Inclusion Satellite Units, opened at Heathcote School in September 2020 and Holy Family School in September 2021 have supported children with access to short-term placements whilst undergoing work towards reintegrating children within their mainstream school. Additional satellite units are currently in construction at Kelmscott Secondary (for completion in 2022/23) and Willowfield Secondary (for completion in 2023/24). Coupled with robust commissioning and tendering processes in place for AP College providers, there is an emphasis on provision that meets the needs of the cohort.

NHS NEL has invested considerable transformation resources of circa 3 million to improve access to and outcomes from BCYP services in Waltham Forest over recent years. This investment is overseen by the Waltham Forest health and Care partnership through the BCYP executive group. The group overseeing this fund have agreed request for investments and bids across partner agencies for over 40 projects, with a significant focus on the health needs of people who may have SEN and disabilities. The innovation fund to date has agreed investment in children and adults ADHD and autism services to the value of £900,191, which includes £173,457 for pre and post diagnostic support for families and children with autism. These plans are detailed further in the report. Other projects include hospital at home services. Support children in their homes who might otherwise require a hospital admission. These services are just being established.

Much work has been done to improve continuing care services and enabling care closer to home to improve the experience for children and families described later in the paper.

The considerable investment has enabled integration of the Occupational Therapy Services across the council and health teams, The investment has already had impact in terms of significantly improved access for children's occupational therapy, particularly for children with physical disabilities, showing a month-on-month improvement.

The investment from commissioning has expanded services to improve children's mental health, introducing innovative collaborative work across voluntary sector and health providers just initiated.

Access to therapy services has historically been challenging due to limited capacity within both the health and social care teams, with difficulties in recruitment and retention. Over recent years there has been significant NHS investment in therapy

and innovation to integrate services across health and social care to improve efficiency, access and retention of staff. This equated to circa £800,000.

The impact of the investment has significantly improved recruitment and retention for therapies and reduced waiting times for children's SLT services. The new ways of working have enabled changed service delivery including a mix of online, digital and face to face delivery to meet children's needs earlier, working closely with schools and early years settings. The investment has also targeted the waiting times for adult speech and language therapy.

There was investment in the LA SEND services from commissioning which enabled the quality improvement work such as development of the ordinarily available offer described later. There is additional commissioning capacity committed specifically to review and improve the send place planning for much needed special school places and units. Other projects are still in their infancy and expect to see impact in 24/25.

The London Borough of Waltham Forest has invested in the SEND Service in the light of increased requests for assessment, with additional assistant SEND Case Officers, a fixed term SEND Service Manager, a SEND Improvement Officer (fixed term) and additional Case Officers. The service has also invested in a new case management system, due to be implemented in January 2024 which aligns SEND to Capita One education management systems used by admissions, attendance and inclusion teams. This move is regarded as fundamental to the journey of improvement, ensuring the service can be proactive in managing the quality of its work, and alongside an investment in Invision 360 audit tool will connect child and parent feedback to a view of educational outcomes, the impact of provision and financial oversight of value for money.

In response to the increased rate of Autism Diagnosis, we have increased capacity in pre and post diagnostic support, making a successful bid as part of innovation funding. Project actions include: Expanding the Good Beginnings programme, expanding Cygnet delivery, introducing Early Bird, expanding activities and networks for children and young people and training for Autism Champions .We have participated in an AET and NHS pilot on schools and Autism, with an interim impact report informing next steps.



There has been an approximate 50% increase in the number of SENIF and EHCP applications for pre-Reception age children, and in response we increased our SENIF budget for 2024/25 to £1.7 million. In addition, Schools Forum have supported a pilot to extend SENIF into reception for the 2023-25. Schools Forum is a mature mechanism to evaluate High Needs expenditure, with strong collaborative leadership from the Headteacher Chair and Co-Chair with LA Education Finance. The model of task and finish groups exploring options around funding decisions supports the local area to make decisions around expenditure for children with SEND and for those who may need alternative provision in a transparent and constructive manner.

Collaborative leadership in response to a rise in speech, language and communication needs is also evident around the Section 75 agreement in pace for universal and targeted SaLt services. During 2020/21, 85% of PVI providers engaged in the 'All Talk' project; 62% implemented 'All Talk' development plans and 28% received follow up visits. 130 practitioners received 'All Talk' training. Over the same period, 57 children were referred to 'Support 4 Talk'; 38 of the 76 PVIs/schools who received SENIF funding received support from Support4Talk (50%). Additional free story and play sessions for under 5s are available across the borough to support SCLN and offer social opportunities. There are circa 60 sessions per week which can accommodate approximately 1200 service users.

Funding is in place from the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTI) to set up an employment forum and we have established a Learning Delay and Autism Employment Steering Group. This work will feed into our Inclusion Employment Strategy which is currently in development.

The Integrated Commissioning Team sits across LBWF and the ICB - they are responsible for commissioning and the oversight of a number of services, including the SEND Success (Flourish Outreach Service); SEND Mediation; the SENDIASS contract; Children's Mental Health Services, including CAMHS and the development of the CAMHS Transformation Plan; Children's physical health services, including community health services and links to the acute health services and primary care; Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy, including Section 75 Agreement for Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy (as outlined above). This brings significant expertise and a holistic knowledge to partnership conversations, commissioning of services and the local view of performance. The Integrated Commissioning Team are also responsible for the oversight of the DSR and Continuing Care, as outlined in other areas of the SEF.

NELFT SaLT service has been commissioned to deliver targeted and specialist support to early years professionals.

SEND Social Work Leaders allow their staff time to ensure they are always considering the best interest of the CYP and following the golden thread when completing a Children and Family Assessments as well as a Care Act Assessment. We focus on the child's journey, what are their wishes and feels and ensure we focus on a strength base practice. The service works closely with the Brokerage team sourcing appropriate placements based on the needs assessment. Families are also supported through Direct Payments so they can source their own services.