

# London Borough of Waltham Forest Self-evaluation of the SEND System

June 2024



Fulfilling potential – working together to deliver meaningful change for children and young people

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# Summary

In March 2017, the joint area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) inspection of Waltham Forest judged that, [“the inspection raises significant concerns about the effectiveness of the local area.”](#) and the local area was required to produce a written statement of action. In April 2019, a joint OFSTED and CQC revisit resulted in the assessment that, [“Inspectors are of the opinion that the local area has made sufficient progress to improve each of the serious weaknesses identified at the initial inspection.”](#) This reflected that the first inspection outcome was a catalyst for fundamental change in the local area, where all partners reflected on the changing landscape and resulted in a real understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities, as well as a commitment to be round the table and to share accountability for outcomes for children and young people.

A CQC reinspection of NELFT in 2022 resulted in an improved rating to good, from requires improvement in 2019. This reflected an evidenced based view of clinical effectiveness and safety, with 97% of internal quality support visits resulting in good outcomes; with leaders’ recognising key challenges and putting in place mitigations.

We have undertaken the Local Area Self-evaluation with an inclusive and holistic approach, collaborating with colleagues from Health, Social Care and Education to contribute to a joint view of the effectiveness of services and their impact on outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The Local Area has drawn on existing service level performance monitoring, parental feedback and their reporting through to joint governance structures.

The Local Area is currently reviewing and refreshing the SEND Strategy, in line with the SEND Reforms 2023 and local area inspection framework, which has drawn significantly on the three co-production workshops to identify what families are seeking in the next few years.





## Our Vision & Values

Now, as councils across the country continue to face an extremely challenging financial landscape and Waltham Forest has committed to building a fairer and more equitable borough, and doing whatever we can to make our borough a better place to live for our residents. To effectively deliver the best outcomes for residents, we have needed to adapt as an organisation.

Our new Corporate Plan, [Mission Waltham Forest](#) is the 'golden thread' driving all of our work sets out the Council's plan for more equal borough by 2030. It is our commitment to all our residents to tackle the fundamental challenges facing them and drive the change within the Council that is needed to achieve this.

To deliver our vision, we have identified a core set of six Missions to guide the changes we want for our communities, and four missions for us as a council. They are designed as challenges for ourselves as an organisation and serve as our commitments to our residents – they are big and ambitious and act as a guide for our work for the coming years. These missions will be the key enablers in making our Borough Missions happen.

### Our People at the Heart of Our Place

[Our People at the Heart of Our Place Strategy 23-25](#) sets out a vision for providing the support people and families in Waltham Forest need, at the right time, in the right place and in a way that works for them. This overarching vision sets out our strength-based approach focused on what residents can do, building capacity and resilience. It also sets out our ambition for all residents to be: safe; well; resilient; independent and connected. It articulates our six principles underpinning our work.

In accordance with our missions and specific to SEND, the service aims to maintain a focus on services designed around residents, a preventative approach for stronger communities and to ensure every family and every child are given every opportunity so they can thrive in Waltham Forest.

### SEND Local Area Strategy

#### Our Vision

All children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities will have what they need to achieve their full potential in their early years, at school, and in college, so they may lead happy, healthy, and fulfilled lives into adulthood.

Our local area is currently reviewing the SEND Local Area Strategy, and associated Local Area implementation plan. Other relevant strategies informing this self-assessment are the Preparing for Adulthood Strategy, our [All Age Autism Strategy](#) and our Early Years Implementation Plan for Children under 5 with Learning and Developmental Delay (see Appendix 1.4).

## OUR PRIORITIES

01

To ensure the early identification of SEND and providing timely interventions, at the right time and in a child-focused way

02

To improve communication and co-production with children, young people and their families

03

To improve the quality of our outcome-focused education, health and care plans

04

To have robust educational settings with improved educational and life outcomes

05

To ensure all transitions prepare children and young people with SEND for the next stages of life, including adulthood

The strategy sets out the direction and approach the Waltham Forest SEND Partnership will take over the next three years. To achieve these priorities action-focused delivery plan is being developed. The delivery plan will set out the practical steps needed to achieve the priorities set out in this Strategy, and the success measures which children with SEND and their families can hold the Council and partners to account. Together, we will ensure children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities will achieve well and receive the support they need to leave happy and fulfilled lives.

### Family First

We have also undertaken a transformation programme (can we have a link) aiming to ensure that we provide the right relational support to give every opportunity for children to thrive with their families. This transformation programme is linked with the broader Mission Waltham Forest missions, focussing on; emphasising a shift towards locally based, multi-disciplinary family help and earlier intervention, prioritising co-production and co-design with children and families to enhance the quality of experience. The desired outcome is to provide more equitable service aligned with Care Reforms to reset children's social care, leading to improved outcomes and financial sustainability.

Our Family First programme seeks to cultivate a Family First culture by investing in preventative and strengths-based approaches, with a focus on keeping all children and young people, including those with SEND, in safe and loving homes. The programme is expected go through the formal governance process later this year and an update will be given in the quarterly review of the self evaluation.

# Borough Profile



Home to an estimated **278,400 residents** and **102,900 households**

24.5% of residents being aged 0 to 18



The **median annual earnings** for full-time working resident is **£36,000**

74.7% of working age residents are in employment

Life expectancy **79.8yrs for men** and **83.2yrs for women**



Currently ranked nationally as the 82<sup>nd</sup> most deprived borough

**Average house price** was **£520,000**



As of December 2022



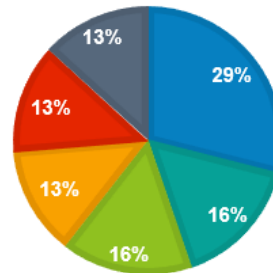
**3,468 CYP have an EHCP** (April 2024)

Approx. 4% of all residents under 25yrs



**92% of the borough's 78 schools** are graded **'good' or 'outstanding'** by Ofsted

## Top countries of origin for residents born overseas



■ Romania ■ Hungary ■ Poland ■ Bulgaria ■ Lithuania ■ Pakistan

## Top languages spoken other than English;



Source: ONS Census 2021



**Two out of three CYP with an EHCP are from a minority ethnic group** (April 2024)

47% of residents are from a minority ethnic group (2021)

## Three top primary needs of school age children (2023)

**31% ASD\***    **24% SLCN^**    **23% SEMH~**

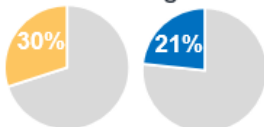
\* Autistic Spectrum Condition

^ Speech, Language & Communication Needs

~ Social, Emotional and Mental Health

**30% of CYP with SEN are persistently absent\*\***

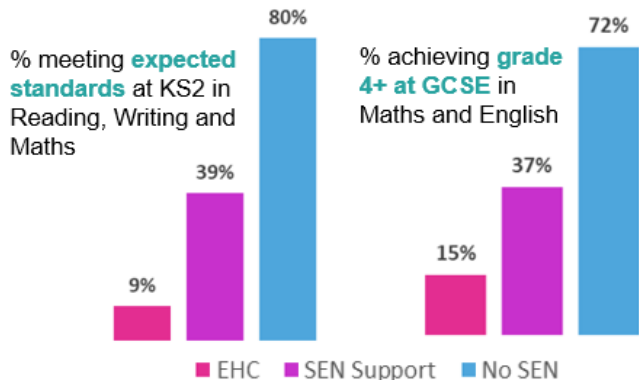
(London average = 31%)



Compared to **21%** of all CYP (2022/23)

\*\*Absent for at least 10% of time

## Attainment at KS2 and KS4 (2022/23)



**Over half (52%) of CYP with an EHCP are in mainstream provision** (2023)

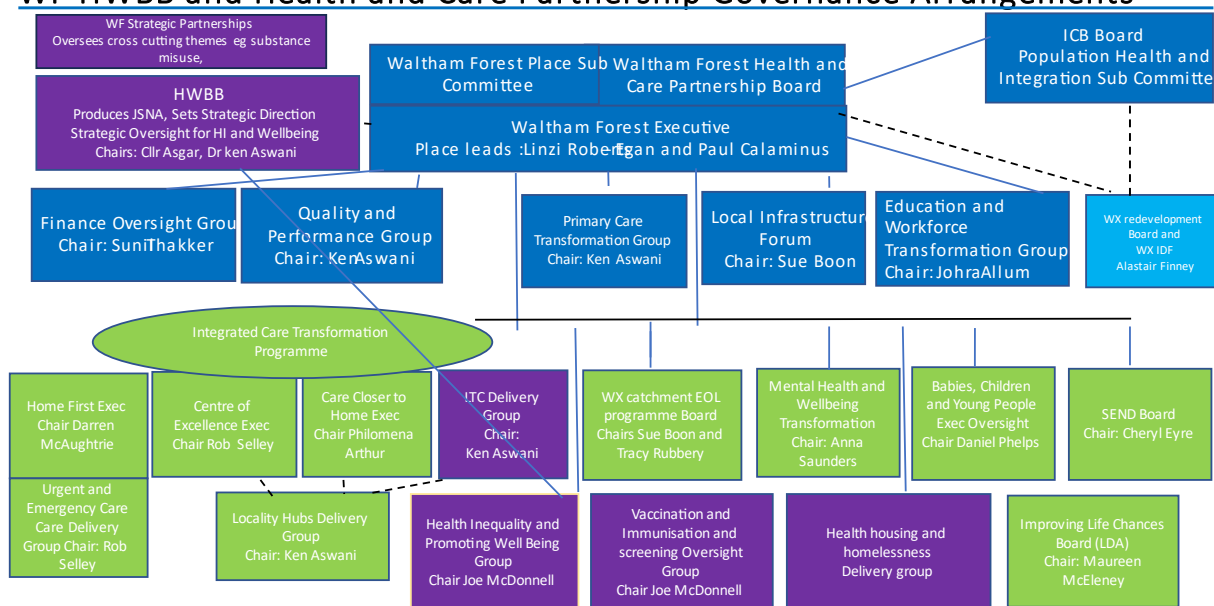
Compared to **41%** of CYP across London

Source: DfE SEND2 2023

# Governance

The new Waltham Forest Health and Care Partnership Board is an alliance of local partners working together – alongside local people – to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities. It is made up of the Council, North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NEFLT), Barts Health NHS Trust, primary care networks and Waltham Forest Federated GP Network.

## WF HWBB and Health and Care Partnership Governance Arrangements



The Local Area SEND Strategic Board has strengthened strategic membership and is chaired by the Director for Children’s Services (DSC). The Board provides oversight of outcomes and provision in the Local Area, with bi-monthly Health and SEND dashboards being presented evaluating the impact. The SEND Board reports to the Health and Care Board.

Children’s priorities remain an absolute focus in a changing health landscape. Our unique partnership with the Institute of Health Inequalities was founded on an unwavering commitment to reduce the social determinants of health disparities, starting at birth. The Waltham Forest Place Based Partnership Board, coupled with the Integrated Care Board, continues to drive progress on health and social care integration that puts babies, children and young people at its heart.

## Leadership

There is a strong focus on education within the senior leadership team of the Council, with the newly Appointed CEO of the London Borough of Waltham Forest a former Headteacher and Director of Children’s Services. The Leader of the Council has also been the Portfolio Lead Member for Children’s Services. Across the local partnership, and as a consequence of the previous inspection experience, all partners have a good understanding of their part and the collective responsibility they hold for the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. This is evidenced in the work

of the Strategic Safeguarding Partnership, as well as throughout different governance structures.

Leaders also ensure the focus on children and young people who are at risk of exclusion or likely to be referred to alternative provision have equitable status, emphasising unmet need and strategic oversight through various fora, including the Headteacher Advisory Group, the Alternative Provision Strategy and the capital works supporting these children to access resource provision alongside mainstream schools. The Portfolio Lead Member for Children's Services meets monthly with education, inclusion and children's service leaders following written reports to scrutinise performance and service priorities. Local Authority decision making processes have enabled the decision to move to Capita One SEND module from January 2024, to provide some short-term additional resource to create leadership and officer capacity in education services, to undertake the SEND Commissioning Review and there is a maturing connectivity across services with children and young people with SEND and additional needs being a golden thread of our work around equality, diversity and inclusion – a key Council mission.

The new Stronger Communities directorate brings together many of the preventative services and levers that are currently dispersed across the council under one umbrella, allowing a much more holistic and integrated approach. The preventative directorate primarily works with residents with emerging needs and has interactions with those who may have multiple, complex and acute needs.

Within the new directorate, a holistic view of early help and intervention is shaped by the Director for Public Health and Corporate Director for Early Help working to the Deputy Chief Executive. The Corporate Directors of Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and Education report to the Director of Children Services. This coherence at leadership level is supporting a developing understanding of the needs of children with EHCPs and at SEND Support, with children with SEND being considered one of the golden threads of our work around inclusion and equity. The team work closely with the Integrated Commissioning team, who through contract management and reviews of service are working to make improvements to services as required, e.g. supporting the SENDIASS team to develop their service and shaping with Flourish Outreach the Ordinarily Available Provision work. We have implemented a Resource Ladder for children and young people with EHCPs, which is reviewed annually. This has provided support for early years and social, emotional and mental health needs.

Key challenges underpinning leadership priorities:

- The increases in demand for EHCPs and complexity of needs has resulted in a need to revisit sufficiency planning as part of the current review of the SEND Strategy. Demand has increased from 3.3% in 2017/18, to 4.9% in 2020/21, above the average for All London Boroughs of 4.4%. The growth in the number, complexity and severity of need continues to be a challenge for the local area. The Local Area has an improving understanding of the complex and increasing prevalence of needs within the borough, and this is contributing to developing plans for improvement. The connectivity of these plans continues to mature.
- A joint project to outline the LBWF Ordinarily Available Provision is underway, with the co-produced framework launched in autumn 2023 and with education settings now asked to self-assess against the principles and consider how we can ensure these principles are delivered consistently in the local area. We are



developing a local practical toolkit for professionals and parent/carers that will support the embedding of the Ordinary Available Provision and intervening at the earliest opportunity and prior to escalation of needs.

- The Local Area SEND Strategy and the Local Area Improvement Plan are in the process of being developed and finalised. This will formalise our vision for SEND and provide a means to report on our improvement journey progress.
- The local area is beginning to explore how representative the parent and carer feedback is, and to develop a more coherent framework for gathering, sharing and acting upon the feedback and experiences of a families and children, ensuring that the feedback is broad and reflects children with different needs and across all phases of education.
- Our approach to engagement needs to be further improved to include a broader range of children, young people and their families in planning and evaluating SEND arrangements. The Local Area needs to extend the reach of planned surveys and feedback to ensure a more comprehensive and representative set of feedback is used to inform all services, including that the feedback matches the local demographics and reflects communities where services are not accessed as well.
- 6 week compliance of health reports, for all professional groups in the health teams continues to be an area of challenge due to high volumes of referrals for reports. The strategies used to meet these targets are discussed with the full partner agency boards on a monthly basis and performance data is shared.

# Our Assessment

The multi agency boards and coproduction groups are working on the Local Area Implementation plan informed by our self evaluation. The Plan outlines thematic priorities deliverable in next three years:

## Five Priority Themes

1. Early identification and timely intervention is accessed at the right time and in a child-centred way to meet their needs
2. Communication and co-production with children, young people and their families both internally and externally
3. Improving quality and outcome focussed education, health and care plans
4. Good, local and inclusive education for children and young people with SEND supporting their academic and life outcomes
5. Ensure transitions prepare children and young people with SEND for their next life stages including adulthood

The local area plan will be governed by the SEND Strategic board and reviewed quarterly. The SEND impact tracker will be used to monitor actions and outcomes under each of the themes.



## Priority one: Early identification and timely intervention, at the right time and in a child-focused way

There are substantial resource challenges across the SEND system, with need far outstripping increases in investment and the Department for Education (DfE) has recognised that the system has become financially unsustainable in their recent [SEND & AP Improvement Plan](#). In the last year alone, there was an increase of almost 300 children and young people with EHCPs in the borough, an 11% rise. Funding is not matching these increases, and further challenges persist in the availability of teaching assistants able to support SEND children, speech and language therapists, clinicians and other areas which are essential to supporting children and young people with SEND to live happy and fulfilled lives. We must work in partnership to use resources in a way that best meets the needs and aspirations of young people.

### **Progress to date:**

Within the LA statutory SEND Service, a bi-monthly SEND Strategic Board provides oversight of performance to those partnership that contribute to the EHC process and its impact has been seen in terms of influencing the decision to move to Capita One SEND module, because we have identified that management reports do not currently enable a well-rounded view of the impact of services on educational outcomes, progression and efficiencies.

Better ICT systems will provide for better management oversight from the point of referrals, allocation of children and monitor and report on progress/outcomes and record a child's learning journey from early years into adulthood. This would also support better communication and information and inform support plans for individuals and wider SEND service planning by professionals.

The Best Start in Life brand (launched in 2022) works with parents and children from an early age to connect with the local community, with six super-hero characters that have been developed to reflect positive distinctive characteristics and to be representative of the borough's demographics. There has been an increase in the number of free inclusive, targeted and specialist story, rhyme and play sessions available across the Borough supported by qualified teachers.

An Early Years Inclusion Pathway has been developed in order to receive referrals/notifications from professionals who are working with under 5's where there are concerns that a child is below expected levels of progress. This also facilitates receipt of statutory section 23 notification from health professionals. There were 129 referrals between April and August 2023. Support is delivered via a range of universal, targeted and specialist services via Family Hubs, early years settings and in families homes and on an individual and/or group basis. The aim is to provide regular learning, development support, assessments and observations that would assist with diagnosis (where appropriate).

The Local Area is committed to support children with learning and developmental delay/SEND. As a result, a 5% top-slice to the funding was agreed to deliver the

Governments free early education and childcare and create a SENIF budget of £1.7 million. This funding provides support to professionals working with the children who attend their settings and the additional cost to the setting of meeting children's needs. Early years settings receive a range of free support as well as cyclical and targeted support visits from qualified teachers, Speech and Language Therapist and SEND specialists.

The Local Area has focus on encouraging and facilitating take up of free early education places by children with learning and developmental delay/SEND which has resulted in take up levels being higher than London and national averages.

A newly formed Early Years Inclusion Pathway's (EYIP) Multi – Agency Review Panel has been established for the targeted intervention for children not in a setting. The Panel routinely review the progress of the children ensuring a holistic approach is delivered to the child and family. Panel members include Early Help, Lloyds Park Charity, Nelft and Tower Hamlets Care Group, with contributions from Early Years.

Early Help provides broad array of inclusive sessions to parents through the Best Start in Life and Somewhere to Belong covering all four localities within Waltham Forest. We have improved collaboration between partners like Lloyds Park Charity, Henry and Tower Hamlets Care Group to strengthen the inclusive nature of the sessions and offer immediate support and advice to parents.

We have introduced new afterschool and weekend session for families with SEND over 5 years old which includes Inclusive dance sessions facilitated by Dash Dot Dance, Waltham Forest Parent Forum's SEND Lego club and Space 4 provides for youth activities.

The new Early Help Outreach Team provides advice and guidance to parents within the community with an emphasis to engage families currently not accessing Waltham Forest Services. Fortnightly morning drop in sessions are available for all families with children with SEND at the local Wood Street Health Centre and introduction of the Family Hub phonenumber operating six days a week provides impartial support and advice to families with children and young people up to 25 years old.

In October 2023 the local area launched Waltham Forest' Ordinarily Available Provision. It outlines the support that mainstream settings should be able to provide for a child through their agreed funding and resource arrangements operating a Graduated Approach to assessing, planning for, providing for, and reviewing most children's needs in their settings and schools. We are developing culture of early identification and early intervention of SEND in order to prevent escalation of needs for most vulnerable families. This approach will support families with getting the right support at the right time. The Ordinarily Available Provision describes a wide range of activities, opportunities and approaches that are offered as basic good practice to meet a range of additional needs without the need for formal diagnosis or specialist support. It emphasises our passion for difference and equal opportunities for all.

Timely identification of all children including those who are Looked After and have SEND. We are working to improve the identification of children, both within the authority, those where Waltham Forest are financially responsible but attend settings outside of the borough as well as those children placed in borough by other authorities, and



improve the quality of their EHC plans, tracking services needed for those with SEND as part of a multi-agency working party with the LAC nursing team lead, DCO, Virtual school and SEND officers. Training has occurred with the virtual school on health needs of children who are looked after to support identification of children with SEND

Regular reviews of capacity to support the number of children referred to the Early Years Inclusion pathway and the number and type of places required in order to explore ways to increase capacity if required and inform school place planning.

The team are reviewing the offer to focus on a targeted, evidence led approach for access to Speech and Language Therapy to respond to the challenges in recruitment and retention. Speech and language assessments for children in school are currently being covered by senior staff working between schools. Recruitment has been increasingly successful as the team has grown and training is also being offered to schools to support teaching and support assistants to work with children with communication needs.

Waiting times have increased on the Neurodevelopmental Diagnostic Pathways 0-18 (after an initial reduction following additional investment) due to increased demand and recruitment issues. In February 2023, 150 preschool children were waiting between 18 and 52 weeks. We are working to improve the pathways following investment from the commissioning teams which has allowed remodelling of services. E.g. training LA and school staff to offer aspects of the pre and post diagnostic support to children and families, which will enhance the psychoeducational approach whilst also freeing up clinical time to carry out diagnostic work.

We continue to work with our coproduction group, commissioners and GP's on increasing registration and uptake of health checks, particularly for our 14-17 years cohort, also working on ensuring smooth transition from children to adults learning disability services, working with SEND and families to develop a full action plan having already improved the health transition page on the local offer, created the new 'transition tool' and started to roll out health passports

To better support children's social emotional and mental health needs the commissioning team have invested in dedicated project support to develop and embed new ways of working using the thrive model of partnership support. This project is starting with a multi-agency assessment of where we are, and where we want to be in 12 months' time.

Increased take up of mandatory development checks by health visitors, improved identification of need and consistency of referrals to Early Years Inclusion pathway to enable support to be put in place at earliest opportunity.

## Next steps

Under the SEND impact tracker, the below priorities and actions have been identified under Theme 1 and will be reported against in the quarterly reviews:

### **1.1 Comprehensive Data Collection: Local Area knows its population with SEND and any changes in need and priority.**

- Produce a SEND needs analysis and maintain up-to-date information that accurately reflects the population demographics, needs and service requirements within the local area, including a focus on disparities between different demographic groups
- SEND strategic board receives regular updates on SEND data and uses this to inform priorities.
- A children's JSNA is currently being finalised, which includes a section on SEND. This document informs the BCYP Partnership Strategy and ensures that the needs of children with SEND are reflected in the BCYP Partnership Strategy.
- School attendance for SEND cohort is monitored as part of the wider school attendance strategy.

### **1.2 Implement a proactive screening process to identify SEND at secondary age at the earliest possible stage, ensuring that support can be provided promptly to those who need it.**

- There is clear oversight and knowledge of the children at SEN support e.g. data is kept on these children and progress tracked
- SEND Strategic Board received termly data from school improvement on SEN cohort, trends and growth.

### **1.3 Short Breaks review, new framework and move to care and support**

- New framework and move to care and support (link to be added to new framework once published)

### **1.4 Improving early access to intervention, therapies and Diagnostic Pathways Establish a system that guarantees the delivery of support and advice to children and their families at the right time.**

- Support Recruitment to SLT and OT via Hard to recruit to initiatives & consideration of skill mix modelling
- Increase capacity of Cygnet course and Introduce Early Bird course by training more trainers and providing support to Early Help to co-ordinate the delivery of the courses
- Introduce 'navigators' into the LA for families of children with autism
- SENCO's to be trained by Flourish to deliver 'all about me' when a child is diagnosed with autism
- The above increases capacity in health services so there are more diagnostic slots thus reducing waiting times for diagnosis

- Provisions for children at risk of exclusion or with additional needs are accessible as part of the Inclusive schools and AP strategy. This is to help with early identification of needs

### **1.5 Increase take up of health and development reviews in early years and increase referrals to Early Years Inclusion Pathway**

- Undertake work to understand barriers to families attending appointments and review how offer can be improved to address this.
- Review of data to understand improved identification of need and consistency of referrals to Early Years Inclusion pathway to enable support to be put in place at earliest opportunity
- Increased take up of mandatory development checks by health visitors,

### **1.6 Compliance with Statutory Timescales Ensure that all needs assessments, reviews, and subsequent provision of services are completed within the statutory timescales**

- Performance for education, health and social care reports to SEND Strategic Board monthly

### **1.7 Training and Development**

- Schools and LA staff e.g. schools/BACME trained to identify ASD/ADHD
- SEND to explore commissioning of universal offer of training on communication/fine/gross motor control and impact of sensory difference as part of OAP



## Priority two: Strong communication and co-production with children, young people, and their families both internally and externally

Navigating the system and understanding what support is available can be challenging for young people, parents & carers, and practitioners. The complexity of what is available and the challenges in accessing the right support can be a significant drain on young people, parents and carers, causing frustration for many. These challenges also risk increasing inequalities as those with more time, resources or education are better able to find their way though. Waltham Forest has been working to bridge this gap and ensure that the voices of young people and their families are being heard both within our internal processes and within their communities.

### **Progress to date**

Inclusive practice is supported in local Ofsted registered childcare settings and schools, by educating children locally when-ever possible, within a mainstream setting if appropriate and through the local model of school resourced provisions. The borough offers an extensive universal and targeted holiday scheme, in which children and young people are supported to participate in activities. 75% of Parents and Carers who participated in the Annual SEND Service Survey 22-23 said they felt their child was valued in the Waltham Forest community. This sense of inclusion and identification with Waltham Forest as a place is supported through the corporate focus on 15 minute neighbourhoods, with an emphasis on accessible services locally.

An effective working relationship with the Parent and Carer Forum recognises their expertise by experience and their valued representation is an important feature of many boards and task and finish groups. Such work has informed service redesign, for example around reducing duplication in assessments and looking at the post-diagnostic pathways for children with autism through the lens of the family and young person. The feedback provided is also informing work around “good waiting” – with providers understanding the significance of clarity of communication; acknowledging where there may be delay but articulating what will happen and signposting to information and advice in the interim .

The newly formed Parent Carer Support Panel with representatives from Early Help, WF Parent Carer Forum, Education Psychologist, Employment lead, Autism steering group representative and others provides peer support to professionals/organisations facilitating parent programmes including intervention for families with children with SEND (positive support behaviour sessions, connective families interventions) delivered online, face to face, at weekend and evenings.

Multi agency working across health and Local Authority partners, and responding to the expressed views of local families in the WF parents forum, leading to service change is strong. E.g. As a result of the collaboration, partnership working in early years is strong with joint decision making and clearly defined pathways; co-production is improving across the local area with more strategic projects being co-produced with parents and carers (Short Breaks review 2022/2023, deep dive in children circumstances who are EHE, EOTAS, permanently excluded and in receipt of tuition 2024.



Whilst there is active participation of young people in the development of services with CAMHS, there is a need to improve young people's participation in the development of wider health and SEND services. Improvement work is often iterative, and leaders need to actively consider how young people will be involved and supported to participate.

Like many London boroughs, a significant proportion of children and young people attend educational settings in other North East London boroughs. The emphasis of local provision for all children is at the heart of our current commissioning project, as we seek to ensure children and young people are educated within their communities as their best preparation for adulthood, where appropriate to their wider goals.



## Next steps

Under the SEND impact tracker, the below priorities and actions have been identified under Theme 2 and will be reported against in the quarterly reviews:

### 2.1 **Co-production informs SEND improvements across the local area**

- All SEND stakeholders, including educators, healthcare providers, parents, and young people, have a comprehensive understanding of the principles and practices of co-production. The goal is to foster a shared commitment to collaborative decision-making and design of SEND services. Ensure that stakeholder contributions directly influence policymaking, service design, and the implementation of support systems for those with SEND

### 2.2 **Local Offer is accessible and comprehensive and is valued by all stakeholders and families.**

- The local offer is easily accessible to all stakeholders and also kept up to date with the latest information, services, and opportunities, ensuring relevance and value for the intended users.

**2.3 SENDIASS provides professional, comprehensive, clear advice and support and contributes towards coproducing pathway developments**

- SENDIASS will run partner engagement 6 monthly with key services, feeding back trends and issues.
- SENDIASS are present at all appropriate workshops and pathways developments

**2.4 Creating opportunities to ensure the voice of children and young people is integrated and is contributing to planning and decision making based on agreed remits.**

- Ensure that all processes and systems related to SEND are communicated in a clear, concise, and accessible manner. This objective seeks to eliminate confusion and misunderstanding by providing all stakeholders, especially professionals, parents, and young people, with information that is easy to understand and act upon.
- YP youth council at the special schools to be utilised to support the development of services. Young people to support the development of information pre and post autism diagnosis through a specific piece of work. 'What I would like to know'
- Families included in all service developments through co-production and PCF reports to SEND Strategic Board termly about progress.

## Priority three: Improving the quality of our outcome-focused education, health and care plans

### Progress to date

The ICB have two GP clinical leads for children's in Waltham Forest, one for children's Physical Health and Mental Health, and one for Early Years and Maternity. Both are closely involved in developing and improving services and are particularly key in enabling links to primary care services. The GP Clinical Lead for Early Years and Maternity Co-Chairs the Early Years and Maternity Board, and the GP Clinical Lead for Children's Physical and Mental Health Co-Chairs the Board for Children's Physical Health (recently established in April 2023, this will oversee areas such as therapies). Identification of gaps has in a number of circumstances led to additional funding to improve services – for example, therapies, autism diagnostics, pre-and-post autism support, community dietetics, and continuing care and continence nursing – although funding can sometimes only be short term, it is recognised that even short-term funding can lead to improvements for some families.

This year we have significantly increased the proportion of children in care with timely review health assessments, up to date immunisations and a recent oral health check and secured funding to increase the number of primary mental health workers within the corporate parenting service from one to three. We have bolstered mental and physical health support for unaccompanied asylum seeking children by piloting a new integrated, holistic pathway. An easy access, community-based care pathway for young people aged 18-25 with a diagnosable, low risk, mental health condition is now in operation with care experience young people.

For young people and adults with learning disabilities and autism we recognised that the use of an acute ward was not appropriate and as a result have closed an acute hospital unit, and instead created an intensive support team to work alongside our community learning disabilities team and young people and families. The intensive support team will also provide outreach support to hospitals for young people and adults who may require a hospital stay due to mental health, to provide training advice and support to staff to ensure their care is optimal, understanding of the impact of any SEND needs on their mental health is recognised and acted upon.

Services for children with mental health needs have had increased investment both into NELFT and into voluntary sector support services, and new CAMHS pathways have been established as a result of joint working with the Youth Ambassadors for both children with mild moderate needs such as anxiety from the mental health in schools and the primary care teams attached to GP's. There are well established distinct pathways for those children with more complex mental health needs. Training and joint working and decision making across CAMHS, schools and SEND is well embedded.

Waltham Forest has growing professional awareness of autism and neurodiversity within the Local Authority, schools and health partners evidenced by participation in recent Autism Deep Dive, access to training on autism awareness and responding to parental feedback when implementing changes. The Early Years and Childcare team are accredited Autism Education Trust trainers. Engagement levels in support offer is high.

The Autism in Education Deep Dive review showed a lot of good practice taking place in schools and a strong response from schools to deliver on recommendations for improvements. A Steering Group that met during the delivery of the review will continue to meet and expand to include more school representation to deliver on recommendations.

Pre and post diagnosis support has received investment for improvement and a working group have developed a delivery plan for improving access to training for autistic children, young people and their parents/families. An information and video offer is also in development to have a long term online offer accessible by anyone.

Continued focus on improving the quality of EHC plans. An investment has been made into the Invision Audit Tool, with a focus on writing good or better new plans. Auditors have been trained across various agencies, including Parent Carer Forum and health. Similar to the national picture, the continued growth in requests to assess for new EHCPs has resulted in lower rates of completion of annual reviews.

We continue to work with our coproduction group, commissioners and GP's on increasing registration and uptake of health checks, particularly for our 14-17 years cohort, also working on ensuring smooth transition from children to adults learning disability services, working with SEND and families to develop a full action plan having already improved the health transition page on the local offer, created the new 'transition tool' and started to roll out health passports. There is good multi agency working at targeted and specialist levels at NELFT's multi-disciplinary panel and the Family Hubs to facilitate the sharing of information and ensure that families are provided with appropriate holistic support. A multi-agency 0-5 Learning & Developmental Delay Strategic group was established with partners across Early Years, NELFT, Public Health, Health Visiting, SEND and Early Help which has developed a 3 year plan to support children and their families.

## Next steps

Under the SEND impact tracker, the below priorities and actions have been identified under Theme 3 and will be reported against in the quarterly reviews:

### **3.1 Continued focus on improving the quality of EHC plans and/or support plans, which are child-centered.**

- Develop plans that are truly reflective of the child's lived experience, as well as their wishes and desires. This objective seeks to place the child at the heart of the planning process, ensuring that their voice is central and that the plans are not just about them but are shaped by them.
- Improve the ratio of co-production meetings to ensure as many parents, carers and children as possible participate in the writing of EHCPs and/or support plans.
- All local stakeholders and parents will engage in a deep dive multi-agency audit which will focus on the quality of plans for children in specific circumstances e.g. Children Looked After, EHE, EOTAS, Perm Excluded

### **3.2 Annual Review: All partners are clear on expectations and timelines for reviews and are included in reviews.**



- Establishing a dynamic and responsive review process that can identify and document any changes in a child's needs, outcomes and provisions over time. Regular reviews are crucial for ensuring that the support provided continues to be appropriate and effective as the child's circumstances evolve.
- Health reports are sought as part of AR process and 2 weeks notice give

### 3.3 **Local Authority and Health commissioning tighter oversight of resources committed into plans and whether it is achieving outcomes for the children**

- SEND officers record the resources allocated within a plan through the use of capita and report run quarterly
- Children's progress in annual reviews at key stages of transition reported on through capita



## Priority four: Robust educational settings with improved educational and life outcomes

Every young person with SEND and every person working with them should have high aspirations for what they can achieve, both in their education and in their future lives. Young people with SEND should be encouraged to set their sights high and access the support they need to get there. We have been working to provide as many opportunities for our young people to thrive.

### **Progress to date**

The local authority is currently undertaking a SEND Education Sufficiency Analysis to understand the current trends, distribution and emerging priorities in respect of supporting educational settings in Waltham Forest that will offer children and young people a challenging curriculum within an environment that promotes learning and development in line with their individual needs and abilities. In addition to meeting various statutory duties, we have a shared understanding that meeting needs locally leads to more positive outcomes for children and young people, enabling them to stay connected to their family and communities particularly as they transition to adulthood. There are also benefits in respect of reduced time spent being transported to school, potentially more flexible and convenient transport solutions for families, and even possibilities for independent travel.

The draft SEND Education Sufficiency Analysis report is expected to be completed during the Spring '24 term which will provide a timeline of the above activities to be delivered together with a proposed plan on SEND commissioning intentions.

Project leadership is often shared across health and Local Authority with the Designated Clinical Officer's role having sufficient capacity to allow both operational and strategic input to support the work of the Integrated Care Board (ICB).

The ICB has been responsive to the needs for innovation, investment and change. Where concerns have been identified about pathways for children, the investment and improvement resulted in developing the continuing care processes, the dynamic support register, and instigation of the new integrated Occupational Therapy team across social care and health, led by a senior OT practitioner. The transition to an Integrated Occupational Therapy Service under NELFT was also facilitated by joint working with external experienced practitioners from services such as quality independence (QI) who were able to support the team and individual families. As the new service took shape QI assisted with preventing challenges in setting up and reducing disruption to families transitioning to the new models of working.

The investment into the Continuing Care team of a full time nurse and strengthened systems, with a named commissioner, has improved the experience for children and families needing this high level of specialist care, with much improved satisfaction with services and swifter resolution of any challenges of managing packages for these vulnerable children

Following investment, recruitment into therapy services has gone very well at a time of national challenge in this area both at senior and less experienced grades.

The provision of Supported Internships in the borough is increasing, with two new programmes commencing in 2023 and interest from education providers to deliver further programme in 2024. Other employment support is also improving in the borough for young people with SEND, such as a new Supported Employment programme working with people with a learning disability and/or autism aged 16 and over. An Employment Forum started in 2023 to include all stakeholders and deliver an action plan focused on improving employment outcomes for young people with SEND.



## Next steps

Under the SEND impact tracker, the below priorities and actions have been identified under Theme 4 and will be reported against in the quarterly reviews:

### 4.1 Local culture that celebrates difference for all in education

- Foster a culture that not only acknowledges but actively celebrates differences. This involves implementing initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity, ensuring that all children feel valued and supported.
- Steering group will be established, progress of implementation monitored at Autism Board, making LBWF Autism friendly borough

### 4.2 Local provision for all children is at the heart of our current commissioning project developing inclusive capacity.

- Ensure that the local educational landscape in Waltham Forest has the capacity to provide inclusive education to all children and young people with SEND. SEND Sufficiency Strategy is developed with stable workforce to respond to the current and future specialist demands to ensure sufficient capacity and capability to support a high performing local SEND system"

#### **4.3 Provide local, good quality provision for children with SEND**

- Conduct thorough reviews of existing Specialist Resource Provisions (SRPs) at both secondary and primary levels, with the intention of further developing these resources. The focus is on enhancing the quality and effectiveness of SRPs to support better academic achievements and improve attendance rates for children with SEND.

#### **4.4 Close the attainment and progress gaps for children with SEND and improve school readiness for Early Years and transition to secondary school to support achievement**

- Monitoring and proactive management of attendance challenges and barriers to education across the SEN school population.



## Priority five: All transitions prepare children and young people with SEND for their next life stages, including adulthood

Transitions between schools or into adulthood can be challenging for many children and young people, and this is particularly true for those with SEND. We will work to make these transitions as smooth as possible to reduce the stress on young people with SEND and their families.

### **Progress to date**

In terms of alternative provision for children at risk of exclusion, all AP providers are quality assured either annually or bi-annually dependent on their level of need. A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is agreed at the end of each visit with clear targets set. Regular termly or half termly QIP monitoring meetings take place where evidence is provided by the provision to demonstrate how well the targets are being met. Lesson observations take place in each of the provisions to ensure the students are receiving education which not only meets their needs but offers stretch and challenge. Students work in books and teachers marking is assessed on a regular basis to ensure that the implementation of the curriculum is being understood by the child and staff are encouraging students to develop their responses in writing. The Youth and Family Resilience Service gathers a view of academic achievement and progression for those children they have supported to inform views on quality of provision and also to inform commissioning arrangements.

Through the Preparing for Adulthood Strategy, local facilities have identified dedicated sessions for children and young people with special educational needs and disability, enabling participation in a wide range of activities e.g swimming sessions and quiet shopping hours.

Investment and work has spanned both children's and adults services, highlighting the understanding of the 0-25 year statutory responsibility for children, young people with SEND and Disabilities e.g. there has been a significant amount of investment into the autism and ADHD pathways in adult services, and development of an 18-25 advisory services for young people with mental health needs transitioning to adult service managed by the CAMHS primary team service. There is always more work to be done around transitions and we are aware that we are really at the start of the journey to improve these pathways.

There is a recently established culture of multi agency working across the special schools, with frequent operational discussion around ways of supporting individual children and families with complex needs as well as ensuring smooth transitions. The multi agency interventions have improved the outcomes for children which is demonstrated through the tracking of children's needs at rated red/amber/green by the multi agency group.

The services look holistically at the feedback from children and families and act on concerns, as evidenced by the access to health services working party focussing on use of health passports and the alert card to support access to hospital and GP surgeries.

Access to Occupational Therapy in February 2023: Initial assessment 18+ weeks- Health 104, Social Care 164. Recruitment in Occupational Therapy is being rigorously undertaken following our new partnership arrangement with NELFT, with the expectation that an integrated service will support the process because of the practice benefits and potential for career progression. New pathways of support for families includes training and advice at the point of referral.



## Next steps

Under the SEND impact tracker, the below priorities and actions have been identified under Theme 5 and will be reported against in the quarterly reviews:

### 5.1 Establishing Transition Pathways

- Create well-defined transition pathways that guide young people with SEND through the various stages of their educational and personal development. It involves collaboration with local area partners to ensure that easy information and guidance are available, detailing what services and options are available at each age milestone

### 5.2 Informed Decision-Making for Young People with SEND

- Empower every young person with SEND to make informed and confident choices regarding their future, particularly as they approach key transition points, such as moving from education into employment or higher education. This involves providing them with the necessary information, support, and opportunities to understand and consider all available options from age 14 onwards, or earlier if appropriate.

### 5.3 Strengthen employment and life-long opportunities: support independence and community integration

- Ensure access to a variety of supported living arrangements, further education pathways, and local internship programmes that cater to the diverse needs and aspirations of SEND individuals.

### 5.4 Strengthen universal health and wellbeing offer for children and young people with SEND

- Universal health offer, including school nurse drop ins, are available for children in special schools.
- Sexual health outreach sessions are delivered in special schools.
- Recruitment of 0-19 service specialist practitioner for SEND
- Health and wellbeing services for young people such as child and family weight management service, online mental health counselling, sexual health services, consider the needs of children with SEND in design and delivery.

