THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA



A Fairer Future

“Someone on my side”

Strategy for special educational needs and disabilities
2025-2030

Introduction

When we asked children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), what does it mean to feel supported and included at school, they told us about being treated as equal, having the education that other people receive and feeling people were on their side. They told us that the SEND Strategy should help anyone who looks like they're struggling and they shared their ambition and hope for their future.

Our Fairer Future SEND Strategy outlines our commitment to creating a welcoming and supportive environment in our borough for children and young people with SEND to thrive throughout their lives. We want our children and young people to enjoy opportunities in their learning and be happy in their childhood. We want them to be well equipped with the skills and resilience that they need for adulthood. We want to prepare our children and young people for their adult lives.

We want our children and young people to feel empowered and confident, to have skills for independence, positive relationships and friendships, and have a strong sense of belonging. It is essential that everyone who works with our children and young people with special educational needs shares our commitment to services that are inclusive; and feel responsible for listening to families, involving them in shaping services, ensuring they feel respected and valued and acting on their feedback.

Our local area serves a diverse and multi-national population, with many residents who speak English as an additional language. To ensure our services are accessible to everyone, it is important to understand their lived experiences and needs. We are committed to treating all residents with dignity and respect regardless of their background.

In refreshing our 2021-2024 SEND Strategy, we have taken the opportunity to ensure our commitment to improving their outcomes is clear and aligns with the Council plan developed with residents as well as health plans from North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB and NHS providers) and strategies to put in place good quality services. The SEND Executive Partnership Board, jointly chaired by the Executive Director for Children's Services and the local ICB Director, has ensured wide ranging engagement (Annex A) with this strategy to meet our commitment to fairness. Much of what we are proposing is maintaining high quality service that are important to families and evidenced as effective, but we are mindful that earlier help, choice and control in the way help it is provided and being fully included will improve outcomes further for our SEND cohort.


Collins
White Rose Maths

Vision for the future

Our vision is for children and young people with SEND growing up in the local area to receive an ambitious, high-quality education and services which provide the right help at the right time, co-produced for and with those who have additional needs:

- inclusive and welcoming schools and educational settings
- special and alternative provision that is ambitious for children and young people
- early identification of additional needs and barriers to learning
- timely support, integrated at the most effective point to receive help
- meaningful opportunities that support them on their pathway to adulthood

Our children and young people are growing up in a world where technological transformation is part of their everyday lives. Our work with them, and for them, must stay relevant to their future, maximising the benefits and staying alert to causes of harm and keeping them safe.





Where are we now?

Children and young people with SEND growing up in our area are far more likely to go to a good or outstanding school and achieve educational outcomes above the national average despite levels of SEND continuing to increase locally.

In 2025, the borough's schools serve 2,701 pupils with special educational needs, representing 20.7% of the school population, up from 17% in 2019. This increase comes despite a drop in primary pupil numbers due to lower birth rates and a declining child population in London.

Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges faced by families and cost of living pressures increasingly impact their well-being highlighting the importance of leaders across the system acting cohesively and continuing to learn from the experiences of children and their families. Our Strategy for 2021-2024 made a commitment to the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people with SEND, recognising the impact of the pandemic and significant progress was made through jointly commissioned services, appropriate step up and down of services between youth mental health support workers, mental health support teams in schools, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

We publish, and update, our self-evaluation with details of what is working well alongside our areas for development. Through targeting resources to early intervention, developing capacity and creating more specialist places, we have increased our SEND Local Offer, and growth in the number of Education, Health and Care (EHCP) plans is below London and national average whilst the number of children in local provision has increased. This has helped us to delivered better value with our high needs ring-fenced funding and has also reduced costs to the council for travel assistance.

Over the ten years since the introduction of the Children and Families Act, our partnership has embedded accountability in its way of working. The involvement of parent champions in signposting families has led to significant achievements including the development of an effective whole-system model for speech, language and communication needs, comprehensive support for families with children with SEND, successful implementation of a council-led programme for post-16 education and employment, support for the health and well-being of parents, and strong inclusion, with 55% of children with EHCPs supported in mainstream schools, which is higher than the London average.

We have made significant progress in reducing waiting times for neurodevelopmental diagnosis, although there is still work needed to reduce this further. We have simultaneously worked together to ensure support is available for those who are waiting. Whilst most children who need therapies are seen in a timely way, the local area partnership is ensuring earlier help (whole system support) across children's everyday lives. There is ongoing work to address the challenges around communication with the wheelchair service and carrying out timely repairs and adjustments.

Significant progress has been made to ensure emotional wellbeing support. The Mental Health Transformation programme has been successfully implemented. The 0-5 CAMHS provides support within Family Hubs, Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) are working in almost all local schools and a 16-25 mental health pathway is well-established. Specialist adolescent crisis support to reduce inpatient admissions is offering intensive home support. There is support from the local Educational Psychology team for children and young people to reduce school avoidance.

We are refreshing our health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) to guide planning and offer reassurance to families that their voices have been heard, their needs are at the fore of planning and that we deliver timely support services for them.

As part of our commitment to joined-up, place-based support, we are embedding Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Family Hubs to provide earlier, holistic and coordinated care, close to home. We have strengthened the partnership with GPs and the voluntary and community sector to create wraparound support as part of the neighbourhood health approach.

We successfully established the role of Designated Social Care Officer for SEN and it helped us develop a network of social care champions to strengthen our joint working.

Schools report that strong services support them in their work with pupils who have speech, language and communication difficulties and there is good access to training. Children and young people with barriers to learning can expect to have their additional needs identified early and receive support from a range of services working with their teachers and their families. Those children and young people with SEND whose needs call for specialist provision benefit from timely statutory assessments, outreach support and a broad range of short breaks. We have increased the range of specialist education provision available locally, and launched guidance on our expectations of Ordinarily Available Provision.

We are committed to greater inclusion, involving families in designing and reviewing local services, working to close gaps, and we are ambitious in wanting to ensure our young people are successful and prepared to live fulfilling adult lives.



National context

SEN prevalence in England continues to rise. National data published in June 2025 highlighted over 1.7m pupil have SEN, 19.5% of all pupils. The proportion with an EHCP (5.3%) has grown by more than 10% since 2024.

In October 2024 the National Audit Office (NAO) reported that DfE funding per EHC plan has fallen by 35% in real-terms and pointed to the lack of capital investment which it believed to be driving independent sector placements, based on their findings that nationally these have cost £61,000 per place per year compared with £24,000 for typical Local Authority maintained school places.

The NAO report was preceded by Isos Partnership research identifying pressures from an ever-increasing volume of children being identified with SEN, demand for provision and challenges from the statutory framework and tribunals. Isos Partnership proposed 'an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND' focus on inclusion in mainstream and investment in training. This will require statutory change and at the time of writing this strategy, central government has signalled its intention to publish a white paper before the end of 2025, setting out proposals to increase inclusion whilst reducing national high needs deficits.

Changes to the health services

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced in March 2025 that NHS England will be merging into the Department of Health and Social Care over the next 2 years. ICBs will be reshaped to focus more on strategic commissioning, working to improve population health, reduce inequalities and improve access to high-quality care. Following this, government published its 10-Year Health Plan for the NHS which will see neighbourhood health services working with Family Hubs and education providers to support children and their families, plans to drive early intervention and diagnosis for children and young people with SEND. The plan will support delivery of moving from treatment to prevention, hospital to community and analogue to digital. Linked to this, is the need for ICBs to continue to foster strong relationships with the places within their footprint, including the development of neighbourhood health. Significant financial savings are needed to be made by ICBs by December 2025.



Delivery plan summary

This Strategy calls for commitment from system leaders at all levels to continue to improve outcomes for our children and young people. Our delivery plan sets out the action we take; how we will oversee sufficiency and availability of affordable support; using our resources as efficiently as possible to ensure the right support at the right time. Our ambition is for:



High-quality inclusive education and support services

Training for staff which builds capacity in schools, settings and the wider workforce





Earlier intervention

Academic and vocational pathways to adulthood, responsive to young people's strengths and interests



Investing resources in the built environment of our schools to become increasingly more adaptable, suitable and inclusive

Commitment and support at all levels, including investment of resources; workforce, finance and joint commissioning



Integrated and easy to navigate support services

Our neighbourhood health offer continues to develop in response to families' needs

Tracking success

Through the SEND Executive Partnership Board, will measure the success of our strategy and celebrate our young people's outcomes, sense of belonging, happiness and safety, particularly spotlighting:

Feedback from families and the voice of young people

Educational outcomes

The effectiveness of support

Uptake and impact of local provision and services.

Transition into adulthood, including employment and independent living

Positive health outcomes

Continue to track waiting times

School attendance



Our commitment to a “Fairer Future” means ensuring that every child and young person with SEND has someone on their side, supporting them to have a happy childhood, achieve their dreams and live fulfilled adult lives.



Annex A

The SEND Executive Partnership would like to thank the following stakeholders for their commitment to fairness, and engagement with this strategy:

- Equal Voices, group for young people with SEND
- RBKC Parent Carer Forum, Full of Life
- Health providers including Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Central North West London NHS Foundation Trust and Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust, WCL MIND
- North West London Integrated Care Board (NWL ICB)
- Lead Member for Family and Children Services
- Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCos) in schools, colleges and nurseries
- Special School Headteachers
- Teachers in Charge of Specialist Provision
- Primary and Secondary Headteachers
- Chairs of Governors
- Children's Services Senior Leadership Team
- Statutory SEN Service
- Educational Psychology & Consultation Service
- Bi Borough Inclusion Service
- Joint Commissioning Board

Please view our local offer for an explanation of common words, acronyms or terms we use.



