

Overview & Scrutiny

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Cllr Caroline Woodley
Cabinet Member for Families, Early Years, Parks and Play

Dear Cllr Woodley,

Post 16 SEND Strategy

At its meeting in March 2020, the Children and Young People Scrutiny Commission discussed the post 16 education and training pathways for young people with special educational needs or disabilities. The agreed purpose of this session was to identify a number of strategic priorities which could inform the planned refresh of the existing Post 16 SEND Strategy.

The Commission was very grateful to local stakeholders who contributed to this process which included the SEND Team at Hackney Learning Trust as well as representatives from other council departments (skills and training, adult and children's social care), local special schools and colleges and other partner agencies. The Commission was particularly thankful to a number of young people with SEND and their parents who also contributed to this process by attending focus groups or who participated directly in the session.

A summary of the key issues which emerged from the session are presented below together with a number of recommendations from the Commission to guide and inform the refresh of the Post 16 SEND strategy. All written submissions from stakeholders as well as a detailed write up of the evidence presented at the session can be found [here](#).

The Commission noted the significant growth in demand for SEND services both nationally and locally, with over 60,000 young people in receipt of care and support detailed within a Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) across London. This growth has been mirrored locally in Hackney where there are currently in excess of 2,500 young people being supported by an EHCP. As national funding has failed to keep pace with this increase in demand, this has created acute financial pressures on local authorities which undoubtedly

has impacted on the nature and level of education, training and learning support options for local children and young people with SEND. This is a national issue faced by many local authorities across the country, but particularly so in London.

The rise in the number of young people aged 16+ with an EHCP has been particularly stark, in Hackney alone this increased from 138 in 2015, to 439 in 2020 and now comprise almost 20% of all local EHCPs. Given the diversity and complexity of the needs of this cohort of young people, there is considerable pressure to develop both the range and number of post 16 SEND education and training opportunities, not only to reduce those not in education, employment or training (NEET) but to help young people move away institutional or home support into more meaningful and gainful activities and enable them to live more independent lives.

The Commission understood that the cost of supporting post 16 training and development options for young people with SEND was on average £15,000 per annum per placement, but costs could range up to £150,000 per annum for those young people with particularly complex and acute needs. The Commission understood that cost pressures for post 16 placements were increasing as the supply of placement options were not matching increased demands. These financial pressures will continue to grow as there will be an estimated gap of 8,950 places for young people with SEND in post-16 education across London in 2021.

Parents and children spoke to the Commission about post 16 SEND options via a number of focus groups conducted with the support of Hackney Independent Parent and Carers Forum. Data from these focus groups confirmed that there was not enough capacity nor sufficient choice of options to meet post 16 education and training needs of young people with SEND (particularly those with complex needs). Parents also felt that these problems were exacerbated by EHCPs not being regularly updated or not being adhered to by settings, and many parents struggled to find appropriate support to help them navigate post 16 options for their child.

Although a significant proportion of young people with SEND continue to receive their education through mainstream settings, options for children with an EHCP to continue their education in local 6th Forms at present remain limited. With more young people with SEND moving through mainstream settings it is likely that demand for options within local 6th Forms will increase further, and the Post 16 SEND Strategy will need to address how local schools can be encouraged and supported to extend opportunities to young people with SEND.

Bringing all local stakeholders was very productive and positive as this gave providers an opportunity to reflect on local post 16 provision and to identify key priorities going forward

which may inform the strategy refresh. A consistent theme throughout the evidence session was the need for more robust systems to support collaboration across the sector as this was seen as vital not only in helping identify the totality and breadth of the needs of local young people, but also in helping to fully map out the range of services currently available to support young people and assess if there were any gaps in current and future provision. Improved collaboration was also seen to be central to better tracking and monitoring of the outcomes of young people and of course to sharing good practice, all of which underpin effective commissioning.

The Commission noted the particular success in developing supported internships with almost 60 local young people with SEND on a supported internship with a local employer. Whilst very favourable feedback was reported on supported internships, both parents and local stakeholders felt local opportunities remained limited. It was felt that with improved collaboration however, there could be considerable scope to improve the breadth and depth of local internships available. In addition with adjustments to eligibility criteria (including to those without an EHCP), confidence building measures with potential local employers and improved signposting it was felt that access to supported internships could be improved further, where a wider cohort of young people with SEND would be able to benefit from this opportunity in the future.

Other issues relating to the SEND post 16 education and training landscape were identified within the consultation with stakeholders, these included:

- The need for earlier and more robust transitional support to help children and parents prepare for post 16 education, training or employment pathways;
- The need to agree and confirm post 16 options with young people and their families much earlier to ensure that appropriate help and support can be put in place ahead of their placement commencement;
- The need for an improved local support offer to parents to help them navigate post 16 education and training pathways and support decision making *with* their child with SEND;
- The need to ensure that the voice of young people is fully reflected in service planning and development, and also fully brought to the fore in their own needs assessments.

Local commissioners and service providers were unified in their belief that improved collaboration and coordination could help develop new opportunities which would enable young people with SEND to move away from institutional or home support into more meaningful and gainful activities and enable them to live more independent lives. It is

hoped that the new Post 16 SEND strategy will create new structures to further support local collaborative efforts

There is clearly much good work being undertaken to support the post 16 training and development options for young people and the Commission noted all the exemplary work undertaken not only in local special schools, but in local colleges, employment & skills and across health and social care settings. It is hoped that the new Post 16 SEND Strategy will invigorate and provide additional focus in helping to deliver improved outcomes for young people.

Yours faithfully

Cllr Sophie Conway
Chair, Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission

Cllr Margaret Gordon
Vice Chair, Children and Young People
Scrutiny Commission

Cc Annie Gammon, Director of Education
Nicholas Wilson, Head of SEND

Recommendations for the new strategy

1. A comprehensive needs assessment is needed to underpin the refresh of the Post 16 SEND Strategy as this will help to establish current and future needs. This needs assessment should be undertaken alongside a comprehensive mapping of current service provision to help identify current and future service gaps, and help SEND services identify future service priorities and goals. The Post 16 Strategy should also reflect a cumulative forward assessment of local EHCPs in respect of the volume, nature and range of future options needed for children with SEND.

2. At its core the new Post 16 Send Strategy should seek to both increase the number and range of opportunities for young people and set out how the wider range of council services (Employment Adult & Skills, Children and Adults Social Care, Health Services) are involved in this provision and in supporting young people to transition at age 16 and 18. In addition, it is recommended that the refreshed strategy should seek to embody the following principles:
 - That the voice of young people (and their parents) is at the fore and centre in the planning, design and evaluation of education and training options and pathways;
 - Opportunities to move away from institutional or home support into more meaningful and gainful activities which promote young people's independence are maximised.
 - That early, coordinated transitional support is provided to both children and parents to provide them with advice, information and guidance to plan and prepare for post 16 options and pathways;
 - That commissioning seeks to encourage local post 16 education and training options and pathways (to help improve service accessibility, support local coordination and wrap around service care);
 - That mechanisms are created that allow for the effective transfer of information between providers and which both informs best practice and develops an effective base for future commissioning;
 - That improved infrastructure is provided to help improve engagement and involvement of local stakeholders with the SEND team in the planning, delivery and evaluation of local Post 16 opportunities.

3. It also recommended that the refreshed post 16 SEND Strategy also makes additional provisions for:
 - Increasing number, scope and accessibility of supported internships (or other routes into supported employment) available to young people with SEND (both with and without an EHCP)

- Additional information, guidance and support to help parents navigate post 16 options and support decision making with their child;
 - An annual Post 16 SEND Fair in which children and parents may assess and discuss possible options in a positive, informative and open environment.
4. Given the pivotal role that they play in supporting the needs of children with SEND, it is recommended that additional investment is made to ensure that the local administration systems, together with those processes which both compile and review of EHCPs are assessed and conform to best practice (particularly in relation to maintaining up to date plans). Practitioners completing EHCPs should also be trained to ensure that outcomes are stated in terms of the Preparing for Adulthood outcome areas, so that commissioners can assess and plan for provision that will allow the learner to achieve appropriate goals (as detailed in Post 16 London Review).
 5. The SEND team and Hackney Education Service should continue to work with local secondary schools and Hackney based colleges to help create additional 6th Form capacity and options to enable more young people with SEND to continue their education in mainstream schools. This approach should aim to identify and extend local best practice and seek innovative ways (e.g. cluster provision) to help extend local 6th Form offer.
 6. In line the Mayoral reports on Post 16 education, it is recommended that the local authority actively contributes to the process of establishing sub-regional hubs to coordinate training and share resources between specialist and mainstream providers to upskill the mainstream sector to help them support young people with SEND.
 7. It is recommended that there is improved public scrutiny and accountability for implementation and monitoring of the Post 16 Send Strategy and that targets and ambitions set out in the strategy are regularly reviewed by CYP Scrutiny Commission.