

Area SEND inspection of Newham Local Area Partnership

Inspection dates: 7 to 11 October 2024

Dates of previous inspection: 6 to 10 December 2021

Inspection outcome

The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The local area partnership must work jointly to make improvements.

The next full area SEND inspection will be within approximately three years.

Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) ask that the local area partnership updates and publishes its strategic plan based on the recommendations set out in this report.

Information about the local area partnership

The London Borough of Newham and NHS North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) are responsible for commissioning and planning the services for children and young people with SEND in the area. The London Borough of Newham is a culturally diverse borough with over 100 languages spoken. It has one of the youngest populations in the country. Many children and young people with SEND in Newham are new to the borough.

Since the last inspection, there have been changes across England in how the commissioning of health services operates. Integrated Care Systems came into effect in July 2022. This means the NHS North East London Integrated Care Board (ICB) and the local authority are jointly responsible for the planning and commissioning of health services for children and young people with SEND within the London Borough of Newham.

Alternative provision (AP) is provided by Newham Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) that includes Tunmarsh, New Directions and Phoenix. These centres offer education for those in secondary and primary phases. Education Links provides education for children and young people with SEND who have been permanently excluded from school aged between 11 and 16 years old.

What is it like to be a child or young person with SEND in this area?

Children and young people with SEND in Newham have variable experiences across education, health and social care. Although some waiting lists have reduced, children still experience lengthy wait times for autism assessments, access to mental health support and key equipment, such as wheelchairs, to help in their daily lives. Children and young people with SEND who have complex needs receive more effective support in Newham compared to others. This is because professionals from education, health and social care work very well together to provide a good level of support and access to services for these children and young people.

On occasion, children, young people and their families who speak English as an additional language do not have sufficient access to interpreters. This means they may not fully understand how to access the services and support available.

In most circumstances, children and young people enjoy taking part in activities in the local community. This includes visiting restaurants, leisure centres, trampoline centres and local parks. Most children and young people feel safe in their communities. There are a range of opportunities for them to participate in clubs and groups in their leisure time, such as dodgeball and football.

Children and young people with SEND, and their families experience an inconsistent approach from professionals when seeking support and guidance. Information on the Local Offer website about the range of targeted and specialist short breaks available to children open to the Disabled Children and Young People's Service (DCYPS) is difficult to find. The variety of short breaks activities promote inclusion and for some children there are extensive efforts to achieve the adaptations they need to access the short break. In a few instances, professionals guide parents and carers to access information that is helpful. However, often professionals rely on signposting parents and carers to services rather than directly supporting and guiding them. Some parents find it difficult to navigate the systems to find the information they need. Subsequently, children and young people do not consistently access the support they need when they need it.

Most children and young people with SEND achieve well in their education settings. Most experience a smooth transition at key points in their education. For example, children who move from early years settings to primary education benefit from a transition well planned by professionals and services that work well together. Transition arrangements are less effective for young people who move from AP to college. This means some young people with SEND do not access college placements and they consequently end up not in education, employment or training.

Young people with SEND successfully influence commissioning decisions made in Newham. A few young people who have SEND are trained to be Young Commissioners. One example of their work is that when commissioning leisure centres in the borough, they were able to negotiate reduced costs to make leisure centre memberships more accessible for children and young people with SEND and their families.

The views and wishes of most children and young people with SEND, and their parents or carers are captured well during assessments and planning. This includes those children and young people with SEND who are educated at home. Children and young people with SEND told inspectors they feel listened to and confident to share their feelings and thoughts about their views and aspirations for their futures with professionals.

What is the area partnership doing that is effective?

- Over the last two years, there have been significant changes in leadership within the local area partnership. The new leadership has brought stability which has resulted in key improvements since the previous inspection. The partnership is ambitious for children and young people with SEND in Newham. For example, there has recently been improvements to therapy services such as speech and language, and occupational therapy. As a result, the amount of time children and young people with SEND wait for therapy support has been significantly reduced.
- Leaders understand the needs of the children and young people with SEND in Newham well, including those with those with the most complex needs. There is much development work underway across the partnership to improve services. This work has not yet had sufficient impact, and some gaps remain. For example, there is a lack of provision for those with the most complex needs aged over 16.
- Health visitors complete their checks through delivery of the Healthy Child Programme and promptly follow up with parents and carers who fail to attend. Health visitors have access to social care and GP data bases which enables them to see where families may have moved to. This approach means children with SEND are less likely to miss key health appointments.
- Children with SEND and their families who are supported through the early help offer mostly receive a timely assessment of needs and provision of support such as parenting groups and direct work. Lead professionals coordinate support for children and families effectively and children and families receive the right help at the right time. However, early help plans vary in quality and, in a few instances, do not identify well enough the needs of the child or young person.
- In most cases, the health and social care needs of children and young people with SEND are identified in a timely way, particularly for those with complex needs. For example, health practitioners have an effective early notification process to inform the local area partnership of children with potential SEND needs. This ensures that children are assessed in a timely way. Disabled children and young people who are supported through the DCYPS, are supported at the right level and their needs are understood well by social workers who are passionate about the progress children and young people make. They frequently review support options to further promote children and young people's development.
- Leaders create positive working environments for professionals across education, health and social care to work together. Co-production (a way of working where children, families and those that provide the services work together to create a

decision or a service that works for them all) is a positive feature within Newham. Leaders have greatly improved their relationships with parents and carers. They actively involve parents, carers, children and young people with SEND, and the Parent Carer Forum (PCF) to be key partners alongside professionals. This means parents can influence, design and steer strategies to continue to make improvements for children and young people with SEND.

- The Newham Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) and the PCF provide valuable advice, guidance and support to children and young people with SEND and their families on a wide and complex range of topics. For example, SENDIASS advisers provide help and support with EHC plans and annual reviews, tribunals and exclusion meetings. Due to the increasing demand for support and with a limited staffing resource, children and young people with SEND and their families experience increasing wait times to access the SENDIASS service.
- Children and young people with SEND on the dynamic support register (DSR) who are most at risk of hospital admission are reviewed by key workers in a timely manner. DSR key workers work well with individual children and young people to identify their needs and set goals. Although this work is in its early stages there is some positive impact on children and young people's emotional well-being.

What does the area partnership need to do better?

- Children and young people wait too long to be assessed for autism. Although they receive a letter signposting them to support, there is no process to review if they have accessed this. Parents and carers sometimes feel that they are not communicated with and feel isolated.
- Children and young people with SEND experience significant waits to access services to support their mental health. Although support is available through an innovative approach to support children while they wait for access to services, involving community activities provided by multi-agency professionals, this is often at an early intervention level. Support is delivered by community partners that provide activities such as music, mentoring and counselling. Children with complex needs including SEND and those with high-risk presentations are seen by child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS). However, the CAMHS support available does not meet the lower levels of mental health needs of a significant group of children and young people with SEND in a timely way.
- Some children and young people with SEND wait too long to be assessed for and issued with equipment such as wheelchairs. The lengths of waits vary with the need for equipment being prioritised. Powered wheelchairs are particularly difficult to access for children and young people with SEND. As a result, the long length of time they spend waiting for equipment impacts on their day-to-day quality of life.
- There is limited strategic overview of the children and young people with SEND on the DSR at lower risk of hospital admission. There is a limited understanding strategically among professionals of the variety of reasons for hospital admissions. Although more intensive mental health support has been introduced, it is too early to

see the impact of this on hospital admissions.

- Children and young people with SEND do not consistently experience a smooth transition when they move from children's to adult health services. Transition nurses provide helpful support where they are involved. However, lack of capacity in this service reduces the nurses' ability to be involved in strategic development work to improve transition arrangements for children and young people with SEND.
- EHC plans and annual reviews for children and young people with SEND vary in quality. Some EHC plans do not provide a clear and informed picture of the child or young person or have a clear focus on their future. In some instances, the valuable contributions that health and social care professionals make about a child or young person does not consistently feature in EHC plans and annual reviews. This is particularly the case when children and young people have a child-in-need plan, or physical or mental health needs. As a result, there is not one plan that is inclusive of all aspects of their needs and the desired outcomes. This results in fragmented interventions which parents and carers have to coordinate, keeping track of interactions between various agencies.
- Some children and young people are not able to access AP when it is needed. The current commissioning model leads to a lack of places being available, leaving some schools unable to access places. In some cases, children and young people with SEND stay at the AP for too long or end up without an education placement as their needs are complex and require specialist provision. The local area partnership's strategy to develop the alternative provision offer is in its infancy.
- Young people with SEND who have the most complex needs have limited opportunities to continue their education so that they are well prepared well for adulthood. This is because there is not enough provision to educate young people with the most complex needs beyond the age of 16 years old. Leaders have started to work with stakeholders to develop this provision, but it is not yet available for young people with the most complex needs to access.
- Young people with SEND who received SEN support in school do not have sufficient opportunities to prepare them for adulthood and employment once they have finished their studies in post-16 education. The support, education and training opportunities for them to access to gain employment and prepare for adulthood are limited.
- When children with SEND move from children's social care to adult social care services, they experience inconsistent planning from professionals. Some children experience delays in having their Care Act assessments completed prior to becoming adults. The transition does not start early enough to allow children and families to have assessments undertaken and support planned for them. Subsequently, they do not have the information they need to make informed decisions about their lives.

Areas for improvement

Areas for improvement

NHS North East London ICB should reduce the lengthy waits for children and young people waiting for an autism diagnosis, access to equipment and support for their mental health.
The local area partnership should improve the quality of EHC plans and annual reviews so that they include all aspects of children and young people's needs and outcomes.
The local area partnership should improve the transition arrangements across services in education, health and social care services for children and young people with SEND.
The local area partnership should improve communication and the support given to parents and carers when signposting to services for support.
<p>The local area partnership should improve the education offer relating to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternative provision • post-16 education for those with the most complex needs • post-16 education for those who received SEN support at school.

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Local area partnership details

Local authority	Integrated care board
London Borough of Newham	NHS North East London ICB
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Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out at the request of the Secretary of State for Education under section 20(1)(a) of the Children Act 2004.

The inspection was led by one of His Majesty's Inspectors from Ofsted, with a team of inspectors, including one of His Majesty's Inspectors and an Ofsted Inspector from Education and Social Care, a lead Children's Services Inspector and a Children's Services Inspector from the CQC.

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