

Case study

May 2017

## Hillingdon – Support for Children with SEND

### Support for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A case study on the support provided by the London Borough of Hillingdon to support children with SEND, and their families, to ensure positive outcomes.

## Support for Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in Hillingdon

When reforms to support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) were introduced by the Children and Families Act in 2014, leaders in Hillingdon took the opportunity to overhaul their SEND offer, working with partners, children and their families to deliver support that keeps children safe and helps them to achieve their potential.

Tony Zaman, Corporate Director of Adults, Children and Young People Services at Hillingdon Council said: "We take our responsibility towards children and young people with SEND very seriously, but we know we can't give them the support they deserve alone. That's why our partnerships within the council, with schools, with health commissioners and providers, with voluntary and business sectors, and with children and their families, are so important – together, we're making sure that our SEND offer is constantly evolving to make sure children can achieve their potential and reach their goals."

When Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspectors recently carried out a joint local area SEND inspection, they found that local leaders prioritised safeguarding, academic outcomes for children and young people were positive, and parents, carers and children were pleased with the support they were receiving.

Partnership working has focused on developing strong joint working practices including a rigorously honest evaluation of strengths and weaknesses, and clear plans for improvement as a result. The drive and leadership from Hillingdon Council to shift existing patterns and ways of working by including children, parents and partner organisations has been key, along with vital challenge and support from elected members, such as through the overview and scrutiny process.

Hillingdon Council's success so far in delivering reforms is not just about the quality of services and plans associated most obviously with SEND, such as the Inclusion and SEN team, but also about the context within which it all operates. Where SEND children and young people require a range of services; strong adult, children and young people services across the board make sure that children get the support they need. Feedback from parents has paid testimony to this depth and breadth of local area offer.

Joint commissioning of services for those with learning disabilities, child and adolescent mental health services and provision of specialist equipment help has improved provision of appropriate support, whilst a drive to increase take up of personal budgets is allowing a more creative and individualised approach to care packages that is only expected to improve as practitioners, parents and children become more confident in utilising such tools.

Partnership working includes schools, colleges and early years providers, where good provision of support means that children achieve well. Special educational needs coordinators in Hillingdon schools describe a more 'dynamic' approach since the 2014 reforms, with better identification of changing needs as children get older and adapt support accordingly. Access to services is also better than before the reforms came into place. Hillingdon Council is working with schools to help increase their resilience to deliver more within the 'universal' offer, so that resources and interventions can be targeted towards higher needs.

An innovative project in which council officers work closely with local employers helped to secure sustainable employment for five young people leaving special schools in its first year and has now

been extended. Young adults with SEND who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) have allocated key workers to help them find work. As a result, the number of young people with SEND who are NEET is small and reducing over time.

Hillingdon Council has sought to both support and involve parents of children with SEND, for example, through offering courses to parents of children with an autistic spectrum condition, to help them to understand the condition and how they can support their children. A parent carer forum, underpinned by a wide range of voluntary groups, is taken seriously and has resulted in improvements to the local offer for children and young people.

Working with parents and carers also goes beyond consultation, with co-production an increasing factor in service design. For example, professionals and parents worked together to create an information leaflet about how to extend speech and language therapy strategies into the home, making sure that the information was genuinely helpful and possible to implement.

An independent travel training programme to help children and young people to overcome transport difficulties has been well received by both parents and young people. The one-to-one training, delivered by a voluntary sector partner, gives young people the skills and confidence to travel on public transport, covering areas such as learning a route, road safety and asking for help. The young person only moves onto independent travel when they are ready, and they are shadowed by an unknown trainer initially and at follow up checks, to make sure they are travelling safely. Not only does the training help the young person to develop their independence and access more social opportunities, but it prepares them for moving into employment at a later stage, making sure they will be able to travel to their place of work.

Personal travel budgets have also been popular, allowing parents and carers to plan transport arrangements around their lifestyles, for example helping those who work shifts, or who use a variety of after-school facilities, so need to vary their transport.

Councillor Philip Corthorne, Cabinet Member for Social Services said: "We are pleased that Hillingdon's joined-up approach to safeguarding the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities has been recognised. We've implemented the reforms in partnership with other agencies, parents and children to bring about real positive improvements in services, and as a result we will improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND."

To find out more, please contact [corporatecommunications@hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:corporatecommunications@hillingdon.gov.uk)



**Local Government Association**

Local Government House  
Smith Square  
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000  
Fax 020 7664 3030  
Email [info@local.gov.uk](mailto:info@local.gov.uk)  
[www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

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