



Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2018-2021

Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) Strategy 2018-2021 for Children & Young People in the London Borough of Croydon

Our vision

Children and young people in Croydon will be safe, healthy, and happy and will aspire to be the best they can be. The future is theirs.

Introduction

This is Croydon's strategy for improving outcomes and life chances for all children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

The strategy sets out Croydon's aspirations for children and young people with SEND and the approach to meeting their needs and addressing barriers to learning, in partnership with parents and local education settings. Croydon's strategy focuses on young people's well-being and attainment, building on young people's strengths with a focus on local education, health and care pathways to adulthood.

Our aim

Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities will achieve independence and employment, whenever possible, in or near their local community so that they can live fulfilled lives and be active contributors to Croydon's future. Croydon has high aspirations for children and young people with SEND.

Priorities

We asked parents and young people with SEND what they wanted and what was important to them going forward – these are some of the things that they said:

Parents have had varied experiences early on when their child's needs were being identified, there was too much variability:

One parent said:

My son had fantastic early intervention. What made it great for us was them coming to us. I couldn't take on the special needs label, I wasn't ready for it. Having people come to the home where he could play and I could talk was incredible'.

Another parent said:

We had to wait a lot, there was never a sense it was going anywhere or that it was linked up – it felt like it was all on me and what if I don't make the right connections in the right place'.

Parents would like better communication and a clear sense of what to expect.

'I don't want a Rolls Royce, I'm happy with a bike but it has to be going in the right direction'...

Young people want to be included in planning for adulthood, they are thinking about transition.

'You can't leave this school and not know what you're doing in life, you need to sort out what you're doing'.

Parents have mixed experiences of different educational provision, both compared to other parents and at different points of their children's journey:

'Present year great so far but last year awful – dependent on staffing'.

'To be fair my Croydon primary was excellent.'

'It is a small school so not too overwhelming. SENCO is brilliant and some teachers are very proactive in finding ways to support my child'.

Although parents had strong views about which individual school would be appropriate for their child, this was personalised there was no consensus on the best sort of provision (e.g. mainstream vs special).

In general, there was a shared view between parents and head teachers about areas for development over the next three years, they were keen to see:

1. Improved early identification
2. Improved joint working with health, social care and education
3. Better graduated response so that children have their needs met in the right way at the right time and, if and when, a child's needs are met through an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan, the EHC Plan is co-produced and accurately reflects a child's needs and provision.
4. Improved post 16 opportunities and outcomes with a greater number of young people with SEND gaining employment and having choices about how they achieve independence to stay in or near their family and local community.

Key to achieving priorities is shared information about the children in Croydon with special educational needs which supports joint planning, commissioning, targeting of resources and tracks outcomes for young people so that there is a cycle of improvement that has a positive impact on children's lives.

The Croydon context for children with SEND

In Croydon we have made a commitment to providing effective support for our children and families, working in partnership with others. Our aim is to provide the right support at the right time.

Nationally and in Croydon, about 93% of children are educated in the state-funded school system without the need for help or support beyond that which a mainstream school can provide. The January 2018 Census indicates that 15% (9750) of the 65,029 Croydon school age children had a special educational need, compared to an outer London average of 13.6%. Of these, between 12-13% had been identified as needing SEN Support, additional support to address a learning need for varying periods of time. This help comes from the skills, expertise and resources available in the child's mainstream school and is co-ordinated by the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).

Croydon Council maintains an Education, Health and Care Plan for approximately 3% of school age children, these are young people with long-term complex special needs such that additional and different provision is needed.

The Children & Families Act 2014 raised expectations and extended the age range for which an EHC Plan can be maintained. Nationally there has been an increase in the number of EHC Plans maintained by Local Authorities; the increase in the number of EHC Plans maintained by Croydon mirrors that of other Local Authorities.

The London Borough of Croydon maintains 2900 EHC Plans (September 2018) and has seen an increase in demand such that more than 300 new EHC Plans have been issued and less than 50 ceased during the period Jan-October 2018. The funding allocated to Croydon through the Dedicated Schools Grant is set to increase by 2.2% over three years. There is evidence that as schools find the financial climate increasingly challenge this has driven demand for funding through EHC Plans. Croydon has historically placed a number of children and young people out of the borough and in the independent/non-maintained sector, in particular those in the older age range, due to a lack of suitable education and care provision pathways locally. In the academic year 2018/19 55% of young people with an EHC Plan 16 years old and over are placed in schools and colleges outside of Croydon; this compares with 15% of under 16 year olds. Placement outside of the borough has financial implications with increased transport costs and does not support the long-term outcome of independence in or near a young person's local community.

While legislation endorses inclusion for children with SEND in mainstream schools national drivers in the schools system have led to increased demand for special school places and, in particular at secondary age young people with learning difficulties have told us that they have not felt that their needs were understood or met.

By age range the number of EHC Plans maintained by Croydon (October 2018) is:

0-4 years – 104
5-16 years – 2239
17-25 years – 562

The percentage of High Needs Funding that is spent by age group (October 2018) is:

0-4 years – 1%
5-16 years – 58%
17-25 years – 41%

In terms of improving outcomes and life chances, Croydon had the second highest rate of 16/17 year olds (10.5%) not in training or education compared to London (5.3%) and England (6%) in 2016. The percentage of adults with learning disabilities in employment is lower than the national and London average.

By type of need for children with an EHC Plan (School Census 2017):

31% - autism
19% - speech, language and communication
13.6% - social, emotional, mental health
6.5% - physical disability
4.9% - profound and multiple learning difficulties
3.3% - moderate learning difficulty
2.4% - specific learning difficulty
2.7% - hearing or visual impairment
The remainder identified as 'other'.

Looking to the future the numbers of children needing SEND support will be affected by the overall numbers of children and young people in the population. There are an estimated 131,493 0-25 year olds living in Croydon in 2018, with this figure set to rise by 7.5% by 2026 (8). However, this rise is not equal across the age groups which needs to be born in mind when planning services. For example, by 2026;

- the 0 to 1 group is predicted to decrease by -2%. The number of live births in Croydon decreased for example between 2016 and 2017.
- the 0 to 4 group is predicted to grow by 2.2% (621 children).
 - the 5 to 11s are predicted to increase by 6% (2385 children)
 - the 12 to 19s are predicted to increase by 22.3% (8148 children)
 - the 20 to 25 group is predicted to increase by 3.4%

Research (Frank Field, 2011, EPPE: 1997-2003, Taggart, B.) indicates that early intervention makes a difference for children and young people with SEND. The current financial constraints on public services make it important that resources are used effectively and that there is a joined up approach to meeting children's special educational needs earlier.

So that young people with SEND live fulfilled lives in or near their community this strategy sets out to enable children and young people's special educational and developmental needs to be identified early; to children with SEND attending local EY settings, state-funded schools and colleges which can meet their needs and a pathway to adulthood which is effective in enabling a young person to achieve the outcome of living independently. This will take the commitment of the Council, Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), parents, young people, education settings, health and care practitioners to work together better to support young people with SEND achieve in Croydon.

Croydon has a range of state-funded mainstream and special education provision. Mainstream schools have a special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who is responsible for organising provision for children with SEND. The SENCO is the key point of contact for parents and professionals. Croydon mainstream schools provide support through quality teaching which differentiates the curriculum to meet children's needs and carefully tracks children's progress.

For children with a need for SEN support, mainstream schools provide access to individual or group interventions to address key areas of need, including access to support from staff with additional training and expertise. SEN Support in mainstream schools may include precision teaching and will often be informed by expert advice from a specialist. For all children in mainstream schools with SEN Support, parents/carers can expect termly review of a child's progress with a record of intervention and future support recorded in an SEN support plan.

There is a range of state-funded special school and resource base special education provision in Croydon:

- special schools (two primary; two secondary and two all through) all of which have been judged good or outstanding by Ofsted.
- primary (11) and secondary (6) enhanced learning provisions (resource bases), which provide specialist teaching alongside and in mainstream school lessons. All specialist education provides a personalised curriculum matched to a child's needs and to support progress.
- specialist nursery classes (3).

Additionally alternative provision for children educated other than at school.

Principles

Croydon's strategy for children with SEND has been informed by legislative duties, the views of young people and parents, schools and practitioners.

The principles that will form the basis of the SEND Strategy are:

- **Inclusion** – schools and colleges increase participation of young people in, and reduce their exclusion from, the curriculum and the everyday life of the school or college. Schools and colleges respond to the diversity of students in their locality. Young people feel safe and are included in their community.

- **Dignity and independence** – children with SEND and their families feel welcomed. They have the right information and the right services at the right time so that they and their families can live a dignified life, as independently as possible, the same as any other child.
- **Choice** – children, young people and parents are supported in participating fully in decisions that promote young people's aspirations.
- **Best Value** – effective use of resources for better outcomes, with pooled resources and integrated health, care and education pathways. Better partnership work across education, health and care, and with other partners e.g. housing and the voluntary sector. Increasing provision and places for children with SEND in state-funded mainstream and special education in Croydon, so that there are local pathways for young people, without the need to travel outside the borough.
- **Better outcomes** – young people with SEND achieve sustained employment, entering into supported internships and/or living independently in their community in Croydon.

Croydon's SEND Strategy – Key areas for development are set out below

Improve early identification of need

1. Through improved Health Visiting Services. The Health Visiting Service (HVS) leads on the delivery of the Healthy Child Programme for the 0 to 5s, and plays an integral part in ensuring the young people of Croydon have the best possible start in life for good health and wellbeing later on in life.

The health visiting service is integral to early identification of developmental issues primarily through the one and two year developmental health checks. If developmental progress causes concern the child is then referred onto other services as appropriate. However the levels of one and two year checks being carried out has been low.

To help address this and other issues, the health visiting service has a transformation plan one of which aims is to create more capacity for the universal developmental checks. The integrated two year check with early years providers is also being introduced across the Borough. Higher targets for the universal checks are also under discussion. The aim is improve on the early identification and appropriate referral of children with developmental issues. This will be done by increasing antenatal, universal 1 and 2 year development checks and developing better links with early year's settings and early intervention SEND services'

2. Through improved Early Help there will be better co-ordinated support based in localities and matched to community needs. This will include provision of Early Support Co-ordinators who help families of children with SEND navigate social care,

health and the universal offer. Support for families will help to maintain children's progress with access to universal and targeted support, including SEN Support in schools.

3. Improved timescales for diagnosis of autism. The current diagnosis pathway in Croydon is fragmented with a long waiting list and waiting time for a diagnostic appointment. A new Autism Spectrum Disorder diagnostic pathway for children under 5 is being piloted so that over the course of the three year strategy Croydon CCG will provide more timely diagnoses and reduced waiting times (which are currently over 12 months).
 - Under 5s – (currently a wait time of 14-15 months)
 - 5s and over – (currently a wait time of 8 months).
4. Health notifications from paediatric assessment and universal checks will inform special school place planning and pathways to adulthood, so that we have the right number of local special school places for children with the most complex needs and we start planning for the number of adults that need support to gain employment and/or live independently early.
5. Improved communication - establishing an early years passport for children with SEND which brings together developmental information, assessment and intervention information; is owned by the child's family and supports preparation for and start of school.
6. For children from one year old, provision of Portage home-based learning to support the development of children with severe, profound and multiple needs early before attendance at an early years setting. This intervention will be reviewed and developed as part of the three year strategic approach to SEND. Outcomes will be monitored and the programme adapted. A key outcome of the strategy will be improved developmental outcomes and better support for families through targeted referral for Early Help and the provision of parenting support (e.g. Triple P; Parents and Infant Interaction). This provision will lead to effective planning for these children's start to education and transition into school.

Better graduated response – with better joint working

1. The introduction of guidance for schools and families about the support available in mainstream schools for children who have their needs met through SEN Support.
2. Development and publication of local eligibility guidance for children for whom the council undertakes and EHC needs assessment and maintains an EHC Plan.

3. Early years education settings supported to identify and meet children's needs and prepare children for school through the early years area SENCO forum and early years support for inclusion. The introduction of high needs inclusion funding to the end of Foundation Stage to provide support for transition into school and until the end of reception for children with additional learning needs.
4. Locality based groups of schools working together to apply high needs inclusion funding to include children with SEND; head teachers working collaboratively with the Local Authority to provide for a wider range of children and young people through mainstream SEN support and without the need for an EHC Plan. This will support effective transition from primary to secondary with reduced fixed term and permanent exclusion. The aim is for schools to be supported in providing mainstream education for children with SEND that live in their community and to support children with SEND to be included in their local community.
5. Improve the provision of local state-funded special education so that children with more complex needs are placed in specialist provision within Croydon. Increased special school places through the new free special school (2-19 years ASD) and increased places in existing special schools through capital investment. Alongside these developments will be the introduction and development of admission guidance for specialist education to support equity of access and transparent decision-making and resource allocation.
6. Improved access to universal services – there are numerous universal services offered in the borough for all children and young people. However some need to be made more accessible for children and young people with SEND.

By way of example, a service that is targeted at improving health outcomes is the council commissioned children's weight management service. Accessibility for children with SEND and their families requires improvement. The provider is working with SEN settings to develop bespoke training and workshops designed for those settings and their children and families.

7. For children with disabilities the three year strategy is to review and develop the short breaks offer so that there is equity in provision, families are better supported to live an ordinary life. It is recognised that currently some children access short breaks at the council run short breaks and respite provision while others may struggle to find providers which can meet their child's needs and use their direct payments to do so. The aim is to support families and help them keep children in the community, reducing family breakdown and promoting child's right to family life through a short breaks offer that is responsive to family needs.

8. The Council and CCG have widened a previously joint commissioned contract for solely Speech and Language Therapy to include Occupational Therapy. Over the course of this 5 year contract it is intended that the joint commissioning of these services will lead to further improved quality, effectiveness and efficiency and build on the levels of integration.
9. For children for whom the Council is undertaking an Education, Health and Care needs assessment the aim is that there will be better joined up assessment and review of a child's progress through the introduction of an ICT system with portal to facilitate transparent and open sharing of communication.

Improved post 16 opportunities and outcomes.

1. Support for emotional wellbeing and mental health through the Local Transformation Plan and the commitment to improved transition planning and access to services for children with complex needs and multiple diagnoses including mental health needs. This support will be available for young people with or without an EHC Plan.
2. The development of local specialist college education provision, the post 16 SEN Centre of Excellence at Croydon FE College. This post 16 centre is due to open in September 2020 with 75 places. A key focus will be pathways into supported employment for those for whom this is an option and for others there will be support for transition to adult care services in the community. The college is expected to provide job coaches and to work with local employers to establish pathways into supported internships and employment.
3. The adult social care offer for young adults with SEND is being reviewed. During the coming three years there will be consultation with young adults and their carers so that sufficiency of provision can be established and decision-making can be based on local pathways for local young people.
4. Improved pathways into supported accommodation.
5. For young people with an EHC Plan transition planning will start from age 13 years. The SEND Service has been re-organised with a new 12-25 SEND Team established. The outcome of better early planning is intended to be a clear pathway and progression post 19, improved outcomes of employment and better tracking of young people's destinations.
6. A clear pathway from children's to adults' health services for young people with complex medical needs who have continuing healthcare needs.

Next steps

Consultation on the strategy

The Council will consult on the draft SEND Strategy to gather stakeholder feedback. The outcome of consultation will be published and will inform Croydon's final three-year SEND Strategy, publication of which is planned for early 2019. We will consult across a number of settings, both mainstream and special schools:

- Early Years
- Primary
- Secondary
- Further Education
- Children and young people
- Parents via the Parents in Partnership

We will also utilise existing forums and meetings to maximise engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

Initial Actions

This strategy has been informed by parents and young people's views and co-produced by representatives from education, health and care and parental representation, reflecting the Governance structure. This strategy has outlined a number of initiatives and actions. We have established a number of key priorities as listed below:

Key Priorities
Develop and implement an action plan which addresses the following:
Improved early identification
Improved joint working with health, social care and education
Better graduated response so that children have their needs met in the right way at the right time
Improved post 16 opportunities

The above priorities will become programmes of work and will extend through the 3 year period.

Better information supports improved outcomes

To plan effectively and work together to support outcomes for Croydon children with SEND requires shared current, accurate information. Historically there has been little consistent monitoring of outcomes for young people with SEND across their mental health, physical health education and care. In the initial stages of this strategy the aim will be to create a baseline multi-agency (health, social care and SEND) view of all SEND children and young people so that:

- we have a shared understanding of Croydon children's SEN
- we can plan based on children's needs, age and locality
- we can monitor and track the effective and, wherever possible, aligned spend
- we can understand the impact or difference which the work we commission is making
- we use data to support our decision making

It is from here that we can better target services and resources which will improve outcomes and achieve better value. This will mean joining up data and will be completed in the first 6-9 months. We will use this data to help us deliver the three year strategy and measure impact.

Improved joint working with health, social care and education

This strategy has been informed by parents and young people's views and co-produced by representatives from education, health and care. There is commitment at all levels of to work more closely in future.

On the ground, we will be looking at ways in practice and operationally to work together more closely and with children and young people who require services from more than one service.

Appendix

Governance

The programme of work to implement this strategy over the next three years is managed by the SEND Strategic Group, which also provides the appropriate governance. This Group comprises education, health, social care and Parents in Partnership who represent Croydon's parents of children with SEND. The new Children's Partnership Board was launched in October 2018; it is through these mechanisms that appropriate resources will be committed.

