

**Special Educational Needs
Best Value Review
Panel Report
December 2003**



EXECUTIVE
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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This Best Value Review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) was carried out in July 2003 following recommendations from the Local Education Authority (LEA) Ofsted Report of May 2003. (See Appendix 1 for Ofsted summary). The following Executive Summary gives an overview of the panel's findings and recommendations, and should be read in conjunction with the 'background information and context' on pages 11-13.

2.0 Scope of this Review

2.1 The full scope is attached in Appendix 4 of this report. The review was to examine the implementation of the SEN strategy with regard to:

- Ensuring earlier availability of support and thereby progressively reducing the level of statements
- Increasing capacity within Brent's own SEN provision, to reduce the necessity for out-borough placements.
- Assisting all schools and nurseries to develop local inclusive provision for children with special needs
- Developing a wider role for special schools and additionally resourced providers to supply advice and support to mainstream schools.
- Considering the redesignation of Special Schools realigned to the current profile of needs in Brent.
- The expansion of the 'Invest to Save' initiative to improve local SEN provision.

3.0 Key panel findings and recommendations

Early Years and Nurseries

3.1 Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership represents all relevant early years and childcare interests for children aged 0-14. Because *early identification* of SEN is important for forecasting and planning future provision, the Early Years team is a vital link with other agencies for the LEA. Earlier intervention is highly effective, and can reduce child numbers which have significant needs from age 7 plus. (DfES research) Early Years is newly established in Brent, and current provision is variable.

3.2 Findings

1. Referrals are not always coming through to Early Years from outside agencies, this can mean special nursery places are sitting empty. The referral process is unclear and slow.
2. Interagency links are not as strong as they could be.
3. The contractual time for the SEN Early Years support team head, may be inadequate for early intervention and preventative work.
4. Social Services nurseries are operating with extremely poor resources.

3.3

Recommendation

1. The Early Years Team needs strong support for strategy development from Achievement and Inclusion Managers
2. The planned Early Years Best Value Review should address early identification and promotion of mainstream inclusion for children with SEN
3. The LEA should consider adopting Social Services nurseries within education management structures. This would enable these nurseries to access greater budget resources, training, qualified line management, and shared transport costs.
4. Early Years team and Early Years SEN support team should be accountable for strategies, policies and targeted outcomes within a specific timeframe of 6 months from setting up.

4.0 Mainstream primary and secondary schools with additionally resourced provision.

4.1 There are 6 mainstream schools with *extra* LEA funded provision for children with SEN Placements in this provision is accessed through the statementing procedure. This extra provision is in the form of special attached units, although pupils are integrated for some time into mainstream settings.

4.2 Findings

1. There is high commitment in many schools to provide for children with SEN, with high skills and expertise available.
2. Some schools are at full capacity requiring extra places, others had vacancies which may reflect parent choice.
3. Confusion exists in some schools over different agencies funding responsibilities.
4. Earlier links between schools and agencies (PCT, LEA, Social Services) is vital for early planning. Late referrals are causing delayed or reduced provision for children, and is putting pressure on schools.
5. The views of head teachers were that incentives for schools to promote SEN 'inclusion' practice would include: financial resources, extra staff, staff training and access to outside expertise. The gap between statement released funding and non-statemented funding may still encourage schools to pursue statements.
6. The qualifications and time offered in schools by SENCO's (school appointed SEN co-ordinators) is very variable.
7. Brent has inadequate provision for SEBD. (Severe Educational Behavioural Disorders.)

8. Social Services sometimes places 'Looked After Children' with SEBD out of borough because of inadequate local provision.
9. More effective monitoring of LEA delegated finance is required to ensure resources go into earlier provision.
10. There is limited capacity within the Achievement and Inclusion division for monitoring finance arrangements.

4.3

Recommendations

1. Audit skills base at primary and secondary level to allow more appropriate placement of children in mainstream schools
2. Seek to place children in schools with expertise in a particular range of SEN.
3. Build mainstream schools capacity by establishing a training program using SEN service and Special Schools. Involve SENCOs.
4. Negotiate Low Incidence Need support with neighbouring authorities.
5. Build into the Achievement and Inclusion Division the capacity to monitor funding arrangements for all SEN aspects, via reorganisation or resources such as finance officer.
6. Clarify funding arrangements to schools.
7. Within overall review of funding, redirect efficiency savings to schools to narrow the gap between Statement and non-statemented funding.

5.0 School Improvement Service (SIS)

5.1 This service works with maintained schools and nurseries to improve standards, raise quality and share good practice.

5.2 Findings

5.2.1 SIS is an asset to the borough with impressive work on improving standards and quality.

5.3

Recommendation

1. SIS should liaise with the Early Years SEN support team to disseminate good practice and influence this team in its development phase

6.0 Special Schools.

6.1 Brent has 5 maintained special schools which cater for children unable to attend mainstream schools. 2 are all age, 2 primary and 1 secondary. All received good Ofsted Reports.

6.2 Findings

1. One special school had 50% children from out of borough, some of this reflects parental choice.
2. There are 39 empty places which are still being funded by the LEA.
3. Because of in borough surplus places, and high out of borough placements, Brent pays more on sending pupils out of borough, than it receives from charging other LEAs. The only way Brent can address this is by filling up local spare capacity.
4. Lack of secondary SEBD provision is having significant financial impact on Brent forcing placements out of borough.

6.3 Recommendations

1. Review of special schools with proposals available by March 2004 should address the following:
 - Urgently address and review the continued funding of empty places.
 - Expand in borough provision to fit needs profile and reduce the need for out borough placements.
 - Making surplus capacity available to outside the borough.
 - Redesignating schools to meet changing needs. (Autism and SEBD)
 - Developing an action plan for next 5 years to enable schools to plan strategically.
 - Discrete units for primary and secondary cohorts as more appropriate than all age.
2. As part of special school and mainstream (additionally resourced) school audit, establish where places are available for small cohorts for SEBD in borough.
3. Capacity to monitor use of finance and appropriateness of placements needs to be built in to Achievement & Inclusion division.

7.0 Transport.

7.1 The LEA provides transport for children in and out of borough. This can be a large proportion of expenditure, and in Brent has been exceeding budget provision for several years.

7.2 Findings

7.2.1 A lack of capacity to monitor funding is identified in Tribal Consultants report. (See Appendix 5)

7.3 Recommendation

1. The LEA should investigate the recommendations made by Tribal Consultants to address the reduction of costs.

8.0 Educational Psychology Service.

8.1 Educational Psychologists are direct providers of psychological services to children aged 0-19 working with schools and parents to identify, assess and meet special educational needs.

8.2 Findings

1. The Educational Psychologist service is highly valued as 'excellent' by stakeholders. within the constraints of their time.
2. The statementing process is extremely slow causing some schools to 'run out of time' regarding what they can provide for children concerned.
3. The Educational Psychology service is not meeting its own statutory targets for completing assessments on time.

8.3 Recommendation

1. Carry out an independent review of the working practices of the Educational Psychology Service to establish staffing levels, deployment practice, and that priorities fit with education development plan objectives.

9.0 LEA Strategic Function

9.1 The strategic management of the SEN service is led by the Assistant Director, Achievement & Inclusion and the Head of SEN, in conjunction with heads of service.

9.2 Findings

1. The LEA is good at accessing funding
2. Interviews suggest that the LEA's strategic lead on different SEN disabilities needs to be more clearly communicated to stakeholders. Some did not recognise the name 'Invest to Save'.

9.3 Recommendation

1. Continue to improve communication between LEA and Stakeholders

10.0 Special Educational Needs Assessment Service. (SENAS)

10.1 SENAS is responsible for the LEA statutory functions including managing the statementing process, annual statement reviews, transfers from primary to secondary, transport needs and resource allocation.

10.2 Findings

1. Better communication is required with the PCT, to assist early referral.
2. Due to the lengthy statementing process, difficulties can arise at annual reviews. There are sometimes disagreements between agencies over the needs of the child. These needs may have changed over the time span it has taken to produce the statement, or at annual review. Who is responsible for signing off the statement is currently unclear to stakeholders.

10.3 Recommendations

1. Representation from SENAS or the Educational Psychology Service at PCT meetings should be reinstated
2. The backlog of recommendations from annual reviews needs addressing urgently, a named officer should be appointed to this.

11.0 Invest to Save.

11.1 This project has invested £700,000 towards reducing the level of statements, and the number of children going out of borough.

11.2 Recommendations

1. The LEA needs to communicate more effectively to schools the beneficial impact of **Invest to Save** to encourage greater participation
2. The School Improvement Service could assist this initiative developing model policies and evaluation systems for schools
3. As part of the overall financial review, assess the financial impact of Invest To Save, monies recouped elsewhere could be redirected to this project.

12.0 Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)

12.1 This unit works primarily with excluded pupils, and with the Behaviour Improvement Programme. Its work has been commended by Ofsted.

12.2 Findings

12.2.1 While PRU can give some support to excluded pupils with SEN, this is difficult with pupils coming from out of borough special schools, or those who clearly cannot re-integrate into mainstream. Because of lack of secondary level SEBD provision, Brent relies on out of borough places (alongside other LA's competing for the same places), which is costly. Quality of provision is variable, and hard to monitor.

12.3 Recommendations

1. Establish SEBD provision in borough as part of provision review, which would be more cost effective. This should link to Early Years, Primary and Secondary setting.
2. Develop greater outreach levels from PRU across a greater age range up to Key Stage 4.

13.0 **Parent Partnership.**

13.1 Funded by the LEA this group supports and advises parents through the statementing process.

13.2 Findings

1. The service is highly regarded by parents
2. Currently 2 part time workers are struggling to cope with the high and increasing demands for their service.

13.3 Recommendations

1. Expand the role and raise the profile of Parent Partnership to link with the PCT and education. This will assist forward planning and transition from pre school to school.
2. LEA documentation should be written in plain English
3. Review Parent Partnership staffing levels with a view to increasing it.

Financial Addendum is on page **40**

Report on the Best Value review of Special Educational Needs.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the panel which conducted the Best Value Review of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Service in Brent in July 2003. It is intended to be concise with additional detailed information in the Appendices. For reader convenience recommendations are contained in boxes.
- 1.2 The Best Value review of SEN whilst scheduled into the review programme for 2003-2004, was also highlighted as a recommendation by the recent Ofsted inspection of the Local Education Authority (LEA) conducted in May 2003. The Ofsted report made some overarching recommendations for the SEN Service which are outlined in Appendix 1. These recommendations assisted the panel to give additional direction to the Best Value review.

2.0 Background Information and Context

Definition of SEN.

- 2.1 Children have Special Educational Needs (SEN) if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.
- This could be:
- (a) Greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children the same age.
 - (b) A disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities generally provided for same age children within an LEA area.
 - (c) If they are under school age, but fall within the definitions a) or b) above, or would do if special provision was not made for them.
- 2.2 Special educational provision refers to provision which is additional to, and different from that normally available for children of the same age in an LEA area. Children should not be regarded as having learning difficulties because the language of their home is different to the language they will be taught.
- 2.3 The Disability Discrimination Act of 2002 makes it unlawful for schools to discriminate against disabled pupils, current or prospective, in relation to admissions, education and associated services, and exclusions. The schools duties sit alongside the SEN framework which requires LEAs to develop strategies and schools to develop plans to improve accessibility for disabled pupils over time.

The outline responsibilities of managing SEN.

- 2.4 Current national legislation on SEN expects LEAs to promote *equality* of opportunity and access and to eliminate *discrimination* for children with SEN. This requires LEAs to be rigorously proactive and alert to inclusive practice in school admissions, exclusions, access to services and external support. This should operate within a context of inclusive practice to promote the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools, and raising standards and achievements for all pupils, which includes:
1. Improving schools' routine practice in meeting pupils' diverse needs;
 2. Developing and implementing an *inclusion* SEN strategy; (The inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream schools where possible)
 3. Managing the process of statutory assessment, issuing and monitoring statements;
 4. Planning provision to meet the needs of pupils with SEN, in mainstream schools where possible, taking account of parental preference.
 5. Providing and brokering specialist advice and support to schools through Educational Psychology and Learning Support Services.
 6. Distributing resources to schools to help them meet children's special needs.
 7. Monitoring and evaluating the impact of schools work on SEN.
 8. Developing partnerships with health and social services to support children with complex or emotional, learning and behaviour needs.
 9. Providing advice and support to parents.

(Source Ofsted)

Statements of Special Educational Needs. (SEN)

- 2.5 Providing for SEN is a complex area, in part due to inconsistencies and lack of clarity within the statutory framework with regard to the roles played by schools, local authorities and other agencies
- 2.6 While LEAs are legally responsible for provision to meet needs of statemented children, (Children with Formal Statutory Assessments) under the 1996 Education Act, resources for SEN provision are increasingly held by schools rather than LEAs.
- 2.7 Some children require other agency intervention and support, which can be limited according to the resources and priorities of that agency.
- 2.8 Statements can therefore place unlimited demand on limited budgets. They are expensive for the Local Education Authority (LEA) to produce, around £5000.00 per statement, to include all phases of the process.
- 2.9 Some schools and many parents feel that a statement (with its accompanying *legal obligations* to provide the support and resources written on it) is the only way of *guaranteeing* the release of the resources they need, in order to provide for the child in question.

- 2.10 Statements are often viewed therefore, as protecting the needs of the child, both in the short term, and for those with continuing needs.
- 2.11 The LEA's policy to shift the emphasis to the allocation of resources into earlier intervention and support, so reducing the reliance on statementing may not always be welcomed for the reasons outlined above. While the government agenda is moving more towards earlier intervention and inclusion, there are some very real difficulties for schools trying to adapt to this. For SEN services, securing the best interests of the child, while managing the allocation of limited resources and reconciling different expectations within this environment can be very challenging.

The Green Paper. 'Every Child Matters' and SEN

- 2.12 The Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters' released by Central Government in response to the Laming Report on the Victoria Climbié Inquiry emphasises the need for early identification of those with SEN. The paper includes changes in the law to give young people with SEN a stronger right to a place in a mainstream school, and extends the protection of the Disability Discrimination Act. There is broad recognition that the statutory processes (of producing a statement) are time consuming and bureaucratic, and that provision for SEN remains very variable across the country. A national SEN Action Programme will focus on promoting early identification and intervention, building school capacity and early years settings, working with health and social care to provide good teaching and care for children with SEN.

Organisational change for Education and Social Services.

- 2.13 The broader impact of the Green Paper will be that at both national and local government level, key services for children are to be integrated within a single organisational focus. So at local level, the government will legislate to create the post of **Director of Children's Services**, accountable for local authority education and children's social services. In addition a lead council member for children is to be established. In the long term the establishment of children's trusts will integrate key services for children and young people. These will bring together education, social services and health services. Local authorities will be given flexibility as to how this reorganisation is undertaken. At national level this has been supported by the creation of a new Minister for Children, young people and Families.
- 2.14 These changes will undoubtedly impact on the SEN Service as it currently functions. In particular for SEN provision it may involve the need to retrain mainstream teachers in advance of changes. The recommendations in this review should be considered within the new context that the service will need to adapt to as a result of the Green Paper.

3.0 **The Scope for this Review** Full scope in Appendix 4.

3.1 The Scope below outlines the key issues the Best Value review was set to investigate.

3.2 The review focused on implementation of the SEN strategy, particularly with respect to the following key objectives:

- Ensuring earlier availability of support and thereby progressively reducing the level of statements
- Increasing ability to meet special educational needs within Brent's own provision, to reduce the necessity for out-borough placements.
- Assisting all schools and nurseries to develop local inclusive provision for children with special needs
- Developing a wider role for special schools and additionally resourced provisions in the provision of advice and support to mainstream schools

4.0 **Key Issues and Main Findings**

4.1 These findings can be read alongside the section of the Self Assessment report produced by the LEA and should be read in conjunction with the report produced by Tribal Consultants for more detailed information. The panel noted that this Self Assessment was an honest account, and that the service area was keen to extract maximum benefit from the Best Value review. Due to the absence of a finance officer for this review, an independent financial review was carried out by Brent Financial Services after this report was completed. Please see the Addendum from Brent Financial Services attached on page 40

5.0 **Early Years and Nurseries**

Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership role and Local Authorities.

5.1 The Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership in each LEA area is the body representing all relevant early years and childcare interests for children aged 0-14 years (0-16 years for children with SEN), and was convened by the LEA within the guidelines set out by the DfES. The partnerships existed to develop and support high quality, accessible, affordable and diverse early education and childcare in every area. Its role is currently changing as local authorities take on more statutory functions. Local authorities currently work to Early Years Development and Childcare guidance 2002/04, with targets covering nursery education, childcare, disadvantaged areas and workforce recruitment and training. Until now Government emphasis has been on delivery through partnership working (Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships) but from 2004 there will be an increased focus on local authority leadership to co-ordinate local planning and be accountable for delivery. In Brent the Early Years team is in the process of being set up, provision is currently therefore variable.

Early identification of children with SEN.

- 5.2 The early identification of children with SEN is high on the government agenda, and is important to the LEA for planning and forecasting potential future need. This need for early identification of, and planning provision for children with SEN cannot be stressed highly enough. A recent study by the DfES found that *early* identification, intervention and support led to a reduction from a third to one fifth of the number of children continuing to have significant needs by key stage 2, (age 7 plus). Once children are over the age of 14 , the impact that provision can have on the longer term begins to diminish.
- 5.3 Brent Council's Early Years team has been recently established under the leadership of a Head of Early Years. The team provides management of the two Early Years network co-ordinators and strategic co-ordination of Early Years initiatives.
- 5.4 An Early Years SEN support team has been operational since September 2003 to provide support and advice to the non maintained sector, led by a senior Educational Psychologist (EP). It should be one link point for referrals from agencies such as health, social services, nurseries and childminders to assist the early identification of pre-school children with SEN. It includes a part time speech and language therapist, Portage worker, specialist teacher, behaviour support teacher and learning support assistant. This is a positive step for improving the provision for Early Years across the borough.

Strategic Issues for Early Years.

- 5.5 A number of strategic issues identified by the Early Years head during this review need to be addressed as the Early Years team is set up and developed.
- 5.6 Referrals were *cited* as not always coming through (from outside agencies such as health) to Early Years and therefore nurseries. This means that specialist provision nursery places for children with SEN are sitting empty, or provision for children is being delayed. Nurseries are aware through their informal links with health, (and from direct approaches from parents), of the existence of children with SEN, but cannot act until the referral process is completed, via SENAS. Provision at this stage could be more straightforward than it currently is.
- 5.7 However the panel found that the Primary Care Trust (PCT) *do* appear to have the appropriate trigger factors (reminders and notifications of deadline dates from SENAS which they *are* responding to accordingly), in place to ensure that referrals are completed within the deadlines from the PCT side.
- 5.8 Although there are difficulties for the PCT around the follow up of non attenders, which can account for some delays. The panel recommends that Parent Partnership could become involved to assist in the follow up of non attenders and offer support. (See recommendations p 25). There is a need for a streamlined joint effective referral process for independent and social services referrals. While an agreed process for making decisions on under 5s has recently been put in place, there still appear to be problems at present and the referral system is not completely clear.
- 5.9 The key multi agency case discussion meetings at which the PCT discuss the assessments of children coming through their system, are no longer attended by anyone from education or SENAS. The former attendance of an Educational

Psychologist, (EP) was a useful link between health, education and social services early on in the process. It would be valuable for this link to be re-established.

- 5.10 The Early Years SEN support team includes one Speech and Language Therapist who feed into education, it would be useful to have representation from one education person at the multi agency case discussion meetings of the PCT.
- 5.11 In order to assist *early identification* of preschool children with SEN, the Early Years team will need to develop a system of outreach and referral for childminders caring for children under 2. This is so that childminders can develop the skills to identify children with SEN in their care, *and* have an appropriate referral system to Early Years in place.

Panel findings

- 5.11 The panel was concerned that the contractually allocated working time for the Senior Educational Psychologist with responsibilities for the Early Years SEN support team (2.5 days) is not enough, and may be consumed by statutory assessment work (Statements). This could remove the emphasis on advice and support and outreach, and would impact on the early intervention and preventative work.
- 5.13 There is a need to emphasise inclusion as far as possible within the nursery setting. This is particularly important in the independent sector where financial or parental pressures might mitigate against inclusion of children with SEN, but also because the mentoring and support required in these settings is likely to be in need of considerable development. The focus of outreach and support and training from Early Years team should be aimed at reducing the perceived need for a statement where extra skilled support will suffice.
- 5.14 The emphasis on support should aim to free up the route for children who actually do need a statement, and need it early on. An earlier statement means that these children can transfer easily into reception with their statement in place, instead of having to wait for the statutory process to complete. It also encourages the school to use the statement as a bargaining tool when accepting the child, when there is no additional support in place.
- 5.15 There are concerns over the clarity and speed of the referral process for nurseries. Nurseries with informal links with health are aware of children with SEN awaiting referral from the SEN Assessment Service (SENAS) but can offer no input and support until the official referral process has been completed. The links between SENAS and the PCT require strengthening as they currently appear weak, with no clearly responsible lead SENAS officer representation at multi agency meetings.

- 5.15 There are acknowledged difficulties over clarity of funding, particularly central government funding which comes in an adhoc manner making long term planning very problematic. Budgetary plans will need to take this into consideration and plot the potential sources of funding aside of the central government Sure Start monies in order to maximise opportunities available.
- 5.17 The Social Services (SS) nurseries with SEN provision are operating with *extremely* poor resources (see recommendations below). Provision is currently reducing with the closure of one nursery recently, (leaving just ~~two~~ three SS nurseries) and concerns were expressed about there being adequate numbers of places for children in this setting. Equipment for children, staffing shortage difficulties, access to qualified educational advice and support, links to other educational establishments, specialist input, (such as speech and language therapy) and management arrangements all need addressing. Some very committed and hardworking staff are working in extremely difficult and demoralising circumstances, this needs addressing as a priority.
- 5.18 Investment in terms of training is often more directed to those with higher academic qualifications, who are actually more likely to move in their career. Investment in training of others such as nursery staff would develop Brent's local resources further, at the earlier stage for children with SEN. These staff already have local knowledge and a commitment to the authority, and should be more highly valued as an asset to the borough. The poor provision for children in SS nurseries could also disadvantage them educationally when admitted to reception classes, as they have had less access to resources, and other LEA provision.

Recommendations

- 5.19 The Early Years Team and Early Years SEN support team have been recently established and will be a vital part of the strategic function of the Achievement and Inclusion work in Brent in terms of early intervention. There are innovative ideas around the role of the team including the establishment of Children's Centres, and extending the Early Years SEN support team, (resources permitting) to be a truly multidisciplinary team, including a social worker, (SW) and family therapist (FT) from the health authority.
- 5.20 The strategic development of Early Years is to be the focus of a Best Value Review in January 2004.

5.21 Recommendation

1. The Early Years Team should have strong support, assistance and commitment from senior management in the LEA as they seek to establish their strategic focus. This should consider the probable structural and organisational changes likely as a result of the Green Paper, in terms of the potential merge between Children's Social Services and Education departments

2. Within the Best Value Review of Early Years, the panel recommend that a major emphasis is to highlight the vital role of Early Years in:

Firstly: Early identification of children with SEN

Secondly: The promotion of inclusion for children with SEN

This Early Years review will provide the evidence of good practice in many settings and should identify where further development is needed. It is anticipated that training needs, resource issues and equality of access will be highlighted

5.22 There is evidently a high degree of commitment and dedication to ensuring the best provision possible to children under five with SEN from nursery providers, both those with additionally resourced provision and the Social Services nurseries. Some providers are working under very pressurised conditions, with limited equipment for the children. There were clear indications that in some settings (social services) they were unable to provide the same calibre and quality of education because of the pressure to provide care and lack of finance. There is a need for these nurseries to access further resources.

5.23 There is currently variation in Early Years provision – the most vulnerable children who are most likely to be placed in social services nurseries have less access to qualified teachers, resources and clear education focus. Children with SEN are admitted at 2¹/₂ years in social services nurseries while nurseries in the maintained sector admit at 3 years plus which is another discrepancy.

(Note this age discrepancy is local practice. The LEA has a statutory obligation to children from the age of 2 with a statement. It is more expensive to care for children under age 2 because of staff ratios required.)

5.24

Recommendation

4. Consider the role of social services nurseries – possibly to link the remaining nurseries to special schools with line management through Head teachers. This would allow greater access to education and qualified teachers thus addressing some access discrepancies.

It would also ensure access to greater resources, a budget and in service training, releasing the potential for greater training investment in nursery staff. This could address some of the difficulties and management support issues currently facing some providers. It could also alleviate costs for transport, where currently buses are shared between the social services nurseries, but there are no shared arrangements with education. This would be cost effective in the medium term as it would allow access to centralised support services in education, such as better equipment for children, qualified educational advice and support, links to other education establishments, specialist input such as speech and language therapy. Current line management difficulties would also be resolved. It is anticipated that the Best Value Review of Early Years (January 2004) will consider this

5.25

Recommendation

- 5 The Early Years team and Early Years SEN support team will need to be accountable within a specified period (3 to 6 months is recommended) for strategies, policies and targeted outcomes. Against these it will be possible to judge effectiveness. Establish a time line for the team, producing documentation and setting targets. A monitoring system should be implemented to establish cost effectiveness and the meeting of targets.

- 6.0 Mainstream Primary and Secondary Schools with Additionally Resourced Provision
- 6.1 Some Mainstream schools, both Primary and Secondary have an increasing range of provision for children with SEN. This is funded by the LEA, and sometimes the Primary Care Trust. It may include additional resources such as provision for those with speech and language impairment, hearing or visual impairments, emotional and behavioural difficulties and autism spectrum disorders.
- 6.2 Schools may have facilities such as separate specialist units where pupils' particular needs can be catered for some of the time, while they are integrated into mainstream classes during other periods. Alternatively, additionally resourced provision may be in the form of additional teaching staff able to provide a specialist support for pupils within the mainstream classroom setting. Provision will vary according to need.
- 6.3 In Brent there are some gaps in the range of current provision for certain types of SEN. While there is no secondary EBD school in Brent, the 2 Pupil Referral Units do provide for excluded pupils and operate outreach to secondary schools to help prevent exclusions.
- 6.4 Currently a government funded Behaviour Improvement Program works into 14 schools, (primary and secondary). School Action and School Action Plus monies (non statement attached funding) approximately £2.1m is allocated to primary and secondary schools can be used by schools to support SEBD pupils. While there is no secondary EBD school in Brent, the 2 Pupil Referral Units do operate outreach, which includes secondary schools, for excluded pupils.

(More detailed information on gaps per specific SEN category, can be found in the self assessment section by 'Tribal' consultants, attached to this report in **Appendix 2** See also Appendix 2 of this report for an outline of what current schools with additionally resourced provision provide)

Panel findings

- 6.5 The Panel found that *those schools interviewed* with additionally resourced provision are providing considerable support for the children with SEN. There is real commitment and a positive attitude towards the government's inclusion agenda of educating children with SEN in mainstream settings.
- 6.6 Some secondary schools were at full capacity, indicating the need for more places to be established in borough. Other providers e.g. some primary schools were not operating to their full capacity with vacant places. Some of this may be due to parental choice. Children may be placed out of borough if parents feel that local provision is not adequate which is not cost effective.
- 6.7 There were issues around funding which required clarification. For example it is sometimes unclear to schools who will pay for extra equipment required, the schools from the delegated LEA funds, the LEA itself, social services or the Primary Care Trust, (PCT). Similarly, regarding Speech and Language Therapists for example, it was unclear between health and education agencies, as to who should pay for their services. A greater level of clarification of the funding formula would enable schools to understand their responsibilities.

- 6.8 In certain instances central government creates confusion with various short-term funding initiatives which may be later withdrawn. This can affect staffing retention on longer term contracts. LEA budgeting has to accommodate this difficulty.
- 6.9 An additional difficulty cited was the use of communicators for deaf children who were being lost to the private sector because of better pay opportunities. Some schools were subsidising payments out of their mainstream budget in order to retain these people. Others were having to resort to agency staff (at additional expense) to meet the needs of children with SEN.
- 6.10 The panel identified the need for earlier links with health, social services and maintained nurseries regarding early access to information about a child's needs which would enable early planning in terms of training, resources and staff deployment, well before a child starts school. The *lateness of referrals* of children at reception age and at secondary level prevents this early planning and preparation, and will have a considerable impact on the child. It may prevent children from receiving the provision (sometimes *any* provision) they require for months, or even longer.
- 6.11 The key incentives which encourage mainstream schools to increase their inclusiveness of children with SEN are twofold: the first is resources, *not just financial*, but in terms of adequate and appropriate staffing levels. The second is access to specialist training for staff and support staff, (particularly in relation to hearing impaired children). While some are trained to a specific level for a specific need, this is again variable across the borough. There is some access to joint education forums to make use of the specialist school expertise, but at present this is limited and needs further development. The development of outreach from the special schools should benefit mainstream, but would require careful planning and funding.
- 6.12 Currently there is variation amongst schools as to how much time an SEN Co-ordinator (SENCO) may allocate to their SEN support role. (A SENCO is a teacher in mainstream school allocated by the Governors and Head teachers, with responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting services for children with SEN). There is also wide variation in skills and therefore the quality of that support. A recent local survey found that few SENCOs have specialist qualifications. This needs to be addressed.
- 6.13 In terms of reducing the pursuit of statements, schools interviewed, despite their support for inclusion and additional support, all noted the fact that the gap between funding released by a statement, and that released for ~~additional~~ earlier work resources (which is recommended by the Revised Code of Practice for SEN) is still very large. This still gives an incentive to pursue a statement, and may be addressed by further development of the 'Invest to Save' Initiative.
- 6.14 There are skills and expertise and a high level of goodwill from teaching staff in the borough which are not being identified and utilised to greatest effect.

- 6.15 Some head teachers, recognising the time lapse from referral to the issuing of a statement, are developing their own initiatives to increase and improve provision. One example is the change of emphasis of investment in provision in a specially resourced unit, to increase the number of pupils at key stage 1 age 5 -7 years, with a reduction at key stage 2. (age 7-11 years). The impact of this decision should provide the early support where needed, so reducing the need for statements. The emphasis on pupils gaining extra support earlier on in the school setting, fits with the government agenda of earlier intervention, and its proven benefits. Such initiatives should be carried out with the full involvement of the LEA, while supported, and viewed borough wide as part of service improvement for SEN.
- 6.16 There are gaps in Brent's ability to provide placements for children with SEN in borough. There is clear researched evidence that children with SEN will be better off if they are located or placed within their borough of residence, close to family and in their community setting. It is poor practice for young children to be spending long periods of time being transported to and from their placements. The emphasis should therefore be on building up the capacity of schools with additionally resourced provision within the borough.
- 6.17 Social Services have commented that while they were often able to accommodate Looked After Children with EBD in borough, it was the lack of education facility which forced the placement to go out of borough. The needs of this cohort of children is often related to emotional and behavioural difficulties, (EBD) at key stage 3 (age 11-14) and key stage 4. (Age14-16) for which there is limited current provision in borough.
Recommendations.
- 6.18 Work is needed firstly to **audit** and secondly to **access** the skills base of teachers and SENCOs in mainstream primary schools. This will identify training needs required in order to meet the government's target of the majority of SEN needs being met within mainstream schools. Areas of concern are mainly provision for pupils with ASD and SEBD, and for SLD at secondary level.

6.19

Recommendation

1. Carry out an audit of existing skills at primary level which could allow the more appropriate placement of more pupils with statements in mainstream schools.

6.20

Recommendation

2. Seek to place children with SEN in schools with expertise. A similar audit of skills at secondary level would allow schools and staff to specialise in a restricted range of SEN. At present non specialist teachers attempt to cater for the full range of SEN. Such specialisms would further enhance the skills of teachers in chosen areas such as speech and language, autistic spectrum disorders and emotional and behavioural disorders.

6.21

Recommendation

3. Establish a Training Programme using SEN Service and Special School skills. Carry out a skills audit and structure a training programme using the skills available within the SEN Service and the Special Schools, to build the capacity of mainstream schools with extra resourced provision.

Within the training programme build in a traded element with adjoining LEAs. Training courses could be self funding, and even generate income.

Part of the recommended skills audit should ensure the skills of SENCOs are regularly reviewed due to the movement within this cohort of teachers. Ensure that all SENCOs have the time to attend training, and time within the school setting to perform their job by providing a guiding framework

Regarding low incidence need, (hearing and visual impairment) and support for minority disabilities, further support for providers dealing with those with low incidence need could be negotiated with other local authorities. Joint funding could be explored with local and regional partnerships. A co-ordinator for this post has been appointed, the post is entitled SEN Inclusion Consultant

- 6.22 It should be noted that there may be an initial rise in the request for statements following extra training and increasing awareness or the ability to identify children with SEN who have hitherto gone unnoticed, however with a focus on increasing understanding of how to use services to support these children, the request for statements would eventually be expected to decrease.
- 6.23 Currently schools themselves have considerable control over funding delegated to them by the LEA. There is an additional need (already identified by management) to monitor and evaluate schools expenditure more effectively. This is to ensure that resources allocated are being used in line with the overarching strategic objectives set out by the LEA and in the best interests of children with SEN.
- 6.23 Allocation for non statemented funding, (additional resources to schools outside statement funding) is a specific area which needs reviewing, and is planned. Non statemented funding is currently based on numbers of pupils at School Action or School Action Plus, which includes SEBD.
- 6.25 In Brent there is currently only *primary* level Special School provision for boys with SEBD. There is no *secondary* Special School SEBD provision, and no Special School provision *at all* for girls with SEBD.

6.26 More effective monitoring of finances delegated to schools would help to drive the focus towards reducing the demand for statutory assessments (Statements) and putting resources into additional and earlier provision, and reduce the cost of funding out of borough placements. There were indications in the Tribal consultant report p 19, (see also page 17 of this report) that management currently has limited capacity to monitor funding arrangements and the appropriateness of placements to ensure value for money. Although this finding related in particular to special schools funding, the panel felt that this issue was reflected in other aspects of SEN provision. Current arrangements for monitoring funding are not adequate, this needs addressing.

6.27 Recommendation

5. The capacity and confidence to monitor, review and revise funding arrangements for all aspects of SEN provision needs to be built in as soon as possible. The panel recommends either the consideration of a new organisational structure which would allow for this, or the allocation of further resources such as a finance officer for a given period of time, to address this as soon as possible

6.28 Recommendation

5. Clarify funding arrangements for schools with additionally resourced provision with the aim of providing greater clarity and guidance for education providers on some of the issues outlined above where responsibility for funding is unclear.

The funding model for schools with additionally resourced provision needs to be reviewed again to ensure that it reflects current levels of need. The formula is currently under review for 2004/5 in consultation with head teachers

6.29 Note: the authority is now legally obliged to pay a per pupil increase to schools for 2004/05 and 2005/06, the impact of changes to the funding model may be significantly reduced for at least these two years.

6.30 Brent's Ofsted Report comments that despite the authority setting a high priority on supporting children with SEN during their early years, they have not made significant progress on this.

6.31 'Earlier intervention in mainstream schools has been supported by elected members who have agreed the allocation of additional resources for pupils with SEN, but who do not require a statement. However the difference between the resources allocated to pupils with a statutory statement, and those without, remains large. This is not encouraging schools to meet the SEN needs of pupils without pursuit of a formal assessment and statement.' Summary section point 121. p 26.

6.32

Recommendation

6. Within the review of funding arrangements recommended in 1.8 and elsewhere in this report, any efficiency savings should be redirected to schools, to address the wide gap between monies released by the statementing process and monies received from Action Plus

7.0 School Improvement Service

- 7.1 Brent's Schools Improvement Service is a considerable asset to the borough with some impressive work going on to improve the standards and quality in schools and nurseries, and promote sharing of good practice.
- 7.2 In terms of assisting early identification of children with SEN, the current monitoring systems of this service are limited. They do address children's pre school education via the 'foundation stage profile', this gives information about what progress children have made, and how well they have met early learning goals. But it gives limited information because of the stage of its research development so far, but also the service's remit is with the maintained sector only. Therefore although it will provide a starting point for identifying children who haven't made progress in relation to age expectations, most children identified with SEN within this profile, would be those who had already entered reception or transferred into an education attached nursery, as opposed to those from other backgrounds such as Social Services nurseries or the Independent sector.
- 7.3 There are opportunities during the current monitoring work, to discuss the standards of provision for children with SEN already in mainstream settings, and special schools. There is less scope within the current SIS remit to assist in the early identification of children with SEN before this stage. The focus is more towards raising quality in these mainstream settings.

7.4

Recommendation

1. The panel would recommend that the School Improvement Service liaise with the Early Years SEN team and through the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership to disseminate good practice to influence and expand the expertise at a crucial time in the teams development

There is currently a bid in progress for an advisor to Early Years which will be very beneficial to the service.

8.0 Special Schools

8.1 Brent has five maintained special schools that cater for children normally assessed as being unable to attend a mainstream school. Two of Brent's special schools cover all ages, (Grove Park and Hay Lane) two of which are primary, (Manor and Vernon House) and one secondary (Woodfield). All schools recently received very positive Ofsted Reports. Their designation is outlined below. (For further detailed information see Appendix 3)

<u>Grove Park</u>	Complex physical and medical needs. (All age 2 – 19 years)
<u>Hay Lane</u>	Severe/complex learning difficulties (All age 2 – 18)
<u>Manor</u>	Severe/Moderate learning difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. (Primary 5 – 11)
<u>Vernon House</u>	Social/ emotional and behavioural difficulties. (Primary 5 – 11)
<u>Woodfield</u>	Moderate learning difficulties/ speech and language/ Autistic spectrum disorder (Secondary 11 – 16)

8.2 It is in line with some of the changes being proposed at central government level that the borough is keen to review its **specialist** provision for SEN in the special school setting, firstly to meet needs which are on the increase year on year, but also to make Best Value judgements on how children are best accommodated. The inclusion in mainstream settings as far as possible is high on the government agenda, and directs the emphasis of this report. A review of Special schools was also highlighted by the Ofsted Report, see Appendix 3.

8.3 Key Issues raised in the service's self assessment relating to provision within special schools were: (Below is an overview, see appendix 3 for more detailed information)

1. Recoupment charges to other authorities who are using Brent special schools is based on the agreed number funded, i.e. on the basis of cost per place rather than the actual costs of the pupils on the roll, in accordance with DfES regulations. Other LEAs are obliged to do the same.
2. Referrals from within Brent and out of borough, for children with physical disabilities are declining, as more children are appropriately included in mainstream settings. This means spare capacity in the special school setting, and possible difficulties in delivering the curriculum with reducing pupil numbers.

3. There is insufficient speech and language therapy support in two schools. (Grove Park and Hay Lane)
4. While there is some outreach to mainstream settings and primary schools, in some primary special school settings there is a need for improved links with nurseries and Early Years.
5. The appropriateness of all age provision in special school settings.
6. Staffing difficulties with recruitment and retention for ASD provision.
7. The lack of in borough provision for ASD at secondary level, and no provision for girls with EBD.
8. Lack of facilities and equipment within some schools.
9. The need for clear specification, designation and future direction for special schools.
10. Issues of continuity from Manor to Woodfield where the profile of needs does not match.

Panel findings

- 8.4 The five schools in Brent serve quite different needs, with evident dedication to their students.
- 8.5 There were a variety of issues identified during interviews, which indicate that a further detailed review of the current role, designation and admission criteria of special schools within the borough is essential and should be carried out at the earliest opportunity. This is to review the range of provision which currently exists in borough, but also for the schools themselves, who require clarity for future development and funding arrangements,
- 8.6 At least one special school cited having over 50% of its children from out of the borough. Some of the out of borough placement is due to parental choice, however parents are not able to name the school they wish their child to be sent to, on the statement. It is the LEA who acts as the admission authority.
- 8.7 Significant under capacity in special schools was made apparent by Head Teachers; one school had an under capacity of around 20 to 25 places for which it was still being funded by the LEA. A total of 39 empty places are currently being funded by the LEA. This is costly and needs to be rectified.
- 8.8 However, the LEA is aware of the urgent need to address this issue of unused places, at the time of this best value review little progress has been made.

8.9 As a result of in borough spare capacity Brent is not able to recoup even near equivalent levels financially from its in borough places used by other authorities, in comparison to what it is charged for out of borough placements. This is not something the LEA can rectify other than by filling up Brents spare capacity. The self assessment contained insufficient financial data for the panel to make direct and detailed recommendations, but the recommended review of special school provision should address the following:

- Recoupment of costs from other authorities based on **actual costs** of pupil is not possible as special schools must be funded on a per place basis. However, Brent is still funding places which are unfilled. This needs addressing.
- Expansion of in borough provision to reduce the necessity for out of borough provision.
- Make available current surplus capacity to outside the borough.
- Ensuring the schools are re-designated to meet changing needs, eg. Autism and SEBD.

8.10 Recommendation

1. A Special School Review should identify changing needs and designation. The pupils on roll at the Special Schools have changed significantly over the past 10 years, as the inclusion agenda has developed, and all schools are now dealing with more severe and complex needs

The short in-depth review of special school provision should provide detailed information about the current situation. This should examine how well the admission criteria are met, and identify any discrepancies, how many pupils could benefit from mainstream placements, the present capacity and possible reduction of number of out-of-borough placements. Initial proposals need to be available by March 2004 so that special schools can forward plan and recruit and retain staff as necessary. This report needs to outline an action plan for the next 5 years, and set a new review date for 2007 with a view to enacting in 2008. This would promote the stability within the timescales for change, so that schools could plan strategically

Structure the review with clear criteria agreed with head teachers, and transparent reasons for carrying it out. Explore the potential for specialist school status in the future. This would enable special schools to develop specific expertise in Art, ICT, sport and other curricular areas in line with their mainstream counterparts. Any potential pursuit of school status as a 'regional resource' should be developed with a clear policy and strategy attached and wide consultation involving Brent neighbouring authorities.

- 8.11 There is still variation in the age range provided for within special schools. All schools are giving at least satisfactory value for money as reflected in Ofsted reports, but the grouping of Foundation Stage, key stage 1,2,3,4 and post 16 in one setting should be reviewed in the light of its appropriateness for the youngest children, and the students at post 16 level.
- 8.12 The panel felt that a separation between primary and secondary provision into discrete units for these schools would be far more appropriate. Such separation would meet the entitlement of older pupils to attend a high school in line with their peers, and younger pupils to follow the same transfer route as mainstream pupils.
- 8.13 The lack of secondary EBD provision for girls and boys is having a significant financial impact on the LEA and Social Services, as pupils are placed out of borough. Placement in independent residential special schools can now cost £150,000+ per pupil in exceptional cases. The average cost is £375,00.00 The steep rise in fees (from 5% to 48%) will need to be taken into account for any future placements.

8.14

Recommendation

2. As part of the audit of special schools and secondary school provision, establish where space is available and will be in place to take small cohorts of pupils with EBD. This could provide appropriately, for a significant number of boys and girls who would benefit from day placements in their home area. The willingness of some schools to do this has already been expressed

8.15

Recommendation

3. Joint funding with Social Services could be arranged within borough for these pupils with SEBD, where respite care is already available, at significant saving.
- Since this best value review took place, proposals have been announced for social services nurseries which will become part of the childrens Centre initiative in Brent. As such it will form part of the multi agency integrated partnership to provide good quality day care and early years provision

8.16 With reference to out of borough placements, the Tribal Consultant's report p 19 states that 'central services' within education lack the capacity 'to monitor and review placements to ensure value for money, and appropriateness of placements for the pupil'

8.17 This finding is reflected in other aspects of SEN provision where the panel found that current arrangements for monitoring funding uses are not adequate. While there are certain statutory constraints on how monies are used, and management also appears stretched in terms of time and workload, it is fundamental that this lack of capacity is resolved as soon as possible.

8.18 Recommendation

4. The capacity and confidence to monitor, review and revise funding arrangements for all aspects of SEN provision needs to be built in as soon as possible. The panel recommends either the consideration of a new organisational structure which would allow for this, or the allocation of further resources *such as* a finance officer for a given period of time, to address this as soon as possible

8.19 Recommendation

5. Audit places to ensure full use, or remove the spare capacity

9.0 Transport

- 9.1 The LEA provides transport for many children with SEN both in borough and out of borough. Generally this can be a fairly large proportion of expenditure within SEN budgets, and in Brent current expenditure has been exceeding the budget provision for several years.
- 9.2 Some limited information on transport arrangements between Brent Education and Social Services Departments was presented within the self assessment in the form of the 2 page Executive Summary recommendations made by an external consultant's report. They are attached to this report in Appendix 5.
- 9.3 The Executive Summary provides some positive conclusions about the effectiveness of current operations, including route planning, use of agency staff, and customer satisfaction. It does question the logic of Education maintaining responsibility for Brent Transport Services, as a common service to the council and it recommends this be placed with the corporate centre.
- 9.4 While close financial monitoring is cited as regularly undertaken, the transport summary again identifies a lack of capacity in both Education and Social Services to scrutinise underlying costs and therefore secure Best Value for money.
- 9.5 Due to time limitations of the panel process, and the absence of detailed information, the panel did not conduct an in depth analysis of transport arrangements and operations. Through interviews however, one issue not covered by the self assessment report was identified.
- 9.6 Reducing the length of journeys especially for young children travelling to special schools is recommended by the panel. Some children attending are spending up to 1 hour 45 minutes on their journeys each way. This is detrimental to the well being of children in question, has an adverse effect on their learning and should be resolved as soon as possible.

9.7

Recommendation

1. The service should investigate and consider the recommendations made by the external consultant, to address the reduction of the considerable costs currently being incurred. Ensuring an increase in local 'in borough' provision by following the review procedures outlined elsewhere in this report should be a priority for the LEA, and should assist the reduction of travel times for young children, as well as reducing the costs of transport.

10.0 Educational Psychology Service

- 10.1 The Educational Psychology Service are the direct providers of psychological services for children aged 0-19 working closely with schools and parents to identify, assess and meet special educational needs.
- 10.2 As well as assessment, they provide a consultation and advisory service to schools, pupils, parents, colleges, the LEA and other professional groups concerned with the welfare of children and young people. Most requests to the team come via schools or the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service (SENAS).

Panel findings

- 10.3 The work of the Educational Psychology (EP) service was clearly valued and appreciated by schools, who cited the quality of support given as 'superb' and 'excellent' within the limitations of their time.
- 10.4 However, the process of statementing was described as 'tedious' 'excruciating' and 'painfully slow', causing some schools to 'run out of time' in terms of what they could then provide for the child regarding the necessary intervention and support . This applies to both pupils who already have a statement, (for statement reviews) as well as those who might need one. Once again early intervention was cited as critical to ensuring a quick response to the needs of young children with SEN. Beyond the age of 14, support measures introduced are likely to have increasingly *less* impact on learning, while earlier intervention means that there is a higher likelihood of the statement being able to be removed at some point in the future.
- 10.5 The panel found that the EP service is providing a range of good quality services to schools but is not meeting its own statutory targets for completion of psychological advice towards statutory assessment within timescales. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The effects of this are delaying provision for children with SEN, putting significant pressure on schools, and may be costing the borough additional resources. It is essential that statutory work receives priority attention, as a fundamental function of the EP service there are no alternatives available to the LEA. In particular parents find the slow process very stressful.
- 10.6 The service did provide some benchmarking data showing staffing levels to statements requested as an indication of poor staffing levels within Brent. However the panel was unable to use this data with clarity or certainty as only 5 of the 10 other boroughs cited are statistical neighbours, and 2 boroughs cited have a non statementing policy which would affect figures for referrals for statements by lowering them.

10.7 Recommendation

1. Carry out an independent review of the working practices of the educational psychology service to establish staffing levels, deployment practice, and ensure priorities are those which affect the Educational Development Plan.

11.0 LEA Strategic Function

- 11.1 The Strategic management of the SEN Service is led by the Assistant Director, Achievement and Inclusion, and the Head of SEN, in conjunction with heads of service.
- 11.2 The LEA was credited as good at accessing funding.
- 11.3 Some interviewees stated that the profile of the LEA as leaders of the vision and strategy for SEN in the borough needed to be higher.
- 11.4 There is awareness within the LEA that a co-ordinated or strategic policy for SEN covering each disability area in Brent needs further development. This was also highlighted during interviews with providers. There is clearly an SEN strategy in place, but many local providers ranging from nurseries to schools are unaware of the overarching strategic vision. This includes who in the authority is taking a strategic lead on which issue, government initiative or other aspect of SEN provision, and what potential timescales are involved in terms of actions and reaching outcomes. A number of interviewees did not recognise the name of the 'Invest to Save' initiative.
- 11.5 Whilst the LEA is felt to be good at consultation, what happens to this information, and which resources will be required to achieve recommended outcomes, following consultation has been unclear to some service users. The strategic direction and leadership on these issues needs to be communicated to service users more effectively.
- 11.6 However, the panel did recognise that while individual service area reports have highlighted the need for a co-ordinated service with a service leader, (such as the Best Value Review on provision for deaf children February 2001), the LEA have advertised but have been unable to recruit. Current service heads feel they do not have the time or staff capacity to lead on this. A potential way around this issue might be the use of secondments from within the authority while trying to recruit. In addition the need for a named professional for each SEN area was expressed in interviews with other agencies. It would be useful for the LEA to consider this.
- 11.7
- | |
|--|
| <p>Recommendation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Continue to improve communication between the LEA and stakeholders and ensure stakeholders understand |
|--|

12.0 Special Educational Needs Assessment Service (SENAS)

- 12.0 SENAS carry out the following statutory functions for the LEA. (Source self assessment)
- Management of the statutory assessment process
 - Provision of a named officer to provide effective communication with parents
 - Management of annual review of statements of SEN
 - Allocation of resources for pupils with statements in line with Brent policy
 - Management of primary and secondary transfer arrangements for pupils with statements
 - Assessment of children's transport needs in line with Brent policy

Panel findings

Multidisciplinary Communication. SENAS

- 12.1 A desire for better communication with SENAS was expressed by representatives from the PCT. Two key points made were that attendance by an education person at the PCT multi agency case discussion meetings would provide a useful link between health and education, to assist early referral, alongside an awareness of children coming through the health system, either for nursery referral, social services referral or education provision.
- 12.2 Difficulties were also expressed around the amendment of statements following annual reviews, where discrepancies arose over changing needs of the child, and whose responsibility it was to sign off the statement. Again these issues could be resolved via more integrated communication between agencies. Some of these difficulties are directly attributable to the length of time the statementing process is currently taking, and the fact that a child's needs may have changed by the time the statement is completed due to the length of the process.

12.4 Recommendation

1. Representation from education is needed on all key multi-disciplinary panels. Produce a termly (annual) calendar of key meetings and identify the responsible team for nominating a representative and have a format for communicating key points to other interested parties.

Consider nominating personnel for each SEN area as an easy point of contact for outside agencies

Statements and Annual reviews.

12.5 Recommendation

2. The backlog of recommendations from annual reviews which require amendments to statements needs to be addressed and assurance given that these will be completed within a set time. A named responsible officer would ensure that deadlines are met.

13.0 Reduction of Statements. Invest to Save.

13.1 LEA officers presented the following information on Invest to Save.

13.2 Since 1999, LEA officers have used £ 700,000 worth of money awarded for the 'Invest to Save' Initiative, to work towards reducing the level of statements, and reducing the number of children going out of borough. This has been aimed at improving local provision, both in terms of specialist provision, and in terms of supporting pupils in mainstream schools with a pre statementing focus, i.e.) to prevent statementing. The level of statements has shown a decreasing trend overall, although there was a significant increase of 63 between the years 2001/2 to 2002/3.

13.3 Further developments in provision have included:

The Invest to Save Scheme has helped to reduce the number of statements. The number of statements drawn up per year over the past 3 years is as follows:

1999/2000	217
2000/2001	158
2001/2002	100
2002/2003	163

13.4 The trend showing total number of statements for Brent pupils over the past 6 years is as follows:

Jan	1998	1278
	1999	1455
	2000	1469
	2001	1461
	2002	1373
	2003	1309

13.5 The developments in provision have enabled;

1. The Language Unit at Kensal Rise to be extended into KS2, enabling 6 pupils to receive provision which would otherwise have required out-Borough placement.
2. A reception class/assessment unit being set up at Manor School, enabling 7 pupils to be placed at Manor rather than out of the borough.

3. An autistic unit at Woodfield School, to be set up. Although a specialist teacher is yet to be appointed, training has been provided to staff and suitable physical accommodation has been created, enabling 3 pupils on the autistic spectrum to be placed at Woodfield.
4. Appointment of an autism outreach worker from Evan Davies Nursery who is working to support 15 pupils on the autistic spectrum in mainstream schools.

13.6 Recommendation

1. It was clear from interviews that the LEA need to communicate more effectively the beneficial impacts of the 'Invest to save' initiative to schools, (some of whom are unaware that this initiative exists), to encourage more participation. Based on interviews, the will to improve on earlier provision for SEN certainly exists amongst schools; many others would be keen to participate in such an initiative if it was expanded

13.7 Recommendation

2. The School Improvement Service should have a key role here in assisting the expansion of this initiative and particularly in developing model policies or self evaluation tools for schools to assist schools in improving their provision

13.8 Recommendation

3. As part of the broader financial review, audit the use of finance to assess the cost effectiveness and impact of this initiative. Monies recouped from saving elsewhere could be redirected towards this initiative

14.0 Post 16 Provision

- 14.1 Post 16 provisions for students with SEN will need to be considered in the light of funding issues from the various funding agencies.

14.2 Recommendation

1. Special Schools and Secondary Schools with additionally resourced provision should be encouraged to establish firm links with colleges to ensure that appropriate courses are available for Post 16. SENAS could assist the transfer process alongside Connexions as link officers between schools and colleges.

15.0 Pupil Referral Unit

- 15.1 Pupil Referral Units (PRU's) work with pupils who have been excluded from school, (and sometimes with pupils who are in danger of being excluded) and provide a range of different access points to the national curriculum. Some may be re-integrated back into mainstream education, others may not.
- 15.2 From September 2002 Pupil Referral Units have been required to provide fulltime education to those who have been excluded permanently, or for fixed terms of more than 15 days. In Brent there are three PRUs.
- 15.3 The Pupil Referral Unit has been commended from various sources including Ofsted, for its effective early intervention and re-integration of pupils back into school. In particular there has been considerable success at implementing BIP, the Behaviour Improvement plan, very quickly after fixed term exclusion. The panel wished to investigate how the benefits of this could be extended.
- 15.4 Brent's Behaviour Improvement Programme is organised at Secondary level around 4 Schools, and has quickly and successfully established the culture that any pupil with fixed term exclusion receives teaching provision in line with DfES requirements. The PRU has a key stage 4 unit for years 10 and 11, which offers a full time alternative curriculum, there are also links with higher education colleges, and a local work experience consortium.
- 15.5 The PRU also has key stage 3 unit for years 7 to 9 which is based on a reintegration model, so the child goes back to an alternative mainstream school. This is done via a case management system, so the process of deciding to which school, and when the pupil will return, is transparent and equitable for schools participating, and the pupils gain a guaranteed level of support and further preventative work.
- 15.6 This work has increased support to excluded pupils and those at risk of exclusion, and exclusion numbers have decreased steadily over the past 6 years by approximately two thirds.
- 15.7 In Brent approximately 8 or 9 % of pupils who are excluded, have Special Educational Needs, some of whom will have Statements. Although the PRU is able to support these pupils, there are some difficulties with children coming from out of borough Special Schools, or those who are clearly not going to be able to re-integrate back into mainstream schools. This is primarily because Brent does not have EBD secondary age provision in borough. Brent has to rely on provision out of borough, alongside other authorities who are competing for the same places. This is costly, and it may be difficult to monitor the quality of provision, which is variable.

15.8 Recommendation

1. Establish EBD provision in borough as part of the review of provision. This would be more cost effective, and enable a stable core of expertise to be established. This should not be seen in isolation to Secondary School age, but should involve work into the Early Years and the Primary setting as well.

15.9 In order to build on the success of PRU in Brent, in reducing exclusions, reintegrating pupils and supporting pupils with SEN, PRU need to be involved at an earlier stage in pupil behaviour to avoid breakdown in school placements.

15.10 Recommendation

2. Development of greater levels of outreach from PRU and special schools across a greater age range including Key Stage 4, liaising with the School Improvement Service. Consider the development of alternative curriculum provision for small groups in some secondary schools

16.0 Parent Partnership

16.1 The Parent Partnership Service was set up and is funded by Brent LEA to assist, support and advise parents of children with SEN who are seeking additional support at school for their children, or going through the statutory processes of getting a statement. Brent Parent Partnership Service has 2 part time workers, who are already struggling to cope with the high demand for their service. To date this year they have dealt with 122 new referrals, with an average of 12 new cases every month. Members of the panel visited the Parent Partnership and spoke to parents whose children had recently gone through the statementing process.

16.2 Parents interviewed were critical of the long delay between the identification of SEN at a very early age and the final statementing. Parents in general found the process very stressful. Panel interviews indicated that the level of support in schools for parents is variable and that the knowledge of SENCO's varied considerably.

16.3 Parents interviewed gave the Parent Partnership the highest praise and regretted that they had not heard of the help and advice available at an earlier time.

16.4 Recommendation

1. Closer co-operation between the Parent Partnership service and health and education, to assist forward planning and transition from pre-school to school years. The profile of the service needs to be raised and their service publicised, as early on as possible, by all agencies

Of particular value would be the involvement of the Parent Partnership in following up the non attenders for health appointments, as this is a significant cause of delays in identification and support

16.5

Recommendation

2. Broader and widespread distribution of the Parent Partnership leaflet in Social Services, libraries and housing offices and early education settings, including nurseries, with automatic inclusion in any correspondence between parents and SENAS.

16.6 The panel found that parents interviewed often did not understand the implications of statements when they received their copy. There was also concern expressed about the scoring system which appears to be less clear in identifying a child's needs if he/she scores under an age 6 year score. In this instance greater attention may be needed to secure an accurate assessment of the individual child's need, alongside the explanation for the parent.

16.7

Recommendation

3. It is important that statements and LEA documentation provide some extra explanation of the system used to allocate additional teaching or non-teaching support and are written in plain English

16.8

Recommendation

4. Review of the current staffing levels of the Parent Partnership Service with a view to increasing it, to deal adequately with the rapidly increasing workload and resulting demands on their service. Current casework has reached approximately 100 active cases between 2 part time employees, they are also becoming increasingly involved in supporting parents of excluded pupils

Addendum to SEN Best Value Review Report from BFS

BFS have reviewed this report in light of the recently identified budgetary difficulties affecting the SEN Outborough Placements budget. Education finance officers expect an overspend on this budget in 2003/04 in the region of £1.1m. This overspend was identified very late in the financial year and will have implications for future years. Although growth is proposed in the EAL budget for 2004/05, this position is not sustainable in the long-term.

In light of this issue, recommendations and issues highlighted below need to be considered in conjunction with the main report.

1. Improvements are required in relation to monitoring of expenditure and provision of information. There is a need for more robust forecasting. Placement costs on a per pupil basis need to be made more easily available, including transport costs.
2. Costs must be driven downwards, ideally through prevention, or by ensuring best value principles are applied when considering the needs of existing pupils. Best use should be made of spare capacity in house, both within special schools and mainstream schools.
 - schools must in future provide places that meet the needs of pupils.
 - the option of funding empty places that are not meeting the needs of pupils must cease.

The budgets for EAL and Social Services nurseries should be reviewed as a single exercise, to ensure that there is a fair balance, to meet overall policy objectives.

3. Taking forward the Invest to Save scheme for the long-term should be investigated. No specific provision has been built into the 2004/05 EAL capital programme for modifications that may be required to enable more in-house provision. This is because no bids have been made. Given the obvious problems this should be addressed as a matter of urgency.
4. Radical proposals to address the overspending must be investigated. The most expensive out-borough placements must be reviewed on a case by case basis to look at alternatives. These reviews should have independent representation (BFS/Members?). Some potential alternatives to consider are:
 - Explore incentives for parents to move children back in-borough
 - Ensure adequate education placements
 - Help with in borough uniform costs. Out of school club incentives.
 - Funding parents for petrol.

LEA Action Plan

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION ALREADY TAKEN	FUTURE ACTION REQUIRED	LEAD OFFICER(S)	BY WHEN
1.0 Establish strategic focus of the Early Years Service in the context of the Green Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member/senior officer group is considering the implications of the Green Paper for the structure of Council Services. • Within the current structure, the Head of Early Years has been designated as the Senior Responsible Officer for Early Years with a strategic responsibility, working across services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following clarification of future structure for Childrens services, proposals to be developed and implemented for the organisation of early years services across education and social services. 	RB/JP/LFL	Sept. 2004
1.1 Best Value review of Early years to highlight early identification and inclusion of children with SEN and identify where further developments are needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best Value review of Early years is underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of Early Years Best Value review proposals in respect of SEN 	LFL	Sept 2004

<p>1.2 Consider future role of social services nurseries, possibly to link to special schools with line management through headteachers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposals for the development of Children's centres have been agreed by members and submitted to the Sure Start Unit. Under these proposals, 2 social services nurseries will be developed into Childrens Centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of Children Centre proposals and clarification of management and governance issues 	<p>LFL (though Childrens Centre Steering Group)</p>	<p>Sept 2004</p>
<p>1.3 Early Years Service and Early Years SEN Team to be accountable for strategies, policies and targeted outcomes against which effectiveness can be judged.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEN early years team in operation since Sept. 03 EYDCP role is under review in light of new government guidance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service operational – plans for 2004/5 for early years will specify priorities, targets and monitoring arrangements 	<p>LFL/GS</p>	<p>April 2004</p>
<p>1.4 Carry out an audit of existing skills of teachers and SENCO's in primary schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information available about school staff who have successfully completed in-house SEN training programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More detailed audit exercise to be completed 	<p>RCL</p>	<p>June 2004</p>
<p>1.5 Seek to place children with SEN in schools with expertise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 additionally resourced provisions have been established in mainstream schools, catering for specific types of SEN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop proposals with schools for designating more mainstream primary and secondary schools to specialise in meeting a specific range of SEN Identify resource 	<p>RCL</p>	<p>September 2004</p>

		requirements.			
1.6	Establish a training programme using SEN Service and special schools skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SEN training programme in place, both for SENCOs and learning Support Assistants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update skills audit (see 1.4 above) and revise training programme for 2004/5 	RCL	September 2004
1.7	Increase capacity to monitor, review and revise funding arrangements for all aspects of SEN provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External consultant has been engaged in January 2004 to review SEN funding arrangements and advise officers about revisions to current arrangements • SEN finance officer in post within the SEN Assessment Service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult upon and implement revised SEN funding arrangements • Establish post of SEN monitoring officer to strengthen monitoring of out-borough placements through follow up to annual review statements. 	MS/RCL RCL	September 2004 April 2004
1.8	Review funding arrangements for additionally resourced provisions to ensure funding reflects current levels of need and to clarify responsibility for funding where this is unclear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional funding for additionally resourced provisions has been subject to successful growth bid (£150,000 over 2 years) • External consultant engaged to review SEN funding arrangements (see 1.7 above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £75,000 to be allocated to additionally resourced provisions, according to identified need, for 2004/5 • Establish agreement with Primary Care Trust about funding for provision, repair and maintenance of specialist equipment 	RB/RCL RCL	April 2004 September 2004

<p>1.9 Any efficiency savings arising from review of funding arrangements should be re-directed to schools to address the gap between School Action/School Action Plus funding and stated funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additionally £500,000 allocated to schools for School Action/School Action Plus funding as part of Invest to Save initiative agreed by members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify short-term and long-term resourcing implications of implementing the Best Value review action plan • Recycle any efficiency savings into schools. 	<p>MS/RCI</p>	<p>April 2005</p>
<p>2.0 School Improvement Service liaise with Early Years SEN team to influence development of good practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement & Inclusion Division established within Education, Arts and Libraries bringing together Early Years, SEN/Inclusion and School Improvement into a unified structure • School Improvement Adviser with responsibility for Inclusion now in post and growth bid lodged for 2004/5 for School Improvement Adviser with Early Years responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linkages between the SIS and Early Years Team to be agreed. 	<p>FE/CR/LFL</p>	<p>April 2004</p>

2.1	Short in-depth review of special school provision to be carried out, setting out an action plan for the next 5 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultant engaged in 2003 to prepare report for Best Value Review including proposals for development in special school provision • Initial proposals being developed to be available by March 2004. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposals developed in consultation with all stakeholders and including timeline for potential developments 	RB	March 2004
2.2	Establish where space is available to take small cohorts of pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.1 	See 2.1	See 2.1
2.3	Arrange joint funding within Borough with social services for pupils with EBD, where respite care is already available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint funding protocol in place across education, social services and health in relation to out-borough specialist placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing pooled budget arrangements for children with exceptional needs 	RB/JP	April 2005
2.4	Increase capacity to monitor, review and revise funding arrangements for all aspects of SEN provision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 1.7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 1.7 	See 1.7	See 1.7
2.5	Ensure full use of special school places or remove spare capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.1 	See 2.1	See 2.1

2.6 Consider recommendations made by the external consultant in relation to transport services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> External consultants report has been presented to members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Services to complete strategic review of their future transport needs and then action plan to be finalised and implemented 	JP/RB	Sept. 2004
2.7 Carry out an independent review of working practices of educational psychology service to establish comparative staffing levels, deployment practice and linkages to the Education Development Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partial benchmarking analysis has been completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent analysis against statistical neighbours to be completed 	KMc/MH	Sept 2004
2.8 Continue to improve communication between the LEA and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of consultative and advisory groups established SEN update to schools, through circulars SEN policy documents on intranet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates to be provided to schools on key areas of development and implementation of BV review action plan 	RCL	January 2004 and ongoing.

<p>2.9 Ensure representation from education on all key multi-disciplinary panels. Consider nominating personnel for each SEN area as an easy point of contact for outside agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA is represented on a wide range of multi-agency strategic and operational groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA representative to regularly attend multi-agency case discussion meetings. • Directory of LEA officers and lead responsibilities for various aspects of SEN to be provided to external agencies. 	<p>MH</p> <p>RCI</p>	<p>April 2004 and ongoing.</p> <p>April 2004</p>
<p>3.0 Meet backlog of amendments to statements following annual review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All annual review reports (over 1000 per year) scrutinised and major amendments to statements made 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify resources required to enable SENAS to amend all statements where changes proposed following annual review. 	<p>JG</p>	<p>April 2004</p>
<p>3.1 LEA to communicate more effectively the beneficial impact of the 'Invest to Save' initiative to schools.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.8 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.8 	<p>See 2.8</p>	<p>See 2.8</p>
<p>3.2 SIS to have a key role in developing self-evaluation tools to assist schools in developing their provision for inclusive education.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Improvement Adviser with responsibilities for inclusion is now in post • Training session organised 'How inclusive is my School?' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-evaluation framework and methodology to be drawn up and consulted upon 	<p>JCa</p>	<p>Dec 04</p>

<p>3.3 Audit cost effectiveness of Invest to Save initiative and consider re-directing any savings arising from the review towards this initiative</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrangements in place to keep track of financial impact of Invest to Save initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure financial information is maintained and updated • Recycle any savings in further Invest to Save initiatives (see also 1.9) 	<p>RCL</p> <p>MS/RCL</p>	<p>Jan 04 and ongoing</p> <p>April 2005</p>
<p>3.4 Special schools and secondary schools to be encouraged to establish firm links with colleges to ensure that appropriate course are available post 16.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14-19 Forum established involving all stakeholders • LEA is represented on Strategic Area Review of post 16 provision being undertaken by the Learning and Skills Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure issue of post 16 provision for SEN is examined by the 14-19 Forum and the Learning and Skills Council 	<p>JC</p>	<p>Jan 04 and ongoing</p>
<p>3.5 Establish provision for emotional and behavioural difficulties in Borough as part of the review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Stage 3 provision developed in 2002 and received good Ofsted report. Primary tuition base established in 2003 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See 2.1, 2.2 	<p>See 2.1, 2.2</p>	<p>See 2.1, 2.2</p>

<p>3.8 Broader and wider distribution of Parent Partnership leaflet in Social Services, libraries, housing offices and early education settings. Automatic inclusion in any correspondence between parents and SENAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets and poster currently sent to all Brent LEA schools and nurseries, social service nurseries, One Stop Shops and Libraries, SENAS, Child and Family, Brent Child Development Team, Speech and Language therapy and some voluntary agencies. • Posters only sent to all medical centres and all private nurseries in Brent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure wide distribution of information • Monitor impact on referrals and ability to manage increased demand through current establishment • Review and revise leaflet. 	<p>SB/NP</p>	<p>April 04</p>
<p>3.9 Statements and LEA documentation provide explanation of system used to allocate teaching and non-teaching support and are written in plain English.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Framework in place for allocation of teaching and non-teaching support according to identified need. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review documentation sent to parents at different stages of the statutory assessment process. • Consult through Parent Partnership, to improve clarity of statements from parent perspective. 	<p>JG/SB/NP</p>	<p>April 04</p> <p>May 04</p>

<p>4.0 Review current levels of staffing in Parental Partnership with a view to increasing it to meet rapidly increasing workload demands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 part-time staff in place, team of 'volunteers' (Independent Parent Supporters) and admin support. • Caseload demands being monitored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collate information about workload, gain comparative information on staffing levels and consider growth bid for 2005/6 	<p>SB/NP</p>	<p>Sept. 04</p>
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Glossary of Terms.

Key Stage 1	(age 5-7)
Key Stage 2	(age 7-11)
Key Stage 3	(age 11-14)
Key Stage 4	(age14-16)

These are stages/ages when pupils take tests and assessments.

Panel members:

Cllr. Helga Gladbaum	Convenor	Brent Council
Karin McDougall	Policy and Performance Officer	Brent Council
Maureen Eade	Independent Advisor	(Ex Ofsted)
Paul Bartlett	Stakeholder.	(National Deaf Children's Society)
Cllr. Richard Harrod	Scrutiny Committee	Brent Council

.
For further information on this report please contact Karin McDougall. Policy and Performance Officer. Policy and Regeneration Unit. Room 221 2nd Floor, Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembly, Middlesex HA9 9HD.

Appendix 1

Section 3: Special educational needs

Summary of Ofsted Report and Recommendations.

119. The LEA's performance is now satisfactory in all aspects of special educational needs. At the time of the previous inspection, the LEA's strategy for SEN was unsatisfactory. A sound policy and strategic plan for development are now in place and satisfactory progress is being made. The recommendations of the previous report have been acted upon. The LEA continues to take reasonable steps to meet its statutory obligations in respect of special educational needs but the time taken to produce statutory assessments involving advice from other agencies is unduly long. The LEA has satisfactory procedures in place for monitoring the use of funding. However, the Best Value review of special schools is yet to take place, which means the role of special schools within the strategy for special educational needs is not clear, and the value for money offered by the schools has not been examined sufficiently.

Strategy

120. The LEA now has a satisfactory policy for special educational needs and inclusive education in place. Following wide consultation, it has the support of schools, elected members and other stakeholders. The policy and associated plans are coherent with other statutory and strategic plans. Operational service plans support the strategy, and the senior management team regularly reviews implementation. The special educational needs and inclusive education strategic review group, comprising representatives from primary, secondary and special schools, social services and health, meets regularly to monitor the effect of the special educational needs policy and strategy and clear progress reports are made to elected members. The "invest to save" initiative is beginning to reduce the reliance on special school places outside the borough by investing in provision inside Brent. Provision for special educational needs has been enhanced by the addition of specialist units attached to schools and effective outreach work for pupils with autism and speech and language difficulties.

121. Some weaknesses remain in the special educational needs strategy. The authority has set a high priority on supporting children with special educational needs during their early years, but it has not made significant progress on this. Earlier intervention in mainstream schools has been supported by elected members who have agreed the allocation of increased resources for pupils with special educational needs but who do not require a statutory statement. However, the difference between the resources allocated to pupils with a statutory statement and those without, remains large. This does not encourage schools to meet the special educational needs of pupils without a formal assessment and statement.

122. A review of the role of special schools is planned, but they are currently unclear about their role. This reduces the potential for more effective and efficient partnership working between specialist provision and mainstream schools.

Inspection Report Brent Local Education Authority

Recommendation

In order to improve the strategy for special educational needs:

- Proceed with the Best Value review of special schools and other specialist provision as a matter of urgency.

Statutory obligations

123. The LEA continues to take adequate steps to meet its statutory obligations. There are systematic procedures in place for monitoring the statementing and annual review processes and the placement of pupils. During 2002 the rate of completion of statements within the recommended 18 weeks improved to 92 per cent, excluding those involving other agencies. In cases where medical and other advice is sought, the completion rate is low at 58 per cent, which is below that for similar authorities. Although the LEA analyses the reasons for the delays, action to remedy the situation has been insufficient.

124. Relationships with the primary care trusts are improving. The LEA's effective contribution to the children with disabilities strategy group is a good example of positive joint working. The LEA has agreed to part fund a joint commissioning manager for children, with health and social services, to improve their capacity for meeting the needs of children with special educational needs.

Recommendation

In order to improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs:

- Put in place effective procedures to reduce significantly the delays caused by other agencies to the process for producing statutory statements.

The procedure for the identification of special educational needs and for requesting a formal assessment is explained well in publications for schools and parents. Letters to parents are clear. The decision-making process is transparent; schools and other agencies are effectively included. The LEA's educational psychology service undertakes effectively the assessment of pupils in independent schools.

126. Belatedly, a parent partnership scheme has been established with a full-time officer in post. Independent parental supporters are being recruited. A useful web site is accessible to parents and helpful leaflets are now being produced. The parent partnership has intervened successfully to resolve a number of potential appeals to the special needs tribunal.

Special educational needs functions to support school improvement

127. The LEA's support for school improvement is satisfactory, as in the previous inspection. Clear guidance is published about the criteria and the Brent thresholds for statutory assessment and about the provision schools are expected to make to meet pupils' special educational needs.

128. The LEA has a useful handbook for special educational needs that provides schools and co-ordinators with clear information, and helps to ensure consistency of practice across schools. However, the updating of the handbook has only begun recently. Decision-making about pupils requiring a statutory statement and the identification of the provision to meet their needs is transparent. Representatives of mainstream and special schools are consulted appropriately in the process.

129. The allocation of funding for those pupils with statements of special educational needs is moderated satisfactorily by the annual review process. For pupils without a statement, funding is delegated to schools. The LEA undertakes an annual audit of the resources used to support pupils with special educational needs. The outcomes of the audit, and examples of good practice, are disseminated effectively to schools.

130. A recent reorganisation has strengthened the links between the school improvement and inclusion services by placing these under one assistant director. Currently, the advice given to schools on target setting for pupils with special educational needs is not consistent and value-added data to improve target setting in the assessment of these pupils are not yet available to schools. Satisfactory support is available to schools through projects, outreach work and the educational psychology and learning support service. However, vacancies in the educational psychology service mean that too much of their work is focused on statutory assessment.

131. The training and guidance on the new Code of Practice for special educational needs has been satisfactory. A good programme of training courses and meetings supports schools in improving the quality of provision, many of these courses are accredited by external bodies.

Value for money

132. The LEA's systems for ensuring value for money are satisfactory. A range of performance indicators are used in order to compare costs and performance with similar local authorities and the national averages. The central budget is well managed and controlled with the exception of the cost of special educational needs transport which has increased significantly in recent years. The basis of funding allocations to schools and individual pupils is clear and understood by schools. The annual audit procedure monitors, and is starting to evaluate, how schools and central services spend the resources allocated but the LEA has not yet taken the next step to compare the progress made by individual pupils with the resources allocated.

(See independent finance review on p 29 for notes on transport overspend)

133. The LEA publishes concise information about the roles and responsibilities of central services, making clear which services are free, which schools have to pay for, and how to access them. Individual services are required to consider Best Value objectives in the planning and implementation of their development plans. A number have undergone Best

Value reviews with satisfactory outcomes. However, the Best Value review of special schools has been delayed and until this takes place, it is difficult for the LEA to be sure that the optimum use is being made of the resources provided to special schools and other specialist provision. There are good procedures in place for performance management in the central special needs services.

Appendix 2

Mainstream schools and nurseries with additionally resourced provision
(Taken from Report compiled by Tribal consultants.)

There is an increasing range of provision for pupils with special educational needs in additionally resourced provision in mainstream schools and in the provision of specialist expertise and resources in special schools, for example, for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder, see table 1. There are, however, gaps in the provision, in particular for speech and language at secondary school level, autism and secondary provision for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

TABLE 1.

School	Description	Current capacity
College Green Nursery	Inclusive provision and outreach service for deaf and hearing impaired children	5
Evan Davies Nursery	1. Inclusive provision for pupils with developmental delay 2. On-site provision and outreach service (ASAP) for nursery age pupils with ASD 3. Outreach service for primary age pupils with ASD 4. Portage service	6 5
Kensal Rise Primary School	Provision for nursery and infant children with speech and language impairment	20
Kingsbury Green Primary School	Provision for primary age pupils with hearing impairment	15
Mora Primary School	Inclusive provision for nursery and primary age pupils with visual impairment and outreach service for all age pupils.	6
Oakington Manor Primary School	Provision for primary age pupils with speech and language impairment	25
Kingsbury High School	Provision for secondary age pupils with hearing or visual impairment	24
Preston Manor Secondary School	Provision for secondary age pupils with speech and language impairment	12

Provision for pupils with speech and language disorders

3.21 A good range of provision is being developed at nursery and primary level, including Curzon Crescent Nursery which has recently begun to develop its own provision. This has not been designated as an additionally resourced provision nursery. There is good support from speech and language therapists. At present there is no outreach support available to other mainstream nursery and primary schools.

3.22 Kensal Rise Primary School has capacity for 20 pupils, with 14 currently on roll, in a Victorian building with good space and accommodation. There are 2 teachers, 1 LSA and 2 full time speech therapists. Places are provided from nursery through to Year 6, although previously only to the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils are fully included and may transfer at any age to their local school. There is support from two speech and language therapists.

3.23 Oakington Manor Primary School has provision for 25 pupils with 21 on roll, although the accommodation is restricted. Staffing is 2 teachers, 2 LSAs and 2 full time speech therapists. Pupils are taught literacy and numeracy in the unit base and integrate into the mainstream classes as appropriate. They may transfer to their local mainstream school at any time. Pupils from other schools may be offered temporary places for short term if spaces are available.

3.24 Preston Manor Secondary school has places for 12 pupils supported by two teachers but without speech and language therapy support. Pupils are fully included with support from the speech and language base. There is no capacity to provide outreach support to other schools.

3.25 There are issues regarding the involvement of the Speech and Language Therapy Service provided by the Primary Care Trust. There is a lack of involvement of the service in regard to speech therapists employed and funded by schools. This has implications for professional input from this service and access to supervision and staff development opportunities. Links with the educational psychology service have not been strong but this is improving. There are concerns about the service level agreement, especially regarding support in mainstream schools for which the service is now overstretched. There are also concerns about pupils being fully included, which may not be appropriate for all.

3.26 Issues regarding speech and language provision

- **Problems of late referrals of reception age children and at secondary level.**
- **The need to review the funding formula for these provisions.**
- **The need for more places at secondary level, possibly combined with ASD.**
- **The lack of involvement of the Speech and Language Service in some schools with additionally resourced provision and the training and development of staff.**
- **Whether fully inclusive arrangements are appropriate for all.**

Provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

3.27 The Evan Davies Nursery provides 5 places on a part time basis (afternoons) and children with developmental delay attend in the mornings. The teacher for autistic children provides outreach support for half a day per week to the Social Services nursery at Barnhill and to primary schools on the other mornings. This is a good use of resources in supporting mainstream schools but there are some difficulties for parents in terms of the part time nature of the placements. Barnhill nursery provides for up to 6 children with autism plus a small number at Anansi nursery.

3.28 There is no designated provision in a mainstream primary school, although Kensal Rise Primary School speech and language provision may be appropriate for some pupils. The choice of a primary placement is, therefore, restricted for pupils needing mainstream access but with specialist teacher support from an additionally resourced provision. Manor special school may not be appropriate in all cases.

3.29 Manor School provides for pupils with severe and moderate learning difficulties, severe communication difficulties and autism. Currently there are 60 pupils diagnosed as on the autism spectrum out of the total roll of 120. Most of the staff are trained in the use of the TEAACH approach and the school is developing as a centre of specialist expertise.

3.30 There is no mainstream secondary provision for autistic pupils other than individual support in a local school. Woodfield special school is developing provision for pupils needing special school placement with four pupils planned for September 2003. There are, however, serious difficulties in recruiting a qualified teacher and training may have to be provided for a new untrained teacher. There is no working link with Manor School for training and sharing of expertise.

3.31 Issues regarding ASD provision

- **The need for designated provision in mainstream primary and secondary schools.**
- **Transfers at primary and secondary level.**
- **Continuity of care and education at all ages.**
- **The need for a clear specification of each provision.**
- **Guidance for Manor School on its future development to meet the needs of the authority.**
- **Recruitment and retention of staff.**
- **Training in autism**

Provision for pupils with social, emotional, and/or behaviour difficulties (SEBD)

3.32 Many children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties are supported in mainstream schools with a statement of special educational needs and additional resources. There is, however, no LEA funded support service for these pupils and their schools. Special school places are provided for statemented pupils at Vernon House School, which caters for primary aged boys from Brent and other boroughs. Currently there are 35 pupils on roll with 18 from other boroughs. There is no provision for outreach to support other schools but there are inclusion links for pupils with other schools. (See section on special schools).

3.33 There are other forms of provision for pupils with a range of needs, including pupils who have been excluded from school.

3.34 The Pupil Referral Unit provides full time education as follows:

Key Stage 2 provision for 6 pupils based at the Centre for Staff Development and funded from the home tuition budget, with a capacity for 6 and 3 currently attending.

Key Stage 3 provision at Stag Lane has capacity for 25 50 pupils. Staffing is 1 head teacher plus 5 fte teachers and a welfare assistant. The teaching staff provide an outreach service to mainstream secondary schools to support preventative work and re-integration.

Key Stage 4 pupils based at Church Lane for up to 25 pupils provided with individual programmes, including FE college links and work experience. Staffing is 1 head teacher plus 7 fte teachers and 1 welfare assistant.

3.35 The total budget for the PRU provision is £1,016,000.

3.36 In addition, the LEA buys 20 places for Key Stage 4 pupils on a 'direct referral' vocational project run by the College of North West London. There are also two centres funded through the Behaviour Improvement Project catering for fixed term exclusions from four participating secondary schools, staffed from the Youth Service. There are also two pre-exclusions officers and one post exclusion officer.

3.37 Brent Education Tuition Service currently provides education for 64 pupils with a range of needs. Of these, 23 have statements (6 excluded and 5 awaiting placement) with an overall total of 17 excluded. The budget for this provision is £753,000 in total but this budget is under considerable pressure due to the increased demands and expectations to expand the level of tuition.

3.38 There are other projects to support schools in providing for pupils with a range of difficulties, such as the primary Positive Behaviour Project to run from January 2003 to September 2004. The staffing is 1 specialist teacher, with a second to be appointed in September 2003, and 3 FTE LSAs. A range of different forms of support is offered and 7 schools are involved. In addition, there is a Behaviour Improvement Project, to be part of the Excellence in Cities Programme, involving 10 primary schools and 4 secondary. The staffing includes two 0.5 educational psychologists and a number of professionals from other agencies.

3.39 Issues regarding provision for pupils with social, emotional and behaviour difficulties

- **No specialist secondary provision within Borough**
- **Limited behaviour support for mainstream primary schools**
- **No specialist provision for girls**
- **Provision for primary and secondary excluded pupils whose needs cannot be met by a PRU placement.**

- **The extent to which the PRU resources could be used more flexibly to cater for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties on a more formal basis at all key stages.**
- **The co-ordination of the range of initiatives and LEA led services.**

Other provision for special educational needs

Provision for deaf and hearing impaired pupils

3.40 A review of the Service for Deaf and Hearing Impaired children in 2001 made a number of recommendations as follows:

- Clear lines of communication, with a named person to co-ordinate the service.
- To provide best practice guidelines regarding working in partnership between mainstream SENCOs, teachers of the deaf and other staff.
- Units to be regarded as an integral part of the SEN department and accountable to the SENCO.
- Funding should be reviewed by the authority.
- A common language scheme should be used across the authority.
- There should be consultation to consider criteria for levels of support.

3.41 The recommendations and the issues raised in the report need to be revisited and addressed when considering the development of services for the hearing impaired.

3.42 Provision across the borough is in mainstream schools with additionally resourced provision in an inclusive setting. For pupils needing more specialised/intensive support out of borough special schools for the deaf are used. The additionally resourced nurseries and schools are as follows.

College Green Nursery is purpose built, new accommodation providing a service for Under 5's for the whole of Brent through a peripatetic/ domiciliary service and placements in an inclusive nursery setting. Staffing is 1 teacher experienced in Early Years and training as a teacher of the deaf plus 1 full time NNEB nursery assistant/communicator. There are two vacancies, one 0.5 communicator and one 0.5 instructor for the deaf. Shared appointments with Kingsbury Green and Kingsbury High schools do not work well and the head teacher would prefer one post of instructor for the deaf.

3,43 Issues regarding nursery provision for deaf and hearing impaired pupils

- **Staff recruitment and retention**
- **The appointment of an instructor for the deaf**
- **The need for a clear specification for the provision agreed with the authority.**

3.44 Kingsbury Green Primary School provides places for 16 pupils (13 on roll) three are from out of borough. Staffing is 1 teacher, 1 communicator for the deaf, 1 instructor for the deaf and 0.5 LSA. The two part time posts of communicator and instructor

shared with College Green and Kingsbury Green are vacant. Transfer at secondary age is to Kingsbury High School sensory provision, which offers fully inclusive education following GCSE courses. This form of provision is not appropriate for pupils who may need a higher level of support from a unit base and access to courses other than GCSE.

3.45 Kingsbury High school occupies two sites, which does present some communication difficulties for the staff of the sensory impairment provision. There are 12 places for deaf and hearing impaired pupils, all full at present. Staffing is 3 teachers and one senior communicator and all are trained in signing. At present the post of head of department has not been replaced and the role is being filled by the school's SENCO. All pupils follow GCSE courses, although withdrawn from modern foreign languages in year 8, and are fully included in the mainstream. The school does not provide for pupils who may need more support from a unit base and access to less academic courses. Transition is to hearing impaired provision at Harrow Weald College, the College of West London or the Derby Royal School for the Deaf.

3.46 Issues regarding primary and secondary provision for deaf and hearing impaired pupils

- **The need for more effective co-ordination of the service.**
- **Choice of local placement at the end of primary phase.**
- **Provision for secondary aged pupils needing a higher level of support in a unit base.**
- **The need for access to accredited courses appropriate to the needs of individual pupils of secondary age.**
- **Management of the sensory provision at Kingsbury High school.**

Provision for blind and visually impaired pupils

3.47 The RNIB is currently undertaking a detailed review of provision in Brent and is due to report at the end of May 2003. This report will, therefore, make reference to the RNIB review but will not incorporate any of its recommendations given the timing for the completion of each report. It is proposed that the RNIB report should be added as an appendix to this report.

3.48 Mora Primary School provides 6 places for blind and visually impaired children. All are fully included but withdrawn for individual support. A peripatetic service is provided for mainstream primary and secondary schools for pupils with statements for which a charge is made. An assessment service is provided for all visually impaired children in Brent. There is a need to review funding for the service and for specialist equipment, such as laptops and CCTVs.

3.49 Kingsbury High school up to 12 places for blind and visually impaired pupils within its sensory provision and all pupils follow a GCSE course (see comments above).

3.50 Issues regarding primary and secondary provision for blind and visually impaired pupils

- **Funding for the primary service and for specialist equipment, e.g. laptops and CCTVs.**
- **Training of teachers and LSAs**
- **Kingsbury High School is not suitable for all and there is a need to consider either the provision of a more appropriate curriculum and courses to meet these wider needs or to develop another secondary school provision.**

Appendix 3

Special schools
(Taken from Self Assessment)

The authority maintains five special schools, two of which are all age (Grove Park and Hay Lane), two primary (Manor and Vernon House) and one secondary (Woodfield). All of the special schools have received positive OfSTED inspection reports. Table 3 indicates their designation, capacities and numbers on roll.

TABLE 3.

Name	Designation	Capacity	N.O. R. Brent	N.O.R. Out of borough pupils	Total budget share	Cost per pupil (based on capacity)	Cost per pupil (actual No.of pupils)
Grove Park	Complex physical and medical needs. (2-19)	90	65	18	1,277,820	14,198	19,659
Hay Lane	Severe/complex learning difficulties (2-18)	120	115	2	1,878,496	15,654	16,335
Manor	Severe/moderate learning difficulties and ASD (5-11)	132	120	8	1,724,160	13,061	14,368
Vernon House	Social, emotional and behaviour difficulties (5-11)	50	35	18	604,758	12,095	17,279
Woodfield	Moderate learning difficulties/speech and language/ASD (11-16)	100	85	0	1,125,926	11,259	13,246

Appendix 4

Special Educational Needs Best Value Review

Scope

The SEN Best Value review will focus on implementation of the SEN strategy, particularly with respect to the following key objectives.

- Ensuring earlier availability of support and thereby progressively reducing the level of statements
- Increasing ability to meet special educational needs within Brent's own provision, to reduce the necessity for out-borough placements.
- Assisting all schools and nurseries to develop local inclusive provision for children with special needs
- Developing a wider role for special schools and additionally resourced provisions in the provision of advice and support to mainstream schools

The review will need to consider whether revision is required to the current organization, designation, admission criteria and funding arrangements for special schools and additionally resourced provisions in order that the above objectives can be met most effectively.

It will also consider the effectiveness of the current SEN 'Invest to Save' scheme and whether there is scope for extending the scheme to further the above objectives.

The review will be cross-cutting and will, to some extent, draw upon the pilot review of SEN. The following services/agencies will need to be involved:

SEN Assessment Service
Educational Psychology and Learning Support Service
Social Services
Primary Care Trust
Special Schools
Schools with additionally resourced provisions for SEN

Appendix 5

Transport findings

Review of transport arrangements

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report analyses the current position of the transport services received by Education and Social Services departments, before setting out broad options for development and change. Phase 2 of this project would involve more detailed work on option(s) selected by senior officers and members for further investigation.
- 1.2 Many aspects of the current service are touched upon in this report. The current position is complex and we have included considerable detail from our analysis for the Borough's future reference. Our main findings are summarised as follows:

Agency Staff

- 1.3 Changing from agency workers to a fully employed service at BTS would cause transport costs for Education and Social Services departments to rise significantly (by £840,000 on current figures). The principal reasons for this are superannuation costs, higher rates of pay and holiday/sickness entitlement. It would also limit scope for options for change at a later date.
- 1.4 Agency staff performance, on the basis of customer satisfaction information available, is as consistent as could be expected from a large group of staff, whether they are employed on an external or internal basis.
- 1.5 The training programme for agency staff is comprehensive. Staff can be employed on routes before they have completed the training programme and/or before they have received clearance. The provision of training during the middle part of the day to secure earlier training and more intensive use of staff should be explored.

Client satisfaction

- 1.6 High satisfaction ratings indicate that the service is well delivered and received by individual clients.
- 1.7 Customer satisfaction surveys should be the responsibility of the purchaser of transport (Education or Social Services) and not the service provider (BTS).
- 1.8 Clear criteria and processes need to be established between the purchaser and provider on what constitutes a complaint and how it is best resolved.

Internal management

- 1.9 Costs are higher through BTS, particularly for pupils with SEN, than may be secured through competitive tendering. The reasons for this are many but would include the type of vehicles used, their utilisation rates and central administration staff costs.
- 1.10 Route planning is effective in terms of the order in which clients are picked up. There are opportunities for innovation to reduce costs for the transportation of both pupils and adults.
 - 1.11 More effective communication, particularly between Social Services and BTS, would reduce the opportunities for misunderstandings about quality of service on offer by BTS and delivered by them.
- 1.12 Both the Education and Social Services Departments need to develop the capacity to become more active as purchasers of services from BTS. Budgets are regularly and closely monitored but there is insufficient scrutiny of the underlying costs to secure best value for money.
- 1.13 There is little logic in the Education Department continuing to be responsible for BTS. Transport is a common service which might be better placed within the corporate centre of the Council.

Four broad options for further consideration and development

- 1.14 The least attractive option is to create staff posts for all present agency escorts and drivers. This would require substantial additional cost (current estimate of £840,000) without significant service quality improvement.
- 1.15 A decision, based on Education's and Social Services' strategic objectives for their clients, could be taken to contract out all transport services to external suppliers by a set date to achieve anticipated cost savings. We emphasise that any attempt to move to commercial provision must be supported by market development strategies.
- 1.16 Social services could gradually withdraw from its arrangement with BTS on a time scale in line with the expiry of vehicle leases. This could be done in a way which did not affect the employment of BTS staff while allowing Social Services the scope to develop a more flexible and cost-effective service. This might include exploring the use of the Department's own vehicles to operate routes to and from centres, and/or the use of commercial suppliers under contract, e.g. for all routes to one centre. We estimate that removing the routes for one of social services day centres (Strathcona) in the first year would release approximately £30,000 to administer the ten routes; up to this amount would be spread across all the other Social Services and Education routes in BTS, thereby giving a marginal increase to the administration costs for the remaining routes. The financial impact on the two departments, particularly Education, in the second and subsequent years if further Social Services routes were withdrawn would require more detailed financial modelling.

- 1.17 The current arrangements could continue with an emphasis on more active management of the relationship with BTS by Education and Social Services. This would include resolving the formalisation of Service Level Agreements to facilitate clarity of roles and communications, and reviewing the management structure that places the service in the Education Department.