

	Brent Health and Wellbeing Board 24 July 2025
	Report from the Directorate of Children, Young People and Community Development
Update on the outcome of Brent's January 2025 Local Area SEND Inspection	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Brent Local Area Partnership SEND Inspection Improvement Plan July 2025
Background Papers:	None
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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) members on the outcome of Brent's recent (January 2025) Local Area SEND Inspection. The report outlines the key findings, details the agreed action plan in response to these findings and updates members on progress made against these agreed actions to date.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that HWB:

- 2.1 Note the key findings of Brent's recent Local Area SEND Inspection.
- 2.2 Note the proposed action plan, and progress made against these actions to date.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

This report contributes to the furthering of Brent's Borough Plan 2023-2027. In particular, it contributes to the following Borough Plan priorities:

- Prosperity and stability in Brent,
- Thriving communities,
- The best start in life and,
- A healthier Brent.

This report also contributes to Brent's SEND Strategy 2021-2025. The priorities identified in the SEND Strategy 2021-2025 are as follows:

- Education, training and employment,
- Healthy lifestyles,
- Activities (community participation),
- Living independently and,
- My Brent.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 The Local Area (to include the Local Authority and North West London Integrated Care Board (ICB)) was inspected by Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) colleagues 27th - 31st January 2025. This was Brent's first Local Area SEND Inspection under the new SEND Inspection framework (further details of which can be found [here](#)). Of the three possible ratings, Brent achieved the highest – namely:

“The local area partnership's special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The local area partnership is taking action where improvements are needed.”

The full report is available [here](#).

- 3.2.2 To provide national context to Brent's performance in this Local Area SEND inspection, of the 54 area SEND inspections that have been graded so far on the new inspection framework:
 - **14** local area partnerships have been graded as 'positive'
 - **26** have been graded as 'inconsistent'
 - **14** have been graded with 'significant concerns'.

3.2.3 The local area's trajectory over the last eight years has been one of continuous improvement in the area of SEND. Brent's previous Local Area SEND Inspection took place in May 2017 with a follow-up visit in May 2019. In May 2019, it was agreed that Brent as a local area had made sufficient progress against their 'written statement of action' which Brent was required to produce following its 2017 Local Area SEND Inspection in which Brent was found to have "significant areas of weakness".

3.2.4 The key findings of the 2025 Local Area SEND Inspection report can be summarised as follows:

- Children and young people with SEND typically receive the right help at the right time, with some services such as the Children with Disabilities team described as providing a "highly effective offer",
- CYP's voices are central to decision-making about their needs
- CYP with SEND achieve well and gain positive outcomes, there is strong commitment to addressing health inequalities in the local area,
- In terms of leadership, leaders collaborate effectively, understand the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families well and commission effective and appropriate services.

3.3.5 In addition to the above areas of strength, the following areas were identified as in need of improvement:

1. The local area partnership should update Education Health Care plans (EHCPs) in a timely manner after annual reviews and at significant points of transition to make sure that EHCPs reflect the current needs of children and young people with SEND accurately.
2. The local area partnership should improve the timeliness and uptake of the mandated antenatal check and six- to eight-week review.
3. NHS North West London ICB should reduce the lengthy wait times that children and young people with SEND experience for neurodevelopmental diagnostic assessments, specialist therapeutic interventions in CAMHS, and community paediatrician assessments.
4. The local area partnership should reduce the lengthy wait times that children and young people with SEND experience for assessments of their home equipment needs.

3.3.6 In response to the four identified areas for improvement (3.3.3, above), a Local Area SEND Inspection Improvement Plan has been created (Appendix 1). The Improvement Plan was created via the Inclusion Strategic Board on the 8th May 2025, which has representation from health, education, parents and carers and social care. The Improvement Plan was then shared with Brent Children's Trust (BCT) on the 22nd May for approval.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

- 4.1 In forming their view of Brent's performance against the Local Area SEND Inspection framework, Ofsted and CQC colleagues undertook surveys of a full range of stakeholders, including parents of children and young people with SEND and professionals. During the inspection they spoke to children and young people with SEND, their parents/carers and professionals from health, social care and education.
- 4.2 As per 3.3.4, above, the Local Area SEND Inspection Improvement Plan was co-produced with a range of key stakeholders including parents/carers, health, social care and education.
- 4.3 Updates and changes to the agreed Improvement Plan will be co-produced with key stakeholders via the bi-monthly Inclusion Strategic Board. Amendments and updates to the Improvement plan will then be relayed to Brent Children's Trust for information and approval. Certain of the actions on the Improvement Plan are also captured as part of Brent's SEND Strategy 2021-2025 Action Plan. As evidence of progress made against Improvement Plan actions captured via the SEND Strategy 2021-2025 Action Plan.

5.0 Financial Considerations

- 5.1 Certain actions set out in the Local Area SEND Inspection Improvement Plan (see Appendix 1) are likely to carry significant financial implications for the local authority and the ICB. It is essential that these potential costs are carefully modelled and monitored, as achieving all of the agreed actions will be challenging within the constraints of existing budgets and limited resources.
- 5.2 For the 2025/26 financial year, it has been agreed to expand the SEND outreach team, funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). While this funding arrangement supports the immediate implementation of the outreach expansion, there remains considerable uncertainty regarding future financial sustainability.

Key challenges include:

- **DSG Deficit Reduction:** The local authority faces ongoing pressure to reduce the existing DSG deficit of £13.6m, which may limit the availability of funds for new or expanded services in subsequent years.
 - **Funding Uncertainty:** There is a risk that future government allocations for SEND may not keep pace with increasing demand or planned expenditure, creating potential funding shortfalls.
 - **Cost Pressures:** Rising costs associated with delivering SEND services, including staffing, specialist provision, and placements, continue to place strain on available resources.
- 5.3 Given these challenges, it will be crucial to regularly review spending against the Improvement Plan and to explore opportunities for efficiencies, joint commissioning, and alternative funding streams wherever possible, without adversely impacting the quality of support provided to children and young people with SEND and their families.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 Members are invited to note that a White Paper on SEND is expected to be revealed by the Department for Education this autumn. This paper may contain proposals for changes to the legislative and statutory framework that currently relate to SEND (most notably the Children and Families Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015)). Were this to happen, the impact and timing of any proposed changes would have to be carefully considered by the Local Area Partnership.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 The proposed actions contained in the Local Area SEND Inspection Improvement Plan are anticipated to improve equality of access to appropriate support services and may serve to reduce health inequalities in the local area.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

- 8.1 It is not felt that the proposals contained in the Local Area SEND Improvement Plan will impact upon the Council's climate and environmental commitments.

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

- 9.1 N/A

10.0 Communication Considerations

- 10.1 Brent's positive outcome in the Local Area SEND Inspection was communicated with external parties using Brent's social media channels. Internally, it was communicated to all staff by both the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director for CYP&CD.

Report sign off:

Corporate Director Nigel Chapman

Corporate Director of Children, Young People and
Community Development