



THE DRAFT S.E.N.D. STRATEGY: WHAT YOU TOLD US ... AND OUR RESPONSE

Why a new S.E.N.D. Strategy in Tower Hamlets?

Following a review completed last year, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) and the NHS (Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group) identified that a new strategy is needed for our work supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Together we spend about £50 million a year in Tower Hamlets: across schools, agencies and services for children and young people with SEND. We wrote the draft SEND strategy to show proposed plans and ideas that we have to organise services and budgets so that children and young people with SEND do even better over the next five years.

We want to make sure there are more opportunities for children and better information about care and education across the board. We also wish to make it simpler for parents and carers to be involved in the big decisions about SEND, as well as with those about the care of their own child.

How did we consult and who was involved?

We had a period of consultation about the draft strategy between October 18th and November 27th 2017. Copies of the full, draft SEND Strategy and a summary version were available from the Council website and on the Tower Hamlets Local Offer, with an e-survey for responses to be submitted. Printed copies were available in schools, children's centres and health centres to encourage parents and carers to take part. We emailed information to schools, staff teams, and other professional networks, such as the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum, as well.

"Parents and young people [with SEND] need to be at the heart of all future planning."

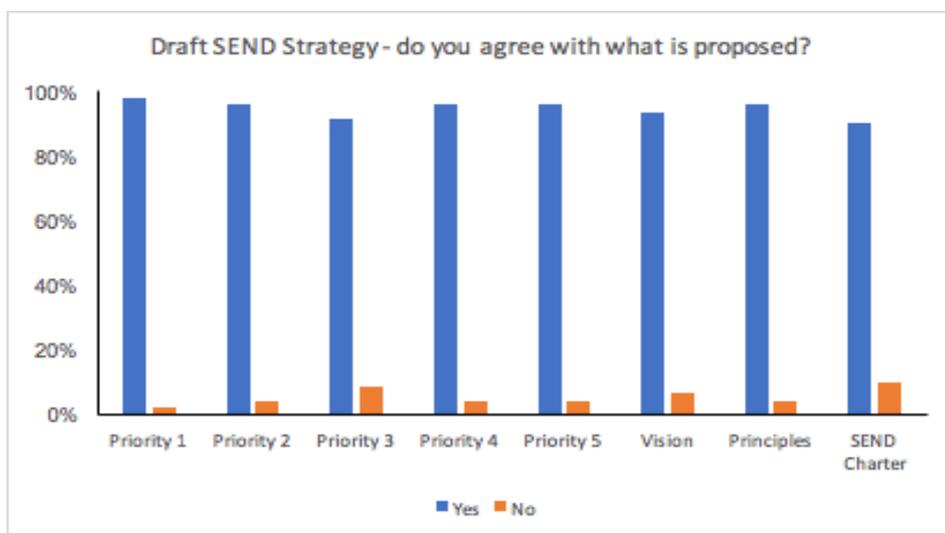
Tower Hamlets Parent & Carer

Where possible, we asked groups and individuals to send in their views on the draft strategy through the e-survey. We also organised some meetings for parents and carers at schools and through the Parents Advice Centre.

In the end, we spoke with nearly 250 people, including about 140 parents / carers and over 90 professionals involved in SEND. We had 91 responses to the e-survey, including six on behalf of groups such as Our Time All-abilities Youth Forum and Tower Hamlets Deaf Children's Society.

What we were told:

The responses were very positive: both about the need for a new SEND Strategy and about areas for change planned over the next five years. As the graph below shows, over 90% of responses supported all of the main changes.



a. Leadership

What you told us:

- Parents and carers want to know who is in charge of SEND and how to contact them.
- As parents and carers that you want to be involved, or at least represented in discussions and decisions.

We will:

- Organise the first of regular 'Q&A' sessions with those leading SEND from the Council and the NHS.
- Make sure that profiles of senior staff involved in SEND are posted on the Local Offer website.
- Involve parent and carer representatives and school representatives on SEND decision-making groups.

b. Be transparent, including about the money

What you told us:

- We want to know how Personal Budgets will work in Tower Hamlets.
- Can we have 'performance indicators' so we can know how things are improving?
 - If budgets are over-spending and difficult decisions are needed, parents and carers want to be involved; not just told.

We will:

- Produce key performance indicators (KPIs) to go with the actions in the SEND Strategy and provide updates for parents and carers about how we are doing.
- Prepare a joint Council - NHS summary about Personal Budgets for parents and carers.

**"Personal
budgets: yes, I
should know
how much is
going where for
my son"**

Parent

c. Opportunities after 16

What you told us:

- Young people with SEND want to be able to work and be as independent as possible.
- You want to see more work experience and supported employment.

- You agree with having more of an emphasis on what happens for young people with SEND after age 16.

We will:

- Work with colleges, schools and other partners to offer more of the courses that are wanted.
- Treble the number of supported internships and supported apprenticeships available for young people with SEND.

**“I want to be able
to work and be
independent.”**

*Our Time Youth Forum
member*

d. Better communication

What you told us:

- For services and schools to increase the trust of parents and carers by communicating more often and more clearly.
- That we should ask parents and carers and children and young people for their views about SEND services and how to keep improving.

We will:

- Include questions about SEND in annual parent and carers surveys and publicise the results.
- Ask parents and carers how we should keep improving the Local Offer website.

Tower Hamlets
SEND Strategy Consultation
Tel: 020 7364 4982
Email: yp@towerhamlets.gov.uk
Come and have your say about the future of services and support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
Free refreshments available
Wednesday 1st Nov, 5 - 6pm, 30 Greatorex Street, E1 5NP

e. The SEND Charter

What you told us:

- It is essential that parents and carers and young people with SEND are involved in what is in the Charter and how it will work.

- We should aim to sign up shops, leisure centres and other businesses to the SEND Charter.
- You want the Charter to make a difference.

We will:

- Involve parents and carers and pupils from local schools in putting the SEND Charter together.
- Signing up to the Charter will be opened up to businesses.

f. Early years and early intervention

What you told us:

- Early years services are important and should be maintained and increase the part they play in identifying children with SEND.
- You want to be kept informed about how well services are doing at supporting those with SEND.

We will:

- Help playgroups and nurseries to identify and support children with additional needs through the Integrated Early Years Service.
- Through the KPIs, we will let you know how many more children are having reviews at age 2 and are developing well.

g. Speedier assessments

What you told us:

- Continue to improve how EHC needs assessments are carried out and how parents and carers are kept informed.
- Faster assessments and shorter waiting times for conditions such as autism and mental illness.
- Many existing EHC plans are poorly written; these need to be updated.

We will:

- Commit to improving the quality of all EHC plans.
- Commit staff to carrying out a review of the pathways for assessing children and young people for autism and mental ill-health.

What happens next?

Between January and March 2018, a revised SEND Strategy is being discussed by leaders of the Council, including the Mayor, and the THCCG. The new SEND Strategy for 2018 - 2023 will then be launched in the summer term 2018.

The launch will include information about how parents and carers will be invited to be involved more and when the next parent and carer survey is planned.

Meanwhile, work to improve how things work for children and young people with SEND continues. This includes putting the new EHC needs assessments in place, changes to the Local Offer website and plans to increase places in some local special schools.

Updates will be posted on the Tower Hamlets Local Offer site (www.localoffertowerhamlets.co.uk/) and be available via schools, colleges, doctors' surgeries, clinics and early years settings.

