

Lewisham's Local Area Partnership

Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy

(0-25 years)

Refreshed December 2025



working together





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Foreword

We are the Champions of Inclusion, a group of Lewisham young people with SEND, who are part of the wider team of Young Advisors to our Young Mayor. We work together to discuss issues that are related to young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in Lewisham and act as advocates for our peers, influencing what is happening for young people with SEND in our borough. We empower young people with SEND to express their views on issues they face in Lewisham. All this work is part of the wider strategy of youth participation and democracy. We have been involved in the previous SEND Strategy development and delivery, acting as a critical friend, and are very pleased to introduce the refreshed SEND Strategy 2025-2030.

A lot of work is happening in Lewisham, to support young people and make sure they belong. There is as always, a lot more to do, especially for young people with SEND, so that everybody can fulfil their potential and be heard and seen.

We have advised Lewisham and continue to advise the wider partnership on all SEND matters across the local area and here is our key message:

The SEND Strategy and the priorities set are here to help make things better for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Lewisham. We believe things can be better, and we want to help make that happen. We want everybody to remember 'nothing about us without us', and nobody gets left behind. We want all children and young people to understand what support looks like, what support is available and feel confident asking for it. It is important that the help we get actually works, and that people check in with us to make sure it does.

We want to see more choices and opportunities to grow, learn, and explore career options and secure paid employment. We want professionals to really listen and connect with us, and for our voices to be heard at every level. We are pleased that we are contributing to a lot of the work and developments taking place in Lewisham and want to do more of this. Everyone should feel and be included and seen. In line with our Education Strategy, Lewisham is a place where everybody belongs and where everybody has value.

Schools and education settings should provide the right support at the right time and public services, and the wider community should know how to respond to people with SEND. We want our communities to understand us, and we want to do well in our education.

Together, via this refreshed SEND Strategy, and the work underlying this, we can make things better for everyone and hold each other accountable. We are looking forward to seeing the impact of the work across the wider partnership and will continue to feed into this.

Inclusion Champions – Young Lewisham Residents

Introduction

Our refreshed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy reflects our commitment to continuous improvement and responsiveness to the needs of our children and young people (CYP) with SEND and their families here in Lewisham. This update has been informed by extensive engagement with various stakeholders and the local area partnership, ensuring that the voices of our young people, their families, educators, health professionals, education settings and other people involved with our young people with SEND are informing our strategy and jointly agreed priorities.

Key elements of the refreshed strategy

Stakeholder engagement

Engagement sessions were conducted in 2024/2025. These sessions provided a platform for partners to share their insights, experiences, and suggestions regarding the SEND strategy. The collaborative approach ensures that the strategy is grounded in the realities faced by those directly involved in supporting children with SEND and is coproduced by all.

Alignment with our previous strategy

The foundational elements and priorities set in the 2020 – 2023 SEND strategy continue to be essential in this updated and refreshed version. This consistency ensures that successful initiatives and frameworks are built upon.

The refreshed SEND Strategy also takes into consideration the feedback and learning from the partnership's SEND Local Area Inspection (September 2024).

Our vision

Our vision for children and young people (0–25 years) with special educational needs and/or disabilities is that their needs are fully met and their aspirations are both ambitious and achievable. We envision a community where children and young people with SEND are included, feel safe, are free from discrimination, and are respected as equal citizens of Lewisham.

How will we achieve this?

Working collaboratively with all partners and key stakeholders, ensuring joint accountability. We recognise the vital role that parents, carers, and wider family members play in supporting their children and young people with SEND. We will develop transparent pathways so that families can easily locate and receive the help they need. We will support the development of an environment that understands the unique needs and strengths of those with different SEND profiles, ensuring they are welcomed and included alongside their peers.

This includes:

- Early identification of needs and appropriate referrals are undertaken as required.
- We acknowledge that access to early intervention and assessment should include timely access to diagnostic assessments where appropriate.
- Reasonable adjustments are put in place across all our educational settings with or without professional or specialist support.
- Youth and play spaces are made accessible to all children and young people with SEND in line with the Local Authority's Play Strategy 2023-2028.
- CYP with SEND and their parents/carers are listened to as experts by experience, when communicating the needs of children with SEND.

- Transitions across all levels of education are made seamless, with consistently high quality and inclusive education settings that are equipped to meet our children and young people's diverse needs.
- Professionals across health, education and social care, and the wider partnership who support children and young people with SEND, are well trained and understand neurodivergent learners, the impact of trauma and adverse starts in life on learning acquisition, and relational practice.

Our shared principles

We emphasise the importance of integrity, transparency, and accountability in ensuring robust and trusting relationships with parents and carers and our young people with SEND. We aim to create and build on strong relationships that foster effective co-production, ensuring that the diverse needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities are recognised, understood, supported and met.

Our services/provisions in Lewisham are centred on children, young people, and their families, tailoring our approach to meet their unique requirements. By collaborating directly with children and their families, we amplify their voices, enhancing the support we provide. Timeliness is crucial for effective outcomes, and we prioritise early identification and intervention to ensure that necessary and appropriate support is available when needed.

Equity is a fundamental aspect of our mission, as we strive to achieve equitable outcomes for all our children and young people, recognising that difference is a strength and that diverse levels of support may be required for different young people. We are committed to tackling safeguarding and mental health concerns for our children and young people with SEND.

We believe in empowering our children and young people with SEND to maximise their future independence and well-being, providing the resources necessary for a successful transition into adulthood and becoming active members of their community. Our educational settings are a key part of our young people's potential for success, and we are dedicated to ensuring that all children have access to the support and opportunities they need to thrive.

We are committed to continued co-production with our children and young people and their families, and we will:

- Create regular forums and discussion groups specifically for children and young people with SEND. These sessions will allow them to express their views, share their experiences and continue to influence the ongoing development of services. For children and young people with SEND who are less visible, e.g., for Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA) cohort of children, we will gather their views with support from parents, carers, teachers, and the wider group of professionals working with them as well as using bespoke multi agency toolkits.
- Work in conjunction with education settings and other organisations that support children and young people to engage with them in an environment where they feel most comfortable and supported. This will help build trust and promote open communication.
- In line with our participation strategy, we will provide training for our staff and professionals about co-production and meaningful engagement with children and young people with SEND and their families, embedding these practices into our sustained modes of working; ensuring that the voice of children and young people with SEND is kept at the heart of the SEND strategy and work across the partnership.

How did we respond?

(extract from the SEND Partnership Strategy
2020-23)

You said

Parent/carers would like to see clearer pathways for families and professionals with reduced waiting times

We did

- We have reduced waiting times in key services that support families. Our Covid-19 recovery plan has resulted in families now waiting just 8 weeks for a first Occupational Therapy Assessment in March 2024. This is down from over 40 weeks in April 2023.
- Waiting times for Early Years Speech and Language Therapy has also been greatly reduced. In March 2024, children waited 22 weeks, down from a 59 week wait in April 2023.
- We acknowledge the impact of current waiting times for autism and ADHD assessments and are working on improved pathways to reduce wait times and better meet need.

You said

Parents/carers reported the need for more provision to meet the diverse needs of Children and Young People'

We did

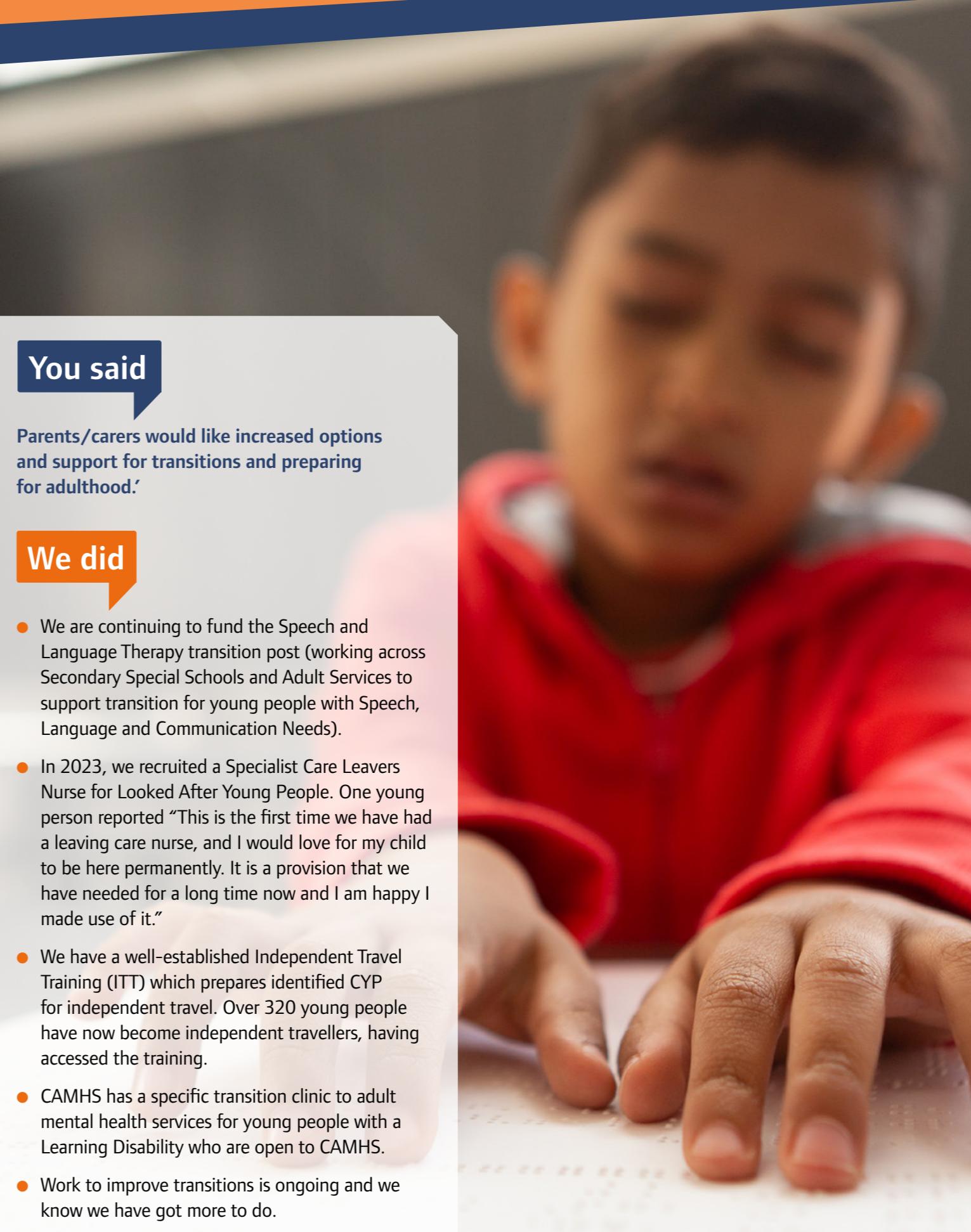
- We have piloted the GP Youth Clinic in the north and south of Lewisham. This is an integrated primary care and mental health service for young people aged 13-25, designed to improve access to mental health and GP services, the clinic has seen strong engagement from young people since its launch.
- LGT Speech and Language Therapy Online Drop-in Service now includes options of weekend appointments.
- We have the PINS Project working in and with over 40 schools now, have developed a toolkit for learners with EBSNA presentation, and are involved in numerous projects supporting children with SEND across education settings.
- We have also created a significant amount of SEN places across Lewisham and continue to do so.
- We have SEN Advisors supporting schools with their SEND practice.
- We have commissioned an all age autism and wellbeing service, running in its second year.

You said

Parents/carers would like increased options and support for transitions and preparing for adulthood.'

We did

- We are continuing to fund the Speech and Language Therapy transition post (working across Secondary Special Schools and Adult Services to support transition for young people with Speech, Language and Communication Needs).
- In 2023, we recruited a Specialist Care Leavers Nurse for Looked After Young People. One young person reported "This is the first time we have had a leaving care nurse, and I would love for my child to be here permanently. It is a provision that we have needed for a long time now and I am happy I made use of it."
- We have a well-established Independent Travel Training (ITT) which prepares identified CYP for independent travel. Over 320 young people have now become independent travellers, having accessed the training.
- CAMHS has a specific transition clinic to adult mental health services for young people with a Learning Disability who are open to CAMHS.
- Work to improve transitions is ongoing and we know we have got more to do.



About our borough



64,740

children and young people in Lewisham are aged 0-17 years old



8,137

children with SEND attending Lewisham settings



86

schools in Lewisham



8

Family Hubs



99%

of maintained schools and academies in Lewisham are 'Good' or 'Outstanding'



29%

of children from Lewisham are known to be eligible for Free School Meals



100%

of our special schools are 'Good' or 'Outstanding'



Lewisham overall population is projected to increase by

6%

between 2021-2028



62%

of children from Lewisham are from Black and ethnically diverse communities



0-25 population is projected to increase by

2%

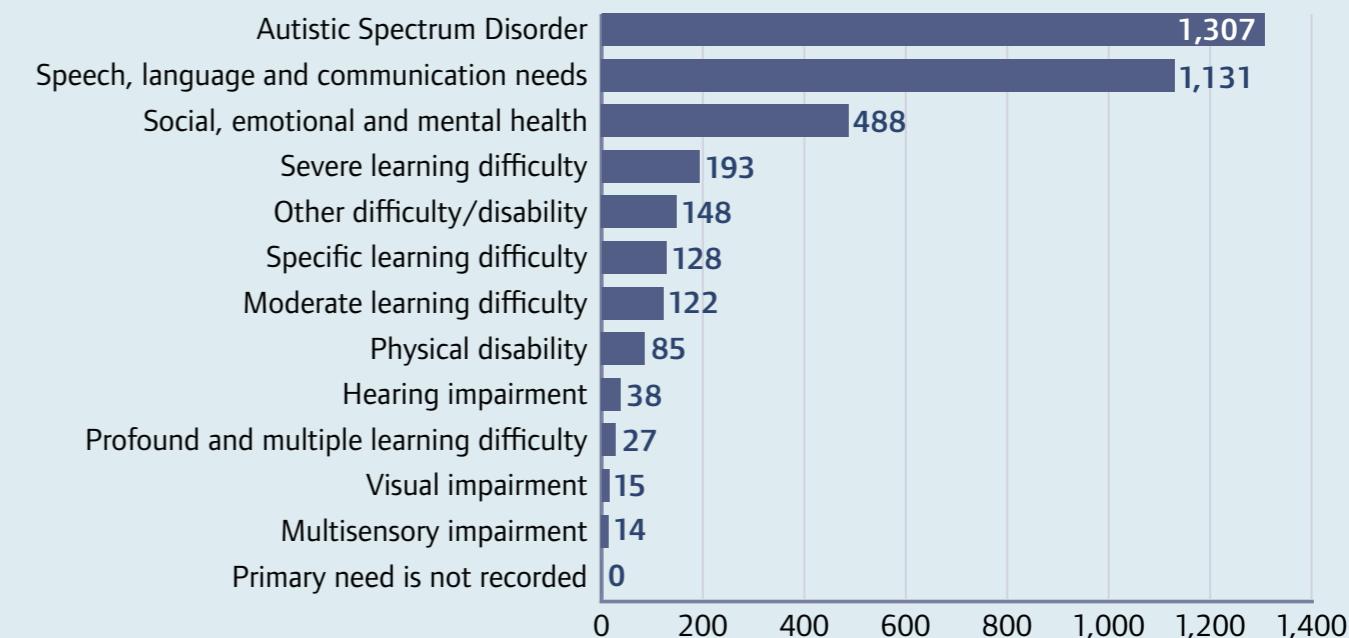
by 2028, while 18-25 population is projected to increase by

9%

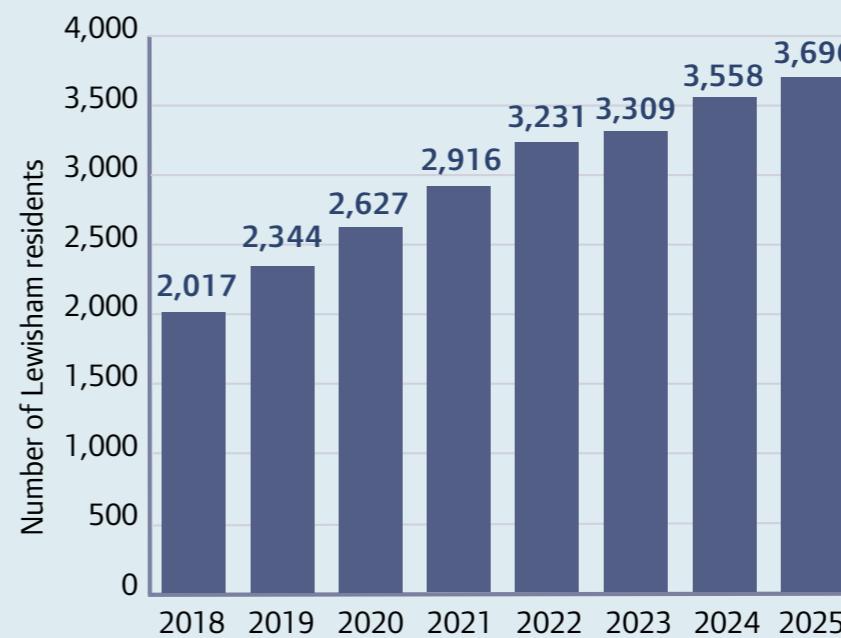
by 2028

Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan

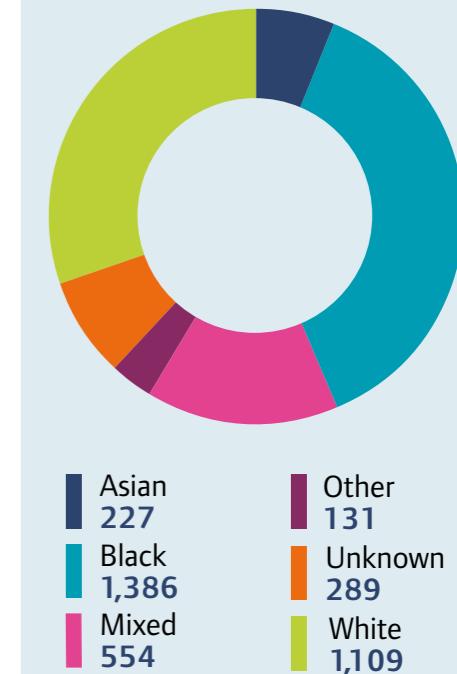
Number of EHCP with primary need



Lewisham resident with EHCP CYP (0-25 years) 2018-2025



Ethnicity distribution



Co-production

What our children and young people with SEND told us:

“ The SEND Strategy must ensure all professionals, in every sector (education, health and social care), have knowledge of all SEND and understand the best ways to work with CYP with SEND. ”

“ More inclusive after school activities and clubs available throughout the year so that no one with SEND feels left out... ”

“ We need more teachers with SEND knowledge and training so that CYP feel listened to, supported and safe in school. ”

“ Our vision is for everyone in Lewisham to recognise and understand all SEND and neurological differences, so that all children and young people with SEND are supported at home, in school and in their community. ”

“ We need to improve the time it takes for CYP with SEND to get help and support from all services (Education, Health and Social Care). ”

What parents/carers told us:

“ One of the most challenging things is the lack of training when it comes to diversity and how families are supported with children who have SEND.. ”

“ We shouldn't be pushing for information; it should be out there and accessible. It shouldn't be the loudest parents who get support quicker. ”

“ Parents are a resource, and they should be asked and supported to work alongside teachers and professionals to bridge some of the gap not only in the community but at times in the school. ”

“ There is a lack of formal integration of SEND children into mainstream schooling. Lack of understanding of how to effectively socialise a child with their school age peers so that they can navigate the world and enabling a fusion of the 2 worlds... ”

Our partnership priorities

In partnership with our children and young people and their families, we have established five key priorities, each anchored by ambitious and steadfast partnership commitments. Central to this refreshed approach, these priorities address the diverse needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, their families, and the professionals who support them. They are designed to cultivate an inclusive environment that promotes collaboration, effective communication, and early/proactive support.



Priority 1:

Children and young people with SEND are supported to build healthy, happy lives within their community; prepare for adulthood; and experience smooth and timely transitions, appropriate to their needs.

Our First priority emphasises a holistic approach to supporting children and young people with SEND. By fostering inclusive practices, enhancing community engagement, and ensuring clear transition pathways. This priority aims to empower our children and young people to lead healthy and fulfilling lives while effectively addressing any potential challenges faced. This comprehensive initiative is designed to create an environment where all children, regardless of their needs and abilities can thrive, enjoy and succeed.

Our current practice

- We have adopted and continue to improve inclusive practice across all our educational settings, fostering an environment where children and young people with SEND feel welcomed, have their strengths and needs identified and are supported.
- The SEND Advisory Service provides guidance and resources to schools for identifying and meeting the needs of children with SEND.
- Over 69% of our children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) are now integrated in, and accessing local schools, which also includes our many local SEN provisions.
- We have an established independent travel training offer, with over 320 young people having become independent and confident travellers.
- We have a consistent arrangement for children moving on from primary to secondary school to ensure a successful transition using our digital program 'Six into Sevens' and the commissioned 'Represents Stepping Up' programme working with Year 6 and Year 7 children.
- For our children and young people who cannot attend school for medical reasons (through physical or mental ill health), we have developed a multi-agency Hospital Outreach Programme (HOP) triage, where SEND needs are discussed and decisions made to ensure individual children receive the right support in a timely fashion.
- A new 'Girls On The Spectrum' group has been set up for girls in the community. This offer is not dependent on an autism diagnosis.
- Lewisham CAMHS is actively involved in Trust wide PCREF (Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework) to engage with and mitigate barriers to accessing services.
- Lewisham Educational Psychology Team have implemented structured actively anti-racist training, including cultural sensitivity in assessment choices, and include cultural impacts on education (including racism) in their psychological reports.
- We successfully implemented the DfE and ICB grant funded PINS pilot (Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools) in 40 Lewisham primary schools and now have been selected for phase 2 reaching an additional 15 primary schools.
- We have introduced 'Difference Matters' to two secondary schools, this programme is the secondary version of PINS and targets whole school and individual teachers with their support for neurodivergent learners.
- Our Early Years settings are supported with their inclusive practice and robust advice is available on identifying and meeting needs early.

- We have commissioned a new SEND Dietetic Service to provide specialised nutritional advice and support to children with SEND.
- We have created 'Therapy Assistant Practitioner' roles to support children who access two or more therapy services.
- We provide timely, effective and robust support for children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism who are at risk of hospital admission. This occurs via the Dynamic Support Register (DSR) and also includes multi-agency discharge planning from hospital, ensuring CYP can return to the community with appropriate support.
- We have commissioned a variety of services to support children and young people with SEND and their families in the community i.e. SEND Information and advice services (SENDIASS), All Age Autism & Wellbeing Hub.
- We have developed Family Hubs, offering a wide range of support and advice to our families in locality clusters.
- Investment into GP Youth Clinic Model supporting YP and young adults with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

What we plan to do

- Expand SEN independent travel training programme to increase the percentage of learners with EHCPs who can navigate their communities confidently and safely by 10%.
- Improve access to community activities for children and young people with SEND through a review of commissioning arrangements and collaboration with the voluntary sector in line with the aims of our Play Strategy.
- Establish The Preparing for Adulthood Board. This board will maintain robust strategic oversight to enable positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND as they transition to adulthood.
- Explore how to strengthen child, young person, and family participation and engagement through the Family-Based Decision-Making mechanisms and redesign the wider Family Help offer.
- Increase access to appropriate support for children and young people from Black and ethnically diverse communities.
- Promote and strengthen the young person's voice in their own transition planning.
- Ensure high quality EHC plans to inform post 16 transitions.
- Create a work experience offer within our Short Breaks Hub for children and young people who attend our Lewisham specialist schools.
- Develop and launch a Lewisham Inclusion Statement/Pledge across all Lewisham schools that focuses on all children being welcome across all our settings.
- Consistently evaluate our commissioning frameworks, maintain provider standards, and ensure high-quality services through contract monitoring and thorough quality assessments. Support commissioned services to ensure the local area is equipped to assist families, reduce isolation, and mitigate emotional distress.
- Adapt and quality assure the language used in EHCPs ensuring that terms used are consistently used across the partnership and understood by parents, carers, education settings and other stakeholders.
- Support local employment opportunities for young adults with SEND.

- Continue to strengthen commissioned services to ensure the local area is well-equipped to support families, reduce social isolation, and alleviate emotional distress.
- Strengthen the Family Hub's work on SEND-related matters to ensure coordinated, accessible, and inclusive support for children, young people, and their families.
- Develop a multi-agency panel with relevant partners to meet on a 6-weekly basis to plan and review residential educational placements for learners with highest level of needs. Terms of reference to be determined with panel members and dataset to be developed.
- Work with our secondary schools and AP providers on ensuring a wider range of subject options is available to learners with EHCPs in their settings (ASDAN etc).
- Implement integrated processes between children and adult services to ensure seamless information exchange and planning starting at age 14.
- At least a 10% increase in the percentage of learners with EHCPs who were eligible to receive sen travel assistance and who can now travel safely, independently and confidently within their communities.
- Parents/carers report clear understanding of support offers for their children at SEN Support and EHCP level.
- Increased positive engagement and feedback from parents/carers regarding their children's lived experiences.
- Positive feedback from young people accessing the GP Youth Clinic on the impact of the service.
- Young people show improved Routine Outcomes Monitoring (ROM) score at the GP Youth Clinic
- The Preparing for Adulthood Board is in operation and oversees strategic improvement work against agreed impact measures. More young people have a transition plan from age 14.
- Local Employers have made more offers to local young people with SEND; as a consequence, more young people will have stable, meaningful employment.
- Multi-agency panel is in place and has robust oversight of all placement decisions. Data should be predefined of good quality and relevance to the criteria of the panel.
- A broader offer of courses is available, matched to learners' abilities and needs.
- Increase in the percentage of transition plans that include contributions from both children and adult services.

Measure of success

- Continued reduction in suspension rate for learners with SEND, indicating improved understanding and management of their needs within schools.
- Reduction in the number of placement breakdowns for learners with EHCPs post-transition into their next school phase.
- Increase in the number of young people with SEND and EHCPs who access local colleges and places within their local community.
- Children, young people and their families, report positive feedback about the support and interventions received at secondary school level.

Priority 2:

Parents/Carers and our children and young people with SEND are recognised as experts by experience and their views and voices shape our services, planning and service delivery.

Recognising and valuing the perspectives of CYP with SEND, parents and carers is essential for ensuring that the needs of their children are effectively understood, identified and met. This approach not only empowers families but also fosters a collaborative environment where their insights can directly influence practice and policy.

Our current practice

- We have appointed a temporary Engagement and Communication lead to enhance parental engagement and communication. This role is pivotal in bridging the gap between families and service providers.
- We have developed “meet the managers” meetings for strategic discussions on Special Educational Needs with parents and carers. These will be delivered termly and assist parents in feeding into strategic thinking and developments.
- We actively work with the Parent/Carer Forum and ensure good communication and joint working, as well as highlighting developments across the local area.
- We have a Champions of Inclusion group, formed by young people with SEND, for young people with SEND and providing a safe space for young people with SEND to learn, grow and connect. Young people with SEND are empowered to express their views on issues they face in Lewisham.

- Senior Leaders such as the Head of Service for Integrated SEND Services meet regularly (monthly) with the Parent/Carer Forum to provide strategic updates and jointly plan ahead as well as being responsive to concerns raised by the forum representatives.
- We are reaching more parents/carers in their communities via the Family Hubs to empower them and support participation

What we plan to do

- Use multiple information sharing methods to ensure key messages are shared in a timely and accessible way.
- Include Parents/Carers in the recruitment processes for senior appointments to allow their perspectives to influence service delivery.
- Ensure continued co-production with children and young people and their families through creating regular forums and discussion groups specifically for children and young people with SEND. These sessions will allow them to express their views, share their experiences and continue the ongoing development of services.
- Explore options to encourage greater parent/carer involvement in decision-making processes related to SEND matters.
- Increase and improve the information, advice, and guidance available in our SEND Local Offer, so that young people and their families have what they need to make informed decisions.



Measure of success

- Positive feedback from parents/carers regarding their involvement and the extent to which their voices are reflected in the wider work of the local area partnership as well as in their child's planned support in settings.
- Increased participation of parents in decision-making at relevant forums and recruitment decisions.
- Increase in family engagement levels and feedback on the clarity and usefulness of communication materials.
- Increased number of co-produced projects with parents and carers.
- Evidence that feedback informs continuous improvement in services i.e. 'You said' 'We did'



Priority 3:

The partnership workforce has the knowledge and skills to effectively support children and young adults with diverse SEND profiles

This priority acknowledges that understanding and addressing the varied needs of children and young people with SEND is essential for fostering an inclusive environment and promoting positive outcomes for these individuals, and in so doing, we are committed to ensuring that the partnership workforce possesses the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively support children and young adults with diverse SEND profiles across the wider local area partnership. We are ensuring that SEND is everybody's business.

Our current practice

- We are piloting a toolkit to support schools in addressing Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA).
- We work closely with all our partners in ensuring neurodivergent learner needs are understood across the partnership. For example, the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) is commissioning training related to neurodivergent learner needs to raise awareness of safeguarding issues, we are promoting training on what adultification is and the risks to children's learning, a significant number of primary schools are involved in the PINS project (partnership for inclusion of neurodiversity in schools), the partnership delivered the EBSA project (emotionally based school avoidance) and this has informed our multi-disciplinary EBSNA Working Group and the development of our toolkit currently being piloted.
- We are engaging in, and applying for pilot work offered via DfE/ICB and VRU, such as 'difference matters', oracy project etc.
- Our All-Age Autism Strategy 2023-2028 presents the partnership vision for an autism-inclusive Lewisham and describes the priority areas of work over the next five years to move closer to this vision as the first of its kind in the borough. The strategy lays the groundwork for a whole-system partnership approach, which is driven forward by the Lewisham Autism Partnership. The Lewisham Autism Partnership (LAP) is a collective of Lewisham professionals and residents who work together to deliver the Lewisham All Age Autism Strategy, in accordance with national guidance.
- SEND Advisors support all schools with their SEND practice and support our SENCos, offering training and advice.
- The Specialist Teachers and Educational Psychology Services (STEPS) deliver bespoke consultation, advice, training, assessment and intervention to all schools and early years settings through core and traded pathways. These are highly regarded services and who work closely with health and care services.
- Our Short Breaks team works closely with colleagues in both education and social care, supporting the team to be part of best practice workshops, relevant training, Signs of safety framework and conferences.
- The Oliver McGowan Learning Disability and Autism Training is mandatory for health staff. Wider training offers for staff in settings is offered by a range of practitioners and services.

- Work in progress around the SEND Training and competency framework level 1-5, with Level 1 & 2 training now available for health staff.
- We are continuing to offer and grow a diverse range of training for parents/carers and professionals.

What we plan to do

- Equip the workforce across the partnership with training and resources to ensure early identification of need and intervention for children's needs.
- Expand training initiatives focused on neurodivergent learners and the provision of guidance on Ordinarily Available Provision (OAP) and SEN Support ensuring confidence and understanding of the graduated approach to understanding and responding to emerging special educational needs.
- Support SEN Coordinators (SENCOs) so they are confident in their roles to better assist teaching staff.
- Monitor the delivery of a graduated response to support children's needs early.
- Provide support to School Leaders to ensure that all our secondary schools are equally welcoming towards learners with SEND and EHCPs.
- Sustain investment in workforce training and resources to ensure professionals are equipped to meet the diverse needs of CYP with SEND.
- We will implement across all primary schools the Lewisham 'Talk Matters' programme which is a whole school approach to oracy at the end of the pilot phase.

- Extend SEN training to other parts of the workforce within the local area, including colleagues in Highways and Transport.
- Promote the application of knowledge through real-life case scenarios and collaborative efforts among peers to integrate learning into practice.
- Neurodiversity training will be offered through the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) to enhance staff understanding of diverse needs.
- Ensure that the partnership uses implementation science to monitor the use of new knowledge and skills post training by gathering reviews of impact on practice.
- We will provide Heads/ partners with feedback on learning and demonstrate improved practice. Dedicated training will be provided to new SENCOs, either new to their role or new to Lewisham, focusing on producing high-quality EHCNA submissions.

Measure of success

- Reduction in suspensions and exclusions among learners with SEND, indicating that unmet or misunderstood needs are being addressed more effectively.
- Increased engagement of young people in planning and reviewing their support.
- Parental feedback and YP's feedback on needs being understood and met.
- Quantitative evidence of people undertaking training, and types/numbers of training courses offered
- Annual surveys from SENCOs indicates increased confidence in their roles



- PINS and Difference Matters evaluations by DfE demonstrate impact on practice.
- The uptake of LSCP Neurodivergent Learner training is increased
- Talk Matters whole school programme has been adopted and embedded in all Lewisham primary schools.
- All services produce case studies annually to demonstrate skills and knowledge of the team/ service and the impact they have on children with SEND and their families
- SEND and Inclusion Outreach Services/Teams report an annual increase in reviews for individual case work
- Headteachers are reassured of consistently good practice related to EHCPs and children placed with them. Schools have the reassurance that the EHCPs issued are 'fit for purpose' and can track the improvement journey. Positive impact on funding and placement decisions.



Priority 4:

The partnership ensures early/timely identification, assessment and effective planning to meet needs through inclusive practice

By identifying and addressing needs early, CYP with SEND can and will receive the support they require before needs escalate. This proactive approach is essential for fostering an environment where children feel welcomed and are understood, regardless of the educational setting they attend. This strategy recognises that effective early help can significantly reduce the likelihood of children and young people requiring more intensive interventions later on, thereby improving their overall educational experience and wider outcomes. Early identification and meeting of needs ensures that all our children and young people have the best possible opportunities to thrive.

Our current practice

- We have developed prevention and early help offers that supports the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people.
- Our mental Health Support Teams (MHST) are committed to inclusive practices, improving access to mental health services for children with mild to moderate mental health presentations. MHST is now supporting over 80% of schools, reaching many more of our children & young people.
- We have a GP Youth Clinic Model which allows for GP and self-referrals to CAMHS within Primary Care Hubs, improving access to mental health services for young people and young adults (13-25 years) with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

- Our current interventions focus on timely identification of communication and language needs, with pathways being redesigned to reduce waiting times for assessments.
- Our specialist School Nurse for children not in education employment or training, electively home educated and those attending alternative provision, ensures that health and well-being needs of these children and young people are identified and managed.
- We have launched Lewisham's 'Moments that Matter' campaign, to prioritise early identification and support for language and communication needs.
- Our SEND Advisors support schools with ensuring children that require SEN Support are on the SEND register and receive appropriate provision.
- Our Early Years settings are supported via a new 'Ordinarily available provision' guide which assists with identifying and meeting needs.
- Training is offered to partners related to SEN Support and the graduated response.
- We are considering a pathway redesign for combined Autism and ADHD assessments within LGT Community Paediatrics and Lewisham CAMHS. This initiative aims to improve integration and efficiency, creating a more responsive system and reducing waiting times for key assessments.

- The completion rate of Annual Health Checks for young people aged 14–25 with learning disabilities (LD) has increased by over 76% since April 2024 to date, as evidenced by our KPIs. This improvement reflects ongoing efforts to enhance access and engagement with primary care services for young people with LD.
- We have initiated engagement with primary care colleagues to better understand their role in the SEND process and explore how they can contribute to improving outcomes for children and young people. This engagement is part of a broader effort to co-produce a more integrated and responsive SEND system with Primary Care partners.
- Enhance comprehensive care packages by integrating specialised interventions, therapeutic services, assistive technologies, and tailored educational support, ensuring that children and young people with SEND receive high-quality, and holistic care.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of Primary Care to further increase the uptake and completion of Annual Health Checks for young people aged 14–25 with learning disabilities (LD). This will enable timely, appropriate healthcare interventions and support improved health outcomes and continuity of care.
- Develop a waiting well approach for assessments within Specialist Health Services.

What we plan to do

- MHST to have teams in more than 85% of Lewisham's mainstream schools by 2026, enhancing early intervention support for mental health difficulties.
- Implement initiatives to ensure timely identification of communication and language needs, including monitoring and supporting the submission of advice through an EHCNA tracker.
- Enhance the effectiveness of early interventions by reviewing current materials and ensuring they are inclusive and accessible.
- Develop more specialist/professional knowledge in family hubs to give more specialised advice.
- Improve access to post diagnostic support for children with a diagnosis of autism and/or ADHD and their families.
- Continue work as part of the Best Start in Speech, Language and Communication initiative, focussed on supporting Early Years settings to create language learning environments that support Speech Language and Communication.
- The Early Years Ordinarily Available Provision toolkit is understood by early years practitioners, implemented in practice, and actively aligns expectations between home, early years, school settings, local authority services (education and care) and health professionals.
- Continue developing combined autism and ADHD assessment pathways, and fostering collaborative solutions that align with all partners' needs to achieve optimal outcomes for CYP
- Co-produce with parents, carers and young people, a model of communication and engagement, to identify what support they need while awaiting access to specialist services for assessment and support.
- Ensure that children given a diagnosis of Global Developmental Delay in their younger years, have this diagnosis reviewed and converted to Learning Disability where appropriate.
- Provide easy to read guides for all SEND services and processes.



Measure of success

- Reduction in waiting times for Community Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy services.
- An increase of at least five schools with MHSTs in 2025/26 through the role out of Wave 2. An increase of at least 10% in the number of CYP accessing MHSTs direct 1:1s and group work interventions from the March 2025 position.
- Reduction in the number of children and young people waiting over 52 weeks for an autism assessment by March 2026.
- Improvement in overall educational experiences and outcomes for all children and young people with an EHCP or SEN support.
- Feedback on the local offer by parents, carers and children and young people, on how they are supported.
- Number of 'likes' and views on the videos made by parents/carers and children and young people in the Local Offer
- Our most vulnerable children and young people with autism, Learning Disabilities, or both are safely supported at home within their communities, eliminating the need for hospital admissions.
- Increased completion rates for annual health checks for young people aged 14–25 with learning disabilities, facilitating early identification of health needs and timely interventions.
- Information provided from parent and carers surveys about waiting times for initial assessment will show improving satisfaction with waiting times and care received.

Priority 5:

Information is shared effectively and there is good communication with CYP and their families

We acknowledge that when parents and carers are informed and engaged, they are better equipped to advocate for their children's needs, leading to a more responsive and inclusive wider local area service delivery model across all sectors. This collaborative approach not only enhances the relationship between families and the local area partnership but also contributes to reducing frustrations and misunderstandings that can arise from a lack of clear communication. Information must be accessible and clear, and easy to find, so that parents can make informed choices and feel empowered.

Our current practice

- Initiatives have been established to improve communication with families, including a communication plan aimed at addressing gaps in engagement.
- Current practices highlight some successes in enhancing communication, but challenges remain, particularly in ensuring proactive rather than reactive communication.
- Families are encouraged to participate in forums such as the Parent/Carer Forum and the Youth Advisory Group (YAG) to share their insights and experiences.
- Initiatives to ensure a consistent presence within Family Hubs are being established across the SEND system. These efforts aim to build trust with families, enhance communication, support timely information exchange between services and ensures that families receive the right support at the right time in familiar, community-based settings.

- Different partners across the local area offer a range of engagement events and forums.
- The Autism Partnership Board has a 'lived experience' co-chair.

What we plan to do

- Develop a comprehensive communication plan that is responsive to the needs of families, outlining strategies for timely outreach and information sharing.
- Utilise technology effectively, such as artificial intelligence (AI), to manage initial inquiries and streamline communication processes.
- Identify barriers to engagement and implement targeted outreach strategies to ensure all families are included in discussions regarding their children's education and support.
- Research how best to access the views of families and who might not currently have their voices heard and create new ways of engagement based on that research.
- Create accessible materials that provide clear information about available services and support, including reasonable accommodation proformas.
- Ensure that our local offer is accessible and updated regularly.
- We will ensure that up-to-date information on community and statutory services and activities for children with specific diagnoses or identified needs is available and accessible to children, young people and their families in an appropriate and accessible format.



- Provide information, advice, and support to families while they "wait well".
- Maintain visibility and accessibility within Family Hubs to enhance communication pathways and facilitate effective information sharing with families and professionals.
- A robust process will be developed to inform the 0-19 service when an EHCNA has been agreed for a child and will incorporate the procedure for distributing completed EHCPs to the relevant services, including primary care.
- Local Offer Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are set by the SEND Partnership Board, monitored annually, and achieved.
- Increased family engagement levels and positive feedback regarding the clarity and usefulness of communication materials.
- Increased overall satisfaction with the support provided and the effectiveness of communication strategies.
- Improvement in the integration of family voices in decision-making processes, as evidenced by feedback mechanisms.
- Comprehensive guidance has been established for healthcare professionals, including those in primary care, outlining the EHCP process and expected contributions. This guidance incorporates the procedure for distributing completed EHCPs to the relevant services, including primary care. All healthcare professionals involved with a child will have the knowledge that the child is undergoing a statutory assessment, fostering effective collaboration and ensuring the best possible outcomes for the child.

Governance, and monitoring the progress of our strategy

- The success of our partnership in supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities will be measured by the positive impact on their learning, and health and wellbeing outcomes. To ensure accountability, we will rigorously monitor our progress over the next five years in the following ways:
- Our performance dashboard will track key performance indicators, allowing us to measure the effectiveness of our commitments.
- We will measure progress against our SEND Improvement Plan to ensure we are delivering on our improvement priorities and achieving meaningful outcomes for children and young people and their families.
- Our Strategic SEND Partnership Board will oversee the implementation of our strategy, provide support and make decisions as needed. The board holds the Local Area (education, health, and care services) to account for the actions and the priorities in this strategy.
- The Strategic SEND Partnership Board will oversee the delivery of the SEND Strategy and will ensure robust monitoring is in place.
- An operational working group will handle reporting and monitoring of the delivery plans, identify concerns and facilitate collaboration among members and feed into other relevant strategic boards, e.g., Inclusion Board, Emotional Health and Wellbeing Board, etc.
- We will regularly provide feedback to our inclusion champions and the Young Mayor and their advisors, on the progress of the delivery of the SEND Strategy



Looking ahead

As a local partnership, we are ambitious to be a local area where children and young people and their families can connect, grow, and thrive. We remain committed to co-production, equity, continuous improvement and community collaboration. Lewisham children and young people thrive when they live in a stable and loving environment, they feel well nurtured and safe, excel in their education, and experience happiness. They have opportunities to enjoy life regardless of any protected characteristics. Therefore, for our children and young people with SEND to thrive, we will ensure that our families thrive, our communities thrive and Lewisham as a local area thrives.



Glossary of acronyms

Acronyms Meaning

CYP	Children & Young People
SEND	Special Educational Needs & Disabilities
PFA	Preparing for Adulthood
YP	Young People
ICB	Integrated Care Board
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services
DCO	Designated Clinical Officer
LGT	Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust
EAR	Early Annual Reviews
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
SEN	Special Education Need
SI	Supported Internship
GDD	Global Developmental Delay
STEPS	Specialist Teachers and Educational Psychology Services
LBL	London Borough of Lewisham
LD	Learning Disability
PEP	Personal Education Plan
PCN	Primary Care Network
GP	General Practitioner
EHCNA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment
MHST	Mental Health Support Team
ADHD	Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
ROM	Routine Outcomes Monitoring