

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Camden's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy Year 3 Progress Report	
REPORT OF Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	DATE 23 rd February 2026
<p>SUMMARY OF REPORT</p> <p>Camden's Local Area SEND Strategy was published in November 2022. As part of the delivery of this strategy we publish annual progress reports outlining the work that we have done to deliver the commitments in the strategy. Appendix 1 provides detail of the work that has taken place during 2025.</p> <p>During the last year, we have made significant progress in the delivery of the ambitions of the strategy. Over 70% of actions within our implementation plan are either completed or on track.</p> <p>This is the third year of delivery of our five-year strategy and the scale of the ambition of the reform we are undertaking means that there is still considerable work to do. We will also be publishing our implementation plan setting out planned activity up to 2027, the end of the strategy period.</p> <p>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</p> <p>No documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p>Contact Officer: Di Osbourne, Head of SEND and Inclusion 5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AG di.osbourne@camden.gov.uk</p>	
<p>RECOMMENDATION</p> <p>That the Committee notes the progress made in the delivery of the SEND Strategy and proposed next steps.</p>	

Signed:



Vikram Hansrani, Director of Education Commissioning and Inclusion

Date: 12th February 2026

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update the Children's, Schools, and Families Scrutiny Committee on the implementation of Camden's Local Area SEND Strategy 2022 – 2027; the local and national context; and the next steps in this area. The Committee is asked to scrutinise service performance and delivery and provide feedback on the SEND local area partnership approach and next steps. It has been customary for an annual progress report on the SEND strategy to be presented to the Committee, as part of the process by which Members set their work programme.

2. Key Questions for the committee?

- What are the Committee's reflections on the progress to date?
- Are there any key areas of activity that the Committee would find helpful to have further information on?

3. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance

- 3.1 The Council is forecasting a drawdown of £7.0m from the DSG reserve in 2025/26 to meet the shortfall in High Needs Block funding for SEND provision. The DSG reserve is at risk of being exhausted by 2026/27 due to continued growth in demand for SEND provision which outpaces High Needs Block funding levels.
- 3.2 The rising increase in children and young people with SENDs the core driver: EHC needs assessment referrals have increased by 74%, EHCPs by 2.8%, and Exceptional Needs Grants by 7.3% compared to the previous year, all of which build long-term and recurring cost pressures into the system. At the same time, tribunal activity is rising and timeliness is falling sharply, which exposes the budget to further legal and placement-related costs.
- 3.3 However, the most significant long-term pressure is the escalating cost of independent non maintained and other local authority maintained placements, which has grown from £2.9m to a projected £7.0m and £2.5m to a projected £4.1m respectively, between 2020/21 and 2025/26 due to shortages with local specialist capacity, (especially for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs). Also Needs analysis shows Camden requires around 70 additional specialist places to begin reversing this trend. Without these places, reliance on external placements will continue to rise, driving further cost escalation and deepening the High Needs Block deficit year-on-year. The financial magnitude of this will need to be identified going forward in future reports.
- 3.4 Officers across the council are developing a SEND & Alternative Provision (AP) Commissioning Plan which is setting out how additional provision can be developed to better utilise High Needs Block funding and maximise capital grants. The key financial risks contained within the report are that the following expectations of future activity in the area will incur significant additional costs which will need to be identified estimated for consideration.

- Continued growth in demand and complexity. - will incur additional costs.
- Potential further increases in INMSS and other local authority maintained spend without delivery of new local places.
- National policy changes linked to the forthcoming Schools White Paper, which may introduce new, unfunded duties.
- Workforce recruitment and retention challenges affecting statutory compliance and cost control.
- Capital investment – existing and future spend to be identified.

4. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor

- 4.1 The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make at this time The Borough Solicitor has been consulted on the contents of this report and has no comment to make at this time

5. Environmental Implications

- 5.1 It is not intended or identified that this update or the Local Area SEND strategy will have a negative impact on climate change, air pollution and the wider environment.
- 5.2 Some of the ambitions in the strategy, for example, ensuring local schools and settings for local children may have a positive environmental impact by reducing travel times for children with disabilities. The Local Area SEND strategy does intend to reduce our environmental impact.

6. Appendices

- Appendix 1 – SEND Strategy Progress Report 2025
 Appendix 2 – SEND Strategy Implementation Plan Year 4
 Appendix 3 – Implementation Plan Acronym List

REPORT ENDS