

## **1. Executive Summary**

### **1.1 Data availability**

The process of gathering data for the report highlighted considerable gaps and shortcomings in the pupil data held by, or available to, participating local authorities. In particular:

- attainment data is very poor for young people working at or below Level 2 of the National Curriculum;
- there is no standardised recording of the support and personal care needs of pupils.
- Data systems and formats are different in each borough making cross-borough planning and comparisons difficult to achieve

#### **Recommendation 1**

Urgent steps are taken to allow participating boroughs to keep data in the same format against agreed criteria and to make this data available for future planning.

### **1.2 Numbers of learners with learning difficulties &/or disabilities**

In each Year Group the five boroughs together have approximately 820 pupils with significant educational needs (either with a Statement of Special Educational Need or on School Action+ and working below Level 2 of the National Curriculum).

There are 1,063 pupils in the five boroughs with significant Communication & Interaction Needs (including autism).

Pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties (dyspraxia, dyslexia or dyscalculia) account for at least 11% of the pupils with more significant needs.

### **1.3 Gap between supply & demand**

Across the five boroughs only 25% of young people, aged 19- 24, with significant learning difficulties &/or disabilities are in education. Much of the provision is part-time (2-3 days per week). Gaining and maintaining work is extremely difficult for young people with these needs, so most of the remaining 3,700 are likely to be classified as NEET.

#### **Recommendation 2**

Participating boroughs review the information held on their NEET cohort to verify the proportion of LLDD young people in this category.

#### **Recommendation 3**

Cross-borough planning on employer engagement, supported employment and social enterprise initiatives are co-ordinated by appropriate senior officers.

#### **1.4 Students' & Parents Views**

Three quarters of students with significant needs, interviewed for the study, wanted to go to college and to get a job.

Parents interviewed for the study highlighted a number of points:

- many young people with more significant learning needs, the need is less for education and more for a stimulating environment. There was concern that day centres currently do not provide sufficient stimulation.
- the mental and physical impact on families of supporting a young person with significant needs can be enormous. There is a need for person-centred "life" planning, including planning for living away from home.
- delays in transition planning are extremely stressful and can result in sub-optimal and expensive support being provided.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The boroughs should develop a common protocol to be adopted by each provider that includes:

- procedures for the early assessment of new LLDD learners and ongoing review of their needs;
- effective support for condition management and the development of a condition management template to enable employment teams to be fully aware of learners' working abilities.
- support for learners personal care needs.
- a student support entitlement covering Specific Learning Difficulties such as dyspraxia, dyslexia and dyscalculia recognising these conditions as barriers to effective learning and establishing agreed support levels.

##### **1.4.1. Protecting existing provision**

- All boroughs to ensure that LLDD provision is part of their strategic plan.

##### **1.4.2. Transition planning & management**

Effective transition planning and management is a crucial part of delivering successful post-16/post-19 education and training. Yet the difficulties involved in the process are consistent themes in discussions with both parents and professionals.

The difficulties centre round four related issues:

- getting agencies to engage with the process and commit funding early enough;
- staff could benefit from more specialist training and time to support the process.
- lack of information about available options.
- the lack of adequate provision that meets the young person's needs.

### **Recommendation 5**

To address the points outlined in 1.5.2 it is recommended that:

- the departments/agencies involved in transition planning agree a clear timetable. A common process for all the North London boroughs would simplify the process where schools and colleges are supporting pupils from a number of local authorities.
- local authorities work together to develop a common training programme to agreed standards in order to develop staff to specialise in supporting learners, families and schools.
- boroughs ensure that the involvement of all the relevant services including the school, education, social and health services, and Connexions is properly co-ordinated by a named senior officer
- the boroughs co-operate to develop and maintain an online database or prospectus of all providers and the services they offer.

#### **1.4.3. Closer co-ordination with Social Services Departments and Health Trusts**

Young people with learning difficulties &/or disabilities rely on services provided by a range of agencies. It is apparent that, for many, a significant challenge to getting timely and effective support is the fragmentation between education, health and social services and the respective funding streams. Greater co-ordination is required to ensure more cost-effective, as well as better, support.

#### **1.4.4. Inter-borough planning**

Given (a) the relatively low incidence of specific types of special educational need, and (b) the extent of cross-border travel to colleges in North London, the boroughs need to co-ordinate their work.

### **Recommendation 6**

It is recommended that a cross-border planning group be established to co-ordinate and drive forward common action. Issues that could fall within the remit of such a group could be:

- developing joint initiatives such as a common travel policy;
- co-ordination of standardised data collection (see recommendation 1);

- undertaking or commissioning on-going data analysis for planning purposes ( see recommendation 1);
- co-ordinate engagement with stakeholders including Third Sector organisations;
- identification of providers able to develop specific specialist LLDD provision;
- commissioning of feasibility studies related to the creation of new specialist provision;
- researching issues related to the provision of long-term employment for learners with learning difficulties &/or disabilities (recommendation 3)

#### **1.4.5. Development of new ASD/SLCN provision**

There are approximately 265 students with significant Communication & Interaction Needs leaving school each year from the five boroughs. The evidence from parents and teachers indicates that there is a need for additional provision. The shortage of provision is not limited to the five boroughs; it is right across London and indeed national.

Consideration should be given to creating a new specialist day provision for post-19 learners with Communication & Interaction Needs. The new provision might work with an existing college to provide the necessary range of courses. It could also build on existing expertise from the special schools within the five borough area. It is recommended that a detailed study be carried out on the viability and cost-effectiveness of such a new provision.

#### **Recommendation 7**

A co-ordinated joint-borough initiative is formalised at DCS level to generate funding to support a detailed feasibility study for the need of 19+ specialist day provision.

#### **1.4.6. Linking education and training with independent living**

One of the issues mentioned by parents is the need to move their son or daughter into suitable permanent supported accommodation in their early twenties. This relieves the families of the enormous pressure of caring for the young person, something they have had to do for the last twenty years, and ensures that the young person is suitably provided for as the parents get older and less able to continue caring for their son or daughter.

#### **Recommendation 8**

It is recommended that, as part of person-centred post-19 "life" planning, education departments work closely with adult social services departments to develop and implement personalised plans to support learners to move permanently from the family home to local supported accommodation.

#### **1.4.7. Focus on getting young people into long term work**

This study has focused on educational provision, however it is apparent that, to have an impact on the long term quality of life of many young people with learning difficulties &/or disabilities, the lack of suitable work opportunities will need to be tackled on a large scale. Although many such learners will not be able to hold down regular jobs they are able to work in properly structured environments.

Consideration should be given to creating social enterprise type businesses that operate as businesses but where some of the employees use their personal budgets to fund the cost of the additional support they need to do their job. The objective would be to create long term jobs, not short term experience/training type placements.

#### **Recommendation 9**

The boroughs should commission research or task the cross-borough planning group (recommendation 6) to identify the following so that training provision can match the learner's needs:

- what jobs are available for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?
- what opportunities are young people interested in pursuing?
- what are the barriers that prevent businesses increasing the number of young people with LLDD that they employ?
- how can local authorities use their influence with service providers e.g. in the provision of social housing, leisure services or environmental services to increase supported employment opportunities?
- would it be viable for the participating local authorities to use the services of the same employment agency?

#### **1.4.8. Improvement and expansion of day centre provision**

Feedback from parents and teachers indicates that:

- there is too little day care centre provision;
- some of the provision that does exist is for all ages and does not provide adequate peer group interaction for young people who are often already socially isolated;
- many of the day centres lack enough suitably trained staff to be able to deliver a lively and enriching experience for young people;
- doubts have been expressed about the quality of care.

Day care centres are likely to remain a significant part of the overall provision for young people with significant learning difficulties &/or disabilities. In view of this, it is important that the volume and quality of day care centre places specifically for learners aged 19-24 receive as much attention as, for example,

FE colleges. The local authorities need to work with adult social services and Third Sector providers to improve this area of provision.

#### **1.4.9. Involvement of the Third Sector**

For many young adult learners with learning difficulties &/or disabilities Third Sector organisations are an essential element in their support. They can also be a source of innovative ideas for delivering specialist provision. It is recommended that:

- Third Sector providers be involved in the planning of LLDD provision and given the opportunity to contribute ideas to the planning process.
- specialist organisations should be invited to contribute to transition planning for individual learners.
- Third Sector providers should be encouraged to put together individually structured training and support packages through links with other funding sources including CAMHS, social services.