

Brent Self-Evaluation for SEND January 2026

 Brent



Nobody
Should
be
Left
behind

Brent Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029

Executive Summary

In January 2025, Brent underwent a Local Area SEND Inspection, which provided a comprehensive external review of its provision for children and young people with SEND. Brent was one of only two local areas inspected in 2025 to receive Ofsted's highest rating for SEND: the inspection recognised Brent's capacity to consistently deliver typically positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Inspectors commended the deep understanding held by local agencies of the borough's SEND needs and the robust inter-agency partnerships that support effective service delivery.

Despite the strengths identified, the inspection also highlighted several areas for development. These included the need to: improve timeliness of amendments made to education, health and care plans (EHCPs) following annual reviews, reduce waiting times for critical assessments (such as child development, neurodevelopmental, and mental health), increase uptake of 6-8 week ante-natal checks, and improve access to essential equipment for families at home. Brent has responded decisively, formulating targeted strategies to address each challenge and demonstrating a dynamic, adaptive approach to service improvement (see Appendix 1 for Brent's post-SEND inspection improvement plan)

Robust systems for the early identification and assessment of SEND remain a cornerstone of Brent's approach. The number of children with EHCPs continues to rise year on year—from 3,500 in January 2024 to 3,791 in January 2025.¹ In 2024, 705 initial EHC assessment requests were made (a significant increase from 603 the previous year), with 170 (24.1%) refused. Of 550 new EHCPs issued, 22.7% were for children under five and 59.6% for those aged 5-10. The borough has noted a pronounced increase in EHCPs for under-fives, closely linked to a rapid rise in early diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), which accounted for 26.2% of new EHCPs in 2024. In response, Brent is intensifying its focus on early intervention, especially for its youngest residents.

Brent's strong support for children and young people with SEND and their families is founded on strong collaborative working. The Inclusion Strategic Board and other multi-agency forums nurture a culture of partnership, facilitating shared expertise and coordinated support that benefits children, young people and their families. Parental and carer engagement plays an integral role, ensuring that the voices of those directly affected by provision are at the heart of strategic planning and service delivery. Key developments within SEND support in Brent in 2025 include, but are not limited to:

- The opening of a new special school and two new additionally resourced provisions in Brent,
- The expansion of Brent's SEND Support teams,
- The creation of a continence service for Brent,
- The rolling out of the new SEND funding model for children in the early years,
- The initiation of a 'WellComm' speech and language pilot in Brent,
- A highly successful SEND Celebration event attended by over 250 children and young people with SEND,
- The hosting of Brent's first 'Inclusive Disco' for children and young people with SEND,
- Brent Parent Carer Forum exceeded 1000 members for the first time,
- The co-production of a new early intervention mental health support offer for Brent children aged 5-18 (25 for those with an EHCP),

¹ To ensure consistency with previous SEFs, and a high level of accuracy, the bulk of SEND data in the 2026 SEF is drawn from the most recent SEN2 data return. The most recent SEN2 data return is from January 2025. 2026 figures have been added where it is felt they add value.

- An expanded 'Holiday Activity Fund' offer for children with SEND, resulting in considerably increased uptake by this cohort,
- The allocation of additional resource to reduce waiting times for neurodevelopmental and child development assessments,
- The development of a second-stage capital development plan that will enable the delivery of more local special school places for Brent children.

Looking ahead, Brent is guided by clear, adaptable strategies designed to respond both to external inspection findings and to local priorities. Continuous monitoring and evaluation ensure that services evolve in step with the changing needs of Brent's diverse SEND population, supporting every child and young person to achieve their fullest potential within a fair and inclusive system.

1 Introduction

1.1 Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in England, with significant communities of Black and Asian heritage. In the context of high levels of deprivation, increasing demand for services that support children with SEND has highlighted inequalities and vulnerabilities across the borough. The local area partnership is very aware of what needs to be done to ensure that all children with SEND get access to the support that they need through a number of existing and developing priority programmes.

1.2 This SEF has been developed with input from a range of partners, including parents and carers, through the Inclusion Strategic Board. 2025 commenced with a Local Area SEND Inspection for Brent, the finding of which was that:

*“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.”*

1.3 As the only local area inspected in 2025 to receive the highest Ofsted rating (other than City of London), Brent is enormously proud of what is being achieved with and for children and young people with SEND in spite of the systemic challenges facing the sector. Inspectors highlighted, for example, the strong knowledge shown by agencies of the needs of children and young people with SEND in Brent and their families, the effective support available and the clear commitment to collaborative working. Areas for improvement were also highlighted, including Brent’s need to process annual reviews in a more timely manner, to reduce wait times for key assessments including child development, neurodevelopmental and mental health, to increase the uptake of the 6-8 week ante-natal checks and improve access to home equipment. Clear strategies have been developed to address the issues highlighted as well as those that Brent as an area itself feels stand in need of further improvement.

2 Children and young people’s needs are identified accurately and most are assessed in a timely and effective way

2.1 Brent is continuing to see a year-on-year increase in the number of children with EHCPs. In January 2025,² there were 3791 children and young people with an EHCP compared to 3500 in January 2024. In 2024 there were 705 initial requests for EHC assessment (603 in 2023), of which 170 were refused (24.1%). In 2024 there were 550 new plans issued (462 in 2023) of which 22.7% were for under 5s and 59.6% were for children aged 5-10. Increases in recent years in the number of under 5s issued with an EHCP aligns with the rapid increase in under-5 diagnoses of ASC (the need identified in 26.2% of new EHCPs in 2024). While the quality of decisions to assess for an EHCP are appropriate in most cases, work is underway to consider how the needs of children and young people, especially Brent’s under 5s, may be even better met through further early intervention approaches (see paragraph 4.7). Brent’s EHCP demographic in terms of age (Figure 1) and area of need (Figure 2) are depicted below.

² In January 2026, the number of EHCPs held by Brent was 4186, representing a 10% increase in EHCP numbers.

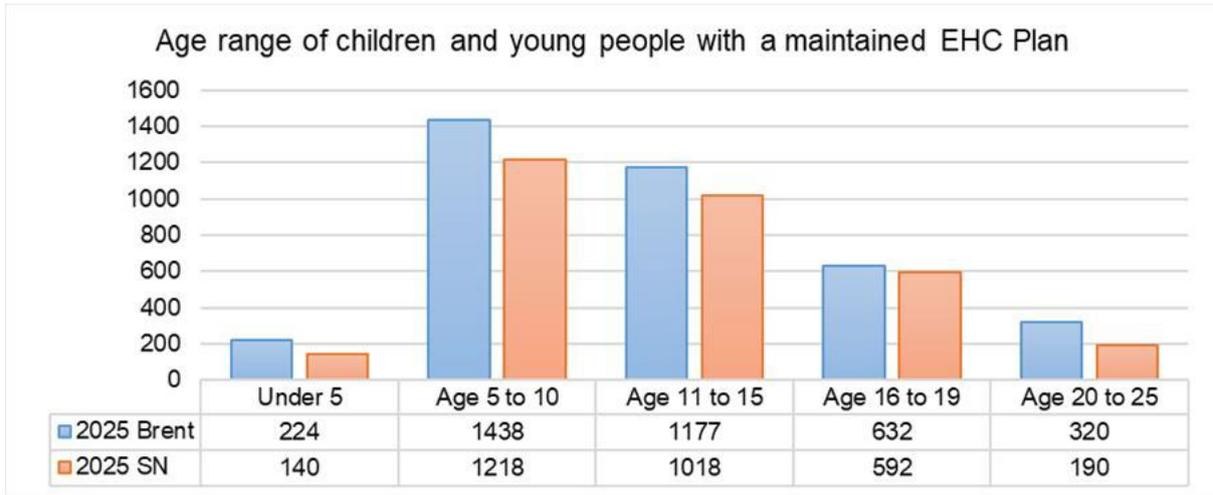


Figure 1 The age distribution of Brent children with an EHCP

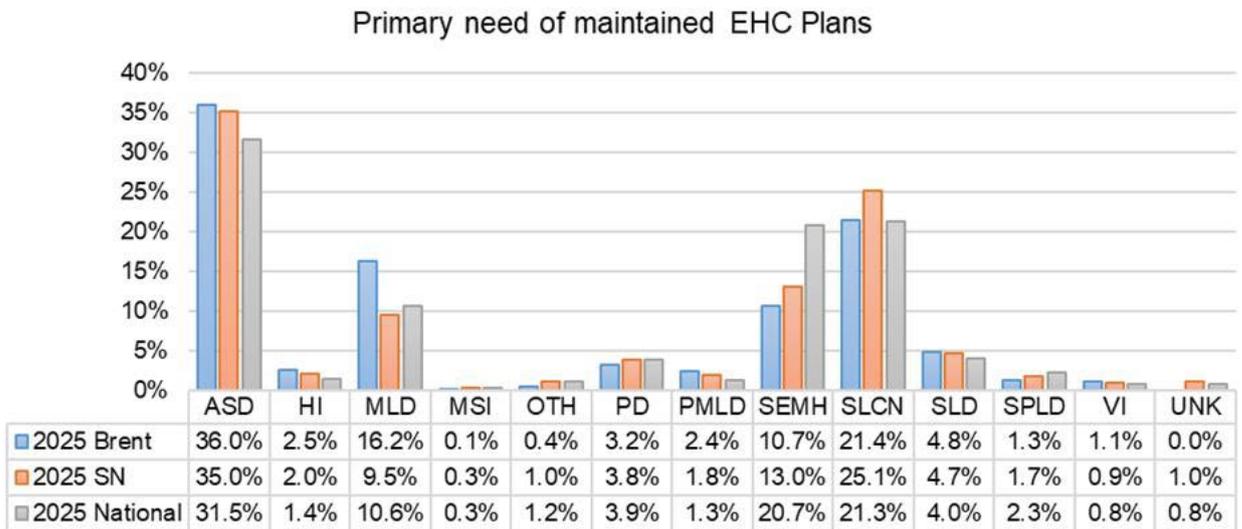


Figure 2 The primary need distribution of Brent children with an EHCP

- 2.2 There are several routes for early identification in Brent, which includes the multi-disciplinary Early Years Nursery Panel that administers the allocation of enhanced nursery places from the High Needs Block and SEND Inclusion Funding to schools and settings (SENIF). School nursery classes, PVI settings or childminders can apply for this additional support for children eligible for 15 or 30 hours funded early education hours with emerging or identified SEND. The SENIF funding and enhanced nursery place allocation is for 38 weeks of the year and provides support for purchasing training, additional resources or equipment and/or increased adult: child ratio. 338 children were supported through the Early Years Panel in the 2024/25 academic year; 60 requests were declined during the year, demonstrating ongoing rigour in the funding allocation process. Health professionals, including occupational therapy, physiotherapy and community nursing provide regular support to children attending enhanced provision places.
- 2.3 There are currently four provisions offering Enhanced EY SEND places, located at the Curzon and Fawood Federation, Granville Plus Nursery School and at the Willow Nursery. The enhanced provisions provide high quality pre-booked spaces for children with a range of SEND. All four nurseries are co-located with a Family Wellbeing Centre, ensuring joined up support across education, health and early help can be provided to families. The nurseries offer 60 full time equivalent (FTE) enhanced places for children with SEND in total. Specialist early years provision is highly regarded by families:

"The nursery really understands I and does their best to work around his needs. They're patient with him and genuinely caring. They've picked up on the things he enjoys, like climbing, and instead of stopping him, they help him do it safely. They also know how much he loves being outdoors and make sure he gets plenty of time outside, which really helps him stay calm and happy. They adapt his learning in ways that work for him, like using more hands on and sensory activities and keeping things simple and visual. Because he's in a small group, he gets a lot more adult support, and they know how to keep him interested without overwhelming him."

"(The support) has helped my daughter's overall development due to the fact of providing extra dedicated time and focus. My Daughter has started to eat which itself is a big difference. She is more vocal now, interaction has increased, she responds to music with body movement. The learning she gets from the staff helps with brain myelination as she has to be trained to learn and it takes time. The risk of my daughter hurting herself or falling has dramatically reduced due to the extra care".

- 2.4 The LA undertook a review of its EY offer for children with SEND in the 24/25 academic year, considering both the rising level of identified need in the 0-5 age group in Brent and the expanded free childcare offer. The review focused on ensuring that all childcare providers in Brent can access a comprehensive level of support (both financial via an enhanced Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF) offer and in terms of advice) that will enable them to meet the needs of all children in their care. The revised Early Years Banding Matrix is being used for all decision making along with a new 4 band funding offer (increased from 2). This initiative seeks to ensure that parents will have greater choice of EY providers and is currently running as a pilot from September 2025. In addition to this, Brent continues to review the provision of specialist EY support for children with complex medical needs, with the aim of ensuring there is sufficiency of places for this highly vulnerable cohort.

- 2.5 Section 23 Statutory Notifications from Health continue to be a system that supports earlier notification of children with SEND to Brent Council. With increased capacity within local NHS Child Development Services through outsourced services for social communication assessments, there was a very significant increase in the rate of Section 23 notifications from 189 in 23/24 academic year to 339 in 24/25 academic year. The main identified needs were Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Autism and global developmental delay. To respond to the identified needs of Brent's early years cohort, especially the ongoing prevalence of young children presenting with speech language and communication needs (73% of the early years inclusion support team's caseload in 24/25 academic year), Brent continues to work with the charity 'Speech and Language UK' to develop a clearly defined SLCN support pathway to ensure that Brent's universal, targeted and specialist offer meets local needs and is communicated clearly to families. Within the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme that Brent were part of, the proposed introduction of the 'WellComm' speech and language assessment screening and intervention toolkit has been adopted and is now in pilot stage being trialled across Family Wellbeing Centres, Nursery settings and Childminders before further roll out is planned more widely across all of Brent's Early Years providers. To further support SLCN development, Brent's Early Years Inclusion Team continues to deliver a highly impactful 'Early Talk Boost' programme, free of charge to early years providers alongside the Brent Early Talk Boost Officer – a role again funded through Family Hubs and Start for Life programme. Attendance take up for this training session continues to be excellent with training frequency increased to monthly. Feedback from recent sessions delivered at a nursery indicates the impact and value of this programme:

"I have been working in the nursery setting for last eleven years and have attended many trainings at Brent however if I had to pick one in terms of how effective it is for children I would without any doubt, pick Early Talk Boost. The training was conducted so well that you walk out of the room and know straight away what to do. The programme is all set and planned you just need to follow it.

"I gained so much confidence in myself as a practitioner while I conducted these sessions. This training has added an immense value to my skills and expertise".

"The children who barely spoke small sentences of 3 to 4 words started speaking longer sentences fluently. Children's listening and attention also improved tremendously. They absolutely loved Tizzy Time and looked forward to it. Parents could notice the difference in their child's language too and were really pleased with the intervention. I would recommend this course to all my colleagues and friends working with children."

- 2.6 Brent's 20-week timeliness currently sits at 72.3% as at the end of October 2025, far above the national average figure of 46.4% but lower than Brent's previous (2024) 20-week figure of 89.3%. The reduction in 20-week timeliness is attributable to increases in the number of EHCPs that Brent holds, without concomitant increases in staffing. The increased workload caused by increased EHCPs has been mitigated by the deployment of AI-assisted technology in the plan drafting stage, saving approximately 2 hours of case officer time per plan written. The increase in demand for EHCNAs has not impacted on the timeliness of decisions to move to an assessment for an EHCP (98.6% at 6 weeks). The Early Years Inclusion team is supporting the early years sector with ECHP processes, including work on how to identify needs and the Early Years Panel is promoting early identification and fast-tracking of pre-school children with complex needs who are likely to require an ECHP assessment. Annual reviews are being given priority for half a day a week by each case officer and this is impacting directly on the 20-week timeliness data. However, as annual review timeliness was identified as an area for improvement in Brent's most recent Local Area SEND Inspection this allocation of resource is deemed appropriate.
- 2.7 Additional support is given to vulnerable children including looked after children (LAC) and those with a social worker via an allocated Educational Psychologist (EP) to the Virtual School. In the 2024/25 academic year 24 children were supported, spread across KS1-KS4. In respect of LAC CYP with SEND, following patterns have emerged over the last year and have subsequently been identified as areas in need of focus:
- All the cases had an SEMH element, without exception.
 - The next most frequently occurring area of need was Cognition and Learning followed by Communication and Interaction.
 - Physical and sensory in relation to overactivity and hyperactivity emerged the least.
- 2.8 In terms of the demographics of children looked after (CLA) with SEND, the majority of the cases were in Key Stage 3 (9) and Key Stage 4 (9), with fewer children in Key Stages 1 and 2 (2 and 4 respectively). Educational psychologist (EP) involvement was primarily in response to needs identified at the Personal Educational Plan (PEP) meeting, with 7 pieces of work explicitly for the purposes of evidence gathering for an EHC plan application.
- 2.9 Looking forwards, the following themes are emergent for this cohort:
- 2 cases were not in education, training or employment (NEET). Both cases were children residing out of borough suggested a need for more focused work with other boroughs to support these children.
 - 8 cases involved work with children who were reluctant/anxious school attenders (potentially meeting the criteria for emotionally based school avoidance - EBSA). This appears to be an increasing trend. All were Key Stage 4 pupils. Implications for exams and coursework are to be considered.
- 2.10 Support from the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is aimed at helping schools to identify and support children's needs. This includes Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) training across all settings and schools and the delivery of an EBSA programme. To date, over 120 ELSAs have been trained in Brent across early years, primary, secondary and special provision, with ongoing supervision support provided by the EPS as per ELSA Network guidance. There are currently 40 active ELSA settings in Brent. The impact of this programme has been universally

positive, with 100% of respondents to a survey stating that ELSA added value to what they do in school and was worth the investment of training and supervision time. Feedback on support from ELSAs by parents is positive, noting improvements in their children's emotional regulation.

- 2.11 The 0-25 Disabled Children and Young people service has 896 open cases of children and young people who either have an active EHCP or their EHCP has recently ceased. The number of children open to this service has grown since the pandemic and increased from 837 in the last SEF, reflecting an increase in need and a focus on assessing and providing services for families at an earlier stage. Out of this cohort there are 30 children who are subject to Child Protection Plans and 20 looked after children. The rest of the children and young people either have a short break plan because they are receiving specialist services or they are preparing for adulthood and receiving care and support which is identified in their care and support plans.
- 2.12 The 0-25 Disabled Children and Young People Service was involved in the ILACS focussed visit on CLA that took place in November 2025. The outcome letter stated that:

“Disabled children in care receive good support. Their social workers skilfully develop relationships with children and their families and have a sound understanding of their needs. These children live in stable homes with caring families and receive strong multi-agency support.”

3 In Brent, children, young people and their families participate in decision-making about their individual plans and support

- 3.1 The voice of parents and children/young people is a key element in the quality assurance of EHCP assessments, plans and reviews. Brent SEND caseworkers actively support children and their families to shape or amend their child's plans and support in both EHCP development and annual reviews. During phase transfer the local authority works with families and children and young people to explore the options of school transfer and 87.6% of children passed through the year 6/7 phase transfer process in February 2025 with an agreed destination. This represents an increase on last year's figure (84%) which is particularly notable given the increasing scarcity of local special school places.
- 3.2 To ensure that the LA includes and respects parental experience in decision-making, parental feedback is gathered on an annual basis by Brent Parent Carers Forum (BPCF). The results of this feedback informs changes in process. For example, in 2024 a new EHCP template was developed in response to feedback from children and young people and their parents/carers. The updated template is designed to be easier to navigate (and is thus more accessible), to emphasise preparation for adulthood (PfA) goals more clearly from post-14/Year 9 and to ensure that the voice of the child or young person remains front and centre throughout. The new plans came into use on all new EHCPs from October 2024. In addition to this, the Head of Service for Inclusion meets at least monthly with BPCF leaders to discuss current issues and challenges within the SEND sector, and to co-produce mitigations/agree actions. For example, in response to concerns shared by BPCF regarding the difficulties that parents were having in getting timely responses from the 0-25 team, a strategy including the trialling of an AI-plan writing software and a new team level response to assigning phone calls was developed, with some positive impact shown. Additionally, and also in response to concerns raised by BPCF members about the level of communication they were receiving from the 0-25 team, since September 2025 the Service Manager for SEND 0-25 and a Team Manager from SEND 0-25 attend a BPCF in-person event every half term to offer 'SEND surgeries' for concerned parents. These events have been

very popular with excellent feedback received to date. Parents report feeling heard and reassured.

- 3.3 BPCF surveyed parents and carers of children and young people with an EHCP in the 24/25 academic year, the results of which are due to be published imminently. Early emerging themes include concerns relating to housing for families of children and young people with SEND, effective support for children and young people during periods of transition and the short breaks offer. Co-production of the short breaks offer was planned during the 24/25 academic year but has had to be placed on hold owing to significant staff absence within the relevant LA teams. These events are due to be rescheduled from January 2026 under the newly created Head of Children with Disabilities post.
- 3.4 A weekly panel, chaired by the Statutory SEND Service Manager, is attended by representatives from across health, schools and settings and social care, including the DCO who provides clinical oversight for assessments and plans. Where assessments or plans are not progressed, a 'way-forward' meeting is held with the referring agency, school and parents/carers to discuss the findings of the panel and the reasons why at that time an assessment or plan is not progressing. Between July 2025 and November 2025 there were 83 way-forward meetings. Themes arising from these meetings include a rise in: children and young people who are academically able, but who are experiencing significant challenges with their mental health needs and/or experiencing Emotionally-Based School Avoidance (EBSA); parents concerned about their child's transition to secondary school (the majority of meetings are for children in Year 3 and above); undiagnosed autism and resultant unmet needs due to long waiting lists with CAMHS; paperwork received from schools including unsupportive language which overly focuses on the child's behaviour rather than how their additional needs present in the environment and out-borough schools who are not able to benefit from Brent services and the Local Offer due to local commissioning arrangements and eligibility criteria.
- 3.5 Feedback from way-forward meetings has informed the support offered by the Local Authority to schools, parents and carers and other key stakeholders (including health). Way Forward Meetings have been shown to be productive in that there are those that conclude with the parents and the school working more closely together in the SEN Action stage of the code of practice and others where further evidence of need or of intervention is identified that leads to an assessment. The function of a Way Forward Meeting is to resolve the matter at an early stage and to avoid Tribunal referrals where we can. To further upskill the Inclusion service when supporting the Way Forward Meetings, Brent staff have recently been supported to attend training provided by Independent Provider of Special Educational Advice (IPSEA).
- 3.6 The SEND 0-25 Team received 45 complaints from residents during the 2024/25 academic year: 24 were not upheld, 2 were upheld, 18 were partly upheld and 1 was rejected. Themes arising from complaints include delays in communication with parents and schools, delays in implementing therapy provision, disagreement around decision-making (particularly transport assistance) and long waiting times for special school placements. On balance, whilst the number of complaints has increased, this remains low relative to the total number of service users.
- 3.7 In the period September 2024 to August 2025, there were 58 appeals, of which 20 were appealing refusal for statutory assessment or a plan not being issued following an assessment, and 38 regarding decisions about EHCPs, with 30 closed during the academic year. At the end of October 2025, there were 48 live appeals at first stage tribunal of which 13 related to a refusal to assess, 4 related to not issuing an EHCP, 22 related to placements and the remainder related

to provisions. There are a further 12 where the cases have concluded, however awaiting formal notification from the tribunal service. Mediation commissioned from an independent provider is in place and available for parents/carers to access. In the 2024/25 academic year, Brent received 52 requests for mediation, an increase from 26 in 2023/24.

- 3.8 SENDIASS service feedback continues to evidence high levels of satisfaction regarding the impartial information and advice received, through the training offer, helpline and individual case support. Data shows Brent SENDIASS is seen as impartial by the vast majority of those accessing the service and 96% of users would recommend the service to others. The number of calls received in the academic year 2024/25 totals 2050, continuing the increasing trend (2027 in 2023/24, 1326 in 2022/23). SENDIASS opened 17 tribunal casework referrals to support families in the process of appeals during AY 2024/25. In the main these appeals were lodged against the LA decision of not to assess or Section I (naming of school). Many of the appeals were concluded prior to hearing with SENDIASS supporting communication between the LA and the families. The positive impact of SENDIASS can be seen below, with comments in the annual user survey including:

“Thank you so much I really appreciate your help for so, if I have other way to say thank I will. Thank you 🙏.(sic)” (child)

*As a parent of a send child, it has always been a challenge to be understood. I feel having this service allows me to feel a bit more reassured in the health and wellbeing of my son, as life can be more challenging with these needs. Always appreciate the help and support ***[SENDIASS] has provided. (sic)” (parent)*

*“The advice, support and information I got from ***[SENDIASS] really gave me hope, above all always being there and returning my calls with support has changed my outlook on professionals, you are of a kind with the amount of work loads you have, I don’t know how you do it... (sic)” (parent)*

4 Children and young people in Brent receive the right help and support at the right time

4.1 Overall children and young people in Brent receive the right support at the right time. The starting point is effective assessment for EHCPs and SEN support to ensure that children’s needs are understood. As can be seen in Figure 3, below, Brent’s 20-week timeliness figures have improved considerably over the last two years to a point where it now sits at 75%. This improvement came about as a result of focused work by the Inclusion service to improve this metric, and as a result of parents feeding back to the service that the 20-week metric is important to them.

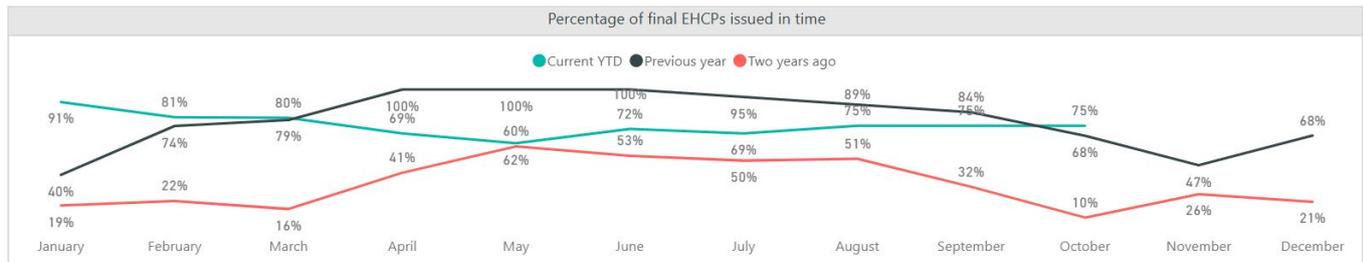


Figure 3: The percentage of Brent EHCPs issued within 20 weeks (including exceptions). Current YTD refers to 2025.

4.2 In terms of annual review timeliness, this has been identified as a priority area in need of increased focus. To address the challenges in annual review timeliness (standing at only 20.1% of annual reviews processed within statutory timescales, as of October 2025 – a slight decrease compared with the 2024 calendar year in which 22.2% of annual review processes were completed on time), Brent has requested that case officers allocate half a day per week solely to annual review work. It is accepted that this allocation is both insufficient to process all annual reviews in a timely manner – meaning the improvement action required post-SEND inspection has not as yet been met - and will likely have a negative impact on 20-week timeliness (despite the now embedded AI technology). However, within the staffing allocation available this is currently felt to be the best compromise. In 2026, a further business case is being written to request additional staffing capacity in the 0-25 team to reflect the growing workload within the team.

4.3 As the number of EHCPs has increased, the number of children with an EHCP placed in mainstream schools has increased from 42.3% in 2021 to 47.1% in 2025. 77.5% of children and young people issued a new EHCP in 2025 are in mainstream school compared to 66.8% in 2021 (national 75.1%; statistical neighbours 79.4%) and 8.0% aged 0-25 are placed in special schools (national 9.3%; statistical neighbours 9.7%) (Source: SEN2 January 2025). Overall, 47.1% of children and young people with an EHCP in Brent aged 0-25 attend a mainstream provision – this is in line with the expectation in the Children and Family Act 2014 that all children should be educated in mainstream where possible.

4.4 Through the Strategic School Effectiveness Partnership Board and regular meetings with headteachers, the Children and Young People’s Directorate leads an effective partnership with local schools to deliver an inclusive agenda. The addition of regular ‘SEND Headteachers Reference Group’ meetings since February 2025 has further improved partnership working and communication within the system. For example, at a recent SEND Headteachers Reference Group meeting, a discussion of the Inclusion Support Team offer led to the co-production of proposals for improvements to the system.

- 4.5 Significant work has been undertaken to develop the capacity of mainstream schools in Brent to identify the SEN needs of pupils early so that they can be supported in the most appropriate way. The rising level of need in Brent is also being proactively and positively responded to by both schools and the LA. Brent currently has 14 additionally resourced provisions sited in Brent mainstream schools, an increase of three since September 2024, adding a further 47 specialist places. Plans for a further secondary ARP in Brent are well developed and due for delivery in September 2029 (as part of the school's new build). Two Brent local special school MATs, the Rise Partnership and the Compass Learning Trust, work with local Brent mainstream schools to provide additional support and training to mainstream colleagues in supporting children with SEND. For example, the Rise partnership is commissioned by the LA to deliver additional training sessions for Brent schools with an ARP. Additionally, the Compass Learning Trust holds an 'Autism Education Trust' (AET) licence and delivers AET training to Brent schools.
- 4.6 Despite this increased support offer, some schools remain concerned about how to support children with increasing complexity of need who are being placed in mainstream schools. Relatedly, some parents also communicate to BPCF a lack of confidence in the ability of mainstream schools to meet the needs of their children. To further respond to this challenge, Brent has taken action to both increase the amount of support available to schools through increasing the amount of top-up funding available to children with SEND, and to increase the amount of funding schools receive for children who are placed in mainstream whilst they await a place in special school, to ensure that no child or setting is disadvantaged simply because of the type of school they attend. A comprehensive review of Brent's resource allocation system in SEND began in 2023, culminating in 2024 with a fully co-produced (with both schools and parents/carers) updated banding tool that will ensure that Brent makes resource allocation decisions with improved consistency and transparency. The roll out of the new approach commenced with new plans in December 2024. The significant additions were the addition of the option for schools to apply for Band 3 funding for children under assessment, and the addition of a higher funding band, Band 7 funding, for children who attend mainstream but who are awaiting a place in a special setting.
- 4.7 Whilst there are clear strengths and areas of challenge in Brent's approach to supporting children on the assessment pathway for an EHCP, and those with an EHCP, significant work is also underway to ensure that where appropriate, children's needs are being met in Brent without the need for an EHCP. Brent has a comprehensive SEND Support service offer available to all Brent residents attending Brent schools. The offer, and the impact of these services is outlined below.
- 4.8 The Intervention First Team (IFT) is a pilot project running within the Harlesden cluster of schools, offering intensive early support to children aged 4-7 who are presenting with social, emotional and mental health needs (part of Brent's Delivering Better Value programme). The pilot has been impactful, with positive feedback received from all stakeholders and a clear reduction in the need for an EHCP for children referred to the programme: at the start of the programme, schools were considering an EHCNA for 67.3% of children referred to IFT. Following participation in the programme, only 4% of participants were referred for an EHCNA (a decision supported by all parties). Of the programme, one SENCo commented:

“We have really valued and appreciated the service provided from the Intervention First Team. The experience has been very positive — strategies shared have been practical and effective, and the practitioners are always friendly, approachable, and helpful. I have particularly valued their persistence and professionalism when engaging with our more challenging parents, as well as the quality of intervention being offered to the children. Consequently, through the support received, we have not applied for any EHCNA’s for the children worked with over the last 2 years.”

- 4.9 Funding for the IFT pilot ended in September 2025, but the LA took the decision to extend the programme until the end of January 2026 to enable a smoother transition to a new early help and early intervention mental health service offer that has been co-produced by the LA and local Health partners.
- 4.10 Further examples of SEND support services available for children and young people include Brent’s Autism outreach service (BOAT), the support service for families awaiting assessment for ASC (STAR), the local authority commissioned wellbeing and emotional support team (WEST), the mental health support teams in schools (MHSTs), the specialist hearing impairment (HI) and visual impairment (VI) support teams, the early years inclusion support team (EYIST) (which also encompasses Brent’s portage service), the inclusion support team (IST) and the SEND support team. All of these services (except the MHSTs) are funded by the Local Authority to ensure that children and young people with SEND, schools and families receive the right support at the right time. Full impact reports of each of these services are produced. Some key data from these support services is as follows:
- 4.11 BOAT: For the academic year 24/25 1188 students were known to BOAT. 29% according to the current banding are actively supported on a regular basis for BOAT but does not take into account the 54% of the caseload (641) children that staff have made some form of request for support for. the current banding is being reviewed to reflect the input required by BOAT. Feedback for the service is consistently positive, with some examples below:

*“The advice given to us by BOAT is central to us providing the best outcomes for our children with autism. When a child is struggling, we depend on the excellent knowledge and expertise of the service. *** has supported us in countless ways, resulting in such positive results for our pupils. Always available by phone or email. We are truly grateful for this support.”*

*“BOAT provide an invaluable service which helps to compliment the support we are able to offer our pupils. *** is always at hand and does a highly commendable job of supporting as best as she can. From the many services we work closely with, BOAT are at the top.”*

“I would again like to emphasize how much we depend on the expertise of BOAT. Although we feel that we are a knowledgeable staff, we are always in awe of the way that BOAT can think of strategies or solutions that we did not even contemplate. With BOAT's support, we have seen many times where our pupils who have really struggled with daily school life, have moved on to become regulated and settled pupils within our setting. They are happier individuals, developing the positive learning behaviours to ensure that they can achieve the best outcomes in all areas of their development and in school life. Thank you again for your support.”

4.12 STAR: An increase of staffing in the STAR team from April 2025 enabled the service to support more families. As of October 2025, 450 families of CYP awaiting an autism or autism and ADHD assessment were known to STAR of whom 54% had children aged 0-5. The increase in staffing also allowed for 21 Brent families to have support for their children attending mainstream settings in 7 neighbouring boroughs, a level of support that previously was not available.

4.13 In terms of reach, STAR has CYP attending a wide range of Brent settings:

61% of Brent Early Years providers have children known to STAR

90% of Brent Primary Schools have children known to STAR

81% of Brent Secondary Schools have children and young people known to STAR.

4.14 STAR offers drop-in sessions at the 8 Family Wellbeing Centres (FWCs) and in 2025 extended this offer to Coffee Morning sessions in settings that are familiar to families. There is a noticeable increase of communication with the growth of STAR and the implementation of 'check in' calls by STAR staff calling families that have not engaged with the service for a term or more.³ Calls have been a beneficial addition to the service with families commenting:

"It is so good to hear from you and know that I can call you, thank you."

"Thank you, Thank you, Thank you, for helping me."

"This service is spot on. information, support and precious guidance are available for us, parents who are trying to navigate in this complicated, long and emotional journey."

4.15 WEST: 456 children and young people received an intervention during the 24/25 academic year, with 88 additional parent/carer or professional consultations conducted (annual target was 350 children and young people). 96% of children and young people who completed an intervention with WEST saw an improvement in their goals (this figure was 100% for children in care), representing an increase of 3% since the last academic year. In addition to conducting direct work with children and young people, WEST are commissioned to provide an extensive support and training offer to schools, families and professionals working within the LA. For example, in the 24/25 academic year 43 Brent professionals attended training on attachment and child development. 26 participants gave feedback – all of which was positive, with 100% of delegates agreeing that the training was relevant to their working practice, was presented clearly and would recommend to a colleague.⁴ In terms of feedback from parents, the following quotes are indicative of high levels of parental satisfaction with the service:

"Thank you for your time with me and my children. Your support has made such a change to our lives. Things are so much better now. Both of my children are now going to school. We all leave the house together in the morning and the children are happy talking to each other, which means they go into school happy. The targets which we set were helpful to keep us focused and we could then achieve our goals."

³ Following a decision to expand the services offered by another North-West London ASC specific support service, STAR will cease to operate from April 2026. For further details, see 10.13, below.

⁴ As detailed in 10.10, below, owing to the joint LA and ICB commissioning of a new early help and prevention mental health offer in Brent (pilot launching January 2026), the WEST service in its current form will cease to operate February 2026. However, the Anna Freud Centre (who operate WEST) will remain in Brent as part of the new early help and prevention offer.

- 4.16 As can be seen above, a key function of Brent’s various SEND support services is to deliver training to schools and providers to ensure that Brent has a comprehensive graduated approach framework (GAF, also known as ‘ordinarily available provision’). In order to respond to an increase in Brent children and young people presenting with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs, Brent funded the rollout of ‘THRIVE’ training offer across the borough, a Department for Education approved offer for schools wishing to support the emotional and mental health needs of their cohort in a trauma informed way. To date, 2 secondary, 2 special and 7 primary schools have participated in the THRIVE training offer. Between May and July 2025, a series of THRIVE quality assurance visits were conducted, highlighting the positive and distinctive methods employed by THRIVE practitioners to introduce the programme within their respective schools. These visits have illustrated a variety of innovative strategies being put into practice to support students’ emotional and social development through the use of THRIVE strategies. Feedback received from the quality assurance visits has been overwhelmingly positive. One comment noted:

“The Thrive and training has had a positive impact on our school by providing staff with valuable strategies to support the emotional, social and communication development of our students.”

- 4.17 The training has enabled staff to acquire a deeper understanding of individual pupil needs, resulting in more tailored and effective interventions. Consequently, schools have observed improved student engagement, stronger relationships, and greater progress, especially among pupils with autism and social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs.
- 4.18 Further efforts to enhance the school workforce within BRENT schools have been developed by way of The Workforce Development (WFD) offer to schools. This is the third year this training has been commissioned. The training offer has seen a strong uptake, with 19 schools participating in various training opportunities commissioned as part of the initiative. The end of year SEND Support feedback, collected from 22 schools, provided comprehensive insights into proposed outreach offers for the 2025-26 academic year. This feedback is used to deliver tailored training to local schools within Brent as part of the LA’s collaboration with Rise Partnership. In response to the feedback for the upcoming academic year, the Rise Partnership has broadened its professional development offerings. Notably, opportunities now include shadowing experiences in early years settings for a day, as well as shadowing with middle leaders across key roles such as the Behaviour Team, Numeracy Lead, PSHE Lead, Engagement Lead, Occupational Therapist (OT), Literacy Lead, and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Lead. These expanded opportunities are set to enrich both training and professional development, strengthening the capacity of school staff to meet diverse student needs.
- 4.19 To further support schools and early years providers to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND, since 2023, Brent has made available £750,000 of funding to schools and early years providers to apply for under the ‘inclusive environments grant’ bid process to create spaces that better meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. To date, £670,000 has been allocated to 68 providers. Money has been used to create sensory spaces, to improve lighting and furniture in rooms, and to purchase equipment such as ‘Cubbies’ and to soundproof halls so they are more accessible for students with sensory processing differences. The positive impact of this scheme has been clear, with SENCOs reporting that, for example, some children with ASC, attendance has significantly improved since the introduction of an appropriate sensory space.

- 4.20 The Virtual School and the SEND 0-25 team ensure looked after children’s needs are met on time through effective co-working. This includes undertaking a combined assessment when relevant, and a combined annual review and PEP process for the 43 looked after children with an EHCP. This joint working and single line of sight at practitioner and manager level ensures children are placed in good and appropriate provision. Reliance on other local authorities for children placed out of borough or who have placement moves, however, can make it difficult to ensure that Brent children are supported quickly and effectively. To mitigate this a SEN Advisory Officer role has been created, this role sits within the Virtual School and ensures oversight of response times and escalating to the Head of the Virtual School and the Head of Inclusion for intervention when required, including taking back the responsibility for the EHCP.
- 4.21 For all children and young people with an EHCP, any changes to their educational offer outside of the annual review process, including exclusion, parental decision to home educate, a reduced timetable or managed move, triggers an emergency annual review. This allows the local authority to maintain oversight of the needs of the child and ensure children are receiving the right support at the right time. Joint assessment by the SEND 0-25 team and the elective home education officer has resulted in low numbers of children with an EHCP being electively home educated (21 as at December 2025, an increase of only 2 children since December 2024).
- 4.22 Owing to strong joined up working between Brent’s education services and excellent work by some Brent schools, Brent’s rate of exclusion remains lower than the national picture, see figure 4, below. For young people with SEND, however, there is a concerning level of disproportionality in Brent’s exclusions data. For example, in primary schools 7.5% of pupils with an EHCP experienced exclusions compared to 0.5% of pupils with no SEN, and in secondary schools 19% of pupils with an EHCP experienced exclusions compared to 9% with no SEN. Analysis of school exclusion data has enabled targeted advisory support to be offered to schools by the SEND Outreach teams where disproportionately is identified and provides an example of strong multidisciplinary practice. Additionally, Brent’s Inclusion Support Team are engaging with colleagues from early help and the pan-London Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) to implement strategies such as intervention targeted at supporting.

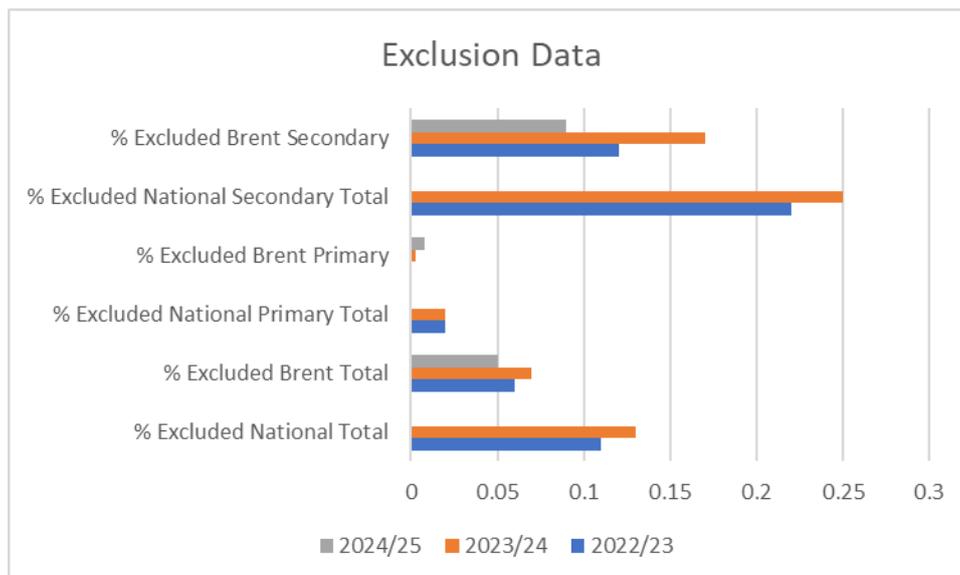


Figure 4: Brent’s exclusion data as an overall percentage (compared to national) and for primary and a secondary for 2022/23 – 2024/25

- 4.23 An area of particular focus in Brent is in expanding the capacity within our special schools and additionally resourced provisions (ARPs) to ensure that there are sufficient spaces available to meet the rising demand. Following the successful implementation of a £44m capital programme designed to add a further 400 special school places (including post-16 provision) by 2027, Brent has developed a further capital programme of a proposed £10m (subject to final approval in January 2026) that would add a further 212 places for CYP with SEND between now and 2029. It is recognised that for some children, this increase in specialist placements will not come soon enough. To mitigate this, Brent worked with schools to agree an expansion to Brent's SEND Support services in the 24/25 academic year by adding additional staff to the specialist teaching team as well as the BOAT and STAR teams. All children with an EHCP who have no identified school place continue to be provided with bespoke, 1:1 tuition packages whilst an appropriate school place is sought. To ensure safe practice in terms of the safeguarding of children without a school place, in the 24/25 academic year, safeguarding training was offered to all Inclusion team members. To further develop safeguarding practice, workshops with colleagues from social care have been planned for the 25/26 academic year.
- 4.24 The EHCPs of children and young people whose parents choose to electively home educate or for whom 'Educated Other than At School' (EOTAS) is named in Section I, and where there is also social care involvement, are subject to joint audit processes by social care and Inclusion Service staff. The audit process was agreed in November 2024. This demonstrates effective joint working across social care and educational services to promote safeguarding.
- 4.25 To support children post-16 with SEND into employment, a new post has been created for a 'Post 16 Skills and Resource Manager'. This post will oversee the development of the land-based curriculum offer at the Welsh Harp centre (due to open January 2027), as well as work with all key stakeholders to further develop Brent's supported employment offer and pathways.
- 4.26 The Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre provides respite services within Brent to eligible CYP with SEND and their families. The service is overseen by the CWD team. The centre carries out an annual stakeholder survey. Sixteen of thirty-three families (48%) responded to the 2025 survey. The following comments are from the 2025 survey and focus on respondents' suggestions regarding staff performance:
- "The service runs smoothly; my child always looks forward to coming."*
- "The environment feels safe and stimulating."*
- "I love the carers and all the staff are very friendly and caring."*
- "Staff are always welcoming and helpful."*
- 4.27 As can be seen from this sample of comments, the service is well-regarded and highly valued by parents and carers. Feedback was mainly positive, praising staff, care and communication. Suggestions focused on small, practical improvements such as extended hours, wellness call timing and sensory room maintenance. The most recent Ofsted inspection in April 2025 rated this setting as Good overall.
- 4.28 As part of the Transforming Care Agenda, Improve Quality of Support and Outcomes by ensuring children and young people with a learning disability are receiving an annual health check in Brent. The latest data for 2024/25 shows around 79.9% of children and young people aged 14 and over on GP learning-disability registers across the North West London ICS (which includes

Brent) received an annual health check. This suggests North West London (NWL) (and Brent) is on track to exceed the national 75% goal; the stretch goal of around 80% set by North West London ICS is on target for 2025.

- 4.29 Processes and systems are set up to support practitioners to work together and share appropriate information in a timely manner, including strong systems for identifying and responding to risks to children and young people with SEND.
- 4.30 Currently 21 children and young people (of which 7 have a diagnosis of Learning Disability and 14 have a diagnosis of Autism) are being monitored through the Dynamic Support Register with a further referral to be added. The roll out of a key worker programme as a direct product of the work of the Dynamic Support Register (DSR) panel for young people with ASC/LD at the point of crisis admission has had a positive impact.
- 4.31 A Positive Behaviour Support pilot is building local capacity and providing training and advice to families and support providers on a behaviour-led suicide prevention model to support autistic children and young people at risk of serious self-harm and suicide.
- 4.32 The CYP Directorate is embedded in the Local Area Emergency Protocol Meetings (LAEP) and Care Education and Treatment Reviews (CETR). This has contributed to preventing children's admissions to hospital as well as planning safe discharges to the community following in-patient treatment. 7 young people have been supported by LAEP this academic year, ensuring that support is provided to families to prevent breakdown.
- 4.33 The THRIVE model continues to support collaborative work across Health, the Local Authority, voluntary and charity sector agencies and with children, young people and families to improve emotional wellbeing support for CYP in Brent. Following extensive engagement with children and young people, parents/carers and professionals, a set of CYP mental health priorities were identified. These priorities were RAG-rated by the CYP Strategic Steering Group, chaired by the Local Authority Director of Education, Strategy and Partnerships, which identified the development of an early intervention and prevention offer aligned to the Getting Advice & Getting Help groupings of THRIVE as immediate and significant gaps in the system. In response, an Early Intervention & Prevention offer (EIPO) was designed to be tested as a model for 1 year, marking a key step forward for Brent. The EIPO will provide a co-ordinated range of early support including timely advice and signposting, wellbeing activities, peer support, targeted mentoring programmes, and brief targeted mental health interventions delivered by both clinical and non-clinical practitioners in local community settings. A central feature of this model is streamlining access to support through a single primary entry point via the CNWL Single Point of Access, where all CYP mental health referrals will be reviewed by an MDT team to ensure each child/young people's needs are considered holistically and are directed to the most appropriate support within the EIPO model or other appropriate support. The aim is to ensure that our children and young people's needs are identified early, and that, they receive timely, responsive and appropriate care at the right time, in the right place. This initiative is set to launch in January 2026.
- 4.34 Service improvements are informed by evidence-based practice to drive forward good outcomes. A neighbourhood model of service delivery is established in Brent through Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC) that deliver services in the community and this is being built on by the development of paediatric and health focused hubs. FWCs offer a range of co-located multiagency and multi-disciplinary services for children and young people with SEND. In

2024/25 535 children and young people with identified SEND were registered with the FWCs (note, there are families with SEND where this criterion was not identified on registration). Of the 535, 185 were under 5s, 168 were 6–11-year-olds, 151 were 12-18 year olds and 31 were 19-25 year olds. At FWCs, ante-natal and post-natal clinics are provided along with healthy living provision and Cygnet and Stepping Stones specialist parenting programmes. In 2024/25 72 parents completed the Cygnet or Cygnet Plus programmes. The Council outreach teams for autism, early years intervention, deaf and visual impairment services all deliver out of the FWCs as well as in schools and settings. In August 2023, the ICP Health Inequalities Executive approved the funding of a localities approach to addressing key health inequalities including asthma, immunisations and vaccinations and the mental health of young people. The focus is on the most deprived wards in Brent (Harlesden, Stonebridge and Dollis Hill). These wards are the highest presenting wards for SEN and exclusions and to better support the needs of these communities there is a focus on better integration of education and early help with the health inequalities programme.

4.35 The local area partnership has worked hard to ensure that parents and carers know how to access services. Since 2022 there has been annual training for frontline staff in each FWC as SEND navigators, to support all parents/carers in Brent to access the right support at the right time. The FWC termly and holiday timetables signpost families to the SEND local offer. The FWC host the CAMHs under 5's service which is accessible across the hub network. Peer-support groups for parents of SEND children have been set-up on Saturday mornings at the FWC, this was following requests from families. There is also a family sign class at Willow FWC. Through the Start for Life programme funding Perinatal Mental Health (PNMH) services, for low to moderate needs will complement the PNMH service for severe needs already in place. The new service launched in spring 2025. The FWCs have a Parent Carer Voice forum, including parents of SEND children, to shape the FWC delivery model and co-produce services to meet the needs of SEND families. Examples of parent voices shaping the offer include:

- Information requested by parents relating to new-born babies on the council start for life website
- Improvements to delivery of the Cygnet and Stepping Stones parenting programmes for SEND families
- Improvements to the FWC e-registration and e-booking system.
- Examples of CYP voices shaping the offer include:
 - Giving ideas for activities at the FWC which then improved take-up
 - Requesting activities that are regular and sustained and not just during school holidays
 - Young women requesting a safe place to come together without males present.

4.36 The FWCs also facilitate opportunities through BPCF for parents/carers of children and young people with SEND to meet, including a monthly group for Children of Deaf Adults (CODA). This was established following a meeting with the Lead Member for Children, Young People and Schools and the Corporate Director of CYP and CODA parents who shared the challenges they were facing in supporting their children to succeed in education and in accessing services in Brent. The outcome was the CODA homework club, delivered by Brent Start, Brent Deaf and Hearing Impairment Service and BPCF and funded by the LA, which received a 'highly recommended' at the GLA Inclusion Awards in 2022. Subsequently a CODA youth club has been commissioned and CODA parents also have access to BSL supported sessions with all local services delivered via the Brent Hubs. The homework support club is a clear example of Brent

working with Brent Parent Carer Forum to deliver services that precisely meet the needs of Brent's unique population.

5 Children and young people are well prepared for their next steps and achieve strong outcomes

5.1 Table 1 depicts Brent's school achievement data for the 24/25 academic year. It demonstrates the level of achievement for SEND children in Brent compared to all Brent children and national levels. By these measures, Brent schools EHCP and SEN cohorts' rates for 'achieving the expected standard' were equal to or higher than national rates across all key stages. These results indicate some very strong support for children with SEND across Brent, and also the impact of that work across the last academic year as Brent's previous position was more variable in terms of cohort performance benchmarked against national. Work to improve the quality of the curriculum through investment in staff and training with Brent schools and settings appears to have translated into the improvement of outcomes for Brent children and young people

Table 1: Headline achievement data 2024/25 children and young people in Brent Schools

| | % attaining GLD = good level of development | % attaining Working At expected level in Phonics | % achieving the expected standard for KS2 (Provisional) | Attainment 8 % (Provisional) |
|-------------|---|--|---|------------------------------|
| Cohort | EYFS | Phonics Year 1 | KS2 Reading Writing Maths | KS4 (Attainment 8) |
| All pupils | 68.3 (68.3 national) | 79.7 (79.9 national) | 69.0 (62.2 national) | 51.3 (46.2 national) |
| SEN Support | 34.3 (26.4 national) | 60.3 (52.1 national) | 40.5 (28.7 national) | 38.3 (33.7 national) |
| EHCP | 5.6 (3.9 national) | 19.8 (19.9 national) | 10.1 (9.3 national) | 20.0 (14.8 nationally) |

5.2 There is a drive to ensure that EHC plans are outcomes focused and that reviews reflect children's ambitions. As evidence of Brent closing the feedback loop, Brent's 2024 redesign of its EHCP and annual review paperwork to better capture the voice of children and young people and preparation for adulthood (PfA) goals was a response to multiagency audits undertaken during the 2022/23 academic year, which found that aspirations post-16 had not been captured well. The annual review paperwork for children aged 14+ now has a clear focus on PfA goals. This increased focus on better preparing children and young people for adulthood can also be evidenced by the fact that Brent has this year commissioned a dedicated 'independent travel training' (ITT) offer. The design and commissioning of this offer was undertaken in conjunction with Brent Parent Carer Forum and PfA is at the heart of the new service specification. This service launched in 2025, and to date two CYP have been trained to travel independently.

Young people access impartial information, advice and support that enable them to make informed choices about their future through a variety of mechanisms including the Careers and Enterprise Hub delivered via schools. Additionally, the local authority commissions a third sector provider, Prospects, to support career development options for young people who are not engaged in education, employment, and training or who are looking for the next step on their career pathway. The provider works as part of the wider employment and skills partnership led by Brent Works offering impartial advice and guidance and access to a range of employment

and training pathways via the Brent Hubs, and a specific provision is available at the Willow Family Wellbeing Centre for young people with SEND. This joint work means that Brent has a high rate of participation for 16-18 year-olds. The December 2023 participation rates return to the DfE identified that 84.1% of the SEND 16-18 cohort (464 young people) were participating in EET including 0.4% in supported internships, compared to nationally (76.9% and 0.5% respectively). The December 2024 the participation rate for the SEND 16-18 cohort (421 young people) was 84.3%. with 6.0% NEET. The commissioned provider is following up on the destinations of those currently not known (9.3%). The NEET rate for the Brent general population is 1.8% compared to 3.4% nationally, with the unknown rate at 1.2% for Brent compared to 2.9% nationally.

- 5.3 The Council is looking to support employers across Brent to be autism aware and to expand the number of employers who are achieving the disability confident standards. A Supported Employment Forum, led by Brent Works and the Inclusion Service, brings together providers with parents/carers and young people to ensure a system wide approach to continued development of the post-16 offer that enables more young people with SEND to secure meaningful employment and improved life chances. The Forum includes the Imperial Hospital Trust, West London Alliance, Compass Learning Trust, Wembley supported internship programme led by Brent Works, College of Northwest London, Shaw Trust, Mencap, Careers and Enterprise Hub and Brent Council adult learning service Brent Starts.
- 5.4 Brent works with multi-agency partners to support the supported internship programme for CYP with an EHCP post 18. Since its start in 2022, the programme has had 91 participants from across north-west London, 60 of these have completed the programme, and 28 have gone into employment. In the 2024/25 academic year, 9 Brent children have participated in the supported internship programme. Brent is looking to increase this number moving forwards, addressing barriers to the growth of the programme including there being a limited number of employers willing to participate coupled with concerns from family members.
- 5.5 To address these issues, and where further work is needed to achieve strong outcomes, Brent has sought to create a new dedicated Post 16 Skills and Resource Manager post to better co-ordinate Brent's post 16 education and employment offer for CYP with SEND, including improved co-production with parents/carers and CYP themselves. The post holder will also oversee the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre when it opens. The building for the centre is on schedule to open in January 2027. The design of the offer has been scoped with Brent Parent Carer Forum and a local special school Trust, and the offer will be co-produced with children and young people with SEND. The Centre will support young people to develop skills across the other three PfA outcomes with a focus on independent living including healthy lifestyles, activities and addressing social isolation.

6 Children and young people with SEND are valued, visible and included in their communities

- 6.1 The core themes of Brent’s fully co-produced Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029 are detailed in 7.2, below. The action plan of the Strategy sets out how the agreed actions will be achieved. A short breaks statement, that was co-produced with young person advisors and the BPCF in November 2023, clearly outlines the offer in Brent. The Local Offer website lists a breadth of activities available and, through BPCF, the local authority is aware of the activities that are popular with families. However, feedback received through the BPCF parent/carer survey indicated that not all parents/carers were aware of what was on offer locally. To respond to this, a workshop was held with parents and carers in early 2025 to co-produce updates to the Local Offer that would make it more accessible to Brent’s diverse community. Feedback received from the workshop was positive and further workshops are planned in 2026.
- 6.2 Examples of activities to support children and young people to be active in the community are discounted physical sports provision through the take-up of ‘B Active Cards’ and ‘Registered Disabled Yellow Cards’ for young people aged 17-25 with an EHCP. The Ade Adepitan Centre continues to provide high quality services to children and young people with a disability and respite provision.
- 6.3 There are a range of third sector organisations providing opportunities for children to engage in activities. Members of a Disability Sports Coach club in Brent had the opportunity to meet five-time Paralympic swimming champion Ellie Simmonds in November 2024, when she attended a session at Willesden Sports Centre.



- 6.4 The organisation Dare, a third sector provider, is commissioned to deliver day respite activities for children with disabilities including at weekends. Dare is also commissioned through the Brent Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme that delivers free enriching and physical activities to children in Reception – Year 11 on benefit-related free school meals during the Easter, summer and Christmas holidays. The activities commissioned in 2025/26 year include a range of sports, horse riding, boat trips, arts and crafts, music workshops and cooking classes and there is a range of places for children and young people with SEND. In 2025, Brent worked with 49 providers, including 2 SEND specialist provisions, to deliver activities at 51 venues across

the borough. It is a requirement that provisions are accessible and inclusive to all. Brent utilises 15% of its funding for children who are not in receipt of benefit-related free school meals but are identified by the Council as benefiting from the programme, as permitted in the grant agreement, including children with SEND. Opportunities are also taken to prioritise an increase in SEND places for example when funding is rolled over from previous holiday periods this funding is partly ringfenced for SEND specific places. As can be seen in Table 2, below, the general trend is an increasing uptake of the HAF programme by children with SEND.

Table 2: Uptake of the HAF programme in Brent by children and young people with SEND, 2022-2025

| | Easter 2022 | Easter 2023 | Easter 2024 | Easter 2025 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of SEND Children | 108 | 184 | 255 | 278 |
| % of HAF Attendees | 6.3% | 12.1% | 15.8% | 17.1% |

| | Summer 2022 | Summer 2023 | Summer 2024 | Summer 2025 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of SEND Children | 240 | 248 | 287 | 302 |
| % of HAF Attendees | 12% | 13.9% | 15.3% | 15% |

| | Christmas 2022 | Christmas 2023 | Christmas 2024 | Christmas 2025 |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of SEND Children | 163 | 149 | 191 | N/A |
| % of HAF Attendees | 16% | 15.8% | 21.5% | N/A |

6.5 The HAF programme enables young people to access new activities they may not have tried before, build their confidence and enhance their social skills, as parents have commented:

“My 3 children attended the programme for the first time and I was really “worried because one of them is special needs and finds it difficult in new places. All I can say is that the team reassured me from the time I met them and my children had the best time they didn’t want to go home. The lunches were so good that my daughter came home talking about chef Rachel’s pasta sauce. They will be back next holiday we have found a place they can call home from home.”

“As a mum, I can’t express enough how much camp has positively impacted my son’s life. The free trips and activities have opened up a world of adventure for him, allowing him to explore new places and trying things he never would have otherwise. It’s been heartwarming to see him engage in various activities such as arts and crafts and engaging in other activities, and watching him grow more confident in his abilities. Most importantly, the socialising with other kids has been invaluable. He’s made lasting friendships and learned the important social skills that will benefit him for years

to come. I truly believe that these experiences at camp have enriched his life in so many ways.”

- 6.6 The local area partnership support children and young people to develop their confidence to participate in local activities. Schools, especially the special schools, are active in ensuring all children and young people with SEND can participate in borough wide activities. Children have an opportunity to perform in concerts and The Village School (a Brent all-through special school) choir took part in the heats for Brent primary Choir of the Year 2025.
- 6.7 BMS supports Brent’s special schools by delivering curriculum and instrumental lessons weekly. All settings are supported and children have access to BMS ensembles after school in 5 Music Centres. This November saw BMS offer each special school with £1,000 to equip its music departments with equipment and technology. This is supported by the DfE’s capital grant. Currently, the RPO and BMS are looking at a new proposal that will see us working collaboratively on projects across all special school settings.
- 6.8 In June 2025, Brent hosted a SEND Celebration event at the Civic Centre in Wembley. Over 250 CYP with SEND and their families, as well as school and support staff gathered to celebrate the incredible achievements of this cohort. Central to the event was the opportunity for CYP with SEND to showcase their talents and the evening included an art exhibition, dance, poetry recitation, singing, music and spoken word presentations. Over 100 students were recognised on the evening for their presentations, as well as their achievements across the curriculum year. Cllr Gwen Grahl, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools, said:

“It was wonderful to celebrate young people aged 14 and above who live and study in Brent, and whose achievements often go unrecognised. With its successful launch in 2023, the SEND Celebration is set to become a biannual tradition.”

- 6.9 Alongside the performances and handing out of certificates, there were various information stalls for families to gain knowledge of Brent’s comprehensive support offer for children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers. The event was designed to be fully accessible, with a designated quiet area, fully accessible spaces and free food and drink for all attendees.



The Worshipful the Mayor of the London Borough of Brent, Councillor Ryan Hack at the SEND Celebration event in June 2025

7 Leaders in Brent are ambitious for children and young people with SEND

- 7.1 Creating an inclusive Brent is a key priority for the local area partnership. This is expressed through the Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027, Borough Plan 2023-2027, and the Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029 that defines the outcomes leaders in Brent are working collectively to achieve for all children and young people with SEND. An annual action plan for the implementation of the SEND Strategy, which is regularly reviewed by both the Inclusion Strategic Board (ISB), reporting to the Brent Children’s Trust, sets an aspirational culture of high expectations and quality across services and provision and identifies areas for development to improve the experience of children, young people and their families.
- 7.2 As the end of 2025 marks the year in which Brent’s existing SEND Strategy comes to a close, extensive work has been undertaken to co-produce Brent’s new ‘Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029’. This was co-produced with a range of stakeholders including children and young people with SEND and their parents/carers, school staff (from all sectors), health colleagues, social care colleagues and early help. The new strategy has identified three priority areas:

- Improve support,
- Improve safety in the community
- Improve preparation for adulthood.

7.3 The governance structure for the Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029 is depicted in Figure 5, below.

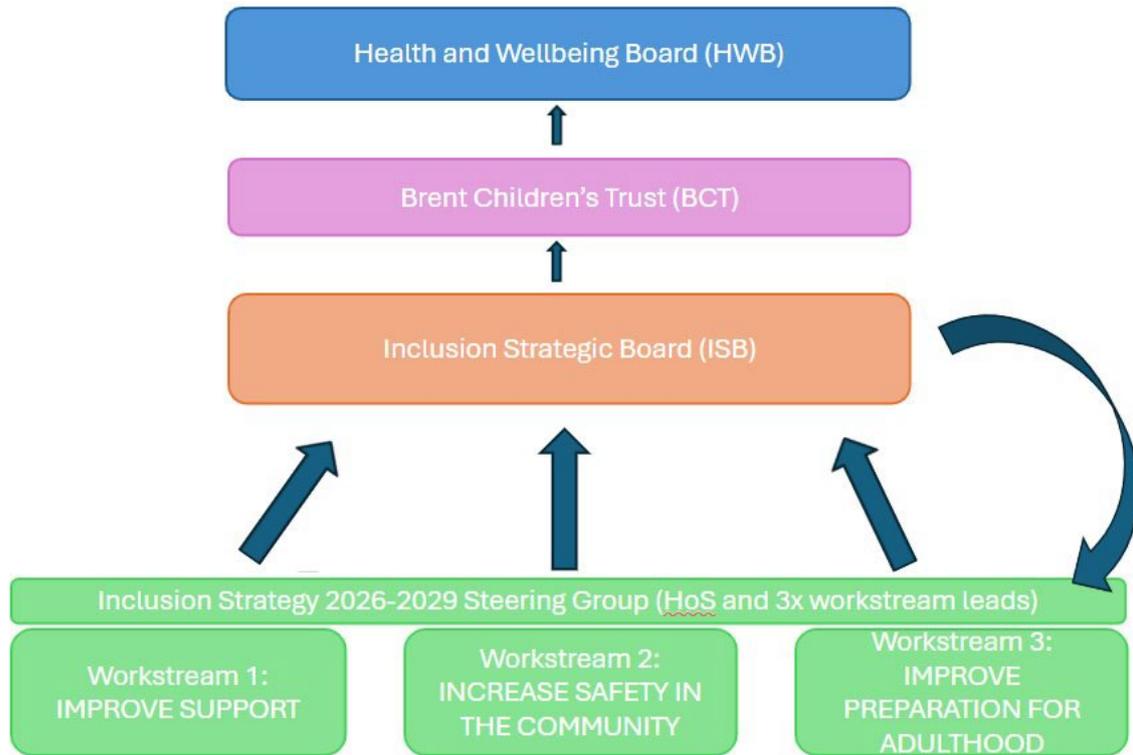


Figure 5: The governance structure for Brent's Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029

7.4 There is strong oversight of SEND through the Corporate Director for Children and Young People, who holds the statutory responsibility for SEND alongside the Chief Medical Officer, NHS NWL (who is the SEND lead), the NWL Executive Board, the Programme Director Maternity and Children Young People NWL ICB and the Borough Director for the ICP. Clear governance structures and reporting mechanisms are in place that cover all aspects of SEND and Alternative Provision through the Brent Children's Trust (BCT), the Inclusion Board that reports to the BCT and the ICP Executive. Processes for making decisions are structured, so that partnership leaders can swiftly agree to changes that are required to improve services or address funding issues. Strong partnership working was identified as a strength in Brent's recent (January 2025) Local Area SEND Inspection (available [here](#)).

7.5 Through the Inclusion Strategic Board, parents (represented by Brent Parent Carer Forum) and practitioners collectively review practice impact. Recent thematic reviews considered by the Inclusion Strategic Board include the Quality and Impact of EHCPs, Preparing for Adulthood, Voice of Children and Young People, Health Transition into the Integrated Care Service and Sufficiency of Places. Quarterly reviews of performance give the partnership the opportunity to provide high support and high challenge to service providers, using a refreshed SEND dashboard. As stated in 7.1, the ISB is integral to reviewing progress made against the commitments of the SEND Strategy 2021-2025. A final review of the impact of Brent's SEND Strategy 2021-2025 will take place via ISB in January 2026, the results of which will then be shared with BCT members.

- 7.6 An Executive Board oversees the local ICP arrangements for Children and Young People. For children with SEND, priority areas of focus are:
- To support children and young people to achieve good mental health and resilience through addressing CAMHS waiting times and implementing the 'Thrive' model.
 - To build whole system pathways to support children with Speech, Language and Communication Needs through early intervention, and to manage rising demand at statutory levels.
 - To ensure that neurodiverse children and young people and their families and carers can live well and receive appropriate and timely support when required.
 - To address health inequalities.
- 7.7 Leaders in Brent continually evaluate services against parent/carer feedback and use performance indicators to understand the areas for service improvement and development in commissioning. The SEF is jointly owned across partners and clearly expresses areas of success and areas for development. Accountability sits across the partnership and monitoring enables leaders to jointly evaluate whether services and provision are improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND, not only whether children and young people have received the services.

8 Leaders actively engage and work with children and young people and families

- 8.1 As stated in 7.2, above, Brent has again demonstrated its clear commitment to meaningful co-production by engaging fully with all stakeholders when developing the Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029. Furthermore, feedback on 'lessons learned' from the SEND Strategy 2021-2025 was sought from CYP with SEND and their parents and carers during the engagement sessions for the Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029 to better understand from their perspective what had worked, and not worked with the 2021-2025 strategy. For example, many parents and carers felt the previous strategy was too long and was difficult to understand. CYP felt that the strategy did not contain enough commitments to things that mattered to them. Brent has sought to address these issues in the new strategy by, for example, making it much shorter, and written with non-specialist language. For CYP, actions that they said were important to them – such as the establishment of an 'Inclusive Disco' have been included.
- 8.2 In addition to the Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029, children and young people with SEND have participated in the development of the Council's current Youth Strategy and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy. While children and young people are actively engaged in developing the Brent approach to SEND, it is recognised that there remains a need for consistent and regular engagement with children and young people. The proposals for the new social club for children and young people with SEND were themselves co-produced with children and young people with SEND and their parents and carers at an event in August 2024 that designed to facilitate successful and enjoyable engagement with young people with a wide range of SEND, including those who are non-speaking and those with significant learning needs.
- 8.3 Brent is committed to meaningful co-production with parents and carers of children and young people with SEND, exemplified in the agreement to support BPCF financially for the next 3-5 years (at least) to ensure that they are able to fulfil their vital function within the local area. As testament to Brent's clear commitment to meaningful co-production, feedback from Brent's parent carer forum about the local partnership is positive:

“Brent Parent Carer Forum CIC is the commissioned participation forum whose role is to reach out to parent carers and feedback on services, offer constructive challenge to current services along with working together to co-production future services. To do this effectively and meaningfully there is a need for regular two-way communication between ourselves and the local authority and health, which we have. We feel we are on the same journey together all wanting the very best outcomes for our children and young people. There are no closed doors in Brent and we are listened to with openness and responded to with a solution focused ethos. We are treated as equal partners with a place on Brent’s Inclusion board with a regular agenda item allowing us to feedback what parents are telling us. Brents SEF is owned by us all and acts as a live work plan where together we work what next, how and by when. We feel involved welcomed, valued and respected.”

- 8.4 The Brent Parent Carer Forum (BPCF) is an integral member of the ISB. The commitment to inclusion of the parental voice is also evidenced in parent/carer participation in the recruitment of senior local authority staff responsible for SEND services, most recently in the appointment of the new Head of Service for Inclusion in July 2024. The BPCF now has 1050 members and a team of 12 parent champions who promote parental participation for parents/carers of children with an education, health and care plan and those being supported at SEN support.
- 8.5 Table 3 below provides a snapshot of BPCF workshops available for parents and carers of children with SEND from August 2022 to date with those in bold available from January to July 2024.

Table 3: BPCF Workshops for Parents and Carers

| Existing and repeating sessions | New sessions requested by parents (as of January 2025) |
|---|--|
| <p>How to challenge effectively to create better outcome for your children</p> <p>The role of SENDIASS</p> <p>Understanding behaviours in your child that may challenge</p> <p>The importance of good dental care</p> <p>Understanding and managing behaviours that may challenge</p> <p>Understanding the importance of section A on an EHCP</p> <p>Moving to secondary school</p> <p>Wetting the bed – toilet training and enuresis – incontinence service</p> <p>Health and wellbeing for parent</p> <p>Sleep hygiene</p> <p>Bullying what are the signs to look at for and how to support</p> <p>Applying for an EHCP</p> <p>Understanding SEND support /Graduated approach</p> <p>BOAT supporting Year 5 parents</p> <p>Person Centred planning</p> <p>Money matters</p> <p>Annual reviews</p> <p>Personal budgets and direct payments</p> | <p>The role of social care</p> <p>Understanding and supporting puberty</p> <p>The role of the inclusion service</p> <p>The ‘Thrive’ model</p> <p>New inspection framework</p> <p>Sensory communication</p> <p>The role of health therapists</p> <p>The role of community school nursing</p> <p>SLT tips – communication</p> <p>Money matters</p> <p>The role of family wellbeing centres</p> <p>Understanding the Resource Allocation System (RAS) in social care</p> <p>New beginnings – supporting the move to big school for parents (Early Years)</p> <p>The role of the SENCO</p> <p>Understanding how language develops</p> <p>What is neurodiversity</p> <p>Early Help – what support is available</p> <p>Direct payments and personal budgets</p> <p>Introductions to Brent Family Wellbeing Centres</p> <p>Understanding behaviour as communication</p> <p>Navigating the Local Offer</p> |

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| SEND review session Young person's transition review | How to ask the right questions |
|---|--------------------------------|

- 8.6 As stated in 8.3, above, as central members of the Inclusion Strategic Board, BPCF have a standing item on every agenda to give and receive feedback and ensure they shape decision-making. A recently updated travel assistance policy, approved by Cabinet in June 2024, was co-produced with BPCF. The new travel assistance policy has an increased focus on supporting children and young people with SEND to develop the skills they need to travel independently using public transport. BPCF colleagues co-produced the service specification for the newly launched 'independent travel training' (ITT) service with members from the Inclusion and Transport teams and were subsequently involved in feeding back on the bids during the tender process. Other projects currently being co-produced between BPCF, the LA and health partners include:
- The establishment of a support group for parents of children with SEND,
 - The exploration of a developmental profiling tool for children for whom there are concerns about their development.
- 8.7 There is an 'open door' between BPCF and the local authority, which ensures that feedback is continuous and BPCF can help to shape creative responses to emerging need. The Head of Service for Inclusion meets with BPCF at least monthly, and there is regular LA attendance at BPCF forum meetings. In 2025, Team and Service Managers from the Inclusion department commenced in person 'drop-in' support sessions for parents and carers, held in conjunction with BPCF meetings. These sessions have proved very popular and have helped to mitigate e.g. communication challenges.
- 8.8 An annual survey is undertaken by the BPCF that helps partners to understand areas of satisfaction and concerns to ensure that improvement plans are co-produced. Initial findings from the 2024 survey include requests for support for the whole family including siblings and more transparency in relation to referrals, eligibility and thresholds. Concerns raised include waiting times, communication between professionals for young people who are eligible for adult services, support for parents whose children are anxious about school and having to go out-of-borough to access leisure activities. Headline strengths are STAR (Waiting Well programme for supporting autism referrals) and BOAT (Brent Outreach Autism Team) that some mainstream schools support children well, that Brent hubs/FWCs provide support for young people with additional needs who are seeking employment, provide families with access to specialist parenting programmes and specialist health practitioners; and specialist groups such as the CODA group.
- 8.9 A steering group of parents/carers and young people has been established to maintain oversight of the Local Offer to ensure continued improvement to communications. The steering group are driving forward, and own, the Preparing for Adulthood website through the young peoples' advisor network. Three workstreams (Health and Wellbeing, Navigation and Flow, and News and Events) are ensuring that stakeholders are provided with detailed information on what to expect and where to access support for parents/carers and young people. Positive comments have been received from parents about how easy it is to access the Local Offer, and how useful the information is to them when making decisions about their children.
- 8.10 A post-16 sub-group of the Inclusion Board has been set up with BPCF to drive forward the Post-16 Skills Resource Centre. Parents and Carers have been canvassed to identify what they would

want the centre to deliver and how. A clear steer has come for activities not just in the new building but across the borough. The next phase is developing an implementation plan which will involve parents and children and young people. The successful recruitment of a Post 16 Skills and Resource Manager in 2025 will serve to further drive forward work in this area.

- 8.11 Of equal importance is how parents/carers of young people at SEN support or where children do not have an EHCP but might have a health diagnosis, are meaningfully informed and able to navigate the system. A new 'Supporting children with health needs in school' policy has been coproduced to ensure there are clear expectations of school, health providers and the local authority particularly in relation to EBSA.
- 8.12 Feedback from BPCF illustrates how members feel the forum is positively impactful for children and young people with SEND and their families in Brent, and that this positive impact is assisted by strong relationships between BPCF, health partners and the LA:

'Working with the LA and health is a partnership, as we truly act as the critical friend. The success is seen as our success so we are able to assist them to deliver services for the family.' (BPCF Director)

'Families are now feeling they are heard, but there is still work to do. The LA are willing to work in a reflective manner to continue to improve and I am happy to be a part of this journey to develop a better Brent for all.' (BPCF Director)

9 Leaders in Brent have an accurate, shared understanding of the needs of children and young people

- 9.1 Leaders use data effectively to help the wider partnership identify and respond to issues. Brent has a SEND specific Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) (created by Public Health) available [here](#). Additionally, leaders in Brent draw on SEN 2 data, health data, school census data analysis, EHC referral and assessment data and referral data for diagnoses and therapies to shape the strategic direction of both service delivery and commissioned services. Data is shared annually and quarterly through the Inclusion Strategic Board (ISB) that reports to the Brent Children's Trust. This is triangulated with the ongoing and annual cycles of feedback and engagement sessions with parents/carers and young people who help leaders to understand the needs of children and young people.
- 9.2 To further refine the understanding that leaders have within Brent of the needs of children and young people, additional focus groups are set up to drill down further into data sets to enable evidence led, targeted support programmes. A clear example of this way of working is the current 'school readiness' working group – a collaboration between Public Health, Inclusion, Early Help, Health and Data colleagues to work collaboratively to share data and thinking around the question of why Brent's percentage of children achieving a good level of development (GLD) at the end of Reception is lower than that of Brent's statistical neighbours. Figure 6, below, shows how further analysis of the GLD data is being used to inform which groups to target for support. Initial findings indicate that boys of black heritage who are on free school meals (FSM) should be prioritised for targeted, early intervention to ensure that they can fulfil their potential. To further inform this work, and as part of the Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029, work is underway to create a combined data set for Brent children, This data set would combine data from health, social care and education to create a more holistic understanding of children's needs. It is hypothesised that this more holistic understanding will facilitate improved design and targeting of support, and, with time, the development of preventative support packages for Brent's most vulnerable children and their families.

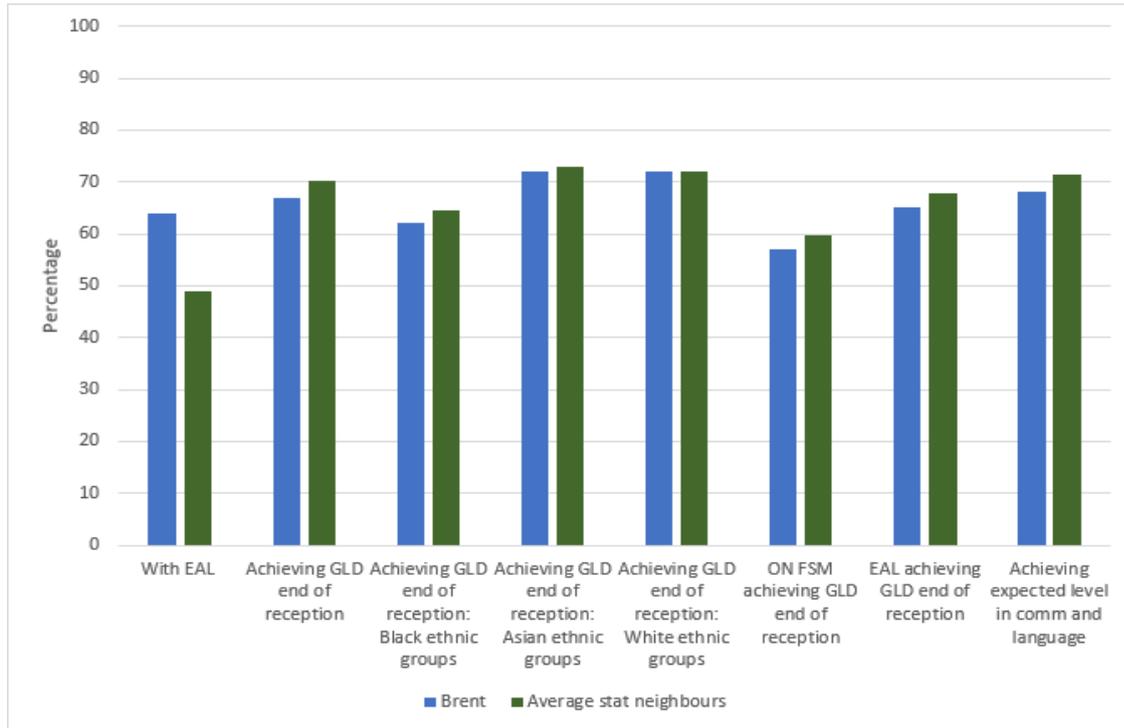


Figure 5: A comparison of Brent’s GLD data broken down by demographic, as compared with Brent’s statistical neighbours

10 Leaders in Brent commission services and provision to meet the needs and aspirations of children and young people including alternative provision and evaluate the impact of these services

- 10.1 Services and systems are designed around the needs of children and young people to achieve the principles in the SEND Strategy and are informed by evidence of what works in achieving good outcomes. Whilst joint commissioning arrangements have become more complex due to the establishment of the Integrated Care Board/System that operates across 8 boroughs (soon to be 13 as of April 2026), close working at a local level within the ICP and engagement in the ICB programme enables partners to make best use of all the resources available to improve outcomes for children and young people in the most effective, way.
- 10.2 Leaders understand that children and young people with SEND may be more vulnerable to abuse and ensure that this is carefully considered when commissioning and evaluating services. Effective safeguarding arrangements are considered in the multiagency response to tripartite funded packages of provision, the DSR, LEAP and CETR panels and in the commissioning of residential settings or commissioning alternative provision. Corporate Parenting Committee oversees the duties of the council and its partners in respect of looked after children and care leavers to ensure these are being fulfilled. It also seeks to improve the life chances of looked after children and care leavers in Brent. A clear example of this commitment is Full Council having unanimously voted to make being in care a protected characteristic in Brent in November 2024.
- 10.3 Over the last five years an increase in the identification of needs has led to an increase in demand pressures that is impacting on commissioned services. Partners are very aware of pressures in the system and are working together to develop a sustainable offer. In the health provider workforce, for example some areas are running at a 50% vacancy rate. A particular pressure area is the commissioning of therapists for pupils in out-of-borough school placements or for those who are registered with an out-of-borough GP. The ICP Executive has established working groups to address the workforce related issues and joint commissioning of services to meet need. For example, in relation to neurodiversity (ND) and mental health and wellbeing, leaders are jointly evaluating the service provision in Brent with a direct focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Focused work on improving mental health and wellbeing has begun to gain traction. The Mental Health and Wellbeing Sub-group is tracking the number of children and young people waiting for assessment, with a focus on reducing assessment and treatment waiting times. The highest numbers of children and young people on the CAMHS treatment waiting list are age 11-16 years, living in NW10, NW2 and HA9, accounting for a 50% increase in presentations. NWL ICB and CNWL are developing prototypes to test pathways for early intervention and prevention in mental health (CAMHS, CMHT and Crisis) in the NW2, NW10 and HA9 neighbourhoods. The aim is to bring NHS Talking Therapies closer to communities utilising voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) partner sites/premises.

- 10.4 There is significant variation in waiting times for ASD/ADHD assessment and certain treatments by CAMHS. There are currently 900 Brent CYP awaiting assessment for neurodiversity (ND). Of these, 56% are male and 44% are female. 23% CYP are aged 5-7years, 59% are aged 7-16years and 18% are 17 up to 18 years. Of the 900 CYP awaiting ND assessment, 24% are awaiting assessment for ASC and 76% are either awaiting assessment for ADHD only or are awaiting a combined ASC/ADHD assessment. The current waiting time for all forms of ND assessment is 34 months in Q3, this represents an increase of 4 weeks since Q2. Non recurrent ICB funding has been agreed (to be used by March 2026), to reduce the number of CYP on ND waiting lists by 50%. This action will in turn reduce wait times. For further details regarding ND wait times, and progress against Brent's post-SEND inspection action plan see Appendix 1.
- 10.5 The waiting list is triaged and support for conditions such as sleep difficulties, anxiety, depression and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) are offered whilst waiting for a diagnosis. The Children's Trust has lobbied the NWL ICB for levelling up funding for Brent, with the Chair having written to the Mental Health Lead in the ICB, seeking addition to the proposed investment plan and recovery plan for mental health services to ensure parity with other NWL ICB authorities. There is currently a workstream being developed to analyse demand and capacity within the service and to consider what additional services the ICP could bid for at NWL level to offer greater preventative capacity and support young people through waiting well provision. Dialogue continues between the local ICP Executive and the senior leadership of the ICB on how resourcing can be improved.
- 10.6 Over the past 18 months the health visiting service has implemented a targeted recovery plan to improve delivery and uptake of the 5 mandated checks for health visiting across the borough. Significant progress has been made towards improving access across the borough. Antenatal checks for vulnerable women have continued to improve and have been completed on time, on average, 85.1% of the time in Q1 and Q2 2025/26. This continues to be a targeted area for ongoing improvement. In Q1/Q2, new birth visits were completed within 14 days 96.3% of the time and within 30 days 99.1% of the time. Performance in Brent in this area is well above the national average. Targets are met for 6-8 weeks checks by 8 weeks with an average completion rate of 85.5% in Q1/Q2 with an improvement seen through Q2. The 12-month child developmental reviews were completed by 15 months 91.9% of the time and 2-2.5 year reviews were completed on time 87.5% of the time. Again, Brent results are well above the national average. Health visitor vacancies have historically been very high across Brent in recent years however recent successful recruitment will see the vacancy rate significantly decrease across Q3/4 as new staff are onboarded. The HV team will continue to focus on improving access to 6-8 week checks and face to face antenatal sessions for vulnerable women and with ongoing access to virtual antenatal group sessions for families on the universal pathway.
- 10.7 In addition to the mandated checks, the health visiting service provides the Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) programme to a small cohort of vulnerable families who wish to take part alongside delivering the popular Infant to School programme which supports school readiness from 3 months to 4 years of age.

- 10.8 Since its inception, the Integrated Care Partnership in Brent has recognised that children need to be given a greater priority in terms of service development and population healthcare. The ICP has built closer links between health, social and education teams and in addition to the Children's Trust has set up a dedicated Children's workstream for the ICP. This means that each of the four ICP sub-groups has a set of children's priorities, cutting across physical and mental health, including neurodiversity. The priorities include, neurodiversity, the development of paediatric hubs, asthma, CAMHS, the promotion of better mental health and childhood vaccinations through the 'Brent Health Matters' model, developing the THRIVE model and addressing capacity gaps in the Special School Nursing service as a result of increased special school places.
- 10.9 36 schools are signed up to become Asthma Friendly, with 9 more in the pipeline, reflecting strong borough-wide engagement. 12 schools have achieved full Asthma Friendly status and 8 are currently undergoing assessment meaning more children are learning in environments better equipped to manage asthma safely. A further 28 schools have started the training pathway, increasing staff confidence and ensuring consistent asthma management across settings. Regular welfare and asthma-awareness training, led by the Specialist Respiratory Nurse, has been well attended, strengthening school capacity to identify and respond to asthma needs promptly. The Children's Community Nursing Team is receiving 25–30 referrals per month, improving early intervention and reducing the risk of avoidable asthma crises. Asthma Awareness Week delivered successfully to increasing community understanding and reinforcing preventative approaches. The overall impact is more schools are asthma-ready, staff trained, and children and young people with asthma are receiving earlier, more coordinated support contributing to safer practice and reduced health risks across Brent.
- 10.10 Brent ICP has worked in partnership with local system partners, families and children and young people to co-design an Early Intervention & Prevention prototype service aligned to the Getting Help grouping of the THRIVE model. This work aims to address identified gaps within the local CYP mental health offer by shifting the focus to earlier, preventative and accessible support. To test this approach, an enhanced provider model has been adopted, enabling existing providers to extend their remit and work in new, collaborative ways commencing early 2026. Through this pilot, Brent ICP is working closely with established local providers including CNWL CAMHS, Brent Centre for Young People, Anna Freud Centre and Brent Young People THRIVE to strengthen and diversify early help support for children and young people in Brent. Following the pilot, the aim is to launch the new service offer in 2026.

- 10.11 The Brent Child Development Service (CDS) has experienced significant consultant vacancies over the last 24 months alongside insufficient capacity to meet demand which is resulting in long waiting times for an initial assessment within Community Paediatrics. As of October 2025, there are 221 children and young people waiting for an initial assessment (compared to 500+ in Q3 2024/25) with a longest wait of 28 weeks for an appointment with a paediatrician. This represents a significant improvement over the last 12 months/post-SEND inspection where the longest waiter was at previously at 50+ weeks. The service has a recovery plan in place to manage available capacity as efficiently as possible, and CLCH is allocating additional resources from Q4 (2025/26 financial year) to support this recovery plan by commissioning an outsourced company to undertake assessment to reduce waits, however this funding is non recurrent. A 6 month long full internal service review has been undertaken within the service which concluded in September 2025 and an action plan is in place to address underlying causes including development of a business case to request an increase in funding to align the service with need and resource in neighbouring boroughs.
- 10.12 There are currently 406 children under 5 on the CLCH waiting list for a social communication assessment (SOCA), with an average waiting time in the last 12 months of 68 weeks. This represents a significant improvement over the last 18 months when then average waiting time was in excess of 87+ weeks. The improvement to under 5s SOCA waiting times has been driven by CLCH commissioning (via ICB ringfenced funding) an outsourced company to support wait reductions that has been operating from Family Wellbeing Centres and local health clinics to undertake assessments, during weekdays and on weekends when families are often better able to attend. A contract renewal to continue this support through Q4 2025 is being put in place to reduce waits, although this ICB funding is non recurrent. The outsourced service is linking with the Child Development Service and local speech and language and occupational therapy services where appropriate.
- 10.13 Because the Brent Waiting Well Autism service was highly successful, NHS NWL ICB has decided to continue and expand this type of support across all of North West London. To do this, the ICB has commissioned a well-established specialist provider, the Centre for ADHD and Autism Support (CAAS), to deliver the new NWL-wide Autism Support Service. This therefore means that the current Brent Autism Waiting Well service (STAR) will be closing from the 1st April 2026. Support will continue through CAAS, who will offer help both before and after an autism diagnosis for children and young people, parents and carers and professionals working with families. The new service aims to ensure that everyone has access to consistent, high-quality support—no matter where they live in NWL. Support will also be available from Brent Family Wellbeing Centres, the SENCo at your child’s setting, and Brent Parent Carer Forum. CAAS will be working with Brent Borough leads, the Local Authority Inclusion Service, Brent CAMHS, the Parent Carer Forum, Family Wellbeing Centres and others to ensure that the service is shaped to meet Brent’s needs. Further information on the new service, including referral routes, contact details and the range of support available will be shared via these Professionals’ networks in late 2025 and early 2026.

- 10.14 Key performance indicators for therapy services have been altered in the last 12 months, reflecting the work NWL ICB is undertaking to standardise the offer for children and young people across North West London. In terms of timely access to health services, the 12-week assessment timeliness has been met on average for 95.4% of children requiring Occupational Therapy in Q1 2025/26 and 92% in Q2. Similarly, 98.7% of children requiring Speech and Language Therapy were seen within 12 weeks in Q1 2025/26 and 97.7% in Q2. In Q1 2025/26, 100% of children and young people referred for Physiotherapy were seen within their 6-week target for assessment and 99.3% in Q2.
- 10.15 The annual (SLT) and quarterly (OT) user feedback audits completed by the SLT and OT teams demonstrated consistently positive outcomes. Service users and schools have reported high levels of satisfaction with the quality of assessments, clarity of communication, and the support provided throughout the CYP's care journey, with 95% of SENCOs rating their experience of the SLT service as excellent. However, the number of special school nurses is not yet at the level required to meet the expanded number of special school places in Brent following the increase across the last 3 years and into the future. This work is ongoing. In the meantime, the ICP Executive have provided non-recurrent funding until March 2026 to recruit staff to address the issue on an interim basis and staff are now in place.
- 10.16 In October 2025, the borough launched a new Children's bladder and bowel (continence) service in Brent in response to local need identified by Brent Parent Carer Forum, local families and health practitioners. The new service has closed a historical commissioning gap in Brent where there has not been a service at all previously. The service was co-designed with local parents from Brent Parent Carer Forum and who also engaged with the CLCH health inequalities team during mobilisation to ensure all letters and written advice meets health literacy standards to improve access and reduce health inequalities. The tier two service will be able to directly support up to 520 CYP in the borough with a range of bladder and bowel issues and is providing training to tier 1 colleagues including health visitors and school nurses to enable them to better signpost families to appropriate support before escalating to Teir 2 services. The team will also provide training to school staff to enable them to signpost families and give advice.
- 10.17 Effective decision-making by a Joint Funding Panel ensures that, where appropriate, joint funding across agencies is applied for children with complex needs, including looked after children needing residential and/or residential school placements, and children requiring Continuing Health Care. Development of the NWL ICB has resulted in a centralised Continuing Health Care Team covering all 8 boroughs, resulting in a review of complex care and continuing health care case funding.
- 10.18 The Brent School Place Planning Strategy (2024-2028) outlines the approach to meeting SEND sufficiency. Responding to the need for demand for local places, the Council invested £44m between 2022 and 2025 in new ARPs and an expansion of the special school estate, including a new secondary special school for children with ASC which opened in September 2025. This capital programme added over 380 special provision places in Brent. The majority of projects in this first phase of capital investment have either completed or will complete by early 2027/. A second phase of capital investment to further expand local specialist places has been agreed by Brent Cabinet. This 'phase 2' capital programme will involve an investment of £10.6m to deliver a further 212 specialist places (pending final approval at Cabinet in January 2026) through expansion of Brent's existing special schools, including onto new, bespoke satellite sites. A 'phase 3' capital plan is in the early stages of development, to ensure that Brent continues to develop sufficiency of appropriate school places for Brent children.

- 10.19 As part of the phase 1 capital plan, and in recognition of the growing need for post-16 provision, the Council agreed investment in the creation of a Post-16 Skills Resource Centre based at Welsh Harp reservoir with investment of £3m approved by Cabinet for 16-25-year-olds. It will focus on pathways into supported employment and will include a horticultural centre. The Welsh Harp centre is on course for delivery in 2027. The new travel assistance policy and new 'independent travel training' (ITT) service are also aimed at supporting preparation for adulthood (see para 5.2).
- 10.20 In 2025, to meet the rising demand for Brent's SEND support services, schools forum approved the recruitment of additional staff to enable the service to meet rising SEND needs across the borough. Additional staff were added to BOAT, STAR and the specialist teaching service. The impact of these staff has been clear, with school staff commenting positively on the level of support available (see e.g. 4.11, above). The national shortage of Educational Psychologists (EPs) continues to present a challenge. However, Brent's approach of 'growing our own' EPs is bearing fruit, with Brent able to both increase the number of main grade EPs we have, and decrease reliance on locums during 2025. This has been achieved as a result of the clear long term vision and strategy of Brent's Principle Educational Psychologist. Planning is ongoing to further increase Brent's cohort of main grade EPs, to enable EPs to engage in more system-wide, non-statutory work. Brent is supportive of the London Pledge for EPs and our approach to e.g. locum recruitment is in line with all tenets of the pledge.
- 10.21 The Inclusion Service works closely with schools to avoid exclusions, where possible, and where this cannot be avoided commissions appropriate provision to meet their needs. In the 2024/25 academic year there were 47 permanent exclusion notifications received from Brent schools and of those, 17 were withdrawn or rescinded in Brent schools through partnership working between the local authority and schools and the use of managed moves. Schools also arrange managed moves directly and, whilst a lens has been placed on the use of part-time timetables for children, further work needs to be undertaken to better understand how schools use dual registration and managed moves to offset exclusions. This activity is keeping permanent exclusions low. Of the 27 pupils permanently excluded from Brent schools in 2024/25, 3 were of primary age and 24 were of secondary age, of whom 24 were Brent residents. Additionally, 16 Brent resident pupils of secondary age were permanently excluded from schools located in neighbouring authorities. There were no permanent exclusions for looked after children. An EHC Plan emergency annual review is held where there are concerns about placement stability for looked after children and young people with an EHCP and resources, training and integrated working around the pupils are established to address any emerging needs. Of 2432 suspensions in total in 2024/25, 272 were for pupils with an EHCP. There were 19 suspensions given to 19 pupils with an EHCP from out-of-borough schools in 2024/25, and no permanent exclusions. Between September and November 2025 there have been 286 suspensions from Brent schools, 60 of primary aged children and 226 of secondary aged children. To date this academic year there has been no permanent exclusions of a pupil with an EHCP from Brent primary and secondary schools, and 30 suspensions.

- 10.22 Commissioned provision includes two local authority pupil referral units, a free school alternative provision and out of borough alternative provision. For those children who are excluded, Brent River College, one of the LA's Pupil Referral Units, provides effective support. In 2019 Brent established an alternative provision school to meet SEMH needs through the free school presumption route. The Roundwood School has been operating since January 2021 and works closely with schools in Brent to offer respite provision. Where a child with EHCP or SEN needs are referred for respite, the school works closely with the LA to ensure the placement is appropriate. For children across KS1-KS3 with more complex behavioural needs Brent Council continues to commission six places a year at The Pears Family School for respite. The respite is dual registered and combines curriculum provision with therapeutic intervention with the child and family. This provision has successfully been used to prevent primary and KS3 exclusions for pupils with complex needs who have subsequently transitioned back into their home school or been supported to transition to a new school. Pupils placed in dual registered provision by Brent Council have clear SMART intervention plans in place.
- 10.23 The Inclusion Support Team provides effective oversight of the placement of young people attending alternative provisions. A panel oversees the referral and placement process for the 6-day statutory exclusions timeline and for health needs provision. To improve decision-making for children with health needs, a separate panel called the Health Needs Panel has been established from September 2023 that combines education, health and care specialists to oversee medical needs and emotionally based school avoidance. This will support the role out of a new policy regarding the health needs of pupils in schools, as well as a coproduced toolkit and training programme. Most young people with a health need are supported through dual registration with Ashley College, the LA's medical PRU. A monthly meeting with both PRU headteachers maintains oversight of young people who are placed in the provision and their transitions. An AP coordinator and an Inclusion Support Team Manager are responsible for commissioning in and out-of-borough provision arranged by the local authority for those unable to attend local PRUs and undertake robust quality assurance prior to commissioning and through the academic year. The Fair Access Process is effective and all secondary schools work in partnership with the local authority to ensure a successful return to mainstream settings for those pupils who are ready.
- 10.24 Addressing disproportionality remains a focus for the CYP Directorate and schools. Through the monitoring of fixed term and permanent exclusions, the LA and schools in Brent are working together to understand disproportionate levels of exclusions for Black young people and developing relevant responses to support full inclusion within Brent. In 2024/25, for secondary pupils, 23.1% of all permanent exclusions were for boys of Black Caribbean heritage. This figure marks an increase from the 8.7% figure of the previous academic year. The Local Authority has funded anti-racist training for school leaders – 'Leading from the Top' in 2023/24. Building on this, the local authority funded an Anti-Racist Programme for all schools that includes the Leeds Beckett Anti-Racist School Award in 2024/25, aimed at addressing educational disproportionality. However, given the rise in exclusions for boys of Black Caribbean heritage over the last reporting period, greater exploration of the data has been initiated, including looking at the intersection of SEND and ethnicity, and socio-economic status and ethnicity, to ensure that our response to this concerning trend is appropriately informed.

- 10.25 There were 2432 fixed term exclusions to 1501 pupils in 2024/25. Of those 1501 pupils, 293 children and young people were subject to a child protection plan in the same period, 42 were known to the Youth Justice Service and 415 were known to Early Help in the same period. These represent significant increases on the previous academic year. In 2024/25, 3 pupils who were excluded went on to be registered as Elective Home Education (EHE) due to parents not wanting their child to go to a PRU. All relevant safeguarding and provision maps are checked on a termly basis. There are currently 21 children and young people registered as EHE with an EHCP and 66 supported by education other than at school (EOTAS) commissioned by the local authority. This includes a number of alternative arrangements to full time education to ensure that children are accessing appropriate education in line with their EHCP. 21 young people of statutory school age are currently being supported by tuition provision whilst they are waiting for a school place (all provided with at least 15 hours of learning). As referenced in section 10.12, above, Brent is working hard to increase capacity within its special schools and ARPs, and by increasing support to mainstream schools to more confidently meet the needs of children with SEND, to ensure that no children are unplaced whilst awaiting a place within specialist provision. In terms of benchmarking this data, as the Department for Education does not collect data of the number of children with an EHCP who are e.g. EHE or on EOTAS or who are unplaced, it is difficult to see how Brent compares nationally.
- 10.26 Ensuring vulnerable children and young people are more effectively supported across the partnership in school attendance and improving oversight and transparency of pupil movements in relation to alternative provision is a priority. A particular focus for the 24/25 academic year was to ensure that Brent enhances its database of all students registered as Elective Home Education (EHE) and Educated Other Than at School (EOTAS) so that the borough can ensure effective safeguarding of these cohorts.
- 11 Leaders in Brent create an environment for effective practice and multi-agency working to flourish.**
- 11.1 Leaders across the education sector play a key role in partnership working to support effective practice. The local authority maintains a strong and effective local partnership with special and mainstream schools working collaboratively to support children and young people through the Setting and School Effectiveness Partnership Board and through regular school planning meetings with the Corporate Director and Director of Education. Sessions with schools that focus on SEND are held throughout the year, including via SENCo forums (three face to face and three virtually every academic year with dedicated sessions for schools with ARPs added in the 24/25 academic year. In February 2025, Brent held its first 'SEND Headteachers reference group meeting' to create a space where leaders in SEND and school leaders can come together to discuss current challenges in the system and agree mutually acceptable ways forwards. These meetings are held bi-monthly and have been important in enabling more system wide thinking in the area of SEND. The Head of Inclusion and the Director of Education meet every half term with the heads of the local special schools also to discuss issues including capacity, forward planning and current challenges.

- 11.2 Close collaboration with colleagues in the NWL ICB is well-supported by strong links with Brent's designated clinical officer (DCO). To further strengthen multi-agency working, the ICB made the decision to make the DCO covering Brent a full-time role in 2024. This decision has already yielded benefits, with the DCO more available to attend meetings with stakeholders from across multiple sectors. The DCO has taken forward on behalf of the local area key aspects of the Down Syndrome Act, by e.g. conducting a mapping exercise in the borough to comprehensively understand Brent's position in terms of what services and support was available for parents. It is important to note that the Act does not introduce new duties but a requirement to have due regard to the guidance when carrying out relevant functions. Across NWL ICB, Ealing (243) and Brent (265) have the highest number of registered patients with Trisomy 21 (Down syndrome) together accounting for ~36% of the total NWL cohort. A focus group was held in November 2025 with parents of Down Syndrome children who gave useful insights into the challenges and triumphs. Paula (not the person's real name) shared her experience as a parent of a child with Down syndrome, highlighting the lack of support and information she received when her son was born. She described the challenges she faced in accessing appropriate services, including diagnostic tests and financial assistance, and the negative attitudes she encountered from healthcare professionals. Despite these obstacles, Paula emphasized the importance of early support and advocacy for children with Down syndrome, and she expressed hope for better resources and understanding in the future. The recommendation from the focus group will be shared at the Inclusion Strategic Board in January 2026.
- 11.3 Within the LA, multi-agency working is strong with clear plans for further improvement in this area. For example, School Effectiveness colleagues work closely with SEND Support team members to undertake joint quality assurance of ARP provision to ensure that there is a consistent shared sense of what 'good' SEND provision looks like in Brent. In February 2025, colleagues from the 0-25 SEND team and the SEND Outreach services team came together to complete their 'designated safeguarding lead' (DSL) training to ensure that all colleagues with a responsibility for children are suitably trained and skilled to ensure appropriate safeguarding. Since November 2024, the Inclusion service has been collaborating with colleagues in Adult Social Care, BPCF and health to draft Brent's 'All-ages autism strategy'. This key document is due to be published early 2026. Since October 2024, colleagues from across Social Care, Inclusion and Safeguarding have collaborated to conduct in-depth audits of children who have EHCPs and are also on child protection plans and who do not attend school (because, for example, they are EHE or on EOTAS packages). The results of these audits are fed back during Brent's monthly performance and QA meetings with findings informing next steps in terms of how children are supported. Brent's approach to supporting this cohort will of course evolve with the proposed legal changes around children who are EHE and on child protection plans.
- 11.4 Brent has a strong focus on the multi-agency quality assurance (QA) of EHCPs (including colleagues from Health, local authority (Children's Social Care and Inclusion) and representatives of Brent Parent Carer Forum), conducted both across the Brent local area partnership and between Brent and a neighbouring LA to ensure a high level of scrutiny. There have been 16 themed EHCPs audited within the multiagency quality assurance process over the academic year 2024/2025 with themed audits across all stages. Auditors have been drawn from the LA's Early Years' Inclusion Service, Educational Psychology Team, 0-25 SEND and SEN Advisory Service and children's social care, North West London Integrated Care System, (Brent) Central London Community Healthcare NHS Trust and Central North West London Healthcare NHS Trust. Additional auditors attended from the statutory SEND service of a neighbouring LA.

Table 4: Multi-Agency EHCP Audit Results for the 2024/25 academic year

| EHCP Audit Overall Judgements | November 2024 | Feb 2025 | April 2025 | July 2025 | Results |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Outstanding | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Good | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 7 |
| Requires Improvement | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| Inadequate | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Result | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 16 |

- 11.5 As shown in Table 4, above, the 2024–2025 cycle shows gradual improvement as two EHCP received an outstanding rating: an increase in comparison to 2023-2024 audits. There was also a reduction in ‘required improvement’ outcomes. Across the 24/25 academic year, there was notable stable good performance (with small fluctuations) and there was also a significant reduction in ‘inadequate’ outcomes across both years. These results indicate a positive trajectory, and also strong knowledge of where improvement is needed. Areas identified for improvement have been shared with partners across the local area. This collaborative effort ensures greater consistency, clarity, and quality across all contributions to the EHCP process. In 2025/26, the audit cycle will continue with new priorities identified for action.
- 11.6 The new EHCP layout (rolled out in the 2024-2025 academic year) has been praised for its clarity and improved presentation of information. The new EHCP enables information to be concise and child-friendly, and parents have fed back positively to the LA via BPCF. The Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) Quality Assurance Framework was itself reviewed in June 2025 to ensure that how the local area assesses the quality of EHCPs across education, health, and social care is robust and consistent. Developed collaboratively by the Local Authority, local area partners, and North West London Integrated Care Board, the framework provides a structured approach to ensure that EHCPs meet statutory requirements and align with best practice. The framework supports a thorough and meaningful review of Education, Health and Care Plans. It helps to ensure that every plan is of high quality, person-centred and meets the needs of children and young people via multi-agency audits and internal team base audits.

Evidence Sources:

SEND Strategy 2021-25
SEND Strategy
Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2027
Brent Borough Plan 2023-2027
Brent Children's Trust Terms of Reference and papers
Brent Children's Trust Governance Overview
ICB and ICP Governance structure
ICP Executive Board minutes
Brent Children's Trust Papers
Health and Wellbeing Board papers
EHCP Multiagency Quality Assurance Report 2023/24
Inclusion Strategic Board papers
Inclusion Strategic Board Dashboards
SEND 0-25 Management Dashboard
Brent Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2023/24
Monthly Performance Report and dashboard
Development Options for the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service February 2022
Report on Education Psychology Service Recruitment and Retention December 2024
Action Plan, Project Plan and minutes for Supported Employment Forum
EHCP Multiagency Quality Assurance Report 2023/24
Overview of Brent EHC Need Assessment and revised EHCP template
Brent SENDIASS Annual Report 2023/24
Delivering Better Value (DBV) proposal and relevant papers (DBV Implementation Plan and DBV Board minutes); Dynamic Support Register
Minutes from LAEP and CETR meetings
Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee Report on School Attainment (2022/23) March 2024
Cabinet report on Post-16 Skills Resource Centre May 2023
Cabinet Report on SEND Capital Programme January 2022.
Supported Employment Forum papers/minutes
Annual Report on Exclusions 2023/24; Annual Report on Alternative Provision 2023/24;
Prospects Contract Monitoring reports
;Statement of Purpose – Ade Adepitan Short Break Centre; Short Breaks Criteria 2018;
SEND Celebration Event Photo Gallery
London Borough of Culture 2020 YouTube video
Holiday Activities and Food Programme annual reports 2021 – 2024
Local Offer and PFA websites
CLCH report on services
Memorandum of Understanding with BPCF
BPCF Workplan;
Thrive mapping and Thrive Project Plan;
Terms of Reference and Minutes of All-age Autism Board;
Supporting Children with Health Needs in School Policy
SEN 2 2024 Analysis Report
Brent JSNA 2019
School Census data
SEND reports to Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee 2023 and 2024
Brent ICP Overview and Priorities ICB

Report on Placements Commissioning, National Safeguarding Review Report of Children with Additional School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28 November 2024 Refresh
Special School Nursing Business Case
Joint Funding Panel Terms of Reference 2018;;
Development Options for the Special Educational Needs Assessment Service February 2022; Refreshed
Graduated Approach Framework 2023; SCERTS Plan 2023;
CYP Commissioning and Procurement Board papers regarding SLT, OT
Health service logic models – Asthma, ND, SLT

Appendix 1 – Brent Local Area Partnership SEND Inspection Improvement Plan – Update February 2026
1. The local area partnership should update EHC plans in a timely manner after annual reviews and at significant points of transition to make sure that EHC plans reflect the current needs of the children and young people with SEND accurately.

| Improvement Action | Impact Measures | Responsible Person | Date | RAG (action) | Progress Update |
|--|---|---|-------------|---------------------|---|
| Update 50% of EHCPs where changes are requested following annual review (AR) within statutory timescales (Devon judgement – 4 weeks). | % of EHCPs where changes are requested following AR updated within 4 weeks. | Service Manager for SEND Statutory Services | March 2026 | Of concern | Brent is currently only updating EHCPs where changes are requested following AR for children in phase transfer year groups (11+ and 16+). Current figure of ARs completed within timescales is 19%. The major barrier to improving this figure is staff capacity. Staff have been told to allocate 0.5days/week to completing ARs – this should increase AR timeliness but will decrease Brent’s 20 week figure. |
| Notify parents/carers of ‘no change’ to an EHCP following AR within statutory timescales (4 weeks) for 90% of plans where this is applicable. | % of parents/carers notified of ‘no change’ within statutory timescales. | Service Manager for SEND Statutory Services | March 2026 | Needs attention | Brent is currently completing this task for all ARs, but not within statutory timescales |
| Work with all schools attended by Brent children with EHCPs to ensure that 90% of ARs are completed in a timely manner and paperwork supplied within two weeks of the AR taking place. | % of annual reviews completed within timescales. | Service Manager for SEND Statutory Services | March 2026 | Needs attention | Most schools are completing ARs for children with EHCPs, but many are not completed to timescale. There are often delays in AR paperwork being sent to the LA. |
| Update 95% of EHCPs where changes are requested following emergency annual review (AR) within statutory timescales | % of EHCPs where changes are requested following emergency AR updated within 4 weeks. | Service Manager for SEND Statutory Services | March 2026 | Needs attention | Brent is currently completing this task for all emergency ARs, but not all are completed within statutory timescales. |

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| (Devon judgement – 4 weeks) for children at risk of placement breakdown. | | | | | |
| Improve accuracy of changes made to EHCPs following AR. | Frequency of complaints relating to proposed changes to EHCPs. | Service Manager for SEND Statutory Services | March 2026 | On track | We have few complaints relating to the accuracy of changes made to EHCPs following AR. However, with a more demanding set of metrics relating to ARs in place, it will be important to also track the quality of work to ensure this does not dip following increased pressure on timeliness. |

2. The local area partnership should improve the timeliness and uptake of the mandated antenatal check and six-to-eight week review.

| Improvement Action | Impact Measures | Responsible Person | Date | RAG (action) | Progress Update |
|--|---|---|-------------|---------------------|--|
| Improved CLCH booking process for Targeted Antenatal Checks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointments booked 4-6 weeks in advance DNAs rebooked prior to expected delivery date (EDD). | CLCH ONW Divisional Director / Dept Director of Ops Head of Clinical Services Brent Children | March 2026 | On track | In progress. Data now provided 8 weeks in advance to enable timely bookings. Team leads being monitored for application of new booking processes. Brent currently has an 85.5% completion rate and trends across 25/26 have been upwards. |
| Staffing model review for completion of Universal Antenatal Checks | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing group identified and signed off through CLCH governance process SOP and training in place for staff Increased appointment slots offered to pregnant women in Brent | CLCH ONW Divisional Director / Dept Director of Ops Head of Clinical Services Brent Children | March 2026 | On track | Successful recruitment of additional HV staff in 2025, now being on-boarded. |

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|--|---|--|-------------------|------------------------|---|
| <p>Identification of clinical space to undertake 6-8 week reviews</p> <p>Improved CLCH booking process for 6-8 week checks</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased appointment slots offered Utilisation of SPA staff to book 6-8 week checks when new birth visits booked. | <p>CLCH ONW Divisional Director / Dept Director of Ops</p> <p>Head of Clinical Services Brent Children</p> | <p>March 2026</p> | <p>Needs attention</p> | <p>In progress. Identification of clinical space within the borough is an ongoing challenge.</p> |
| <p>0-19 service specification, KPIs and contract agreed and signed</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing model contractually aligns with need to meet all mandated checks | <p>CLCH and Public Health commissioners</p> | <p>March 2026</p> | <p>Needs attention</p> | <p>In progress. Service specification agreed. Staffing model under joint CLCH / PH review to align with financial envelope.</p> |

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.

CLCH Child Development Service/Community Paediatrics Collaborative

| Improvement Action | Impact Measures | Responsible Person | Date | RAG (action) | Progress Update |
|--|---|--|-------------------|------------------------|---|
| <p>Undertake a Child Development Service (CDS) model review to quantify the demand/capacity gap and propose options to make best use of the available resource</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Increased skill mix in recruitment. Streamline internal assessment and diagnostic processes. Long-term waiting list/ RTT management | <p>Associate Medical Director CLCH With CLCH ONW Divisional Directors of Ops CLCH Head of Clinical Services CLCH Clinical Services Manager</p> | <p>March 2026</p> | <p>On track</p> | <p>Work ongoing between CDS and Inclusion to refine the medical advice given during the EHCNAs process. Aim is to offer improved advice and free up clinician's time.</p> |
| <p>Use of non-recurrent funding for outsourcing ASD assessments and CDC Initial</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Waiting list management and reduction in RTT | <p>Clinical Services Manager</p> | <p>March 2026</p> | <p>Needs attention</p> | <p>There are currently 406 children under 5 on the CLCH waiting list for a social communication assessment (SOCA), with an average waiting time in the last 12</p> |

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|---|---|--|------------|-----------------|---|
| Paediatrician assessments for wait list reduction | 2. Reduction in length of waiting time for an ASD diagnosis. | | | | <p>months of 68 weeks. This represents a significant improvement over the last 18 months when then average waiting time was in excess of 87+ weeks.</p> <p>Despite the additional non recurrent funding, known demand exceeds known capacity and waiting lists will continue to grow once this funding ends.</p> |
| Review of Brent ND pathway to align with NWL ICB ND core offer / specification work | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waiting list management and timely assessment 2. Equity of access with better signposting | CLCH Associate Medical Director/ Child Development Service Clinical Lead | March 2026 | Needs attention | <p>CLCH actively contributing to the NWL ND pathway project – Brent CDS data submitted</p> <p>CDS clinical lead ND pathway review in final draft in anticipation of NWL wide core ND pathway roll out.</p> <p>Requires completion of NWL ICB core offer specification work to steer service development – this work has been slowed owing to the imminent changes in the ICB structure.</p> |
| Reduce waiting times for Community paediatric assessments | 18 week wait data for community paed and size of backlog | Associate Medical Director CLCH CLCH Head of Clinical Services CLCH Community Provider Collaborative | March 2026 | Needs attention | <p>Capacity issues remain, but longest wait time is now 28 weeks, down from 50+ weeks in 24/25.</p> <p>A 6 month long full internal service review has been undertaken within the service which concluded in September 2025 and an action plan is in place to address underlying causes including development of a business case to request an increase in funding to align the service with need and resource in neighbouring boroughs</p> |

CAMHS/CNWL

| Improvement Action | Impact Measures | Responsible Person | Completion Date | RAG (action) | Progress Update |
|---|--|------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Reduce time for neurodevelopmental diagnostic assessments | 18 week wait data and size of backlog | Director of CAHMS NWL ICB | March 2026 | Needs attention | December 2025 900 CYP on ND wait list, average wait time of 34 months. However, non-recurrent funding approved to reduce the size of the wait list by 50% by March 2026 – this is on track. In-depth exploration of alternative models of ND assessment underway between NWL ICB, CLCH, BPCF and Brent LA. |
| Reduce time for specialist therapeutic interventions in CAMHS | 18 week wait data and size of backlog | Director of CAHMS NWL ICB | March 2026 | Of concern | No funding is currently available. Needs further internal discussion |
| Improve CAMHS data quality available to the partnership | Establish regular data dashboard with clear data definitions | Director of CAHMS NWL ICB | March 2026 | Needs attention | Data set is now reported regularly to ISB. Work is now ongoing to agree between partners what would represent the optimal data pack to help drive change. |

4. Local Area Partnership should reduce the lengthy wait times that children and young people with SEND experience for assessments of their home equipment needs.

| Improvement Action | Impact Measures | Responsible Person | Completion Date | RAG (action) | Progress Update |
|--|--|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| Establish robust tracking system for tracking OT screening, assessment, approval, and delivery of equipment, including reporting to managers to provide oversight on the waiting list. | Timely assessment of home equipment needs – target 45 days | Head of CWD | June 2026 | Of concern | A waiting list is in place and is being monitored by a manager. |
| Recruit to permanent OT team – Deputy OT manager post and OT posts. | Permanent resource in place | Head of CWD | June 2026 | Needs attention | Job descriptions have been produced but no new staff have been recruited (lack of interest in vacancies). Further recruitment drive planned. |

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|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Consideration to be given to aligning the recruitment and retention package for OTs within CYP to that of OTs in ASC. | Retention of permanent staff | Director Early Help and Social Care | June 2026 | Needs attention | A proposal will be developed for consideration. Delays due to staff change at senior level. However, now a new HoS is in post this action should progress. |
| Develop CPD programme for OTs comparable with ASC OTs | Retention of permanent staff | Head of CWD | September 2026 | Needs attention | A CYP training plan is currently being developed. Delays due to staff change at senior level. However, now a new HoS is in post this action should progress. |