



## Children with Learning Disabilities and Complex Health Needs

### 1. Introduction

'Disability' is [defined](#) as an overarching term encompassing range of conditions with varying levels of impairment, activity limitation and participation restriction. This includes visual impairment, physical impairment, learning difficulties, mental health problems, autism and life limiting illness. The [Equality Act 2010](#) generally defines a disabled person 'as someone who has a mental or physical impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'. In the UK, the number of children living with complex health needs is increasing, attributable to support for and treatment of premature babies and young people with medical conditions, amongst many other reasons.

The aim of treatment and social care for children with complex and enduring needs or illnesses is to manage their condition in such a way that they are able to enjoy and to achieve fully in their lives and to make a positive contribution. Children, young people and their families should have the opportunity to become 'expert patients'. To achieve this, they should have access to services that help them to develop the self-confidence and self-management skills needed to deal with the impact of the condition on the child and their family or carers.

Research by the [Children's Society](#) (2011) estimates that around 4 in 10 disabled children in the UK live in poverty. The research states that without the additional support, children with disabilities may end up both deprived of material items and unable to engage in the normal day to day activities, leaving them socially isolated. The Children's Society research highlights the further negative impact of cuts that will be faced by families with disabled children under the new Universal Credit Benefit system. This cut is likely to cost up to 100,000 disabled children up to £27 per week.

### 2. The Local Picture

There are a range of local services responsible for identifying and supporting children with disabilities and complex health needs.

#### 2.1 Disability register

The Helping HANDZ and Parent Partnership Service Co-ordinator (a member of the Social Work Team for Children with Disabilities [SWTCD]) maintains a register of Children with Disabilities and provides advice and guidance and support to parents of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Disabilities. In 2011, there were 387 children on the disability register in Hounslow.

#### 2.2 Social Work Team for Children with Disabilities

The SWTCD provides assessments of need and risk to children with disabilities and their families. The team works in partnership with a range of agencies across education, health and the voluntary sectors to assess, coordinate and provide packages of support in response to identified need. Based within the Team is the Challenging Behaviour Team, which consists of an Education Psychologist, a Clinical Psychologist and a Speech Language Therapist. This Team provides support to professionals and families on



managing challenging behaviour. During 2010/11, there were 307 children registered on the disability network and SWTCD offered a service to over 200 young people. Approximately 11,400 hours of Home Care is also provided by Scope UK, and 60 families use this service.

### *2.3 Aiming High Short Breaks Initiative*

SWTCD leads on the development of the multi-agency Aiming High Short Breaks Initiative, which aims to provide enjoyable activities to promote the inclusion and development of disabled children and young people and to provide valuable breaks for their parents and carers. The Aiming High service has developed a comprehensive range of short breaks which include a sitting and befriending service and short breaks at the weekends and holidays. During 2010/11, 37 young people regularly received regular overnight short breaks.

### *2.4 Special Educational Needs Administration Team*

The SEN Administration Team is responsible for the statutory assessment, placement and monitoring of children with special educational needs. The service works in partnership with other Specialist services, the Early Intervention teams, schools, parents/carers and health professionals to identify assess the special educational needs of children. The Team is responsible for securing appropriate educational placements for children from birth to 19 with the necessary specialist support. The SEN Admin Team maintains 1,140 statements for children with a range of special educational needs. Of the total number of pupils with statements of SEN, 658 are placed in special schools and centres (including the independent sector) of which 513 attend Hounslow Special Schools and Centres.

Assessment of projected need indicates that Hounslow will have a shortfall of special school places in September 2012 of 10, increasing to a shortfall of a minimum of 111 special school places by 2016/17.

### *2.5 Special Educational Needs Specialist Support*

SEN Specialist Support (SENSS) Team provides specialist teaching and teaching assistant support to children with Sensory and Physical Disabilities. The team will, where necessary, support the families of newly diagnosed children from birth. The team works with children across the continuum of needs in mainstream schools and centres within Hounslow and, where necessary, discharges the Local Authority's duties regarding children's placement within Borough schools. The SENSS Team also provides training to school staff working with children with sensory and physical disability needs. The Team is also responsible for the assessment of children's need for transport from home to school, against revised assessment criteria.

During 2011, the SENSS Team were working with just under 600 children and families. Since 2008, there has been a small but steady year-on-year increase in the number of children who have statements for Visual and Hearing impairment (17.2% and 19.5% increases, respectively). Whilst the number of statements for physical disability has reduced, this does not reflect the complexity of needs of the pupils who continue to have a statement for this.

## **3. Strategic Leadership and Collaboration**

Delivering effective and co-ordinated services for children with disabilities and complex needs requires strong partnerships and collaborative working with parents and across a range of professional disciplines and agencies. There are a number of multi-professional forums and panels in Hounslow which operate on this basis, including:



- The Pre-School Panel – which coordinates the identification of and support for children with disabilities and complex needs;
- The Short Breaks Panel – which works in partnership with disabled young people and their families to improve access to short breaks and create flexible, local provision;
- The Autistic Disorder Spectrum (ASD) Strategy Group – which coordinates the development of services for children with ASD; and
- Ealing and Hounslow Children’s Hearing Services Working Group (CHSWG) – a working group made up of stakeholders and parents to work towards improving services for children with a hearing loss.

#### **4. Priorities**

The 2011/12 priorities for children and young people with learning disabilities and complex health needs in the Borough are:

- Information on children’s needs are shared across the SEN and Disability service teams and with relevant professionals, schools and settings at an early stage;
- Planning for children’s education, health and care needs to be coordinated through the Children’s Integrated Resource Panel to maximise the efficiency of decision-making;
- Minimise the number of external placements and, where possible, to deliver education and care packages within the Borough;
- Reviews of children’s progress and support to be undertaken jointly with all key professionals involved;
- Improved care pathways for children with long term conditions;
- Develop closer joint working between Early Years Services and Health Professionals, such as the Health Visitors;
- Improved schools management and support during absences of children with long term illnesses;
- Increased awareness of parents regarding their right to a specialist opinion; and
- Implementation of Early Support, a family-centred key worker programme for families of young children with complex disabilities, in the Borough.

#### **5. Summary of Need**

The table summarising the needs in this area has not been completed as it is not considered appropriate for Children with Learning Disabilities and Complex Health Needs.