

Locality SEND Support in Mainstream Schools: A brief guide for parents and carers

In order to improve the quality and timing of support to Croydon resident children with special needs and disabilities the Local Authority has begun an exciting new project with around 33 early adopter mainstream primary and secondary schools. The project is called “Locality SEND Support”.

The aim of the project is to provide earlier and better targeted help and support to SEND youngsters in the early adopter schools by working with four groups of schools who are all local to each other and better placed to understand the needs of their children. Each group has been given a sum of money to directly support pupils in their local area and have been given the flexibility to spend this in the way that best helps children with emerging challenges to their learning and progress.

Two Area SEND Leads have been appointed who are SEND specialists and will directly support schools, both to use their existing SEND resources in the best interest of the young people and to help distribute additional funding where schools may have insufficient resource to meet an emergent need. The Area SEND Leads will work very closely with school SENDCos, parents, SEND professionals, such as Educational Psychologists to provide and signpost support to SEND pupils. This local approach will enable us to better understand the needs of the children in our care and get help to them quickly in order for them to catch up with their learning and overcome their challenges.

SEND Locality Support is not aimed at children who already have an EHCP nor at youngsters in special schools or enhanced learning provisions. The project is focused on working with local schools to identify young people who are demonstrating a special need and who require early help to support this need.

Whilst we expect many students to benefit from this locally provided and targeted help, we understand that this may not work for some students who present or develop complex and exceptional needs. In order to meet these needs Croydon has allocated a significant sum of money to be shared between all four local areas. This resource will be distributed by a multi-disciplinary panel at Local Authority level.

There is nothing in this project that will take away the right for a parent to request an Education Health Care Needs assessment, however the funding for any ECHPs issued will come from the budget of the Locality SEND Support funds. The sincere hope however, is that early intervention will ensure that the correct strategies, support and therapies are offered in a timely manner. Hence, by the time statutory assessment is considered, funding will already be in place as will a dialogue between schools, students and parents which will help to build trust and a common agreement of what is required in the best interests of each child.