



## Education Health and Care Plans for disabled children recommendations

More than 40 parents attended the joint NHS Community Voice and Hackney Independent Parents Forum (HIP) which took place at the end of January at the Tomlinson centre. Speakers included Sarah Darcy, Clinical CommsisonignGroup (CCG) children's board managers, Graham Read (Interim Head of SEND at the Learning Trust), Jill Ellis (community paediatrician, Malky Davidovits from Interlink Foundation, Claire Usiskin (independent supporter for parents) and Grace Alexander (parent of a child with SEND). The meeting was chaired by patient representative Tony Harms. Below are the recommendations for health and education commissioners and providers which were made at the meeting.

Recommendations	
1.	<p><b>EHC Plans 'eligibility criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The term 'eligibility criteria' is wholly inappropriate as it implies these are statutory guidelines which they are not; they appear intimidating to parents, carers and other professionals.</li><li>• The draft guidelines should be rebadged and referred to as Hackney's local guidelines for deciding on EHC plan assessments</li><li>• The draft eligibility criteria/guidelines as a 30 page document is inaccessible to most Hackney parents and carers – this makes the consultation itself inaccessible</li><li>• It was suggested that the consultation should be restarted using guidelines set out in plain English, easy read and other language materials that parents/carers and young people in Hackney can access (but without losing the detail)</li><li>• Emotional welfare and behavioural needs and diagnostic profile should be properly considered even if a child's apparent educational attainment or IQ is higher than set out in the guidelines</li><li>• The Hackney guidelines do not reference the SEN Code of Practice . They should do explicitly</li></ul>



	<p>throughout</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There should be a clear and defined process for parent's views to be appropriately translated onto EHC plans, at the moment the process is patchy and the parent voice is only heard as a result of interventions by the Independent Supporters who are encouraging parents to submit their views in writing.</li></ul>
2.	<p><b>Range of professionals including SENCOs need to be trained on how to properly fill out EHC plans.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SENCOs and schools are struggling to write EHC plans; they need intensive training to write the plan in a way that ensures children get the best possible support they can. One parent had a SENCO tell her that they did not know how to write the plan after her child was refused an assessment.</li></ul>
3.	<p><b>Health co-ordinators should be clearly briefed to ask parents about any CAMHS provisions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hackney Learning Trust and other health services (like the Hackney Ark and East London Foundation Trust) need to work together to capture the mental health needs of children.</li><li>• A high proportion of children with SEN and disabilities also have mental health needs, there seems to be a blind spot if a child is seen and diagnosed within mental health services like the ELFT.</li><li>• Plan co-ordinators need to routinely ask mental health services for information as part of assessment alongside information from social care etc</li></ul>



<b>4.</b>	<b>Support for parents and access to information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The system is too complicated and parents feel as though they are often policing the system (especially schools) rather than being confident that the process will work for their child.</li><li>• Access to support for all parents e.g. the parents who aren't here (at this event) because they are shy/can't speak English or just find it impossible to know where to start to navigate their way through the system.</li><li>• Hackney Learning Trust and schools should be giving parents information about ALL available support for parents including HIP, Independent Supporters under SENDIAG etc.</li><li>• Parents are reporting problems with SENCOs listening to parent's requests for SEN assessments.</li><li>• Parents should get mandatory access to information/breakdown of how their child's school is spending SEN delegated funds and how their specific child is directly benefiting from SEN support. A lack of transparency on SEN support funding seems to be a key barrier to them getting children getting the support they need</li></ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Support for SENCOs and holding schools to account</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• SENCOs are seen by many parents as being the 'front door' to the system and if access to information and support here is lacking, the process can be incredibly hard for parents.</li><li>• Parents have reported problems with contacting SENCOs at schools as a result of high turnover of SENCO staff.</li><li>• This high turnover of staff is problematic for children as relationships between the child and the SENCO are not able to develop with EHC plans being written by SENCOs who have had very little contact with the child. Consistency is really important here.</li><li>• There should be some financial incentives for SENCOs to stay on for a minimum of stated years.</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be some form of sanctions against the schools if they break the rules and refuse to take children especially in cases where both the parents and the learning trust are in agreement that this is the right setting for the child. There are no enforcement measures against schools who are acting illegally.</li> <li>• Training for school governors to keep on top of SEN provisions within schools to improve practice in schools.</li> </ul>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Specific meeting on post 16 process</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There should be a specific post 16 SEN talk.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interlink Foundation recommendations-specific to the Charedi Orthodox Jewish Community in Hackney</b></p>	
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>£6k intervention:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new guidance requires schools to provide evidence that the child/young person requires interventions above £6k. As independent faith schools, Charedi schools do not receive delegated funds. This creates a challenging situation for the schools.</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Educational Psychology Service:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The guidance expects schools to work with a range of agencies to support pupils at SEN Support, including HLT's Specialist Support Teams and the Educational Psychology Service. Accessing support from the EPS is a particular challenge since this is a traded service and Charedi schools do not receive delegated SEN funding. As a result, when submitting a request for a child to receive a statutory assessment, parents need to pay for a private EP evaluation. This costs in the range of £700-£1000. If HLT has agreed to assess a child, they will then send in their own EP to do another assessment; this</li> </ul>



	does not seem like the best use of resources.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Support at transition stage:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There is inadequate support for YP transitioning from their school settings onwards. Also, there is no natural pathway for YP once they have finished school.</li></ul>