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**Meeting Notes: Coffee Morning Newham Parent Carer Forum, Tuesday 14 January 2025, 10 AM to 12 PM**

**Date:** Tuesday, 14 January 2025
**Time:** 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

**Agenda and Topics**

1. Welcome back
2. School Funding (From Early Years, Primary, to Post 16). \*Slides has been shared to parents
3. London Fire Brigade Autism Initiative (cancelled, to be rescheduled)

**Total Attendance:** 28 parents and carers (17 in-person,11 online)
**Chair:** Yamou
**Co-Chair (Housekeeping):** Adeola
**Minutes Takers:** Rosie and Vaishali

**Speakers:**

1. **Ian McFee** – SEND Placements and Business Operations – Service Manager
2. **Lesley Hare** – Principal SEND Officer

**Topic: School Funding**

**School Support**

* Children with English as an additional language, or medical conditions that affect their physical health, but not their learning or access to education, are not considered SEN, but are entitled to appropriate support in mainstream schools.
* Schools receive a core funding amount of £4,000 per child, regardless of SEND status. For children with SEND, schools can access additional funding of up to £6,000. They can request over this via an EHC needs assessment, provided they have evidence that the initial funding has been fully utilised.
* Parent Question: How can parents ensure that the £6,000 SEN support funding is used effectively for their child’s needs?
	+ LA Response: Child should be on the schools SEN register and parents should meet with the school 3 times a year to review progress.

**Monitoring the Use of SEND Funding**

* The Local Authority (LA) monitors the use of funding by requiring schools to demonstrate the impact of the allocated funding and whether it is being used effectively to support children’s needs.
* The LA expects schools to collaborate with parents by having a support plan in place and reviewing progress or outcomes three times a year.
* SEND funding can cover costs such as small group sessions and payment for support staff.
* Parent Concern: A parent raised concerns about the prioritisation of funding, suggesting that children who do not require the full £6,000 allocation should have their funds redistributed to other SEND children in greater need.
	+ LA Response: The £6,000 is a notional allocation across SEND-registered students, not necessarily assigned per individual child. Schools are trusted to manage these funds appropriately, for example, in cases where a SEND student is hospitalised.

**EHCP Budget Allocation**

* Parents raised concerns about schools claiming they cannot provide one-to-one support despite an EHCP budget of £12,000.
	+ LA Response: It is difficult to comment on individual cases, but funding is determined based on the EHCP and the level of support outlined in it.

**Determining Funding Levels**

* Parent Question: How is funding determined?
	+ LA Response: Funding is allocated based on needs and provisions in the EHCP. These are matched to descriptors that are linked with different funding levels (e.g., Band A) that the LA believe will allow the school to fund and deliver the support specified
	+ If schools fail to deliver the required provision, parents can raise this through annual reviews and contact the SEND officers and escalate their concerns through the LA. Ultimately parents can also pursue legal action through judicial review. Judicial review is the last option after parents have exhausted all other avenues and Legal Aid may be available.

**Use of SEND Funding and Other Sources of Funding**

* Funding can cover speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and other necessary support listed in Section F of an EHCP. (but not other medical interventions that do not educate or train e.g. Physiotherapy)
	+ LA Response: Parents can discuss budget allocation with schools to determine how support will be delivered.
	+ Other sources of funding include Pupil Premium funding and DLA funding for nursery-aged children.

**Annual Reviews**

* Funding is reviewed as part of the annual EHCP review to ensure the provision is being delivered as agreed.
* Parents expressed concerns about social opportunities for their children during playtime and requested dedicated support staff during these periods.
	+ LA Response: Changes in a child’s needs, such as behavioural difficulties, should be reflected in the EHCP.

**School Autonomy**

* Parent Question: How do schools apply funding to meet individual needs with or without EHCP?
	+ LA Response: Schools have autonomy in how they provide support to children without EHCPs, such as by creating specialised, separate classrooms. Once an EHCP is issued, the LA will decide if a child needs access to additional resources through top up funding.

**Funding for Post-16 Education**

* Parent Concern: Parents raised concerns about limited education options post-16 and whether funding could be used to support further education instead of alternative activities.
	+ LA Response: Parents can request clarification on available funding and support options.

**Access to Out-of-Borough Schools**

* Parents asked whether they could choose schools outside Newham, including mainstream and independent schools.
	+ LA Response: Parents have the right to request schools, but funding allocations vary depending on the type of school.

**EOTAS and Alternative Education**

* Parent Question: How can parents access Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS), and what are the eligibility criteria?
	+ LA Response: EOTAS applies in cases where no suitable school placements are available.
* Parent Question: If a child is removed from school due to depression or anxiety, can the funding be redirected to alternative support?
	+ LA Response: It depends. If the LA agrees and cannot find a suitable school for the child, the school can use the funding to pay for specialist support.

**School Exclusions and Provision Gaps**

* A parent shared concerns about exclusions from college and underutilised resources such as sensory rooms.
* NPCF Response: The forum will follow up on individual cases in the background.

**Involvement in EHCP Changes**

* Parent Question: If parents want to add something to the EHCP, can they do so, and will the LA authorise it? What if the school objects? What if the child does not make academic progress?
	+ LA Response: Changes do not always need to be formally written into the EHCP; agreements can be made directly with the school. The EHCP outcomes should be set up to monitor progress and the effectiveness of the funding. Parents do not have to wait until the annual review to propose changes.

**Funding Transparency and Accountability**

* Parent Concern: Parents raised concerns about the transparency of funding allocations and how provisions are monitored. Some expressed frustration over long waiting times for services such as occupational therapy despite available funding.
	+ LA Response: Parents were encouraged to follow up with health services regarding waiting lists and check referral progress. Schools should ensure that resources are provided in the interim while waiting for additional support. The LA acknowledges that there is an ongoing shortage of occupational therapists.