

Publication of an independent audit of Education, Health and Care Plans

On 18th October 2019, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman finalised a report concerning services for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Richmond after three families brought complaints to the Ombudsman. You can read the Ombudsman's statement and find the report here: [Richmond SEND Complaints Ombudsman Statement](#)

The complaints were upheld and in addition to compensation and apologies being made to the families concerned, the Ombudsman recommended an audit of SEND provision for which the local authority (through Achieving for Children) is responsible. As a result, an independent audit of 1,494 Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans was completed. The audit considered information from 1st April 2018 to 31st December 2019 for all active EHC Plans. Parents and carers were invited to contribute their views and experiences to the auditors; 103 parents chose to do this.

The Auditors' Report was published in June and you can read it here: [Richmond ECHP Audit Report May 2020](#). Here is a brief summary of the auditor's findings.

The audit identified failings for 37 children and young people which remained unresolved at the time the auditors' report was written. These are currently being addressed with the support of one of the independent auditors.

These were not the only issues identified by the auditors. 43 children and young people were found to have spent a fixed amount of time out of education during the period examined in the audit; seven of these young people were still not in education, employment or training when the audit ended.

47% of EHC Plans that were due for an Annual Review were not updated in a timely way. This was 508 EHC Plans. As a result of these failings, 227 children and young people were found to have been impacted by the delayed provision of therapeutic support, learning support or a specialist school placement. The backlog in updating these plans is currently being worked through by Achieving for Children on behalf of the local authority.

In addition to these findings, the audit identified poor communication with parents and inconsistent record keeping as common issues, along with some failures in following processes for children with an EHC Plan moving into the borough and for young people moving to post-16 education or training.

The audit report also identifies areas where improvements have been made over the last 12 to 18 months and where Richmond performs significantly above the national average, in particular the number of EHC Plans finalised within 20 weeks and the proportion of children with EHC Plans attending their first choice of school or college.