

ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE
24 APRIL 2014

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)
Councillors Ballsdon, Eden, D Edwards, Ennis, P Jones, McElligott, Orton, Vickers and Williams.

Apologies: Councillors Anderson, Gavin, O'Connell, Ralph and Rynn.

33. UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) PROVISION 2014-16

Further to Minute 30 of the meeting held on 5 March 2014, Avril Wilson, Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, submitted a report providing the Committee with an update on the current position with regard to changes to SEN provision 2014-16 in relation to national changes which were due to start from September 2014, and would take up to three years to implement, and outlining the direction of travel required in order to meet the short and medium term requirements of the Children and Families Bill.

The report summarised the new legislation and provided the Committee with an update with regard to the current position in respect of both national and local requirements. An Action Plan would be drafted that outlined the broad direction of travel. The Berkshire SEN / LDD lead officers had been working together, along with parents and Berkshire Health agencies, to plan the operational delivery of the five requirements of the Children and Families Bill to ensure a common approach as far as possible.

The report stated that a review of the local SEN funding approach by an external consultant had indicated that greater clarity was required in order to ensure that parents and schools had a good understanding of how Special Educational Needs funding was allocated and the impact that it had on the child. To achieve this, the Council would have to establish systems for reviewing and monitoring both the cost and outcomes for the wide range of existing provision. It was anticipated that a short life working group of officers, schools and parents would propose recommendations for achieving this by the end of July 2014.

The report explained that the Local Offer was a term introduced in the legislation and was used to describe a concept of both information and services that would help families understand what provision was available to them in the local area. It contained the following elements:

- early years;
- school and college provision and transport to and from it;
- social care services available, including short breaks;
- health services, including speech and language therapy;
- how to access specialist support; and special and specialist school provision available - including training providers and apprenticeships.

In order to have a published Local Offer by 1 September 2014 additional work would need to be carried out to create "pathways" for families to follow when they would be seeking information. Currently the Local Offer database was being populated.

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Questionnaires had been sent to all providers for them to complete online and return. Schools had been provided with a system for completion of the questions and Health Authority officers had also been asked to complete and return a questionnaire.

Ramona Bridgeman and Tara Robb, of Reading Families' Forum, attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the parental perspective of having a child with special needs.

Resolved -

- (1) That the commitment to providing opportunities for children and young people with additional needs be confirmed and children and parents being at the heart of these changes be recognised;
- (2) That the Director of Education, Adult and Children's Services, in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Education, ensure that the Council was able to meet the statutory requirements of the Children and Families Act that must be in place by September 2014, including a process for generating Education, Health and Care plans being in place and the Council having a published Local Offer;
- (3) That an action plan be written, co-produced with parents, setting out the direction of travel for officers, schools and parents to follow, which may require further decisions to be taken by Committee;
- (4) That a short life working group of school staff, officers and parents publish recommendations by the end of July 2014 that defined a system that ensured that SEN finances were delegated, allocated and monitored in a transparent way that met the needs of pupils and was understood and 'owned' by both schools and parents. The working group include in its membership Councillors D Edwards, McElligott and either Councillors Ballsdon or Vickers;
- (5) That the SEN Strategy for Reading 2014-2017 be submitted to the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Committee recommend that representatives of the Reading Families' Forum be invited to attend the meeting.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.45 pm).