

## READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

### REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, ADULT & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	6 NOVEMBER 2014	AGENDA ITEM:	12
TITLE:	UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SEN PROVISION 2014-16		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	EDUCATION
SERVICE:	SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS	WARDS:	ALL
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#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report follows from reports made in March and June 2014 which outlined four strands of a strategic approach to providing education support for children with additional needs. These priorities remain:

Priority 1: To ensure that Children and Young People with Statements of Special Educational Needs/Education, Health and Care Plans will have their education, health, social and emotional needs met from provision within the locality of Reading or neighbouring Local Authorities whenever possible.

Priority 2: Develop provision within Reading or in partnership with our neighbouring Local Authorities which reduces reliance on the most expensive and remote options.

Priority 3: Work with families to enable them champion better outcomes for their children.

Priority 4: Work with schools and other providers to make best and transparent use of the finances available to narrow the achievement gap for SEN children.

1.2 It sets out progress by the council, schools and parents in the development of a proposed action plan and in meeting the statutory duties required of us.

1.3 The action plan is attached in appendix A and the draft Charter for parents and schools is in Appendix B.

## 2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 Note that the Statutory requirements set out in the Children and Families Bill for September 14 have been met, including the publication of the Local Offer.
- 2.2 Note the SEN Strategy action plan has been co-produced with parents and school representatives, setting out the direction of travel for officers, schools and parents to follow, this may require further decisions to be taken at policy level which will be reported to the Adult Services, Children's Services and Education committee in due course.
- 2.3 Note that a communication plan is under development, and as set out in 4.5, committee are asked to confirm their support for the SEN charter.

## 3. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 Since March 2014 the council has undertaken activity to meet the statutory requirements which flow from the Children and Families Bill. The following is now in place.
- 3.2 The process for carrying out an Education, Health and Needs (EHC) assessment is in place. A three year time table for converting the current 927 Statements of Special Educational Needs has been published and the team has been extended by two additional 'Assessment Co-ordinators' (fixed term contract for three years) who are already in post. They work closely with all involved in the process and provide additional capacity to complete the three year timetable for conversations.
- 3.3 All the Statutory Assessment paperwork has been rewritten to reflect the new EHCP system. This revised information has been sent to all schools, pre-school settings, Parents Forum, Parent Partnership and the Independent and Voluntary sector. The back office system has been similarly adapted to accommodate the new changes. It is expected that the next iteration of the Council website will provide improved access to this information for all users.
- 3.4 The "Local Offer" has been published. This online resource was active from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 via the front page of the Reading Borough Council website or via a direct link at:  
<http://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/family.page?familychannel=3>

An independent charity representing pupils with additional needs reviewed the Local Offer of all local authorities on the first weekend in September and judged that only 30% reached their "green" rating, and that group included the Reading local offer.

- 3.5 The Special Educational Needs Action plan has been completed in conjunction with Parents Forum representatives and with the SEN Strategy group. It is attached in appendix A as at the end of October 2014. The SEN Strategy group will oversee the Action Plan, updating it and escalating issues as required.

#### 4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 A review of the SEN formula has been carried out by a sub group of the Schools Forum. The revised proposal includes an increase in the quantum of the “notional SEN budget” and introducing ‘prior attainment’ as an indicator of need alongside the more traditional ‘deprivation’ factors. This is being considered by the Schools Forum and a decision is expected at the December meeting.

A review of the local SEN funding approach by an external consultant has indicated that greater clarity is required in order to ensure that parents and schools have a good understanding of how Special Educational Needs funding is allocated and the impact that it has on the child. To achieve this, we will establish systems for reviewing and monitoring both the cost and outcomes for our wide range of existing provision. It is proposed that a booklet will be written for parents and schools to explain how resources are allocated for pupils.

- 4.2 The benefits for co-producing key strategy and working documents with parents has been considerable. It is proposed that parental representation remain on key strategic groups such as the SEN Strategy group. Ways for generating greater participation and engagement with schools are currently underway between schools, Parents Forum and the Local Authority. The intention is to establish regular fora between families and schools whose purpose is to review and discuss SEN issues. The intention will be to have forums established in a group of pilot schools by July 15.

Similarly it has proved highly beneficial to have a representative of the Private, Independent and Voluntary Sector present at the SEN panel. Their input has been important when considering Providers to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs.

- 4.3 The Headteacher / SENCO and parents working group has met to review the procedures for allocating additional resources to support children with SEN in mainstream school settings. A short life working group of officers, schools and parents has made recommendations for a new system for allocating additional support. The working group is recommending that the allocation will be via a system of peer moderation. SENCOs will discuss, at prearranged cluster meetings, why they consider a child or situation in their school warrants the allocation of additional resources. They have to illustrate that a child’s needs are exceptional for the school as opposed to predictable.

Heads and SENCOs in the working group were of the view that making a case for these exceptional needs to their peers, will increase accountability for the allocation of additional resources and allow for a greater sharing of special educational needs strategies and knowledge across schools in Reading. The

allocation of additional 'exceptional' resources will cover both individual allocations and additional support to 'inclusive schools' that need to draw more significantly on their delegated budget to meet the first element of funding for exceptional needs pupils.

Currently Headteacher chairs from each of the five new clusters are being appointed. They will then meet to establish cluster moderating groups whose purpose will be to agree or not whether a child's/children's needs are exceptional enough to warrant the allocation of additional resources. The new allocation system will be operational by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2015.

- 4.4 The external consultant who was asked to review the SEN finances has been asked to complete a review of the effectiveness of Reading Borough Council's Specialist resources and Specialist teams the context of effectiveness of service delivery, value for money and outcomes for children. The Council resolved at Policy committee in September 2014 to setup an overarching group, to include practitioners and councillors to consider the overall scale and type of provision. This group can expect to receive the review in December 2015.
- 4.5 A communication plan is currently been written. As part of this work a conference for parents and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) was held in September 14 to explain the new changes. The changes occur within a strengthened SEN Code of Practice that promotes greater partnership working between schools and parents with regard to SEN. The proposed element of the plan include:
- a SEN charter for parents and schools which has been coproduced in draft and is attached in appendix B.
  - Parents, are made aware of the "Statement of Intent" published as part of the Local Offer that describes what should normally be available in all schools in Reading when supporting children with SEN in the classroom, in small groups and individually.
  - A regular forum where a school and the families it serves can meet to discuss Special Educational Needs is established. Reading's Parent Forum is leading on this element already.
- 4.6 Personal budgets will become a legal right for families with an approved EHC plan if they request it so they can directly buy the support identified in the plan. No formal date for implementation has been given by the Department for Education but it is expected that this needs to be in place by September 2017.
- 4.7 The additional project officer who was appointed to establish the Local Offer will now be focusing their attention on writing the communication plan and drawing up a strategy for Personal Budgets to be covered by Education, Health and Social Care.
- 4.8 Joint commissioning between Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) will be required for services for disabled children and young people and those with SEN. No date for implementation has been given but it is expected that a system for joint commissioning needs to be in place by

September 2017. A cross agency working group has been set up by the Commissioning team for Berkshire Health.

## **5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS**

- 5.1 This report directly contributes to a healthy population and the development of good educational attainment.

## **6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION**

- 6.1 There have been specific consultation events which have informed the proposals in this paper. Meetings have been held with families, mainstream schools, SENCO's and special schools along with colleagues from Health and the Voluntary sector, to seek their views on the organisational and financial aspects of the changes.
- 6.2 The Schools Forum has been engaged in the development of this work and has appointed a sub-group to be part of the development of the funding approach required for improved clarity.

## **7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 This report does not require an EIA as it deals with those people who already share a protected characteristic. An EIA will be undertaken as part of the development of the detailed action plan referred to in the main body of the report.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 A grant of £250k has been allocated by central government to support the implementation of these changes and to ensure the effective communication with parents, carers, schools, voluntary organisations and young people themselves.
- 9.2 A number of the financial decisions required will either be: made by, or consulted on with, the Schools Forum as the expenditure is predominantly from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Recent regulatory changes require that more decision making is devolved to this group which reports in public.