

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION & EARLY HELP SERVICES

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| TO: | HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD | | |
| DATE: | 17 April 2015 | AGENDA ITEM: | 10 |
| TITLE: | UPDATE ON CHANGES TO SEN PROVISION 2014-16 | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR ENNIS | PORTFOLIO: | EDUCATION |
| SERVICE: | SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS | WARDS: | ALL |
| LEAD OFFICER: | Chris Stevens | TEL: | 0118 937 2094 |
| JOB TITLE: | Inclusion Services Manager | E-MAIL: | Chris.stevens@reading.gov.uk |

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report follows from reports made to ACE during 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.

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.

3. PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 A review of the SEN formula has been carried out. The 2015/16 budgets for schools an increase in the quantum of the "notional SEN budget" and introduced 'prior attainment' as an indicator of need alongside the more traditional 'deprivation' factors. This was considered by the Schools Forum and has been agreed.
- 3.2 A review of the SEN funding and resource unit provision has been completed by an external consultant who has made recommendations regarding the need for clarity of funding and the requirement to review and monitor both costs and outcomes of our provision. Once the consultant's report has been approved the process of reviewing the pattern of existing provision can be started.

Additionally a short life working group of Head Teachers, parent and LA representatives has been set up to look at the effectiveness of existing specialist provision. The discussions during the first two meetings have focused on Special Educational Needs funding and understanding the costs and banding that apply to funding individual placements.

- 3.3 The benefits for co-producing key strategy and working documents with parents has been considerable. There is now parental representation on key strategic groups such as the SEN Strategy group, the Head Teachers SEN short life working group and working groups looking at developments to Transition planning and Personal Budgets.

Ways for generating greater participation and engagement with schools are 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. These for are now beginning to be established including a pilot based in one of our mainstream secondary schools.

Representation from the Private, Independent and Voluntary Sector remains at the SEN panel. Their input has been important when considering Providers to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs.

- 3.4 Recommendations for a new system for allocating additional support special educational needs support for those children considered to have exceptional needs have been met. The first round of moderating cluster groups have been completed. The central meeting of the chairs of the cluster groups, SEN manager and SEN finance Officer have met to consider the funding proposals for those children considered to have exceptional needs. Timetables for future cluster and central chair meetings have been arranged for the coming year.

3.5 A communication plan is currently been written. At the conference for parents and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) held in September 14 it was confirm that :-

- a SEN charter for parents and schools has been written and circulated to schools and parents and placed on the Reading Services guide.
- A“Statement of Intent” has been published as part of the Local Offer. This describes what should normally be available in all schools in Reading when supporting children with SEN in the classroom, in small groups and individually.
- Regular forums where a school and the families meet to discuss Special Educational Needs are currently being established. Reading’s Parent Forum is leading on this.

3.6 Conversion plans to Education, Health and Care plans for children with Statements of Special Educational Needs are well underway to meet this years timetable, with a focus on those approaching transition to a new setting.

3.7 Meetings have taken place with parents, providers and (in May 15) with special schools to raise awareness about:-

- The new independence training team and new arrangements to rationalise the use of taxis.
- The need to be vigilant about potential child protection issues.
- The skills required to be an effective child escort in buses or taxis and to seek views on how best to train escorts and how best to communicate a child’s needs to the escorts, their travel companies and via engaging families in this exercise.
- What the Local Authority expects of each Travel company to ensure safety, statutory requirements and efficiency of service.

4. NEXT STEPS

4.1 The working group set up to look into developing consistency of funding will now consider how to make structural savings of 900K within the SEN High Needs block and to make recommendations on changes in the current configuration of Reading’s special education provision in order to ensure best value and to best meet needs as described by parents and schools. This will inform what needs to be done to achieve consistency of funding and to establish provision that demonstrates best value and meets the profile of needs for Reading children. A booklet will then be written for parents and schools to explain how resources are allocated for pupils and the pattern of provision that that these refer to.

4.2 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.

4.3 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. Discussions with Health, parents and Service users are under way.

- 4.4 The additional project officer who was appointed to establish the Local Offer will now be focusing their attention on drawing up strategies for Personal Budgets to be covered by Education, Health and Social Care and Joint Commissioning.
- 4.5 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. This group is now well under way and intends to make presentation to the Childrens Joint Commissioning Strategy group in November 15.
- 4.6 A short life working group has been set up to review the provision that currently exists in Reading to meet the needs of children who present with challenging behaviours. This group will agree the best configuration of provision to meet needs, including preventative measures, identify gaps in current provision and make proposals to the SEN strategy group on potential savings to fund what is considered to be the spectrum of provision best suited to meet needs.

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.