

READING HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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| DATE OF MEETING: | 7 October 2022 | | |
| REPORT TITLE: | SEND STRATEGY 2022-2027 UPDATE | | |
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update regarding the delivery of the Reading partnership SEND Strategy 2022-2027.
- 1.2 The SEND strategy is included in Appendix 1. A summary of HM Government March 2022 SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time Government consultation on SEND and Alternative Provision is included in Appendix 2.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 Board are asked to note the content of this update and endorse priority actions for the coming year.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 As reported to Health and Wellbeing Board in October 2021, the Reading partnership SEND Strategy 2022-2027 sets out how the local area partnership will deliver support and services in collaboration with children, young people, families and carers to meet local needs and national responsibilities.
- 3.2 Our strategy for SEND is rooted in our vision for Reading's children and young people:

All children and young people with SEND will be supported through the provision of the right support at the right time to be as independent as possible and have their emotional, social and physical health needs met. They will have choice and agency in adult life and be able to access and navigate services to lead rich and fulfilling lives and flourish in a healthy, thriving and inclusive borough.

- 3.3 Our strategy reflects the positive outcome of the June 2021 local area inspection and the key areas for development identified through that report. Our strategy is co-produced with local parents and children, is informed by related key national documents such as the SEND Code of Practice (2015), National Autism Strategy (2021), the National Disability Strategy (2021) and the NHS Long Term Plan and has been reviewed in line with the

national SEND Review and related consultation. It also takes account of national advocacy campaigns that promote the rights of disabled people.

- 3.4 In March 2022, HM Government launched the national SEND Review: Right support, right place, right time, and the Government consultation on SEND and Alternative Provision. The proposals in the consultation are in line with the agreed Reading partnership SEND Strategy 2022-2027. The consultation on Government proposals concluded on 22 July 2022. The Reading SEND Strategy will continue to be informed by any consultation results announced by HM Government.

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 Current Position

- 4.2 This report summarises progress on the 2022/2023 action plans set out in the strategy. The over-riding key performance indicator for the new strategy, as previously reported to Health and Wellbeing Board in October 2021 is that any local area inspection in the future rates Reading as one of the best local areas in the country for children and young people with SEND and their families.
- 4.3 The strategy 'went live' from January 2022 and work strands have driven priority actions, reporting to the monthly SEND strategy group, co-chaired by the interim Executive Director Children's Services and the Designated Clinical Officer for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (0-25), Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board.
- 4.4 Examples of the further progress made for children with SEND, building on the strong partnership working recognised by Ofsted and CQC in their Local Area SEND inspection of June 2021, are set out in this report. Contributions to this report have been received from across the partnership delivering the work strands of the strategy.

Strand 1: Improving communication

- 4.5 The SEND guide for parents was co-produced with service users and their families in June 2021, a good example of the way in which Reading Families Forum and Special United are ensuring that service users and their families are routinely consulted and influence direction.
- 4.6 A range of new guides and information packs have been made available for parent/carers and children through partner websites and the local offer, which include; easy read short breaks information; the 'managing your wellbeing' web page; mental health support information and resources pages; the special needs Reading Services guide; the SEND local offer - Reading services guide; and the 'Parents Guide to Direct payments.' Regular updates on new SEND provision are provided through the SEND local offer newsletter.
- 4.7 Communication and engagement of parent/carers is proactive, with expansive social media communication of all guides and an ongoing advertising campaign on screens inside Reading buses. Parents and carers have directly influenced change and presentation of communications and branding, evidencing good progress in co-production.
- 4.8 Impact is tested out through parent/ carer and young people surveys, which are providing positive feedback. There is positive feedback from community groups in Reading regarding the improved SEND website, refreshed as of May 2022, with the latest guides and resources for parents, young people, and professionals.
- 4.9 The Special United youth group for children with SEND has recorded a new training video to help schoolteachers and other professionals better understand pupils with special

educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The stars of the short film explain in their own words what schools and other professionals could do to improve life for young people with additional needs. The video is a collaboration between Special United, Reading's SEND youth forum, which is part of Reading Families' Forum; Berkshire West Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC). The development of the film is part of a growth approach to autism adopted in Reading in response to an increasing number of autistic children and young people in the borough. It aims to improve their experiences in education and with other public services.

- 4.10 A further example of how successful approaches to coproduction and communication are cutting across all areas of the SEND strategy can be seen in the coproduced 'Preparing for Adulthood' easy read information and the 'Becoming an Adult' information guides. The sharing of this updated information is having a positive impact for young adults with SEND, helping to reduce anxiety in our young people and to support well informed decision-making across key transition points.

Strand 2: Early intervention through to specialist provision; Strand 6: Capital and School places; Strand 7: Revenue and funding

- 4.11 A new commissioning strategy has been implemented for the development of more local Alternative Provision & Specialist Setting provision. The Brighter Futures for Children Commissioning Team is leading on bringing together a range of options to meet the needs of children who may benefit from being in an inclusive education environment but are unlikely to be able to be in a mainstream classroom for the full school day.
- 4.12 A market development day, hosted by BFfC Commissioning Team, was held in June 2022, to support the development of more local provision. A number of providers came forward with proposals, which are progressing at sufficient pace to secure an increased number of school places for Reading children this academic year. Plans for a new Special Free School, Oak Tree, are well progressed for a September 2023 opening. BFfC officers are working with RBC to submit an expression of interest for a further Special Free School in the DfE published national expression of interest round in October 2022.
- 4.13 In early 2021 there was a comprehensive review of resourced provision in Reading's schools. There has been some capacity enhancement of provision but there remains an opportunity to explore further these enhanced provisions currently being managed by mainstream schools to meet the needs of their complex pupils. In July 2022, schools were approached and a number of primary schools agreed to explore options in relation to assessment provision, Additionally Resourced Provision and satellite provision (Specialist provision sited on a Mainstream school property). A number of Reading schools have expressed an interest in developing more specialist provision. Schools who have expressed an interest in the summer term are being supported to work up proposals which will be evaluated this term. Brighter Futures will be actively exploring capacity within schools to continue to expand the graduated offer of provision for Reading's children young people. One of the barriers to this expansion of provision has been a national challenge in recruitment both in the Special and mainstream sectors. Brighter Futures for Children are working with local schools to further develop a partnership approach to Workforce Strategy and recruitment to support schools in filling these roles.
- 4.14 Work has been done to ensure the targeting of resources to where they are most needed. For example, local community groups and charities have been invited to lead on projects aimed at culturally appropriate support and services for children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. An Inclusion Fund has also been established which provides additional funding to mainstream schools with a high percentage of pupils with EHCPs compared to our statistical neighbour average. Resources have been transferred from the DSG Schools Block to the High Needs block to fund this investment in local schools.
- 4.15 The DfE has introduced a new programme, called Delivering Better Value in SEND, to provide dedicated support and funding to help local authorities reform their high needs

systems. Brighter Futures for Children on behalf of Reading Borough Council have been invited to participate in this programme, with a planned commencement date of January 2023. The programme has made available immediate funding to employ a data analyst to help refine our understanding of demand data. Support available through the programme could also include SEND Advisors, workshops, ESFA engagement staff and potential further funding to invest in the local SEND system.

Strand 3: Consistent approaches to emotional wellbeing

- 4.16 The partnership commitment to the SEND Strategy is supported through the action led through the One Reading Partnership, to ensure consistent approaches to supporting Reading children's mental health. There are regular presentations from services or about projects focused on Mental Health and Emotional Well Being through the One Reading Partnership. Due to the vulnerability and risk of exploitation of the SEND population and to prevent replication of work it has been agreed to combine the SEND Preparing for Adulthood and One Reading Adolescent Risk Strategy Group strands.
- 4.17 The much-valued 'Therapeutic Thinking Schools' networks and training are continuing to be supported in the vast majority of Reading schools, with positive impact on inclusion and support for Reading children. The Schools Link Mental Health Project is being developed as part of the SEND Strategy's focus on promoting resilience, prevention, and early intervention. Educational Psychologists & the Primary Mental Health Team are offering mental health surgeries to all Reading schools as part of this approach. There is a comprehensive training offer to schools, early years settings and colleges and this supports schools in applying therapeutic thinking to reduce exclusions and promote mental wellbeing. There is in addition a new Trauma Informed Practitioner in place for the autumn term who will also provide additional support to Reading schools.
- 4.18 The Educational Psychology Service and Primary Mental Health Service have written and are delivering Early Years Mental Health Training: Little People Big Feelings to help ensure that the needs of vulnerable children under 2 are consistently identified by professionals.
- 4.19 Work is also continuing to develop local appropriate specialist provision and interventions which includes continuing to implement the crisis and home treatment model. Recurrent funding has been identified for a CAMHS (Child Adolescent Mental Health Services) liaison role within the Royal Berkshire Hospital to support their established Lead Mental Health Nurse to support children, young people, families and staff in the acute paediatric and adult wards.
- 4.20 In June 2021 the Royal Berkshire Foundation Trust joined the Hospital Navigators pilot project, funded by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit. This offered young people 13 - 24 attending A+E the opportunity to have support from a matched Mentor, with the intention of starting support at a critical point in time. Research shows that change is most likely to be initiated in these reachable moments but this depends upon a person's available support.
- 4.21 Starting Point, who were commissioned to provide this service, have recruited and trained 24 volunteers and consistently cover Friday and Saturday night. In the first 12 months (June 2021-22): 120 young people were supported by the service, most of them Reading residents. Attendance reason or comorbid factors identified included injury, self-harm, risk taking behaviours (substance abuse) young people with learning disability, autism. 43% of young people referred engaged on positive pathways, highest number in Thames Valley out of the 5 sites. Of those who discussed their mental health with a Navigator, 90% said they struggled with it. Of those asked, 100% found it helpful having a

conversation with a Navigator in hospital and 100% were glad that they were able to have a conversation with a Navigator. RBH evaluation shows reduction in repeat attendance to the Emergency Department. Volunteer mentors demonstrated low levels of turn over and allowed for wide range of diversity. Qualitative data from case vignettes demonstrate impact upon individuals of meeting with the navigators and mentors.

- 4.22 There are regular meetings with relevant NHS acute and Brighter Futures for Children colleagues to coordinate the response for children with the highest needs and those in crisis, and the partnership are implementing the Thames Valley project for young people with more complex needs, using the Health and Justice Secure Stairs therapeutic model. We continue to develop early help and secondary mental health support, promoting the Thrive model and the specialist CAMHS Service for Children Looked After.
- 4.23 A new Task & Finish Group has been established with a focus on children and young people from ethnic minority backgrounds and cultures accessing mental health and emotional wellbeing support, information, and services. An Assistant Educational Psychologist is employed to lead on this work.

Strand 4: Preparing for adulthood

- 4.24 A panel for preparation for adulthood has been established to oversee improved transitions and preparation for adulthood work across the partnership. Transition work in Year 9 upwards is an area of focus and is being addressed through proposed joint working for children aged 14+ between Brighter Futures for Children and adult social care.
- 4.25 In August 2022, Buckinghamshire Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB) Integrated Care Board (ICB) commissioned a Quality Improvement Project - Transition to Adulthood - the Journey for young people/adults with Learning Disability or Autism (13 to 24). The Berkshire West stakeholder group for this project met on 14th September. Reading Adult Social Care and Brighter Futures for Children, BHFT and RBFT were well represented and will ensure active Reading participation and leadership of this work.
- 4.26 To support the BOB project and ensure we hear the voice of young people funding has been identified by the NHS England South-East Region for a SEND Improvement project: Improve transition planning through the lens of a CYP with autism, learning disability or both. This will include Reading young people and will involve special and mainstream schools.
- 4.27 A new Reading all-age Autism Strategy 2022-2026 is being developed which will enhance partnership support in preparing children for adulthood. Public and partner engagement has been a core element of developing Reading's Autism Strategy, including autistic people and their families and carers, third sector and voluntary organisations and professionals from across Reading. Engagement and coproduction took place via a mixture of interviews, workshops, surveys, forums, existing local groups, targeted outreach to groups and feedback sessions. This insight is being used to inform and shape the strategy, and to test emerging findings, recommendations, priorities, and vision development.

Strand 5: Support for families / short breaks

- 4.28 There is a dedicated area on the SEND Local Offer providing information, advice and guidance on short breaks, coproduced with Reading Families Forum, Special United and the wider SEND community-based services to ensure that information is accessible, meets the needs of local families CYP, and that the services commissioned are structured around the feedback provided. This area is widely used by parent carers, school SENCOs,

the wider Reading community and professionals working with families to help access and understand the short breaks offer.

- 4.29 In April 2022 the creation of shared care at Pineroft diversified the offer of short breaks for families into established residential care that is regulated by OFSTED. The additionality and continued offer and delivery of services as planned at Cressingham overnight short breaks provision brings added value to the children and families of Reading.
- 4.30 The short breaks offer has improved significantly this year. Short breaks are mapped based on feedback, gaps analysis and needs based on young people with SEND in Reading, this has encouraged take up of the offer. The Family Information Service and SEND Local Offer team are also part of professional forums, supporting for example social workers to explore and secure a wider range of alternative service options for families. The Family Intervention Service also offer a brokerage service to vulnerable parent carers helping them to access short breaks. This support has enabled many families and children to access universal short breaks.
- 4.31 The Service has proved effective in helping the partnership better understand the feedback from commissioned providers and this is also an integral part of how local offer information is communicated to families. The Family Information Service capture feedback from parent carers and evidence of positive outcomes to further improve our offer. This coproductive approach to engagement has resulted in the creation of various short breaks, including the recent creation of the Lego club. The Service has provided families with a public face and direct connection to an individual who is responsive to local represented needs. Some of this work has informed ideas of bespoke short breaks including hydro-pool therapy and art therapy.
- 4.32 All targeted commissioned short break providers can share information about their services on the SEND Local Offer, which is updated and moderated by the Family Information Service, with the result being timely information on all offers being shared. Every commissioned short break provider also has a duty to ensure they promote and publicize their short breaks offer.
- 4.33 Priority areas for further action**
- 4.34 The SEND Strategy 2022-2027 is a comprehensive strategy, with a wide range of actions set out in the work strand action plans. Below are listed key areas of priority which are points of focus to help secure improvements across our local SEND system over the coming year.
- 4.35 Recruiting specialist, trained staff across partner-delivered services to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND continues to be a key challenge, and the key challenge restricting the capacity in specialist services. Educational Psychology, CAMHS and specialist Teaching Assistants remain priority recruitment areas. A more joined up approach to workforce recruitment and retention is a top priority.
- 4.36 Data sharing remains challenging. Coproduction and communication with all partners are key drivers in the development of the new Local Transformation Plan which is currently being written.
- 4.37 Many parents continue to be concerned about the amount of time they have to wait for a diagnosis appointment for ADHD and ASD. The waiting list has reduced recently but this is an area of continued attention. Reading Families Forum report that families are not sure where to start when their child is put on the waiting list for an assessment of Autism or ADHD or has another diagnosis. Most of the concerns at Reading Families Forum's Family Information and Fun Day related to this concern. The partnership will be taking action in

the autumn term 2022 to improve the sharing of relevant information and advice to parents, through the information guides available the Local Offer.

- 4.38 The joint working to successfully reduce exclusions has enabled children and young people with SEND to attend school for longer and achieve better results. Whilst the partnership continues to make impact with the Therapeutic Thinking in Schools approach, exclusions of young people with Autism (with and without LD) is a continued area of focus and there are continuing issues for young people with LD who have additional emotional regulation and wellbeing needs.
- 4.39 Reading Families Forum have seen a large increase in children presenting with Emotionally Based School Avoidance, which is further evidenced by feedback from young people. A new EBSA team for children in a Reading school has been established this academic year and a further Mental Health Support Team will also add further capacity to address the needs of identified children and young people at risk of EBSA. Work will continue this year to develop our partnership response to prevent children missing education, with more communication between services and a coproduced approach with families to help navigate the system of support for children, so that children can make progress in their learning.
- 4.40 Some families still experience services and pathways across the partnership of providers (BHFT, BOB ICB, RBH and BFfC) which don't work together seamlessly. Some pathways to health services are not clear enough and can be confusing. Work with families will take place in the coming year to clarify pathways and continue to streamline how services work together.
- 4.41 CAMHS capacity, crisis response and support for children with Learning Disabilities and Autism remain a concern for parents, related to the recruitment challenges set out above. A new Specialist CAMHS service for LDA is being commissioned and the partnership will continue to explore ways to support an improved CAMHS offer.
- 4.42 Parents tell us the Local Offer is helpful but with such a wide offer they find it hard to know always where to go. In response, the Berks West Local Transformation Executive Committee has commissioned SCW to scope a single front door for Mental Health and Emotional Well Being services. In the interim period, to have a comprehensive view of what is available locally, the group is developing a Local Directory of services for professionals to use and Ambassadors are creating a visual mapping of local services. Parents also want to see more day care and overnight respite for those young people whose needs prevent them from working, e.g. severe physical and learning disabilities.
- 4.43 Employment Education and Training for SEND young people remains a key priority. Developing more pathways to fulfilling destinations for all young people with SEND remains an important priority for the partnership. Increasing links with Reading's business community and expanding the offer of supported internships are key objectives for 2023.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO READING'S HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The information contained in this report and its appendices are in line with the overall direction of the Reading Health and Wellbeing Strategy, contributing to the following strategy priorities:

Help children and families in early years

Promote good mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people

6. ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No environmental and climate implications have been identified in the writing of this report.

7. COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

7.1 The development and delivery of the SEND Strategy has been supported by the proactive work undertaken by Reading Families' Forum and Special United - young people's forum, as set out in this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.2 The SEND Strategy 2022-27 aims to ensure the changing diverse and special education needs of Reading children are met, to raise the education standards for all and address inequality due to social disadvantage, disability (including multiple complex needs) and/or other protected characteristics, and contributes to the delivery of the Council's equality duties. The strategy will be reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changing demographics and to ensure that the diverse and special education needs of Reading children continue to be effectively met.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Not applicable for this report

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Not applicable for this report

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Not applicable for this report