

Reading Borough Council Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy 2017 – 2022



**Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable
Providing the best life through education, early help and healthy
living**

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Special educational needs and disability (SEND) is a complex area with a wide range of agencies and professionals involved. While there is evidence of some good practice in the local area, there is a need for a more co-ordinated approach to identifying and meeting needs.
- 1.2 It is expected that the vast majority of children and young people's needs will be able to be met locally, with most in the context of universal services that are able to identify needs early, and are inclusive and responsive to meeting needs within their context whenever possible.
- 1.3 Clear pathways are required that set out expectations of what should be provided by universal services and at what point more specialist services might be required to provide further assessment, advice and support, and/or more specialist provision.
- 1.4 This strategy draws on an overview of relevant and comparative data and information, and proposes a number of key strands which will provide a focus for its delivery. The strategy and action plans that prescribe its delivery will, at a minimum, set out:
 - the actions the authority and its partners are taking to ensure all duties under relevant legislation, statutory guidance and regulations are carried out (see attachment one to this document for a list of relevant legislation);
 - the numbers of pupils who have SEND and the specialist educational provision required in the planning period (see attachment two for pupil data);
 - the projected costs of the provision, and how this is to be contained within budget (see attachment three for tables setting out current dedicated schools grant (DSG) expenditure, including the high needs block (HNB)).

2 Aims

- 2.1 To provide a framework for a coordinated approach that will support all stakeholders and partners to:
 - understand the profile of children and young people's needs with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) 0-25 within Reading borough and how that compares to other local authorities;
 - have clarity regarding their responsibilities and their role in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND;
 - ensure that there is a continuum of provision to meet the range of needs of children and young people with SEND and their families which is flexible to the changing profile in Reading;
 - understand the pathways to accessing more specialist support when required;
 - have confidence that high needs spending and resources are targeted effectively and support improved outcomes for children and young people;
 - understand what needs to be commissioned, recommissioned and decommissioned to meet the changing profile of needs across Reading borough both now and into the future.

3 Anticipated Outcomes

- 3.1 We will know our key strengths, gaps and areas for improvement, and will ensure these are addressed strategically.
- 3.2 Children and young people's SEND will be identified and addressed early, preventing escalation to more specialist services where possible.
- 3.3 Children and young people, and their parents and carers will feel engaged in the process of assessing their needs and informing decisions about their support
- 3.4 Children and young people, and their parents or carers, will be clear about the identification and assessment processes and the criteria used to make decisions.
- 3.5 Children and young people and their parents and carers will feel confident in what is provided through being involved from the start in the strategic commissioning of services.
- 3.6 All agencies will work together to collectively improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

4 Principles

- 4.1 The strategy will deliver the principles set out in the Children and Families Act, 2014 through delivering and ensuring systems and procedures for:

- the **participation** of children, their parents and young people in decision making;
- the **early identification** of children and young people's needs and joined up early intervention across education, health (universal and specialist) early help and social care services as appropriate to need to support them
- **greater choice and control for young people and parents** over support;
- **collaboration** between education, health and social care services to provide support, including development of jointly commissioned services;
- **high quality provision** to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN;
- a focus on **inclusive practice** and removing barriers to learning; and
- **successful preparation for adulthood, including independent living and employment.**

(SEND Code of Practice, 2015, sections 1.1 and 1.2)

- 4.2 In Reading these principles are further defined:

- co-production with families through the parent carer forum will be central to delivery of the strategy;
- the overall approach to decision making regarding SEND Provision will be linked to the overarching strategy and approved through the strategy Board and Governance Structure;
- there will be clear expectations of universal services, including early year's settings, health visitors and health services, schools and colleges, and clear pathways to early help and early intervention support across all relevant services;

- universal services will be equipped to provide the right support at the right time to prevent unnecessary escalation to more specialist services;
- the approach will support multi-agency working, breaking down barriers and ensuring a joined up approach for children, young people and families;
- changes to provision should be sustainable and based on detailed analysis of needs and evidence;
- provision will be made locally that can meet needs, and reduce out of area placements where appropriate and possible; and
- developments will take account of preparing for adulthood, working with adult services at the appropriate time to support transition and planning for adult skills and adult services.

5 Delivery

5.1 These principles will be delivered through the key strands set out in the strategic framework set out in Section 10, each of which will set out specific actions and intended outcomes in more detailed plans which will be kept under regular review.

- strand 1: analysis of data and information to inform future provision and joint commissioning;
- strand 2: early identification of needs and early intervention;
- strand 3: using specialist services and identified best practice to increase local capacity; and
- strand 4: transition to adulthood.

5.2 Reading's **transforming care programme (TCP)** supports delivery of the strategy by developing and strengthening local service provision for children, young people and adults. It will have a significant impact on the planning and delivery of support services to children and young people with learning disabilities and /or autism, including those with mental health conditions. It includes:

- health care;
- preventative services;
- advocacy;
- carer support universal welfare; and
- education and training.

6 High needs block funding

6.1 Actions need to be taken to review high needs block spend alongside schools block, early years block and the new central services block, benchmarking with other local authorities and ensuring that it is targeted where it should be, that it is not being used to fund costs that should be funded from elsewhere, and that it supports positive outcomes for children and young people.

6.2 All commissioned projects and services should have a contract or service level agreement (SLA) in place that is regularly monitored. These will be reviewed to ensure that all high needs block spend can be accurately reported on how it is supporting children and their outcomes and providing value for money.

7 Progress to date

- 7.1 A brief summary of work undertaken to date to implement the SEND Reforms is summarised in attachment four to this document. This includes examples of work undertaken with the parent carer forum.

8 Governance

- 8.1 As Reading borough council is the lead agency for delivery of the Children and Families Act, 2014, the ACE committee is responsible for approving the final strategy.
- 8.2 In order to ensure clear governance and accountability a SEND strategy Group will be set up, chaired by the director of children services with membership from all key agencies including parent carer forum.
- 8.3 The SEND strategy group will secure engagement of all key partners and lead on the monitoring of the implementation of the strategy, providing a framework for reporting progress to key stakeholders and partners, and specifically the ACE committee and health and wellbeing board.
- 8.4 The SEND strategy group will monitor progress towards fully implementing the SEND reforms.
- 8.5 The recent commencement of a cross Berkshire directors of children services group and a service Manager for the joint implementation group in the west of Berkshire will support any required strategic regional commissioning.

9 A strategic framework for SEND

Strand 1: analysis of data and information to inform future provision and joint commissioning

- 9.1 A framework for regular analysis of needs will be developed to support the joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) and ensure that capacity can be planned in special education provision and services, care provision (including short breaks), school nursing, including special school nursing, and therapy services to manage growing demand in terms of volume and complexity of need within a locality.
- 9.2 Analysis will be used to identify better ways of using resources early to meet needs and supporting improving outcomes for children and young people without the need for an EHC assessment and plan.
- 9.3 A framework will be agreed for production and analysis of data reports and how it will inform future planning and delivery of the strategy.
- 9.4 A review all high needs block spend alongside all other DSG blocks and other council and partner spend on high needs will be carried out to ensure compliance with regulations, efficient use of resources, further benchmark with other Local authorities and inform focus of future priorities for spend and future commissioning.
- 9.5 A methodology for planning special school and specialist provision places will be developed and included in the school organisation plan which will be updated annually. This will enable the local authority to forecast growth in high needs pupils and support place planning in schools and college provision, as well as the development of an accommodation strategy. This should take account of young people up to the age of 25.

- 9.6 A robust plan will be developed to interrogate the issues leading to low attendance and high exclusions of children and young people with SEND. These will be collectively addressed by all partners linking to early help / intervention.
- 9.7 A joint commissioning strategy will be developed with partners that will develop better services that support the earlier identification of need, remove barriers in providing the services needed, and ensure that we know the impact of the services we deliver and commission.
- 9.8 We will review all opportunities for arranging how services work together, across education, health and social care which will help to deliver more personalised and integrated support resulting in better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

Strand 2: Early Identification of needs and early intervention

- 9.9 Guidance and professional development opportunities will be reviewed to enable early identification of needs and joined up support by all agencies involved with children and young people.
- 9.10 Universal services will have clear information on expectations of what they can provide, as well as pathways to more specialist support when needs cannot be met through universal services.
- 9.11 Expertise in SEND in Reading will be further developed and drawn upon so that all providers have access to and have opportunities to share high quality practice.
- 9.12 School to school support for SEND will be further developed from identified best practice to build capacity and ensure that specialist skills and knowledge are available across the widest range of settings.
- 9.13 Outcomes will be carefully monitored and benchmarked against the best national standards whatever the setting with consistently high expectations.
- 9.14 Opportunities for extending Early Help Services will be explored, enabling better integration of more specialist services.
- 9.15 There will be earlier intervention in teenage years to enable sufficient time for the young person, and their parents/carers to be actively and meaningfully engaged in identifying the support and resources required to prepare for adulthood.

Strand 3: Using specialist services and identified best practice to increase local capacity

- 9.16 Specifications / service level agreements will be developed to provide a framework for specialist services, identified best practice, and schools with specialist provision to formally contribute to improved capacity for early intervention through the improvement in knowledge and skills of providers.
- 9.17 Referral pathways will be developed that provide clear information on what to expect from universal services prior to referral to specialist services and how to access specialist support services and the Early Help offer.
- 9.18 There will be a clear framework for the quality assurance of providers that gives confidence to families as well as commissioners that outcomes for children and young people will improve and there will be value for money.

- 9.19 Working with the clinical commissioning group (CCG) and local authority commissioners we will ensure that there is clear information on the role of health providers such as school nursing, including special school nursing, therapy and other services to support children and young people with medical needs/conditions.
- 9.20 Working with the CCG we will clarify the role of all partners in the education, health and care assessment and plans and annual review.

Strand 4: Transition to adulthood

- 9.21 We will work with families to develop a transition to adulthood plan (14-25) that outlines how young people with SEND will be supported into adulthood, recognising the extra help that may need to build their independence and clarifying pathways for accessing more specialist support and funding.
- 9.22 Everyone who is involved in supporting young people as they approach adulthood will work together to have positive aspirations for them and support them in a way that helps young people to be as independent as possible and achieve their goals.
- 9.23 Young people and their parents/carers will have clear and accessible information about what to expect in the future as they move along the pathway and prepare to become an adult living a healthy and fulfilling life in their community.
- 9.24 From the age of 14 young people will be supported to consider options for training, volunteering or opportunities for paid employment. They will be encouraged to aim for the maximum achievable independence and including, where possible, meaningful engagement in the world of work. The council will work with businesses and charities to provide better opportunities for paid work, training and volunteering.