

## **Southend-on-Sea Borough Council**

### **Report of Corporate Director of Department for People to Cabinet 17 March 2015**

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#### **Second Annual Report on the Implementation of Southend on Sea's Strategy for Children Age 0 – 25 with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities: "Early Help, Partnership Choice and Ambition 2013 – 2016**

People Scrutiny Committee– Executive Councillor: Councillor Anne Jones

#### **A Part 1 Public Agenda item**

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#### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To report on progress of the second year of the implementation plan of the strategy for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. The report gives a summary and progress report on the 5 key proposals and the action plans that take the strategy forward (Appendix 2).

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the report for the second year of the SEN Strategy.  
2.2 Comments are sought on the progress of the Strategy

#### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Southend on Sea's Strategy for Special Educational Needs was approved by Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2013 following a period of extensive consultation with a range of partners and stakeholders. The strategy set out both local and national developments and priorities.
- 3.2 The strategy is ambitious for all children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities and describes how all schools, services, parents and partners can work together to improve outcomes for young people. The strategy, entitled "Early Help, Partnership, Choice and Ambition" is attached as Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The strategy and action plans are monitored by the SEN Strategic Board. This is the second annual report on the progress of its implementation.

#### **4. Progress Report**

4.1 The strategy has 5 key proposals each with an action plan.( Appendix 2) The following is a summary and highlights of some of the progress that has been made so far on implementing the strategy.

#### 4.2 **Proposal 1 – Early Intervention**

The focus of work for the last year has been to implement the SEND reforms and the new SEN Code of practice. The reforms are wide ranging and include the following:

- From September 2014 all Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Learning Difficulty Assessments ( LDAs) are replaced with Education Health and Care Plans ( EHCP) for children and young people age 0-25. There is a phased transition plan to convert existing statements and LDAs to Education Health and Care plans by April 2018.
- Education Health and Care Plans have a clear focus on person centred planning through a co-ordinated and integrated assessment process that places children and young people at the centre.
- There is new guidance for schools and settings on taking a graduated approach to identifying and supporting pupils with SEN – called SEN Support. This replaces the previous School Action and School Action Plus. Schools are required to review all children on their SEN register by April 2015
- There is a requirement to publish a Local Offer that sets out the support available to all children and young people with SEN across the Borough including leisure, health, care and post 16 training and apprenticeships.
- From September 2014 parents have the right to request a personal budget as part of the EHC Plan and this is linked to the Local Offer
- Local Authorities must provide Independent Information Advice and Support to children, young people and their parents and carers. This new service replaces Parent Partnership.
- There is a focus on joint planning and commissioning between Health (Clinical Commissioning Group) and the Local Authority's education and care services to ensure that provision is in place to meet needs.
- Transition to adulthood is important to ensure there are pathways into employment, independent living, participation in society and good health. Young people are more closely involved in the decision making and can request an assessment up to their 25th birthday.

Implementation in Southend has been overseen by the SEN Strategic Board with 7 work streams established to take the detailed planning forward. This Board reports to the Success for All Group and then to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Input from parents and practitioners has been critical and there has been excellent representation and consultation with a wide group of stakeholders. This has been a whole systems change programme affecting all staff in settings and services who work with children and young people with Special Educational Needs. As a result of careful, detailed planning, consultation and training, Southend was in a position to successfully implement the new arrangements by September 2014 in line with government requirements. The programme has been monitored by the DfE and HMI. The "Planning for Change" programme focussed on training staff from schools, early years, colleges and services to implement the reforms. 6 Phases of training have been delivered and over 500

staff attended. Schools have been supported in their planning for readiness on the new systems and processes as well as the need to publish their own SEND Information report.

The new documentation for the Education Health and Care Plans embraces the principles of a co-ordinated and integrated assessment right from the early school based stages with a new and more joined up Individual Support Plan through to the statutory assessment framework and EHC Plans setting out the needs and support across Education, Health and Care. Ongoing review and evaluation with feedback from parents is in place.

Southend has published its transition plan to convert over 900 existing statements of SEN and 150 Learning difficulty Assessments ( LDAs) to Education Health and Care Plans over the next 3 years, The priority is given to children and young people who are changing schools or settings. This is on track to be delivered within the required timescales.

#### **4.3 Proposal 2 – Working in Partnership with Parents**

The new EHC integrated needs assessment and plan framework involves parents and carers throughout the process and provides a platform for greater integrated working across services. The voice of the child and young person is captured throughout and professionals working with them are encouraged to set high ambitions for successful long term outcomes. The EHC Plan is co-produced with parents and the young person.

A key piece of work that has successfully engaged parents and stakeholders, children and young people and youth and school councils is the implementation of the Local Offer. This sets out in one place information about provision that is available for children and young people in the area who have Special Educational Needs and helps to inform planning for services and identify gaps in provision. The Local Offer is now an integral part of Southend Help and Information Point ( SHIP) which is an online information service. Systems for updating and quality assuring the Local Offer have been put in place and ongoing Governance will be managed and monitored through an overarching Board.

The Local Authority has also commissioned an independent mediation service to enable dispute resolution for parents where agreement cannot be reached through normal channels. This is an essential step before proceeding to appeal to the SEN tribunal against decisions the Local Authority makes in the EHC assessment and planning processes.

Work has begun on developing the policy, criteria and monitoring arrangements to enable parents who request it to have a personal budget and on identifying the services available. This is for implementation by September 2015 as set out in the Code of Practice and this work will involve consultation with headteachers, health and other services. There is much experience and good practice in Southend in adults and childrens services on which to build. In the meantime where there are existing personal budgets from health or social care, these are being incorporated into new Education Health and Care Plans.

An important element of the new Code of Practice is to provide independent advice and support for parents and carers in the new EHC assessment and planning processes. The former Parent Partnership Service has now become the new Information Advice and Support service ( IAS). It is an impartial service which is confidential and accessible and provides advice on policy and local practice, on personalisation and personal budgets, on law and disability and help with resolving disagreements. There is a part time member of staff as well as volunteers who have completed the accredited training for the role. The service is working closely with Southend SCOPE who have resources to offer time limited support for parents who are going through the EHCP process to ensure a consistent approach.

The SEN strategy identified a need for a focus on training for staff in early years settings and schools on Speech Language and Communication. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual SEN conference planned for March 2015 has this as the theme and is targeted at Headteachers, SENCOS and staff in services with national speakers attending.

#### 4.4 **Proposal 3 - Access to high quality provision**

There has been some significant progress in actions under this proposal. Seabrook College has been established as a federation of the former Priory School and the Renown Centre for Learning together with other services to support children with Behaviour Emotional and Social Difficulties. Recent OFSTED and HMI visits indicate that good progress is being made and that outcomes for some of the most vulnerable children and young people are improving. In September 2014 the College relocated to new premises for its Key Stage 4 pupils at North Road and the primary pupils are at the Prittlewell centre where they have access to more appropriate facilities with outdoor play space. There is now one governing body and a combined budget. The College will take further steps in 2015 to become one organisation and there will continue to be a need to work towards realising the vision for pupils to be located on one site where possible.

The Behaviour Outreach Service has been reformed and sits within the management of Seabrook College and is now working with schools across the Borough. Early indications are that the service is well received and offering support to schools and pupils. Impact will be evaluated at the end of the academic year.

Permanent Exclusions from Southend Schools continue to be lower than national and there were no permanent exclusions from primary or Special schools in 2013/14. Where some schools have high rates of fixed term exclusions Seabrook College and the outreach service provide targeted support.

81% of schools inspected between 2012 and December 2014 were judged Good or Outstanding for Behaviour and Safety.

Alongside this development the nurture provision in all primary schools continues to move forward. More schools are developing a nurture base within the school and others are developing nurture approaches. There will be further

consultation with headteachers on future developments to implement nurture approaches.

A comprehensive "Planning for Change" 6 phase training programme has been delivered for staff in schools, settings and services to implement the SEND reforms. Over 500 people attended training. The work to support Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators ( SENCOs) and SEN practice in schools has been strengthened with the establishment of 2 advisory SENCOs and an SEN Quality Assurance manager and a Teaching and Learning Practitioner for SEN. Four SEN cluster groups have been formed for SENCOs to meet to share good practice, ongoing training and support for the delivery of the SEN reforms and to undertake SEN moderation across schools. A training needs analysis has been undertaken to inform future training needs.

#### **4.5 Proposal 4 - Raise attainment and expectations for learners with SEN and/or Disabilities**

Analysis of attainment of SEN learners indicates that in Southend, children are doing less well than children with SEN nationally, and that progress to close the gap continues to be slow. Schools are expected to review their SEN registers by April 2015 to ensure that only children with clearly identified SEN are placed on school SEN Support stage. This will potentially result in a short term widening of the SEN gap and greater challenge in addressing this. However the aim is to close the gap to be at least in line with national trends. Southend Challenge groups of schools are working together to raise standards and close attainment gaps in all of the Borough's schools. The focus is to reduce inequalities in the attainment of vulnerable children particularly those on Free School Meals. Alongside this, training and support for schools to provide high quality SEN provision has begun. This has focused on the importance of correct identification of children with SEN as opposed to those children who may be underachieving. The new SEN Code of Practice makes it clear that Quality First teaching is the first response for children who are underachieving. The training has also covered assessment tools, moderation and criteria for SEN support as well as mapping provision and using resources effectively.

4 of the 5 Special Schools in Southend have been judged Good or better at inspection with one school outstanding. Seabrook College ( former Priory School) was removed from requiring Special Measures in March 2014.

Work is progressing on developing suitable pathways for learners post 16 and in September 2014 all leavers with statements of SEN were in education, employment or training.

#### **4.6 Proposal 5 - Using resources effectively**

There is an expectation that all schools will audit and evaluate their provision and resources for children with SEN on an annual basis. The new SEN Code of Practice requires schools to publish a SEND report annually. This report sets out the provision and support the school makes for children with SEN. Schools have received guidance on this and early monitoring indicates that all schools have either fully completed this or are in the process of doing so.

Monitoring systems for schools' use of SEN resources is in place and includes visits to schools by the SEN advisory SENCOs and the Quality Assurance Manager, moderation of SEN support across schools undertaken through the SENCO clusters as well as through individual pupils' annual reviews.

The new funding arrangements for mainstream and special schools were implemented in April 2013 and further reviewed with a report to the Schools Forum in January 2014 and again in January 2015. There has been some growth in places in special schools that mainly reflects the general increase in pupil numbers but also in post 16 provision.

The Borough's performance in relation to compliance with the requirements of the statutory assessment process is good with 100% of statements of SEN delivered within statutory time scales. However at 3.3% Southend has a higher rate of statements than national (2.8%). By the end of January 2015 60 new Education Health and Care Plans were in progress and 209 Conversion reviews to transfer existing statements of SEN to Education Health and Care Plans had taken place with the priority to those children who are changing schools.

## **5. Conclusion**

Good progress continues to be made in the implementation of the SEN strategy. Of particular note over the last year has been the partnership work to implement the SEND reforms, the Local Offer and the new Education Health and Care Plans with an integrated and co-ordinated needs assessment. Southend was in a good position to meet the government requirements as a result of the detailed planning and training for staff in schools, settings and services. Other successes to note include 100% performance in delivering statements of SEN to statutory timescales, the low levels of exclusion from schools, the performance of the Special Schools and the further establishment of Seabrook College and the Behaviour Outreach Service.

During this second year of the strategy, most of the necessary systems and processes have been put into place to ensure high quality provision and effective use of resources. The focus has been on helping schools to develop their systems as well as their readiness for the reforms.

In the third year of the strategy we should begin to see impact and improved outcomes. This will include:

- A reduction in the numbers of children on the SEN support stage register in schools through improved identification of SEN. However, this may potentially have a short term impact on the SEN attainment gap widening. The aim is to close the gap to be at least comparable with national and continue to have high aspirations for children and young people with SEN.
- A reduction in the numbers of children who require an Education Health and Care Plan (formerly statements) to at least the national average of 2.8%. This will require working with schools to develop the skills and expertise of staff so that children's needs can be met at SEN Support stage in schools and settings and through maximising resources. It will

also mean working with parents to ensure they have the confidence that their child will receive high quality support.

- Over time fewer children will need to access specialist or residential provision because their needs can be met within a mainstream setting and close to home. This will be achieved through all services, schools and agencies working together in a more co-ordinated way to enable staff in mainstream schools to have the skills and expertise to support a wide range of needs. Of particular importance is ensuring that the expertise of Special Schools and specialist services such as mental health offer support and training for staff.
- Parents feeling fully involved in the EHC Plan and processes with positive feedback.

The following areas will be the focus and priority for the third year of the strategy:

- Continue to ensure that all partners work together to embed the SEND reforms and the transition to the Education Health and Care Plans ensuring parents and children and young people continue to be fully involved in the process and the evaluation of the service.
- Education, Health and Social Care to work together to take forward the joint commissioning work to ensure that services are available to meet needs including the personal budget arrangements.
- Work with schools to raise the attainment of children and young people with SEN to ensure that children with SEN make expected progress. Key to this is to have high ambitions for children with SEN.
- Continue to work with schools to develop the skills and expertise of staff in all aspects of SEN to ensure high quality teaching.
- Further consolidate the development of Seabrook College and the services for children with Behaviour, Emotional and Social Difficulties
- Refresh the current Protocol for the transition of young people into adulthood and adult services in light of the Care Act.
- Refresh the SEN strategy beyond 2016.

## **6. Corporate Implications**

### **6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision & Corporate Priorities**

The strategy contributes to the Success For All priorities of raising achievement and securing good outcomes for the Borough's children and young people.

### **6.2 Financial Implications**

From 2013 new financial arrangements have been in place for the funding of SEN in Schools and for Special Schools and Units. These arrangements are kept under review and reports are received by Southend on Sea's Schools Forum as required.

### **6.3 Legal Implications**

The new Education Health and Care Plans and the new SEN Code of Practice came into force in September 2014. They have the same legal status as statements of SEN. These are being implemented as per government guidance and the new SEN Code of Practice.

#### **6.4 People Implications**

Over 500 staff in schools and services have received training to meet the new requirements of the changes to the Education Health and Care Plans and the new SEN Code of Practice as well as the wider SEND reforms. Training will be ongoing.

#### **6.5 Property Implications**

There are ongoing requirements for suitable accommodation to be provided to ensure the successful implementation of Seabrook College, the Local Authority's provision for children with Behaviour, Emotional and Social Needs. A plan is in being developed that will link to the corporate work stream on the use of buildings.

#### **6.6 Consultation**

There has been extensive consultation and engagements with a wide range of stakeholders on the strategy and the implementation of the SEND reforms, in particular, parents and children and young people. There is a workstream made up of parents and carers for the implementation of the Local Offer.

#### **6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

Data is regularly monitored to ensure that there is a match between demand and the provision that reflects the demography of the population. Processes are in place to ensure that there is a fair distribution of resources across schools to meet the needs of pupils with SEN and that resources are targeted to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.

#### **6.8 Risk Assessment**

There are a number of potential risks associated with the implementation of any strategy and change programme. One is a potential lack of engagement with stakeholders. This has been mitigated through regular meetings with headteachers, Special Educational needs Coordinators and staff in services. An annual SEN conference keeps the profile high with headteachers. Another key risk was associated with introduction of the new systems and processes for the implementation of the new Education Health and Care Plans – this is a major change project. The risk was mitigated with the establishment of a multi agency project board and underpinning work streams. Also through regular consultation with stakeholders and partners and training for the workforce in schools, early years settings and services.

#### **6.9 Value for Money**



Monitoring the use of SEN resources is incorporated into the strategy. The change to the new systems and processes for the EHC plans will be implemented within existing resources and with the SEN reform grant that has enabled temporary staff to be appointed into the SEN team to meet the additional demands of converting over 1000 existing statements and LDAs to EHC Plans over a 3 year period.

#### **6.10 Community Safety Implications**

None

#### **6.11 Environmental Impact**

None

### **7 Background Papers**

DFE (0-25) Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.

### **8 Appendices**

**Appendix 1.** "Early Help, Partnership, Choice and Ambition" Southend on Sea's Strategy for Children age 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities.

**Appendix 2.** Second Annual Progress Report on the SEN Strategy and Action Plan 2014.

