

For general release

REPORT TO:	Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee 12th March 2019
SUBJECT:	Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy
LEAD OFFICER:	Robert Henderson, Executive Director Children, Families and Education Shelley Davies, Interim Director of Education and Youth Engagement
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Flemming, Cabinet Member for Children Young People and Learning
PERSON LEADING AT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING:	Alison Farmer, Head of 0-25 SEN

ORIGIN OF ITEM:	The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee considered a paper setting out the draft SEND Strategy and proposed approach to consultation in November 2018. An update paper following consultation was requested.
BRIEF FOR THE COMMITTEE:	The Children and Young People Scrutiny Sub-Committee are asked to consider the report of the consultation outcomes, updated SEN Strategy and proposed approach to implementation.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides the outcome of the Council's consultation on the SEND Strategy and proposed approach to implementation.

2. SEND Strategy

- 2.1 A draft strategy for Croydon children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) was developed during 2018 to take forward a shared vision for children and young people with SEND and a shared strategic direction of travel for the local area, including key partners in health and education settings.
- 2.2 The Strategy was informed by the views of parents and young people and focuses on key areas for improvement, across the Council, health, care and education with the key aim of improving the opportunities for young people with

SEND to live fulfilled lives and achieve independence in or near their local community.

2.3 The draft strategy set out the views of parents and young people that had informed the strategy, identified four key areas for strategic development (see below), a set of principles for delivery and specific changes that would be achieved:

- Early identification of needs
- Improved joint working across education, health and social care
- A better graduated response, which provides the right support at the right time
- Improved post 16 pathways and transition to adulthood

2.4 Consultation on Croydon's draft 0-25 SEND Strategy started on 3rd December 2018 and ran until 31st January 2019. The consultation was far reaching with views sought from parents/carers, young people and other agencies and stakeholders all of whom offered important views and feedback to be taken into consideration.

2.5 The consultation was extensively promoted through a number of channels. This included direct contact with young people, families and stakeholders through focus groups. There was online availability of consultation documents including surveys available through the Local Offer and Get Involved webpages and social media. There were ninety-nine responses to the on-line survey and feedback was given in face to face meetings by one hundred and twenty members of the public, with the majority of stake-holder feedback being from young people and parents.

3. Consultation Outcomes

3.1 A report of consultation feedback has been included in the Appendices to this documents. Findings have informed the revision of the SEND Strategy.

3.2 Broadly, those consulted agreed with the four key areas that had been identified for development and stakeholder views coalesced around these themes. Feedback was greatest in the area of 'Post 16' and 'Joint Working'.

3.3 Following feedback and during the initial period of the consultation a fifth key area, 'workforce development' was identified as a recurring theme which was not sufficiently addressed in the draft SEND Strategy and as a consequence this was added part way through the consultation period.

3.4 While there are overlaps in the issues raised, identification of relevant stakeholder feedback according to theme has been considered useful.

3.5 Feedback on early identification drew attention to the need to consider 'identification' across the age spectrum, not just in the early years. Stakeholders indicated they considered there was an issue in regard to resources in relation autism services, health visiting and other provision, such as speech and language therapy, was raised. The recent re-instatement of the Portage service was welcomed by parents. In general, parents indicated that reduced waiting times was important, consideration of the wider family,

including siblings and the need to identify children's needs before 'crisis point' is reached.

- 3.6 Stakeholder feedback in regard to the area of Joint Working highlighted the significant work that is needed to join up the Council priorities of education and care with Health priorities, in addition to processes for Governance. There was a sense that parents sometimes felt as though they and their child were 'stuck in the middle' of services that lacked coherence and a shared approach. Parents were keen to play a greater part in developing approaches to joint working in Croydon.
- 3.7 The eligibility of children with autism for social care and out of school short breaks was raised. In general, the lack of a joined up autism pathway across health, education and care was a recurring theme. Issues were raised regarding the link between GPs and paediatricians and a need to have a shared information and commonality of approach, so that parents do not have to re-tell their story.
- 3.8 The Graduated response feedback focused on key issues relating to children's mental health and the capacity of mainstream schools to meet children's needs. The need for training for parents and practitioners, in particular, in regard to autism was identified. A repeated concern was the lack of graduated response for children and young people with mental health needs, which families indicated, left them desperate and not knowing where to turn for help.
- 3.9 Discussion about Post 16 pathways generated the greatest volume of feedback. There was clear feedback that parents welcomed the development of local college provision and would like to play a part in shaping this development. There was a consensus that the current approach to transition from childhood to adulthood for young people with SEND was not working, did not start sufficiently early and, as a consequence, there was anxiety about young people leaving school. Parents felt there was no respite and a lack of engagement by health and that, as young people became adults, some families struggled to cope. Young people themselves indicated their aspiration to gain employment and the need for support to help them achieve this goal.
- 3.10 Workforce development was added as a theme partway through the consultation. Feedback on this area of development indicated that there was a need for the wider workforce to have a better understanding of SEN legislation, autism, sensory needs and speech and language needs and intervention. Specific feedback focused on autism outreach for mainstream schools so that children could have their needs met at SEN Support.
- 3.11 This feedback has informed revision of the SEND Strategy (see Appendix).

4. SEND Strategy Implementation 2019-2022

- 4.1 An implementation plan with key milestones, clear accountabilities and agreed measures of impact is being developed and will be subject to the Governance of the Children's Partnership Board with links into the Health and Well-Being Board.
- 4.2 Implementation will align with Council priorities and developments in practice across Children's and Adults Services to ensure consistency, efficiency and effectiveness of performance.
- 4.3 The key areas for action in the implementation plan will be organised in accordance with the five themes set out in the strategy with a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) from the Council and Health for each of these five areas of work. SROs will be responsible for reporting progress against key outcomes regularly and as directed by the Children's Partnership Board.
- 4.4 Parents will be represented on each of the work groups, with Parents in Partnership (Croydon's parent/carer forum) providing co-ordination of parent representation to ensure a cross-section of parents have the opportunity to inform developments.

5 FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 Funding for children with SEN comes to the Local Authority through a High Needs Block Grant from the Department for Education. This funding is announced annually and the total allocation for Croydon for 2019/20 is £61.347 million.
- 5.2 The High Needs Block forecast at the end of Quarter 3 is an overspend of £5.745 million in year with a cumulative overspend of over £13.176 million. Increased demand, with numbers of children with an EHC Plan standing at over 2900, compared with 1800 statements of SEN in 2013, an over-reliance on the independent sector, in particular post 16, and a need to improve transition to adult services are key drivers.
- 5.3. The scale of the challenge of managing a balanced High Needs budget is such that this requires all partners within the Council, in education, children's and adults social care, schools and health partners, including CAMHS and the voluntary sector to work together to better meet needs in local state-funded education. This strategy helps to address this challenge over the medium term.

(Approved by Kate Bingham – Head of Education Finance, Investment and Risk (S151 Officer).

6. Comments of the Council Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

- 6.1 Christopher Clark, Social Care and Education Lawyer, on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance noted that the SEND Strategy conforms with current legislation and guidance.

6.2 Consultation on the strategy has been undertaken in accordance with the Council's policy.

(Approved by Chris Clark, Lawyer, on behalf of the Director of Law and Monitoring Officer)

7. **Human Resources Impact**

Not applicable. Whilst there are no direct human resources implications arising from this report the information presented will help to shape and influence HR practice, policy and procedures in relation to roles and responsibilities that relate to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy.

(Approved by Nadine Maloney, Head of HR: Children, Education and Families)

Contact Officer: Alison Farmer, Head of 0-25 SEN

Background Documents: None

Appendices: Appendix 1 Proposed Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy
Appendix 2 Public Consultation Report
Appendix 3 Equality Impact Report