

REPORT TO:	CABINET 25 March 2019
SUBJECT:	0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy
LEAD OFFICER:	Rob Henderson - Executive Director of Children, Families & Education Alison Farmer - Head of Special Educational Needs 0-25
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Alisa Fleming – Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Learning
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY/POLICY CONTEXT/ AMBITIOUS FOR CROYDON	
Corporate Plan 2018 – 2022	
<p>The recommendations in this report are in line with the new operating model – ‘getting the basics right for residents’ and will contribute to the delivery of the following key priority / outcome: ‘Our children and young people thrive and reach their full potential:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people in Croydon are safe, healthy and happy, and aspire to be the best they can be • Every child and young person can access high quality education and youth facilities • Ensure there are high quality school places for Croydon’s increasing numbers of children and young people 	
FINANCIAL IMPACT	
<p>1.1. The Council has statutory duties under the Children & Families Act 2014 and the Care Act 2014 to provide for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. The 0-25 SEND Strategy sets out an approach which supports the achievement of positive outcomes for young people with SEND, within the framework of the legislative duty to ensure efficient use of public resources.</p> <p>1.2. The education provision for children and young people with SEND and for whom the Council maintains an EHC Plan is funded through Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block Funding (HNB), decisions about which are made by Schools Forum, under Education, Skills Funding Agency funding Regulations. Croydon’s High Needs Block has an overspend; the SEND Strategy (see Appendix) includes measures which support increased local provision in state-funded schools and the focus of the Five Year High Needs Funding Strategy is to establish a balanced budget within a five year period. This strategy was approved by Schools Forum (July 2018).</p> <p>1.3. The implementation of the 0-25 SEND Strategy will result in an increase in places within local state-funded special schools; the introduction of specialist post 16 SEN college places and increased and improved inclusion in mainstream schools. This will result in a more efficient use of public resources.</p>	

The Leader of the Council has delegated to the Cabinet the power to make the decisions set out in the recommendations below

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

- 1.1. Consider the draft proposed 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy and accompanying report concerning the consultation exercise and the Equality Impact Assessment; and
- 1.2. Delegate authority to the Executive Director of Children, Families and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Young People and Learning to:
 - a. taking into account any comments made by Cabinet, take such steps as are necessary to finalise, publish and implement the Council's 0 – 25 SEND Strategy (noting the decision to finalise and publish is a Key Decision and will be advertised accordingly).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. Croydon Council has consulted on a 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) three year strategy. This strategy sets out the Council's vision, guiding principles and the key areas of development that will be the focus for Croydon's children and young people with SEND over the coming three years.

3. 0-25 SEND STRATEGY

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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 children and young people's special educational needs and disabilities

- Improved joint working across education, health and social care to meet needs, so that parents and young people experience joined up support and there is a shared understanding of the impact of joint commissioning.
- A better graduated response, which provides the right support at the right time; with a particular focus on inclusion and SEN support for children in mainstream schools
- Improved post 16 pathways and transition to adulthood so that young people gain independence in or near their local community

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 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.
- 4.2 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 stakeholder feedback being from young people and parents.
- 4.3 The report of the consultation has been included in the Appendices to this document. Findings have informed the revision of the SEND Strategy as set out below.
- 4.4 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'.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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. These issues are now reflected in the updated SEND Strategy

- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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.
- 4.9 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.
- 4.10 Discussion about Post 16 pathways generated the greatest volume of feedback. There was 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.
- 4.11 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.

5. 0-25 SEND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 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.

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

6. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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 3000, 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.
- 6.3 The pressures on LAs as a result of funding levels not keeping pace with that demand is a national issue, with growing press coverage and professional association interest over the past six months. Pressure on high needs funding will increase further with the introduction of the National Funding Formula for schools that removed council flexibility to move funding from the general schools block to the high needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant to help plug this funding gap. Schools also face funding pressures and should not be expected to meet shortfalls in high needs funding.
- 6.4 Further, the DfE has introduced, as a condition of the 2019/20 DSG, the requirement to provide recovery plans for DSG deficits (which will apply to Croydon). Further guidance on the process and format for submitting the recovery plan will be issued in early 2019.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 Financial commitments and risks associated with the 0-25 SEND and which relate to the Education Estate have been approved through related Cabinet decisions (January 2019 and July 2018).

Approved by: Lisa Taylor – Director, Finance, Investment and Risk

7. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 The Head of Social Care and Education comments on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance that that the SEND strategy conforms with current legislative and guidance.

Approved by: Head of Social Care and Education, on behalf of the Director of Law and Monitoring Officer

8. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 8.1 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

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 9.1 An equality analysis was undertaken to ascertain the potential impact the strategy will have on groups that share protected characteristics. The equality analysis concluded that the strategy will have a positive impact for children and young people and those living with disabilities as it will set out to improve the outcomes and life chances for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Approved by: Yvonne Okiyo, Equalities Manager

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 10.1 There are no direct implications contained in this report.

11. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

- 11.1 There are no direct implications contained in this report.

12. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS/PROPOSED DECISION

- 12.1 Cabinet is asked to:

- Consider the consultation and approve the process
- Approve the draft proposed 0-25 Special Educational Needs and Disability Strategy.
- Approve the Equality Impact Assessment.
- Delegate final sign off of the Council's 0-25 SEND Strategy to the Executive Director of Children, Families and Education so that it can be implemented

13. OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Not relevant

CONTACT OFFICER: Alison Farmer, Head of SEND Service

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

1. Report on SEND strategy consultation
2. Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy revised following consultation
3. Equality Analysis report

BACKGROUND PAPERS: Initial draft SEND strategy