

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Health and Wellbeing Board
2.	Date:	October 1st 2014
3.	Title:	Special Educational Needs and Disability Transformation
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Families

5. Summary

This report provides an update on the implementation of the reforms to support children and young people with special educational needs and a disability. New duties for local authorities and clinical commissioning groups commenced on September 1st 2014.

6. Recommendations

- **Committee members are asked to comment on the report and note the progress made.**

7. Proposals and Details

7.1 The Children And Families Act (2014) introduced the first major reform of the ways we support children and young people with special educational needs for over 30 years. The Committee received a report on June 4th 2014 which provided the background to the reforms. In July, Rotherham's Children, Young People and Families Partnership agreed to add the following priority to the Children and Young People's Plan:

"With parents and young people, we will transform how education, care and health partners ensure that children and young people with special educational needs or a disability are identified early and supported to achieve the best possible outcomes in adult life. We will focus on making the transition between different services as seamless as possible."

7.2 In preparation for the start of the new special needs system in September, the 'In It Together' event was held on July 4th. Organised by the Parents' Forum, Clinical Commissioning Group and Council staff, 'In It Together' attracted over 500 parents and young people who were able to gather information from education, health and care providers and attend workshops to discuss how best to introduce a more personalised approach or how the new assessment model was developing. The event was remarkably successful and drew praise locally and nationally, including from Brian Lamb, chair of the DfE Inquiry in Parental Confidence and SEN, which started the process of reform. It is expected that the "in It Together" event will take place each summer, not least to ascertain the views of children, young people and parents about Rotherham's SEND Local Offer website.

7.3 Whilst there are a wide range of actions required to transform the ways in which children and young people with special educational needs and disability are supported, there were two key tasks which had to be ready for September 1st. The first of these was to have established a single place where information and advice about all aspects of special educational needs and disability could be found. Rotherham's SEND Local Offer Website started at noon on September 1st and continues to develop. Information from schools, colleges, local authority services, voluntary organisations, health and care providers has been brought together at www.rotherhamsendlocaloffer.org. Following discussion with parents and young people, Rotherham's local offer site aims to provide as much information as possible within the site and not to simply link to other sites – a virtual equivalent of parents being passed from pillar to post. For example, unlike some other local authorities, information about special needs support in schools and colleges has been specifically collected and included. The site continues to improve and a steering group to test out developments with parents and young people has been set up.

The second key task to be ready for September was to have introduced a new assessment system for those with special educational needs and disability, bringing together separate systems for early years, schools and colleges. SEN statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments have been replaced by Education Health and Care plans and a timetable has been published

showing how those with statements will transfer to the new EHC Plan. Details of the new assessment system are available on the local offer website. Training sessions about the new arrangements with schools, colleges, care and health providers have started.

7.2 In addition to getting ready for September 1st, a range of actions has been agreed by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Transformation Commissioning Group, which consists of representatives from parents and education, health and care sectors. Whilst some of the tasks will be delivered quickly others are more long term, reflecting that the transformation of services will take up to three years. The key tasks – and progress on achieving them- are :

- Local Offer Website established : complete
- SEND Assessment Pathway established : complete
- How the voice of parents, children and young people is heard, including consideration of support for the parents' forum and parent partnership : Partially complete
- Establish a group between education, health and care to consider how best to commissioning SEND services, including understanding demographic pressure : Set up and underway
- Develop personal budgets for children and young people with SEN : underway
- Commission an external body to provide mediation and dispute resolution services : Existing provider contracted to offer the new services for one year, whilst new commissioning arrangements are undertaken.
- Build on the success of the Rotherham Charter : Discussions underway
- Develop an accountability policy which describes how the local authority and CCG will monitor the outcomes for children and young people with SEND and make that information available : Underway.
- Consider the impact of the changes in providing SEN support for young people in custody (which start in April 2015) : Underway
- Ensure maximum transparency and understanding of how national funding is provided to schools and colleges to support SEN : Discussion with the Schools' Forum is underway.

8. Finance

The new SEND System is being introduced against a backdrop of reducing budgets and increased demographic pressures. Whilst various grants have been provided by central government to assist local authorities in setting up the new system, for example for the local offer website, it is not clear whether this funding will continue beyond March 2016. Gathering better demographic information about, for example, the number of babies and young children with complex needs, will help the authority and CCG plan more effectively to meet the needs of these children as they progress into adulthood.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Meeting the rising expectations of parents and young people is a welcome challenge and effort must be focussed on how parents and young people are placed at the heart of the new system. Rotherham, like many other LAs, is experiencing a rise in the number of young children with complex needs. It is not clear whether this is a short or long term trend. The Department for Education has commissioned an external body to review how national funding is provided to local councils to support those with high levels of need.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

One of the ambitions of the new system is to enhance the independence of young people with special educational needs and disability when they reach adulthood. This is not only better for the person involved, but could also reduce costs in the long term. Monitoring the outcomes of young people and the performance of education health and care providers to encourage independence is a key task in the medium to long term.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Report to the Health and Wellbeing Board, June 4 2014.

DfE guidance, including to local authorities, is available at :
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities-send-reform-letters>

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