

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 1 December 2020

REPORT TITLE:	SEND STRATEGY
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

REPORT SUMMARY

This report sets out the Local Area strategy for improving outcomes and life chances for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

For many families, feedback indicates that the SEND reforms have brought about positive change, but for some the process has been troublesome and not easy to navigate.

The strategy focuses on reducing inequality and links to two Council priorities:-

- Brighter futures for our young people and families – regardless of their background or where they live
- Services which help people live happy, healthy, independent, and active lifestyles, with public services there to support them when they need it

Considerable consultation was undertaken to determine the key priorities. Two SEND summits were held with over 150 stakeholders across the Local Area attending. Feedback was received from the SEND Youth Voice group, Parent Carer Partnership Wirral, parents, and SEN support young people. Over 250 young SEND people engaged in the consultation and shaped the four priorities. The main priority is to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for young people with SEND. To do this the focus is on:-

- Identifying needs at the earliest point and provide the appropriate support.
- Ensure that young people are ready for each stage of their school life and prepared for adulthood.
- Increase participation and engagement young people and their families. In doing so ensure that all changes to policy/processes takes account of the views of young people, their parents, and carers as well as professionals.

The matter effects all Wards within the Borough.

This report does not relate to a key decision.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Children, Young People and Education Committee is requested to:

1. Support the Local Area SEND Strategy
2. Note and endorse the Local Area SEND Improvement plan.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The changes brought in by the Children and Families Act 2014 combined with the underlying principles provide the vehicle to improve all our services for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.
- 1.2 SEND is an important issue across the Local Area, with far-reaching implications and high cost to both the public purse and life chances. A strategic approach to improving outcomes for SEND young pupil by intervening at the earliest opportunity requires a strong partnership strategy and delivery plan.
- 1.3 The four priorities have been determined by the feedback from young people with SEND.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 Not supporting the SEND Strategy and Improvement Plan would lead to disconnection within the Local Area. Lack of co-ordination and direction would have a detrimental impact on SEND young people's outcomes.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 It was agreed at the SEND Strategic Board in 2019 that the current strategy for SEND should be evaluated and a new strategy co-produced, considering the views of all partners and stakeholders. It was agreed that young people with SEND be given the opportunity to contribute significantly to the new strategy priorities.
- 3.2 It was agreed at the SEND Strategic Board that the focus should be making Wirral great for children, young people, and their families, driven by the voice of the child, young person, and their families.
- 3.3 In partnership with key local area partners and stakeholders, including parents and carers, we will work to provide a holistic approach to break the cycle so that children and young people are well supported to stay with their parents/ carers wherever possible.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Currently the High Needs budget is £1.2 million overspent with projections of the overspend increasing. As a result, the Head of SEND is working with colleagues on producing a recovery plan consultation.
- 4.2 Resources and assets will be used innovatively to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs. We will work to further develop a culture of inclusion to ensure that young people with SEND are not permanently excluded from school. The financial pressures have been noted in the Medium Term Financial Plan.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Authority has duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 regarding how services and support are delivered for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs.
- 5.2 There are several commissioned services for SEND provision such as speech and language therapy which will be reviewed as part of the commissioning cycle. This will take place within the existing timeframes for contract renewal and use the existing Council Procurement processes.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 We will provide development opportunities so that the workforce can continuously improve. We will further an effective performance framework so that service areas can be appropriately held to account.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 7.1 Failing to deliver the strategy will be mitigated through oversight and scrutiny arrangements by the SEND Operational group and the SEND Strategic Board. Oversight of the SEND Improvement plan will be provided by partners on a regular basis.
- 7.2 It is necessary to acknowledge the current financial pressures facing the Council and its partners as a risk. The Direct Schools Grant (DSG) is projected to be £2.7 million overspent by the end of the financial year. The Head of SEND is working with the Department for Education on a recovery plan. This could result in reduction of service delivery. Any future funding discussion must consider cost-benefit analysis and the need for invest to save approaches.

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The SEND strategy has been co-produced. Initial engagement with partners took place in October 2019 and January 2020. Over 250 young people with SEND provided feedback through small group consultation activities or by completing the online questionnaire. The SEND Youth voice provided comprehensive feedback. The planned schedule of online consultation started in March 2020 but had to be revised due to Covid-19 and lockdown conditions.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 It is recognised that a significant number of SEN young people have protected characteristics of the nine groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the strategy and delivery plan and can be found via the following link:
<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/equality-impact-assessments>

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no environmental and climate implications arising from this report. It is anticipated that the SEND strategy will have no impact on the emission of greenhouse gases.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 SEND Strategy
Appendix 2 SEND Improvement Plan

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date