

<b>11 October 2011</b>		<b>ITEM 8</b>
<b>Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee</b>		
<b>Special Educational Needs</b>		
<b>Report of: Malcolm Taylor, Strategic Lead, Learner Support</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> No	
<b>Accountable Head of Service:</b> Carmel Littleton, Head of Learning and Universal Outcomes		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Jo Olsson, Director of People Services		
<b>This report is</b> public		
<b>Purpose of Report:</b> To report on the development of Special Educational Needs Strategy following the Publication of the Government Green Paper Support and Aspiration : A new approach to special educational needs and disability.		

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Government Green paper Support and Aspiration : A new approach to special educational needs and disability sets out key themes to inform the development of new arrangements for the support of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
- 1.2 This paper sets out a series of key developments in line with the themes in the Green Paper and a framework for further review and development of special educational needs support.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That scrutiny notes the report and endorses the intention of the Local Authority to develop its strategic framework for the support of children and young people in line with the 5 key themes of the Green Paper including the development of new unified systems of assessment and access to resources, and reviews its current services and facilities to ensure that they are best suited to meet the needs of the local population.

### **3. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Government Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability was published in March 2011. This consultation document set out a framework for the reform and development of systems of support children and young people who are identified as being disabled or having a special educational need.
- 3.2 The Green paper has been published following a series of reports on Special Educational Needs including the 2006 Education Select Committee report and the Lamb Report of 2009. Both of these reports identified concerns nationally regarding the complexity of systems to identify and allocate support to children and young people with special educational needs; the timescales of these processes ; the outcomes for children identified within these systems; and the confidence of parents in these systems.
- 3.3 There have been a range of ongoing developments in Thurrock in line with the key areas identified within these reports and the Green Paper brings together these developments across both special Educational Needs Services, developments in support for Disabled Children and joined up support across Health, and Children’s services in the assessment and early intervention for disabled children.
- 3.4 The Education Select report identified a number of issues concerning the Statutory SEN processes including the specificity of resources within statements of special educational needs. This led to interim guidance on the specificity of statements of special educational needs which Thurrock was already fully compliant with.
- 3.5 These reports led to the commissioning of the more detailed Lamb report into the SEN system. This resulted in the publication of advice in relation to improving the quality of special educational needs statements and in developing parental confidence in the statutory services for special educational needs. This advice was included in a review of the writing of statements in Thurrock. Thurrock SEN statements were fully compliant with this advice and this view was supported through visits from the National Adviser on special educational needs.
- 3.6 The other areas of parental involvement and development of parental confidence in the Statutory process of special educational needs, has been supported through the use of guidance from the Lamb report, further training and formal qualification in the management of SEN statutory procedures
- 3.7 The Green paper sets out proposals to reform these systems across five main areas.
1. Early Identification and Assessment
  2. Giving parents control
  3. Learning and achievement
  4. Preparing for adulthood

## 5. Services working together for families

- 3.8 Thurrock has carried out significant developments across its services for children with special educational needs over the past 10 years. Thurrock has maintained a strong commitment to developing a range of provision to support children with special educational needs including improvements in special schooling, mainstream support bases and outreach services to mainstream schools.
- 3.9 Thurrock's commitment to maintaining special schools as part of the wide offer of support to children and families sits clearly in line with the Green Paper's proposals to give parents a choice of school including special school and mainstream options.
- 3.10 Thurrock's two special schools both of which are judged to be outstanding schools have national reputations of excellence and provide a range of services both to the pupils attending these schools and through outreach services to mainstream schools.
- 3.11 Thurrock has continued to develop a range of mainstream bases resulting in a consistent set of arrangements to support the inclusion of pupils with a range of special educational needs within mainstream schooling. The support within these bases has led to significant achievements for pupils with special educational needs.
- 3.12 Thurrock has strong services for the early identification and support of children with disabilities and special educational needs through its Early Support arrangements, Portage services and Multi agency assessment services. These services run with a strong commitment to the team around the child model, are in line with the proposals regarding early assessment and intervention and in giving parents control and in services working together.
- 3.13 Thurrock's developments with person centred planning as part of the Transition programme has been identified as a case study within the Green paper clearly demonstrating the areas of strength within Thurrock under the Green Paper area of Preparing for Adulthood.
- 3.14 The developments in Thurrock outlined above therefore place Thurrock in a strong position to move forward in line with the proposals contained within the Green Paper. These proposal coincide with proposals set out in July 2010 in the White Paper, Excellence and Equity: Liberating the NHS which have been further revised following the listening exercise and recommendations made by the NHS Future Forum.
- 3.15 Thurrock applied for a Pathfinder bid in with Southend Borough Council and part of Essex County council and South Essex Primary Care Trust to develop key areas of the SEN and Disability Green Paper proposals in August 2011. The results of this bid have been recently announced and in the context of a large number of application this proposal has not been taken up by the Department for Education

#### 4. ISSUES AND/OR OPTIONS

4.1 It is proposed that the key themes within the Green Paper inform a number of developments in Thurrock Special Educational Needs Strategy building on the developments that have taken place in recent years.

#### 4.2 **Early Identification and Assessment**

It is proposed that the work that has taken place within the Early Support Programme is developed further to link with the Portage support and all other Early Years provision as a unified single plan.

4.3 Thurrock's Portage Service based at Treetops school provides an outreach service of assessment and advice to support pre school children with complex special educational needs and their families.

4.4 The Early Support Programme in Thurrock brings together a range of professionals through the co-ordination of referrals and the development of a unified plan.

4.4 The Early Support Programme brings together these developments which will include the merging of the Portage and Early Support Steering Groups and processes to provide a unified system of Early Support in Thurrock. Thurrock has a clear model of 'Team Around the Child' within Early Support and Portage which involves multi disciplinary input from Health and Children's services.

4.5 We will investigate the development of a single plan and the Optional Individual Budgets with families of children who are under five who are supported through the Early Support approach.

4.6 It is proposed that a programme of Annual Review Training is implemented across the local authority to ensure that Schools are fully skilled in the running of annual reviews to ensure appropriate steps are taken to monitor progress and build parental confidence in the systems of support. To ensure the quality of the work by Special Needs Co-ordinators in schools it is proposed that there is an on-going programme of accredited training for SENCOs funded by the TDA to ensure all schools are meeting the SENCO standards.

#### 4.7 **Giving Parents Control**

It is proposed that parents and carers should have greater involvement in the proposed single assessment to ensure that they support and understand the plan, have had input into the process and that any concerns are answered at an early stage. To assist them in understanding and fulfilling their role fully, we will develop the use of voluntary key workers to work with the family and to act as an advocate for them. We will develop and test ways to improve the ease with which parents feel able to 'navigate' the system and to exercise choice.

- 4.8 It is proposed that the systems of information are reviewed and developed to ensure a clear local offer is produced setting out all support services to children who are disabled or who have special educational needs. This will include the services normally available at mainstream schools and the support to families who need additional help.
- 4.9 It is proposed the representation on decision making panels for additional resources and the criteria used within these panels is fully reviewed with the involvement of parental representation to improve the clarity regarding access to resources.
- 4.10 A central element of these developments will be the involvement of parent representative groups such as the Family Voice Thurrock which developed initially from the Aiming High For Disabled Children programme and has continued to provide representation through the Children's Partnership Inclusion Workstream.
- 4.11 **Learning and Achievement**  
It is proposed that there is an on-going programme of support to mainstream schools in the teaching of children with special educational needs. This programme of specialist support builds on the commissioned school improvement support for the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- 4.12 It is proposed that a key area of this work will continue to be the provision of support for the teaching of pupils with specific learning difficulties / dyslexia through on-going professional training. This support is delivered through partnership with Special Educational Needs Joint Initiative for Training , at the University of London. This will ensure that schools have the capacity to appropriately support pupils with these needs.
- 4.13 The area of speech and language needs will also continue to be a key area of support due to the impact this has on learning and social development. There will be an on-going programme of support for early years children with speech and language difficulties, building on the success of the ELKLAN multi agency training and work with the ICAN base and the Primary mainstream resource for children with speech and language needs. This will build on the work set out in the new Thurrock on-line resource guide published this year. There will also be further work on the Speech Link and Language Link approaches to provide baseline assessments and programmes of support for children. This has been successfully implemented in a small group of schools and will be rolled out across Thurrock.
- 4.14 The monitoring of progress and attainment of children with special educational needs will continue to be a key area of SEN strategy and will be supported through the use of RAISEonline data procedures being implemented through work at the SENCO Forum and the use of the Progression Guidance materials.

- 4.15 The development of specialist settings through the establishment of the mainstream resource bases and the on-going developments within the two special schools has allowed Thurrock to provide an integrated offer of support across a wide range of needs including out reach services to mainstream schools. It is proposed that we undertake a review of all specialist provision taking into account our current and predicted numbers of children with particular areas of need. This will inform the next phase of development of specialist support to ensure the development of pupil places continues to be targeted at the appropriate area of needs. This review of provision will include the potential to develop further specialist areas of out-reach to support mainstream school placements and opportunities to expand the range of pupil needs within mainstream bases where appropriate. This will take place through a review of current provision and consultation with individual providers and stakeholders. This will include the current out-reach capacity to support children with sensory and communication difficulties.
- 4.16 The review of out-reach provision will include as a central element, the role of Thurrock's special schools both of which are judged to be providing outstanding services, to investigate with them ways in which these services can be developed further and targeted on the areas of greatest need.
- 4.17 The identification of behaviour emotional and social difficulties as a special educational need requires a range of approaches in both mainstream schools and specialist settings to ensure these pupils needs are appropriately met. It is proposed that there is further development within this area closely linked to the development of services within the mainstream bases , pupil referral units, turnaround centres and mainstream project work . Examples of further support in this area would include the development of Emotional First Aid piloted through the TAMHS project , on going support for work on Attachment difficulties and the application of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy for children and young people to support their thinking, behavioural control and emotional skills.
- 4.18 **Preparing for Adulthood**  
The work on Transition in Thurrock involving Person Centred Planning has been identified as outstanding practice and it is proposed that this is developed as part of a review of transition arrangements to support the transfer from schools to colleges and adult settings.
- 4.19 The local authority has developed clear systems to ensure the appropriate use of the Section 139a assessments relating to learning difficulties following the transfer of this duty to the local authority set out in the Education and Skills Act 2008 and the Apprenticeships , Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The SEN panel has been established for the consideration of exceptional additional resources to support learners with learning difficulties and disabilities post 16 in line with the statutory guidance.
- 4.20 It is proposed that there is a review of the current arrangements for transition and access to post 16 learning to build on the good practice established over the past two years. This will review the current specialist services available to

post 16 learners both through the Special Schools, the opportunities in the new sixth forms, local colleges, specialist colleges and work activities linked to access to adult provider services. It is proposed that this review will support young people and their families in being provided with a clearly identified range of local opportunities for accessing employment, learning and independence in line with the principles identified in the Green Paper.

**4.21 Services working together for families**

The development of a central plan for children in the early years through Early Support provides a model for practice to be developed across a wider age range bringing services together to support families in a more unified manner.

4.22 It is proposed that the systems of assessment and support informed by the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and those provided through the Team for Disabled Children and Health are reviewed to ensure that there are appropriate opportunities for unified working and joint plans for children and young people of all ages with learning difficulties and disabilities. This will include a review of all resource panels and commissioning of services to ensure these are working in a co-ordinated manner to support families.

4.23 It is proposed that there is on-going work between Health and Children's Services to ensure that support for families across a range of areas including specific workstreams such as the support for children with Autism and for those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are delivered in a co-ordinated manner enabling families to have a clear understanding and greater involvement and control in the support being provided for them.

4.24 It is proposed that there is an ongoing co-ordinated programme of short breaks activities available to children and families of disabled children including the new after-school services to be provided in the newly completed Treetops / Beacon Hill centre in Buxton road. Access to these services will be fully co-ordinated within a unified plan of support, building on the arrangements that developed from the Aiming High for Disabled Children programme.

**5. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)**

The above areas for development build on areas identified within the current Children and Young People's Plan 2011-12 which was consulted upon as part of its development. It is proposed that the key strategic themes will be brought together into a unified consultation paper which will be circulated to all stakeholders to inform its development and implementation.

**6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT**

6.1 These developments will improve the the local authority's ability to meet the following priorities:

- Improve the education and skills of local people

- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- Provide and commission high quality and accessible services that meet, wherever possible, individual needs

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**  
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**kgoodacre@thurrock.gov.uk**

The DfE are currently consulting on the future of funding high cost pupils in line with the proposals put forward in the green paper. Whilst there are no significant financial implications to this report currently, it would need to be reviewed in line with any future funding changes.

The development of single plans for children and young people with learning difficulties and disabilities will involve clear commitments to resources currently decided upon through allocation from separate Local Authority and Health budgets.

Any changes in budget allocation to enable the development of a personal budget as indicated within the Green Paper will be in the light of any legislative changes in this area.

The development of any further local resource bases to support identified needs will need to be delivered in line with the Council capital spending allocation.

### **7.2 Legal**

Implications verified by: **Lee Bartlett**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652167**  
**lbartlett@thurrock.gov.uk**

The current legislation sets out the frame work for the identification and assessment of children and young people with special educational needs described within in the Code of Practice for SEN . Any changes to the assessment processes will need to ensure the Local Authority remains compliant with the current legislation until such time as this is amended.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Samson DeAlyn**  
 Telephone and email: **01375 652472**  
**sdealyn@thurrock.gov.uk**

The services for children with special educational needs and disabilities support children and families who may be subject to discrimination and prejudice. The proposed review of services and developments within this paper, set out to strengthen individuals opportunities to achieve and lead



independent lives. Any changes in services will need to be subject to an Equality Impact Analysis and carefully monitored to ensure that the needs of all groups of disabled children and young people are being positively enhanced and that the Local Authority is fully compliant with its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

7.4 **Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental**

None identified

**8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 The proposed areas for development for the support for children and young people with special educational needs have been developed taking into account the key themes set out in the Government Green Paper Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability published in March 2011.

8.2 Thurrock has outstanding special school provision with a national reputation for excellence across a range of areas. The development of mainstream resource bases within mainstream schools and academies has significantly enhanced the Local Authority's capacity to provide inclusive opportunities for children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

8.3 Thurrock is well placed to respond to the changing landscape of special educational needs having systems in place to build on the key themes identified in the Green Paper.

8.4 Therefore the following recommendation is made;

That the Local Authority develops its strategic framework for the support of children and young people in line with the 5 key themes of the Green Paper including the development of new unified systems of assessment and access to resources , and reviews its current services and facilities to ensure that they are best suited to meet the needs of the local population.

**9. BACKGROUND PAPERS USED IN PREPARING THIS REPORT:**

- Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability published in March 2011.

**10. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

None

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