

10 October 2017		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Peer Review Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Support across the Local Area		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Malcolm W Taylor, Strategic Lead Inclusion / Principal Educational Psychologist		
Accountable Assistant Director: Malcolm W Taylor, Strategic Lead Inclusion / Principal Educational Psychologist		
Accountable Director: Rory Patterson, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the recommendations and the subsequent actions following a Regional Peer Review of the support in place across the Local Area for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This is attached as Appendix 1. A high level action plan summary is attached to this report as Appendix 2

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 That Children's Overview and Scrutiny consider the recommendations of the Peer Review and the High Level Action Plan

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Thurrock Local Authority commissioned a peer review of SEND support from a team of colleagues from Cambridgeshire, Bedford Borough, Southend and Peterborough Local Authorities. The review consisted of a preview stage which included an analysis of a range of Thurrock Documentation and Data and two days in the Local Authority conducting a series of focus groups and interviews. This was undertaken on 20th and 21st June 2017.

2.2 The SEND Peer Review was undertaken as part of a regional programme of SEND peer reviews developed through the Regional ADCS group.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 The Local Authority identified an overarching focus for the review:

How effective are the SEN support arrangements for all children and young people aged 0-25 years in ensuring that their needs are identified and met so that they make sufficient progress within the expectations of the SEND reforms?

3.2 The preview analysis of data identified 4 key themes to be examined through the review process.

1. The prioritisation for improving the SEND cohort outcomes and improving schools' support for this cohort
2. The effectiveness of evaluative analysis to ensure quality of provision
3. The effectiveness of multi-agency working partnerships
4. Parental understanding and confidence in the system

3.3 Key Strengths identified in Thurrock

The Local Area has a strong commitment to working with parents moving towards greater co-production of strategic planning and has developed with parents a set of underpinning aspirations to support Thurrock's SEND strategy.

Officers and schools value the potential of the SENCo forums, which are well attended by schools, to identify effective practice and provide school-led support.

The Local Area has built on strong foundations of cross agency working in Early Years to implement the SEND reforms effectively. There is good evidence of effective multi-agency working in Early Years. Relationships between settings and the Local Area developed in early years would appear to be very responsive to need. There are also examples of strong working partnerships between School improvement, Early Years support and the Educational Psychologist Team. There is good representation of Health at Early Years panels

The LA has historically prioritized support to Early Years to good effect with the majority of children with SEND in EYFS having their needs met through SEN support

At post-16 there are some good examples of multi-agency working for targeted work with students, particularly with South Essex College

The LA has recently worked with parents to develop a set of overarching aspirations for a SEND strategy which is evidence of the LA's commitment to co-production with parents.

Early Years' Parents have a range of opportunities to provide feedback through Portage and Early Support which is impacting on the refining of services and support provided.

3.4 Key Areas of good practice identified in Thurrock to share regionally

The innovative practice in post 16 provision, particularly the joint working between the local authority and South Essex College and sharing of this practice with other providers.

The focused and targeted multiagency work to support children 0 – 5 years with SEND and their families. This includes transition work with primary schools.

Effective practice was noted in relation to outreach services that the borough has set up in Thurrock.

3.5 The recommendations identified in the Peer Review

Improve the strategic focus to ensure the priority for improving the outcomes for the SEND cohort is met

- Review current staffing structures to provide more capacity for strategic leadership and planning
- Establish a coherent governance structure that ensures greater accountability for reviewing progress
- Refine the SEF to more clearly demonstrate the identification of strengths, areas for development and key priorities for the Local Area
- Develop a Local Area SEND plan aligned to the SEF
- Clarify accountabilities and responsibilities of all stakeholders for the SEND cohort
- Improve top level analysis of the range of data currently collected to inform strategic planning
- Agree with all schools, colleges and post-16 providers a revised approach to collecting SEND outcomes and progress data which will support greater challenge to those settings where outcomes for the SEND cohort are a concern
- Ensure parents and young peoples' voices are included in strategic planning

Increase parental understanding and confidence in the system

- Improve parental understanding of the Local Offer
- Seek a broader representation of parents on the Parent Carer Forum (CaPa)
- Establish a culture where feedback from all parents with children with SEND is more frequently collected and is used to inform practice
- Clarify for parents the SEN support offer

Improve analysis of data to inform planning and practice

- Establish a clear framework for the collection and analysis of data

- Improve top level analysis of the range of data currently collected to inform strategic planning
- Agree with all schools and colleges, post-16 providers a revised approach to collecting SEND outcomes and progress data which will support greater challenge to those settings where outcomes for the SEND cohort are a concern

3.6 Action Plan following the Peer Review

A high level action plan has been developed to address the key issues raised within the peer review. These actions are linked to existing priorities across Children's Services. This is attached as Appendix 2.

3.7 The Action Plan will be monitored by the SEND Development Board Chaired by the Corporate Director of Children's Services on a fortnightly basis and reviewed by the SEND Strategic Group on a termly basis.

4. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

N/A

5. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

5.1 This review and action plan contributes directly to the delivery of the Council's statutory duties in relation children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Patricia Harvey**
DSG Consultant, Corporate Finance

This report covering issues in relation to the support for Children and Young People with SEND includes services which are funded by the Direct School Grant. The effectiveness of this support has a direct impact on the demand for Statutory Assessments of Special Educational Needs, High Needs Support and the consequent financial implications of this.

6.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Education Lawyer

Committee is asked to consider the recommendations of the peer report and action plan. No decisions are required. The statutory duties in relation to

SEND are covered in the Children and Families Act 2014 and described in the SEND Code of Practice 2015.

6.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Price**
Community Development Officer

This report and supporting action plan relates to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Implementation of the action plan, with due regard to the recommendations outlined in the peer review, will help to ensure the Council meets relevant SEND legislation and Equality Act requirements.

7. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- N/A

8. Appendices to the report

- Appendix 1 SEND Peer Review Report
- Appendix 2 SEND Peer Review Action Plan

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Children's Services