

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) Cabinet	Date of Meeting:	10 July 2018 26 July 2018
Subject:	Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment Working Group - Final Report		
Report of:	Head of Regulation and Compliance	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Children, Schools and Safeguarding		
Is this a Key Decision:	Yes	Included in Forward Plan:	Yes
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

To formally present the final report of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment Working Group.

Recommendation(s):

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)

That the following recommendations be supported and commended to the Cabinet for approval:-

Cabinet

That provided the recommendations are subject to any budget implications and the inclusion of the revised recommendation 1. (h), as amended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) on 10 July 2018, the following recommendations be approved:-

1. That the Head of Schools and Families be requested to:-
 - (a) Review the current provision of Special Educational Needs (SEN) units within schools, in order to ensure that appropriate provision is available within the relevant schools, as evidence provided suggests that the current system is not meeting the needs of children and their families appropriately.
 - (b) Encourage relevant schools to consider an alternative term for "SEN unit", possibly describing themselves as a "SEN-friendly school", in order to reduce stigma and improve compliance with the Equality Act.
 - (c) Liaise with the Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups and Alder Hey

Children's NHS Foundation Trust in order to explore the possibility of requesting assessment appointments by professional experts to be carried out in schools wherever possible, particularly specialised schools and those schools with a unit, in order to provide a "safe" environment for children, with less preparation required for those children who experience anxiety when their routine is disrupted.

- (d) Encourage those schools that have a SEN unit to have a dedicated Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), particularly where there are a high proportion of children with SEND, as evidence provided indicates that access to appropriate resources is greater in settings where there is a dedicated SENCO.
- (e) Encourage schools to include SENCOs on the management team for the school, in order to enhance the profile of SEND.
- (f) Encourage schools to support SENCOs to undertake referrals of children with SEND for professional input and assessment appointments, in order to minimise delays in obtaining Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- (g) Explore the possibility, in conjunction with the Council's Senior Educational Psychologist, of encouraging schools to undertake joint training on SEND for parents/carers' groups within schools, with teachers and governors, in order to ensure that the information and approach provided are consistent, appropriate embedded.
- (h) Include Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for parents/carers of children with SEND within the information available on school admissions, as part of the "school readiness" approach, in order to create an efficient and effective home-school partnership from the outset, in conjunction with the Assessment, Resource and Provision Planning Team.
- (i) Explore the possibility of increasing communication with parents/carers on SEND through the Borough's Family Wellbeing Centres, particularly from an early years' perspective and possibly through the development of leaflets, in order to enhance "school readiness" for the children and their parents/carers.
- (j) Liaise with the Sefton Clinical Commissioning Groups to explore the possibility of requesting that information on SEND for parents/carers is included with/within the Personal Child Health Record (red book) and through the Healthy Child Programme, in order to assist in early intervention.
- (k) Encourage schools to include potentially useful contacts and useful events on SEND within school newsletters, in order to ensure that all parents/carers have access to them.
- (l) Encourage primary schools to share good practice and to consider undertaking inclusivity education with all children, particularly relating to SEND and neuro-diversity, in order to raise standards and ensure equitable and universal access to provision within schools.

- (m) Revise Sefton's Local Offer in order to make it more user-friendly and accessible to parents/carers, which could include ensuring that it is easier to find on the Council's web-site, using less formal language and the inclusion of a glossary of terms and abbreviations.
 - (n) Liaise with the Council's Head of Health and Wellbeing in order to:
 - (i) Encourage schools to advertise and promote the School Nurse drop-in sessions within their newsletters, so that parents/carers have a greater opportunity to access them.
 - (ii) Request the School Nursing Service to approach the SENCO Forum, with a view to discussing the Healthy Schools Programme and to clarify the role of the School Nurse, particularly in relation to assessing children with SEND and in order to minimise delays in obtaining EHC Plans, as this would help to manage the expectations of parents/carers.
 - (o) Submit a report to a future meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding), following an audit, providing information on the following:-
 - (i) Any high schools which are restricting the number of enhanced transitions for SEND, together with explanations for the reasons behind the decisions.
 - (ii) The number of children with SEND accessing Sefton schools who come from outside the Borough and the reasons for this.
 - (iii) Consideration of how parents who have children with SEND and who are not engaging with schools could be engaged, or re-engaged.
 - (iv) Whether funding has been withdrawn for children with SEND in Year 6 and the reasons for withdrawal.
2. That the Head of Health and Wellbeing be requested to ensure that the School Nurse carries out their role prior to any collaboration with the school SENCO, in relation to assessing and referring children with SEND, in order to minimise delays in obtaining EHC Plans.
 3. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) be requested to consider the establishment of a Working Group in the future to examine post-19 provision for SENDs, in order to improve conditions for this vulnerable group of young people. This could be a Joint Working Group with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills).
 4. That the Senior Democratic Services Officer be requested to liaise with relevant officers in order to ensure that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) receives a six-monthly monitoring report, setting out progress made against each of the recommendations outlined above and as a

means of ensuring SMART objectives.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Working Group has made a number of recommendations that require approval by both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) and the Cabinet.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

No alternative options were considered. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) established the Working Group to review special educational needs and disability process of assessment and the Working Group has performed this task.

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The support for SEN provision in schools is funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The High Needs Block is overspent by £1.5m and is under significant financial pressure due to the number of children requiring SEN specialist provision / 1:1 support in schools. Costs need to be reduced to keep within budget and avoid impacting on the Council’s core budget if additional funding is not provided by central government. Any changes to the SEN offer in schools / specialist provision which increases cost will need to be funded from savings elsewhere in the DSG.

(B) Capital Costs

Not applicable

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets): Not applicable
Legal Implications: Not applicable
Equality Implications: There are no equality implications.

Contribution to the Council’s Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) are considered to be some of the more vulnerable members of our communities.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities:

By improving processes for children with SEND, this will contribute towards the facilitation of more confident and resilient communities.
Commission, broker and provide core services: The Local Authority shares responsibility for children with SEND and has a role in ensuring good quality care and services for them.
Place – leadership and influencer: The Council has a role to play in providing strong leadership and influencing Partners to work towards the provision of good quality care and services which are in the best interests of children with SEND.
Drivers of change and reform: The Council has a role to play in driving improvements for support to children with SEND.
Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity: Good support for children with SEND is more likely to lead to them reaching their maximum potential, which could include improved life chances.
Greater income for social investment: Good support for children with SEND is more likely to lead to them reaching their maximum potential, which could include improved life chances.
Cleaner Greener Not applicable.

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Head of Corporate Resources (FD.5209/18.....) and Head of Regulation and Compliance (LD.4433/18....) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

A number of external organisations and Providers have been consulted on during the course of the review and these are listed within the Final Report.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Following the expiry of the “call-in” period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting

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Appendices:

The following appendices are attached to this report:-

- Final Report of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment Working Group.

Background Papers:

There are no background papers available for inspection.

1. Introduction/Background

1.1 At its meeting on 26 September 2017 the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) established a Working Group to review the topic of Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment; and the following Members were appointed to serve on the Working Group (Minute No. 23 (4) refers):-

Councillors Murphy, Brenda O'Brien and Spencer;
Co-opted Members Mrs. Sandra Cain, and Ms. Libby Kitt;
Former Councillor Maria Bennett; and
Former Co-opted Member Mrs. Carrie Ryan-Palmer.

1.2 Councillor Spencer was appointed as the Lead Member for the review.

1.3 Terms of reference for the Working Group were as follows:-

To review the Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment, in terms of "what it will look like in the future", to include the following aspects:-

- Confidence in mainstream education to support Special Educational Needs; with particular reference to:-
 - Referrals and Assessments;
 - Information provided to parents/carers, particularly on assessment and during the transition to secondary school;
 - SEN provision in schools;
 - Sharing of "good/best practice".

1.4 The Final Report is attached for consideration

1.5 The Committee is requested to support the recommendations produced by the Working Group and commended them to the Cabinet for approval.

1.6 The Cabinet is requested to approve the recommendations.

1.7 At its meeting held on 10 July 2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) considered the Final Report of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Process of Assessment Working Group and supported the recommendations, provided the recommendations were subject to

any budget implications and the inclusion of the revised recommendation 1. (h), to read as follows:-

- “1. (h) Include Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for parents/carers of children with SEND within the information available on school admissions, as part of the “school readiness” approach, in order to create an efficient and effective home-school partnership from the outset, in conjunction with the Assessment, Resource and Provision Planning Team;”.