

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: HILLINGDON'S IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) REFORMS

Cabinet Member	Councillor David Simmonds
Cabinet Portfolio	Deputy Leader of the Council / Education & Children's Services
Officer Contact	Jon Pitt, Administration Directorate
Papers with report	Hillingdon's Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To consider the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee's review into Hillingdon's Implementation of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms and the recommendations contained therein.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	<p>Putting our Residents First: <i>Our People</i></p> <p>To put our residents first by ensuring that young people in the Borough with special educational needs and their parents / carers receive a service that meets and goes beyond the statutory requirements as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.</p> <p>To contribute towards the vision of the Hillingdon Children and Families Trust Plan to "Improve the outcomes for children, young people and their families in need or at risk through co-ordinated evidence based services."</p>
Financial Cost	The recommendations set out in this report do not have any direct financial implications as the work would be undertaken within existing budgets.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Children, Young People & Learning
Ward(s) affected	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1. Welcomes the report from the Children, Young People & Learning Policy Overview Committee (as in Appendix 1) on the review into Hillingdon's Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms.**

- 2. Endorses the specific recommendations of the Policy Overview Committee as set out below:**

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

- 1) That Cabinet endorses the work being undertaken to develop the local Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) offer in light of the national Reforms in this area.**
- 2) That the Cabinet Member for Education & Children's Services considers the following recommendations in light of the Committee's review:**
 - a) That the development of the Council's strategic approach to SEND Reforms ensures that relevant information is contained in the published local offer and that relevant Council staff are provided with the tools to enable them to support parents/carers in accessing the information effectively.**
 - b) To fully involve parents / carers as the local SEND offer is developed.**
 - c) That consideration be given to working with schools to provide more specialist and targeted training to school staff in relation to the local implementation of the SEND Reforms.**
 - d) That arrangements be made to ensure that schools, parents/carers and young people within the Borough are able to provide feedback on their experiences in relation to the SEND Reforms, to enable the Council to learn from their experiences.**
 - e) That an assessment of Hillingdon's implementation of the SEND Reforms be undertaken once the changes have become embedded, with consideration given to a progress report to the Cabinet Member and the Policy Overview Committee's meeting towards the end of 2015.**

Reasons for recommendations

The Children, Young People and Learning Policy Overview Committee agreed to undertake a review of Hillingdon's implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reforms. This was due to the wide ranging nature of the Reforms and likely impact on all children and young people aged 0 to 25 with SEND.

The Reforms, which were introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014, represented the most significant changes to the statutory framework for SEND for 30 years. The Act introduced a statutory duty for local authorities to produce a 'Local Offer.' This sets out the services available within the Borough for children and young people aged 0 to 25 with SEND. The other major change introduced was the replacement of SEN (Special Educational Needs) Statements with EHC (Education, Health and Care) Plans. The new EHC plans are more comprehensive than the SEN statements they replace as they cover not only the special educational needs and required provisions for the child / young person, but also set out healthcare and social care provision and introduce personal budgets.

The SEND Reforms came into force on 1 September 2014. The Council was required to publish the SEND Local Offer by this date and to start undertaking EHC assessments, leading to EHC plans. Children and young people that already have a SEN statement are being gradually

migrated over to the EHC Plans. This requires a 14 week assessment process. It is anticipated that the migration process will take until 2018 to complete.

The Committee has recognised the significant work already undertaken to implement the SEND Reforms within Hillingdon. At the same time, it is recognised that there is a need to enhance the published Local Offer and to ensure that parents / carers, schools and the young people themselves are fully involved and consulted as the Reforms continue to be implemented. The ongoing, iterative nature of the Reforms is reflected in the Committee's recommendation that a progress report is brought to the Cabinet Member, then the Committee for consideration later in 2015.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject or amend some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

1. Information on the agreed terms of reference for this review and a list of the witnesses who provided evidence can be found in Appendices A and B of the report itself.
2. Progress made to date on the implementation of the SEND reforms has included publication of the SEND Local Offer, which is accessed through the main Council website and the start of the transfer process from SEN (Special Educational Needs) Statements to EHC (Education, Health and Care) Plans.
3. The Department for Education (DfE) has commended the Council for its approach to project and programme management and use of self-assessments in its implementation of the SEND Reforms. The DfE also noted that parents and health partners seemed well engaged in relation to the reforms.
4. The Council developed the SEND Local Offer quite rapidly in order to meet the statutory launch date of 1 September 2014. It had always been recognised that the Local Offer would require further development over time, particularly around the functionality and usability of information in relation to the Offer. Feedback provided by service users to date had suggested that information within the Local Offer was not always presented in a format that was accessible to the various audiences that it had been designed for.
5. The external witnesses that provided evidence to the Committee felt that they had been fully involved in and consulted on the implementation of the SEND Reforms so far. Communication between partners was also felt to be good. It was considered that further engagement with parents / carers was required as the reforms were implemented and embedded, particularly in relation to the Local Offer.
6. The Council had conducted a series of generic, awareness raising sessions with schools as part of the preparations for the Reforms. Evidence provided to the Committee suggested that the training and information provided so far had been well received. However, there was a need for more focused training support to be provided to schools in relation to the transfer process from SEN Statements to EHC Plans to ensure they fully understand the local processes.
7. The transfer from SEN Statements to EHC Plans was seen as being a significant opportunity to gain the views and input of a wide range of service users and their families. Although the Council had met its statutory obligations, witnesses felt that further

consultation was required with parents / carers and young people as the number of families with experience of the new Plans was currently too small.

8. In common with other local authorities, Hillingdon has implemented the Reforms gradually, while ensuring that its statutory duties have been discharged. It is anticipated that the reforms will not be fully implemented until 2018.
9. In considering the implementation of the recommendations, the following comments are provided by officers for Cabinet to consider:
 - a. **Recommendation a:** Necessarily, the Local Offer was developed rapidly to meet the statutory launch date of 1 September 2014. A concerted effort was then made to increase the amount of information available but it is now recognised that the functionality and usability of the Local Offer requires further work. Feedback received to date suggests information held within the Local Offer is not always presented in a way that is accessible for the various audiences it is designed for. Historically there has been a lack of meaningful and consistent engagement with children and young people with SEND so a good opportunity exists to address this and work with young people to establish how they need information to be presented and to enlist their support in creating the final product.

Once the Local Offer functions more effectively it is important to ensure it contains relevant and useful information and that it is widely used by, and benefits, its intended audience. It is a requirement that the Council consults broadly in relation to the content of the Local Offer, therefore the opportunity exists to develop a network of trained advisors in a range of settings that the public regularly access. These advisors will then be in a position to support service users in getting the most out of the Local Offer.

- b. **Recommendation b:** Following the initial intensive work that was conducted in relation to all aspects of the SEND reforms, which included considerable parental input, there is a risk that parents and carers become disengaged with the ongoing process of embedding new ways of working and the refinement of the processes involved. Given the fundamental nature of and reason for the Reforms, it is essential that parents and carers continue to remain at the heart of all developmental work in the longer term to ensure a cooperative approach is maintained.
- c. **Recommendations c:** A series of initial, generic, awareness raising sessions have been conducted with schools as part of the preparations for the Reforms. Feedback from these sessions has demonstrated that there is now a clear need to deliver more focused training to support schools in their pivotal role regarding the assessment and transfer process. The approach to EHC assessment is sufficiently different to the Statementing process to require specific and targeted training to ensure a person centred approach is adopted in all schools and that the schools are able to follow the local procedures.
- d. **Recommendation d:** As the Council recognises the journey it is on to improve services and experiences for children / young people and their families, it is important to understand what works best for service users. Traditionally, one of the key issues raised by service users is that they have not felt involved in the process. The transfer from Statements to EHC plans is a significant opportunity to gain the views and input of a wide range of service users and their families. This learning should inform the way in which assessments are conducted in the future.

- e. Recommendation e:** No service comment has been provided in relation to this recommendation as it relates to a progress report being provided to the Cabinet Member and to the Committee later in 2015, rather than to a specific aspect of service delivery.

Financial Implications

The recommendations set out in this report do not have any direct financial implications. Any additional work undertaken after agreement by the Cabinet would be met from within the existing resources available. In order to support Council's with the implementation of the new reforms and the increase in responsibilities, two grants were awarded in 2014/15; the SEN Reform Grant (grant allocation of £433,492) and the SEND Implementation Grant (New Burdens) (£269,666).

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

The recommendations seek to ensure that persons aged 0 - 25 in the Borough with Special Educational Needs and their parents receive a service that meets and goes beyond the statutory requirements as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. The recommendations will help to ensure that the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Reforms continue to be implemented effectively within Hillingdon, while ensuring that parents / carers, schools, young people and other stakeholders are fully involved in their implementation. Implementation of the recommendations will also help to ensure that information in relation to the Local Offer and the wider Reforms is provided in an accessible format and that schools and other relevant staff receive adequate training to enable them to facilitate effective implementation.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee heard evidence from a range of witnesses, further details of which can be found at Appendix B of the report itself. A witness session held at a Committee meeting took evidence from officers and representatives of the Hillingdon Parents Carers Forum. An additional witness session was held with the headteacher of a local secondary school.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting recommendations from CYPS Policy Overview Committee on the review into Hillingdon's Implementation of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms have no direct financial implications. Grants awarded in 2014/15, highlighted in the financial implications, will support Hillingdon with the implementation of the new reforms, enabling the Council to fulfil and exceed obligations set out in the Children and Families Act 2014.

Legal

There are no significant legal implications arising out of this report to bring to Cabinet's attention. Under the Council's Constitution, Cabinet has the appropriate powers to agree the recommendation proposed at the outset of this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL