
0-25 SPECIAL NEEDS SYSTEM

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the work of Darlington as a national pathfinder in developing new approaches for implementing the reforms associated with the 0-25 Special Needs System.

Summary

2. The Government's ambition is that the special needs reforms will implement a new approach which seeks to join up help and support from children and their families across education, health and care, from birth to 25.
3. The new legislation comes into effect from September 2014 but as a national pathfinder, Darlington has been testing the reforms and identifying new ways of working since early 2012. This report provides Committee Members with an update on the implementation of the reforms in Darlington.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that :-
 - (a) Committee Members note the content of the report
 - (b) Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee provide continued support and appropriate challenge in the development of the new 0-25 special needs system across Darlington.

**Murray Rose
Director of People**

Background Papers

Draft SEN Code of Practice for 0 to 25 years - statutory guidance (Department for Education)

Rachel Kershaw : Extension x2026

S17 Crime and Disorder	No direct implications
Health and Well Being	The SEN Reforms will improve the Health and Well Being of all children with additional needs
Carbon Impact	No direct implications
Diversity	The SEN Reforms will improve the diversity of provision and support for all children with additional needs
Wards Affected	All children with SEN across the Borough will be affect by the new reforms
Groups Affected	Children and Young People aged 0-25 with additional educational needs
Budget and Policy Framework	No adverse effect
Key Decision	No
Urgent Decision	No
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	To improve the life chances and education opportunities for all children with additional needs
Efficiency	Better use of resources in a more targeted approach will achieve efficiencies

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

5. Committee Members will recall a presentation undertaken at the October meeting providing an overview of the new reforms being introduced for the 0 to 25 special needs system. This report provides an update on the work of Darlington as a national pathfinder in developing new approaches for implementing the changes.
6. The Governments ambition is that the special needs reforms will implement a new approach which seeks to join up help and support from children and their families across education, health and care, from birth to 25. Help will be offered at the earliest possible point, with children and young people with special needs and their parents or carers fully involved in decisions about their support and what they want to achieve. This will help lead to better outcomes and more efficient ways of working.
7. The new legislation comes into effect from September 2014 but as a national pathfinder, Darlington has been testing the reforms and identifying new ways of working since early 2012. A totally new approach has been developed which is routed in person centred techniques and aims to engage support and advice at the earliest stage a need is identified. Since September 2013, all new children identified with additional needs are automatically offered the option of the new Education, Health and Care plan instead of the historical Statement of Educational Need. We are also providing training so that every practitioner supporting a child with additional needs will be able to start a One Plan even if they do not meet the statutory requirements for an EHC plan.

8. To date 90 families are engaged in the new processes and 57 children have a new Education, Health and Care Plan completed. Professionals across each of the three agencies have been involved in different plans as appropriate and engagement has been across all staff including (but not exclusively), nursery settings, post-16 colleges, therapists, paediatricians, early support co-ordinators and school SENCo's.
9. The work of the Pathfinder Steering Group and Project Team is now focussed on finalising guidance and documentation for a smooth and seamless roll out to all professionals and families affected by the implementation of the new legislation. Training and staff development will play a key part of the programme over the next 6-12 months to ensure that the new ways of working are fully embedded.
10. The Department for Education has recently announced the allocation of an SEN Reform Grant which will be allocated to all Local Authority's as financial support to implement the new reforms. We have not finalised any plans for the funding but anticipate it will be required to meet the cost of the training programme and to ensure appropriate staffing levels to fully implement the reforms. As a pathfinder authority there is an expectation that we will share our learning and development with other Local Authorities and we have already had a number of requests for teams to visit and discuss our methods of implementing the new processes.

Continued Development

11. It is accepted that workforce development is a key area for ensuring the success of the new reforms. However, as an integrated approach from 0-25, the new system will not be successful for families without the full engagement from everyone and at every level across all statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sector. To date this engagement has been one of the key achievements of the programme but its continuation is essential as more detailed development of processes continues.
12. The Steering Group have identified that further work is required in the following areas:
 - (a) Development of an ICT system and data sharing protocols that will allow seamless transfer of information between agencies so that support for children and young people is not slowed down by bureaucratic systems.
 - (b) Embedding the principles of Key Worker support into the roles of all professionals involved in supporting children and young people to ensure that families can have confidence to request support from the professional they feel most appropriate to support them at a time of need.
 - (c) Development of peer support for parents and young people to understand and contribute fully to the new processes, and utilising the Community and Voluntary Sector to strengthen Community support.

- (d) Embedding the principles of person centred planning to ensure the needs of the child/young person are fully identified and the appropriate support is in place to realise aspirations.
- (e) Developing a resource allocation system to enable families to understand the funding allocations used to support their child and giving them the support and opportunity to take control of how the funding is used to support their child.

Outcome of Consultation

- 13. Significant consultation and engagement has been undertaken throughout all stages of developing this programme. Families, children and young people have been instrumental in developing all elements of new process and have been fully supported to be involved through a close working relationship with Darlington Association on Disability.
- 14. Professionals from each of the three elements, Education, Health and Care have been fully involved and have led the majority of the development work. The Steering Group and Project team are multi-disciplinary and all activities, work streams, focus groups, training and development sessions have been well attended by all agencies.
- 15. The majority of feedback received from parents, children/young people and professionals is extremely positive about the changes the new systems will make, with particular emphasis on greater value placed on person centred approaches.