
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY: 0 TO 25 YEARS

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on the implementation of the national reforms associated with the 0-25 Special Education Needs (SEN) System.

Summary

2. The Children and Families Act came into force on 1 September 2014 and provides the legislation for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
3. The new approach seeks to join up help and support across education, health and care for children and their families, from birth to 25.
4. As a national pathfinder, and also a regional champion, 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

5. It is recommended that Committee Members note the content of the report;

Jenni Cooke
Service Director for Children, Families and Learning

Background Papers

Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0-25 years - statutory guidance from the Department for Education and the Department for Health.

Author: Rachel Kershaw Extension: x5885

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

6. The Children and Families Act came into force on 1 September 2014 and provides the legislative framework for the Government's ambition in reforming the special educational needs processes.
7. As a national pathfinder, Darlington has been testing the reforms and identifying new ways of working since early 2012. During 2014/15, Darlington was identified as a regional champion providing a role of support for other Local Authorities (LA's) in the North East and disseminating areas of good practice.

Education, Health and Care Plans

8. Since September 2013, all children newly identified with additional needs in Darlington have automatically been offered the option of an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) instead of the historical Statement of Educational Need.
9. Since September 2014, all families requesting an EHC Needs Assessment have been allocated a named SEN casework officer who sought to develop a close relationship with the families to ensure their concerns and wishes are listened to and addressed throughout the process. Initial contact begins with a home visit to meet the family and the child/young person and to gather their views. Families can make contact with the named caseworker at any time during the assessment process and the consistency of this officer means that families are kept informed more regularly and understand the process more clearly.

10. Feedback questionnaires are issued to all families at the end of the process and the responses to date have generally been very positive. Families welcome the focus on person centred approaches, they like having a named contact officer and they generally feel more involved in the decisions.
11. In August 2014, the Government set LA's a target that ensures that all existing Statements of SEN are reviewed and if appropriate transferred to the new EHCP process by April 2018. Young people with a Learning Disability Assessment (LDA) must have their needs assessed and an EHCP plan in place, if required, by 1 September 2016. In Darlington this equated to just over 400 Statements and almost 100 LDA's.
12. A four year plan for phasing the conversion of Statements and LDA's to the new EHCP was developed for Darlington, in consultation with local stakeholders. The document was made available from the 1 September 2014 and identifies targets for conversion each year. The requirements are ambitious alongside the introduction of relatively new processes and procedures, and although everyone is focussed on achieving the timescales set, the quality of young people's and parents engagement in the process is being closely monitored to ensure the transfer is done 'with them' not 'to them'.
13. For the 2014/15 academic year, Darlington are committed to transferring all young people with statements who are progressing into further education and all young children who were issued with non-statutory EHC plans issued before 1 September 2014. To date, all young people progressing into further education have undergone the transfer process and the SEN team are currently transferring young people who have non-statutory EHC plans. The process has involved caseworkers undertaking home and school visits as part of the personal centred approach, alongside multi agency working. This has allowed the local authority and families to work together to create a robust Education, Health and Care plan.

School Based High Needs Funding

14. Traditionally, SEN funding in Darlington has been delegated to schools through the Schools Funding Formula as a 'Notional SEN' allocation. This allocation is driven by a combination of free school meal and postcode deprivation (IDACI) factors. For mainstream secondary schools all funding for SEN is delegated. For primary schools up to £13,506 is delegated, with amounts above that coming from a centrally held fund and allocated with a statement to meet a child's individual needs.
15. In 2014 the Department for Education (DfE) began implementing changes to the schools funding formula through the introduction of a £6,000 threshold for delegation of SEN funding through the Schools Block of the Direct Schools Grant (DSG). For Darlington schools this means a reduction in delegated limits and the need for a movement of funding from the schools formula driven 'Notional SEN' allocation to the High Needs Block. The DfE intention is that high needs funding will be then be re-allocated on a needs led basis where individual pupils require additional support above the £6,000 threshold.

16. The matter has been debated by the Schools Forum and an agreement was put in place so that no changes would be made to the funding formula for high needs in 2015/16; allowing the Local Authority and schools, through workshops and consultation, to develop robust options for future implementation.
17. In the beginning part of this year, a Costed Provision Mapping tool has been developed and trialled with a number of Darlington Schools. The tool aims to provide schools with an easy to use system with which they can record the amount and type of support that a young person in their school requires to ensure their educational needs are met. If the support required exceeds the delegated funding levels the school can seek to request additional top-up funding related to specific areas of support. The tool will shortly be issued to all schools to use to complete for the pupils on roll. A data collection exercise in October will then identify the levels of funding required in each school for the academic year 2016/17.
18. It is envisaged that a more specific funding allocation tool such as this, will ensure that appropriate and necessary funding is provided to schools for the children who need the most support, enabling the LA to track progress and outcomes more accurately.

Multi-Agency Working

19. Professionals across each of the three agencies (Education, Health and Social Care) continue to be involved in the development of individual EHCP's as appropriate. Engagement from colleagues in Educational settings such as nursery settings, schools, post-16 colleges remains the most positive engagement at this stage. Engagement from colleagues across other professions is generally positive when their service is already involved in specific cases.
20. Training and staff development continues to be a key area of focus. A specific training course for School Governors has been delivered, with over 50 Governors attending. Feedback has been really positive and the session has ensured a good knowledge base across a wide range of schools.
21. A termly School SENCo Network meeting continues to focus on the key themes of the reforms, disseminates good practice and allows SENCo's the opportunity to discuss issues and ask questions.
22. The Parent-Carer Forum, hosted by Darlington Association on Disability, has been renewed and refreshed over the last year. A new lead person has given structure to the forum and parents have had the opportunity to work closely with the LA to review specific areas of importance to them, such as the Home to School Transport policy and the Local Offer. It is hoped that the scope and membership of the forum will grow over the coming year so that more opportunities for co-production can be identified.

Ofsted

23. In December 2014, the DfE invited Ofsted to formally inspect local areas on their effectiveness in fulfilling their new duties in relation to the SEN Reforms. Ofsted will

undertake this role along with the Care Quality Commission and a local authority officer.

24. Pilot inspections are currently taken place in a number of selected LA's across the country. The inspection framework is due to be published in the autumn with formal inspections commencing from March 2016.
25. It is envisaged that robust and rigorous inspections will ensure that parents and young people receive as much information as possible about what is being offered at a local and national level.
26. In Darlington, the proposal is to reform the multi-agency steering group that was instrumental in preparing for the reforms during the pathfinder period, and to use this group to steer key work areas that will ensure the LA and Health Authority are fully prepared for a future Ofsted inspection.

Outcome of Consultation

27. Significant consultation and engagement has been undertaken throughout all stages of the pathfinder programme and the implementation of the reforms. 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 and the Parent-Carer Forum.
28. Professionals from each of the three elements, Education, Health and Care have been fully involved and have led the majority of the development work.
29. All feedback, views and information received will continue to be monitored and be used to improve the changes that are taking place for young people and families in Darlington.