
**SEND STRATEGY AND FUNDING/TRAVEL ASSISTANCE POLICY
CONSULTATION REVIEW GROUP**

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To present the outcome and findings of the Review Group established by this Scrutiny Committee to examine the proposals and submit comment on the consultation process.

Summary

2. Members will recall that, at a meeting of this Scrutiny Committee held on 29 October 2018 Members received a report outlining plans to consult on a strategic plan for delivering better outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and proposed amendments to the application of the High Needs Block in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
3. Members also received a report on plans to consult on the introduction of a SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disability) Travel Assistance Policy.
4. The Review Group has met on 26 November and their findings are outlined in the report.

Recommendation

5. It is recommended that Members of this Scrutiny Committee approve the recommendations to be forwarded as the formal response of this Scrutiny Committee on the consultation process.

**Councillor Chris Taylor
Chair of the Review Group**

Background Papers

Special Educational Needs Strategy and Funding Report and Special Educational Needs Home to School Transport to Scrutiny on 29 October 2018

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no specific implications for Crime and Disorder.
Health and Well Being	Increased engagement for children and families in the receiving of timely services.
Carbon Impact	There is no carbon impact in relation to this report.
Diversity	There are no specific diversity issues in this report.
Wards Affected	There are no specific Wards which are affected by this report.
Groups Affected	Children and families in Darlington.
Budget and Policy Framework	This report has no impact on the budget or policy framework.
Key Decision	This report does not constitute a Key Decision.
Urgent Decision	This is not considered an urgent decision
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	To enable children with the best start in life.
Efficiency	The outcome of this report does not impact on the Council efficiency agenda.
Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers	This report has no impact on Looked After Children or Care Leavers.

MAIN REPORT

Information

6. A number of Members of this Scrutiny Committee attended the various public consultation events that had been organised by this authority between 5 and 21 November 2018 to consult on the SEND Strategy and Funding and the SEND Travel Assistance Policy.
7. Members met on 26 October 2018 to discuss the feedback received at the various consultation events attended and to propose a Scrutiny response to the proposals in the strategy.

SEND Strategy and Funding

8. With regard to the SEND Strategy and Funding the feedback from those parents that attended the consultation events was in general supportive of the principle of the money following the child or young person.
9. There were some concerns around transition between phases; the current lack of specialist provision in Darlington; the poor communication between home and school especially in secondary education; and the out of area placements which was above average in Darlington.
10. Parents also expressed their desire to have more information on their own child's funding and felt that there could be improved liaison between the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and schools and the overall sharing of information between professionals could be improved.

SEND Travel Assistance Policy

11. The main feedback received regarding this Policy was around ensuring that each case is examined to prevent hardship and encourage better utilisation of local facilities.

Conclusion

12. From our discussions on the feedback from the various consultation events we concluded that in general there is support for the proposals in the SEND Strategy and Funding from parents and Members, however we felt that there were some improvements that could be made to services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and disabilities. .
13. One of our main concerns was the lack of local resource bases and Members agreed that now was a good time to review the outside provision as the last commissioning was in 2010.

14. Members also agreed that the appointment of a key person for accountability and communication between parents and schools was key to the success of the proposed strategy.

Recommendations

15. It is recommended that:

- (a) There is adequate monitoring of the funding allocated, especially within the Academies.
- (b) Consideration be given to the appointment of a Parental Liaison Officer.
- (c) That more Resource Bases are commissioned in Darlington mainstream provision.
- (d) The need for a Portage Service in Darlington be re-examined.
- (e) The working arrangements with the health organisations and CAMHS be improved.