

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITY COMMISSIONING (SEND) STRATEGY - UPDATE**

*To:* Cambridgeshire Schools Forum  
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**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of the SEND Commissioning strategy is to understand and plan for the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND to enable them to achieve good outcomes.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary on the key issues and next steps for implementing the SEND commissioning strategy.
- 1.3 The reason for bringing this paper on the next steps is to seek your views on the best ways of engaging schools and educational settings to participate in planning future services and provision for children and young people with SEND.

**2.0 SEND COMMISSIONING STRATEGY- KEY ISSUES**

- 2.1 The SEND Commissioning Strategy provides a high level strategic framework for how we propose to address the increasing demand and financial pressures resulting from our current systems for identifying children and young people with SEND. We have a higher percentage of pupils with an identified SEND than nationally and compared with similar authorities. This level of identification needs to be examined as it places increasing financial pressures on schools as well as the Local Authority. These pressures are becoming unsustainable especially within the context of an increasing population of 0-19 year olds.
- 2.2 Our commissioning intentions are based on a person-centred and strength based model with children, young people their families and carers at the centre:
  - Be based and designed within communities by families, children and young people with SEND
  - Building on the strengths of the family and community to find solutions through a person and family centred planning approach
  - Be joined up and coherent across organisations and sectors- we will work to keep children and young people with SEND in education and care local to their home.
- 2.3 Our commissioning intentions are based on a person-centred and strength based model with children, young people their families and carers at the centre. Their engagement, participation and co-production are essential in determining what outcomes are important to them, and what support they need to help them achieve these outcomes.
- 2.4 We know that we have an increasing population of young people identified with more complex needs, for instance, those with Autism and Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. For these we need to develop a timely response working with mainstream schools

and early years settings to help target additional wrap around support to keep the child safe, attending school and cared for at home. We need to ensure we build capacity to provide preventative interventions to deal with early alerts for risks of exclusion or placement or family breakdown.

- 2.6 Many schools across Cambridgeshire have taken up the training opportunity to receive free or subsidised Autism training delivered by the SEND specialist services. This training promotes an understanding of autism, develops competencies in school staff to meet the needs of pupils with autism, and helps embed the national autism standards in Cambridgeshire schools. We need to extend the training opportunities to improve the competencies of our workforce to gain a better understanding of different areas of SEND. The Cambridgeshire SEND workforce strategy (currently being developed) will identify both the training needs across the authority and the range of providers, including schools, who are able to deliver training and workforce development.
- 2.7 We will continue to commission a range of services to support children and young people to succeed in their local school or educational setting. The Early Help offer will be integrated across Local Authority services as well as with partners to ensure both effectiveness and efficiencies in supporting families, and educational and community settings to meet needs. As part of this offer the SEND specialist services will provide additional support and guidance for schools and families on interventions that will have a positive impact on children's learning, participation, and independence.
- 2.8 We will continue to commission a range of specialist educational provision that includes AreaSpecialSchools, Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties specialist provision, and enhanced provision for autism and hearing impairment. The new duties and expectation post 16 to prepare young people for adulthood will need new commissioning arrangements to provide Education, Employment and Training opportunities up to the age of 25. Further Education colleges are at the centre of these statutory reforms and may become the biggest single providers for young people with SEND. We will need to ensure there are effective arrangements in place to provide for the wide range of student's needs.
- 2.9 There are pressures on places at all of the Area Special Schools. This is due to the increasing complexity of the physical and medical needs of the pupils, particularly the younger cohort of children entering special schools. As a result, the overall pupil numbers are not necessarily rising, but the numbers of pupils the schools can admit is reducing. There is a review being undertaken looking at the numbers that schools can admit given the changing nature of their needs. We have a previous Cabinet decision to provide for three further Area Special Schools over the next 10 years, but we will review with service users and providers whether this model of specialist provision meets future needs. Similarly, we will need to take into account the effect of significant population growth and the implications for the increasing population of young people with SEND, particularly those with severe and complex life long needs.
- 2.10 Over the last two years there has been rise in permanent exclusions within primary schools. There were seven primary permanent exclusions last year, and since September 2014 there have been a further four. Although Cambridgeshire's overall rate is low compared with national data and our statistical neighbours, it is still a significant concern.

We are currently reviewing the arrangements to deliver a quicker response to primary schools where there is a risk of permanent exclusion. We are keen to work with primary, secondary and special schools on more flexible and rapid responses to support interventions that help manage the situation and maintain the pupil in the local school and in their local community.

### **3.0 NEXT STEPS +TIMESCALE**

- 3.1 We are developing more detailed commissioning plans for the main areas of SEND. These commissioning plans will be developed collaboratively with service users, stakeholders, providers, and partners over the next four months. They will provide more detailed information on how needs will be met over the next five years, and projected spend required over the next 10 years across the spectrum of need, and will be ready by the end of April 2015, and be circulated to the Schools Forum for information and for comments in the Summer term.
  
- 3.2 We propose to bring together groups of headteachers and inclusion leads/SENCOs from across all phases to help shape the more detailed commissioning plans for the level of SEND we have now and predict we will have over the next 10 years. The representatives from schools and educational settings and other partners will need to represent views and ideas from their sector. The expected outcome will be recommendations for developing effective and affordable provision that will meet future needs and demand and proposals for any changes to methods for allocating resources to enable needs to be addressed earlier.