

SCRUTINY REPORT



MEETING: Overview and Scrutiny

DATE: 30 January 2020

SUBJECT: SEN Strategy

REPORT FROM: Councillor T Tariq, Cabinet Member – Children and Families

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Executive Summary

This report provides an update of the progress and work undertaken to date to transform SEND in Bury and address the areas of concern raised by previous Ofsted/CQC inspections of SEND in local area.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note this report for information.

SEN Strategy

1. Introduction

1.1. The purpose of the paper is to outline the progress made:

- To transform those processes and systems in Children's Services supporting SEND
- To work with the CCG to address the areas of development highlighted at the Ofsted/CQC re-visit for SEND.

2. Background

2.1. SEN services in Bury have historically been very traditional and they have been reactive to the changes of the Children's and Families Act 2014 and Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Reforms. As a result structures, processes and the ways of working of operational teams, were slow to respond to the vision and objectives of the SEND Reforms introduced in 2014.

2.2. Bury's Joint Area SEND Inspection in June 2017 identified eight areas of weakness and the subsequent Ofsted/CQC re-visit in May 2019 highlighted that progress had been made in five areas but three weaknesses remained. The SEND Code of Practice explicitly states that the reforms are cross-cutting with health, social care up to age 25 and education services, and the challenge is for this to be a jointly owned agenda for the CCG, Children's and Adults.

2.3. The DfE has now approved (9.12.19) the Action Plan for the weaknesses identified at the Ofsted/CQC re-visit.

3. SEN Strategy

3.1 In building a new SEND service, the following principles are fundamental:

- Fit for purpose' now and in the future
- Efficient, effective and value for money
- Delivers good outcomes for children and young people in Bury
- Integrated into the wider work of partners and stakeholders who support children and young people in Bury

3.2 To achieve this the following actions have been taken or are in progress:

1. Strengthened Governance arrangements are now in place.

The SEND Partnership Board which was set up initially to ensure the widest representation of all stakeholders in SEND has achieved its purpose. A new SEND Executive Board is in development to provide scrutiny and to hold officers to account for the delivery of the key priorities on SEND and improved outcomes for children and young people.

2. Schools are key partners in the transformation of SEN.

Leadership of inclusion and SEN by the Heads is integral to transformation of the school sector. Head-teachers are part of the borough wide governance arrangements. Schools now have more ownership of inclusion and SEN with the development of the Inclusion Partnerships, the adoption of quality standards and a more innovative curriculum offer. Another positive development is the identification of Associate Heads for SEN, Health and SEMH to offer leadership support across the school sector.

3. Improve outcomes for children and young people.

There is now a SEND graduated offer in schools which ensures the accurate and effective identification of needs. This coupled with a multi-disciplinary team approach for agreeing behavior support strategies for those children at risk of exclusion, has resulted in a significant reduction in exclusions, both permanent and fixed term.

4. A stronger local offer and less reliance on out of borough provision.

All children and young people who have been placed in independent and non-maintained special schools are being reviewed with a view to identifying those whose needs could be met locally. This will lead to better outcomes for children and young people as placed in their local community, and whilst this will require some local re-investment, there will be cost efficiencies over the longer term.

We have increased the range and amount of local provision by recently tendering for Alternative Provision and have a range of quality assured providers so that there is now geographical coverage and an innovative, engaging curriculum to offer to those children and young people at risk of dropping out from school.

5. Service Reviews so that structures and functions are future proof.

A number of Education Services reviews are in train for the SEN Service, Educational Psychology Service, Hearing Impaired Service and Visual Impaired Service. These reviews will focus on service improvement and ensuring that we are delivering high quality services that are sustainable, efficient and cost effective. The culture within the SEN system also needs to change to a focus on outcomes, co-production, and early intervention. This will ensure that the SEN service is proactive and working with parents with a focus on early intervention rather than responding to a crisis where choice and options for the Council, CCG and parents become limited and relationships fraught.

6. Quality assurance needs to be embedded.

Quality assurance processes need to be robust and use data effectively to inform operational and strategic decision making. Following the Ofsted/CQC revisit a significant piece of work was undertaken with partners on EHCPs led by the local health provider. This has increased professionals' understanding of their roles in the EHCP process and streamlined working practices, so that professionals are providing more meaningful contributions for assessments.

7. Priorities on SEND in the next 12 months

Work on the above areas is continuing as part of the SEND work-plan.

The wider priorities in the coming 12 months are focused on co-production with parents and the development of health pathways, specifically neurodevelopment and sensory. Integrated commissioning for improved SEND outcomes across health, social care and education will be strengthened through the establishment of the One Commissioning Organisation.

4 Financial implications

4.1 SEND is an area of high risk for children's services due to escalating costs from service demand and more complex placement packages. Departmental savings have been identified from the re-design of the local SEN system. This will put in place demand controls and earlier interventions so that cases do not escalate to crisis point where high cost packages have to be commissioned.

5 Legal implications

5.1 The legal implications associated with this area of work are that unless there is the planned re-design of the local SEN system there will continue to be the level of challenge from parents and families with some cases resulting in Tribunal which incurs costs both financially and also in staff resources.

6 Associated Risks

6.1 SEN is a risk on the corporate and departmental risk registers with mitigating actions identified.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The above report shows that significant progress has been made on SEN in re-designing delivery models and services to improve outcomes for children and

young people but it is essential to continue with the SEND work-plan of reform.

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