

CHOICE AND ACHIEVEMENT – INCLUSION IN BARNET

A new policy for Barnet to promote independence and provide support to children and young people who are disabled or have Special Educational Needs (SEN) including Emotional, Social and Behavioural difficulties.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In May 2012 the Government produced “Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability – progress and next steps”.

This sets out a summary of the key responses to the consultation questions in the green paper, current progress and further plans for the vision, in which:

- children’s special educational needs are picked up early and support is routinely put in place quickly
- staff have the knowledge, understanding and skills to provide the right support for children and young people who have SEN or are disabled, wherever they are
- parents know what they can reasonably expect their local school, local college, local authority and local services to provide, without them having to fight for it
- children who would currently have a statement of SEN and young people over 16 who would have a learning difficulty assessment have an integrated assessment and a single Education, Health and Care Plan which is completed in a shorter time and without families having the stress of searching to get the support they need
- parents have greater control over the services they and their family use, with: every family with an Education, Health and Care plan having the right to a personal budget for their support
- parents whose children have an education, health and care plan having the right to seek a place at any state-funded school, whether that is a special or mainstream school, a maintained school, academy or Free School.

We will need to track further developments in the approaches outlined in the Green paper and the SEN pathfinders and move forward flexibly in order to maintain ongoing improvements and be in a position to implement the requirements of the Children and Families Bill expected in 2013.

There has been much progress in Barnet over recent years. Achievement for this group of children and young people as a whole compares very favourably nationally and there has been a steady improvement in attainment outcomes both in the primary and secondary phases of education. Our priorities include aiming for further improved outcomes, with a focus on early intervention and support and improving transition as we move forward with a single multi-agency plan approach for a 0 – 25 age range.

WHO IS THIS STRATEGY FOR?

Barnet has high expectations in promoting the empowerment, achievement and inclusion of disabled children and young people and those with special and additional educational needs including those facing emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and challenges to positive mental health and well being. This strategy is for all such children and young people with needs of varying impact and complexity. These needs may currently be addressed by school or early years action and individual education planning through to those requiring statements of special educational needs and additional and special provision. It is recognised that their parents and carers must be partners and participants in that process and that they should be supported in their role.

Many mainstream and specialist schools, educational settings and agencies both within and outside the authority and including the voluntary and independent sector, make a huge collaborative contribution to positive outcomes for this group of children and young people.

The council has a strong commitment as “Champions” for children with SEN and has an intensive interest in ensuring strategic developments in this area lead to the best possible outcomes for children and young people.

WHAT ARE THE KEY PRINCIPLES?

Our expectations

We are aspirational. Children and young people and their families are at the very heart of what we do and we want to ensure the best possible arrangements are in place for them. Planning for SEN provision will include joint developments across the council, the independent and voluntary sector and through the Children’s Health and Well Being board. Our intention is to meet our statutory responsibilities and deliver on local priorities within an equalities framework that values diversity and reduces inequality and disadvantage and maximises opportunities and life chances for our disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational and Additional Needs. Our focus is on raising achievement and closing the gap between vulnerable children and others less disadvantaged.

Personalisation

Personalised arrangements with personal and individual budget options and person centred planning can promote individual responsibility, joint accountability, independence and a sense of self determination for example through the application of choice. These principles should apply in an holistic approach to education, training and employment, care and play and leisure and mobility and access across the community. Our approach to specialist assessment and intervention therefore will consider equality and diversity issues, the young person’s community, home and school context and family

support requirements as assessed through processes such as the Common Assessment Framework. Person centred planning will be key.

Pre-birth to young adulthood

Barnet believes that adopting a pre-birth to young adulthood perspective and a largely joined up system will assist in developing the preferred multi-agency collaborative model and single plan approach to meeting needs and ensuring smooth transition through a young person's development from pre-birth to twenty five and beyond. This approach will bring parents and carers and children and young people, agencies and departments within the council, the Children's Trust (Health and Well Being Board) and the independent and voluntary sector closer together in planning provision and monitoring progression.

Early Intervention and building independence and resilience

In common with the early intervention and prevention strategy, this strategy seeks to target early intervention and support to build independence and resilience in children, young people and their families, promote positive mental health and prevent escalation of special educational needs. Central to this is support for a universal offer which delivers quality education and care and the targeting of resources in an effective and economical manner, which reduces vulnerability and dependency. Central to this will be reasonable adaptations and modifications of a child's setting, targeted group interventions (e.g. for speech and language development) the uptake of training and professional development opportunities and access to multi-agency advice and consultancy, through virtual locally based teams in the Team Around the Setting and Network Model.

Provision through partnerships

Placement planning for children and young people with SEN including Emotional and Social Behaviour Difficulties (ESBD) will be increasingly carried out in association with other council alliances and partnerships with schools, the voluntary and independent sector and other service providers to ensure local provision is available to keep CYP in contact with their home community. In a new partnership with schools they will be encouraged and supported by the local authority to find collaborative approaches across the whole authority. There is increased need across North London as a whole at a time when Council budgets are under pressure. Analysis across authorities indicates a requirement for growth in provision particularly in the areas of autism and emotional, social and behavioural difficulties and in arrangements for 16 plus learners and school leavers.

Consultation, Participation and Evaluation

This strategy will be outcome focussed and underpinned by initial and on going participation and consultation with children and young people, council members, unions, their parents and carers and service providers. Strategy

developments will be informed by changes in legislation, guidance and SEN pathfinder outcomes. Strategic direction and operational developments will be underpinned by evidence informed practice, evaluation and research. Leading edge groups will continue to inform developments and the strategy will be overseen by the Inclusion Strategy Group and links to other strategic groups.

It is proposed that Barnet adopt an open channel and ongoing consultation approach to this strategy initially agreeing the principles of the strategy and support for an outline implementation work stream but retaining the flexibility to respond to innovation and evaluation, for example, through the SEN pathfinders.

Effective Communication and Clarifying the Offer

Schools and settings will be encouraged and supported in providing accurate information about what they can offer. Financial and SEN support arrangements will be published as required. Communication with stakeholders will be clear; services available should be signposted effectively with clear criteria for access. There will be clarity and transparency about the statutory and discretionary offer being made to parents and children in terms of available provision and services and the decision making processes. Where possible choices will be identified. Banding approaches will be explored to support this process and ensure that our approach is fair.

Parents and carers and families

In Barnet we believe that parents and carers are the best informed when it comes to understanding their child's needs and that parents want the best outcomes for their children. Parents tell us they want the best possible arrangements and not necessarily the most expensive. We will endeavour to collaboratively make provision which meets the approval of children and their parents, meets a young person's needs, allows them to feel included, ensures effective use of resources and value for money, does not negatively impact on the education and care arrangements for all children, but enhances their life experience.

Where the council believes it is acting in a young person's best interests but there is conflict with parents the council will engage in mediation before confirming a decision but will remain mindful of its duty to taxpayers and other SEN children. The council will also ensure that the child and parent continues to have a voice in this process through engagement of parent partnership services and advocacy as required.

The role of young carers and the impact on their lives of living with siblings with significant needs is recognised. This strategy will link with other initiatives to ensure their needs are met.

Organisation and resourcing

Statements of special educational needs although currently a necessity, are resource consuming in the short and long term. Barnet Council and our schools are committed to ensuring special educational needs are met wherever possible through timely assessment and intervention and without the need for statutory assessment wherever this is possible and desirable. It is our intention that special schools and additionally resourced provisions in mainstream schools will work closely with support services to ensure an excellence and outreach model of service delivery to meet special educational needs.

Children's and Adults' services in Barnet will have an organisational structure that enhances delivery of this strategy and the intended outcomes. This will include bringing services providing administrative and decision making processes for different age ranges into closer collaboration. Jointly through work with early years providers, schools and colleges, health, early intervention and prevention services and social care, a single plan approach will be developed.

Effective teaching and support

Quality teaching in outstanding schools is the first line of support in meeting special educational needs. Our school improvement and review arrangements will continue to maintain a focus on working in partnership with schools to meet the needs of vulnerable students. Within this, there will be a particular focus on developing capacity to promote the development of communication and speech and language development from an early age.

Provision and service delivery (including therapies) will be safe, quality assured, meet professional and ethical standards (including NICE guidelines) employ effective performance management, monitoring (including outcomes and impact). Barnet standards for procurement, contracting and joint commissioning will be employed.

Services should wherever possible be delivered where children are involved in their usual day to day activities and in contexts with which they are familiar. Children's centres, schools and colleges should be hubs for the delivery of a personalised curriculum and multi agency services.

The authority will co- develop a provision mapping approach with providers to assist in this process. Where appropriate the local authority will assist the public, independent and voluntary sector: for example, to develop or target services according to identified need. Our aim is to ensure that we have a continuum of services to meet a continuum of need, Our response to changing needs will be timely and efficient. The council will jointly plan with schools and assist in the duty to co-operate, to ensure services do not become fragmented but are consistently available and comprehensive in nature.

WHAT WE WILL ACHIEVE?

We will

- ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the education and care of disabled Children and Young People including those with Special Educational Needs
- ensure effective progression and high attainment and achievement for children and young people with SEN
- close the gap in attainment between CYP with SEN including emotional and social difficulties and their peers not experiencing these challenges
- ensure a customer care approach, that parents are supported and satisfied and report that they are
- ensure that CYP with SEN can be educated within mainstream settings wherever possible and special school and college settings within our locality
- reduce the reliance on statements of special educational needs and pilot the use of a single plan
- reduce the number of tribunals with a high level of agreement from SENDIS that provision being made is appropriate
- reduce school leavers with SEN who are NEET
- increase the range of outstanding provision available to children and young people with SEN
- reduce exclusion of children with SEN
- ensure the positive health and emotional well being of children who are disabled or who have special educational Needs

Our immediate required developments

Autism and Profound and Multiple Learning difficulties

An expansion of our autism provision.

Mainstream schools

Quality training for Special Needs Co-ordinators and teaching assistants

Build capacity in high incidence need arrangements such as speech and language and emotional social and behavioural difficulties

Support changes in relation to SEN funding and organisation signalled in SEN Green Paper new funding for schools guidance.

Signpost and support mainstream school participation in Achievement for All initiative.

Explore responsibilities in the partnership to deliver on the duty to co-operate with regard to vulnerable pupils. Explore with schools how peer support, peer

tutoring and mentoring can be included in volunteer and accredited programmes e.g. play buddies, circle of friends, travel buddies and mobility.

Speech Language and Communication

Roll out findings from the national Better Communication Research Project and assist in capacity building in schools and children's centres to develop communication skills including oracy and presentation.

Expand Parent/Carer speech and language ambassadors in schools

Special school and Additionally Resourced Mainstream provision

Special schools and additionally resourced mainstream schools will need to work collaboratively with specialist teams and services to ensure further embedding of the excellence and out reach model to support inclusion.

Emotional, social and Behavioural difficulties and emotional well being

There will be consultation with schools and other providers about how the family of schools works with the authority to ensure the emotional, social and behavioural needs of students are met.

The continuum of provision will be identified and this could be brought remain on roll at their schools whilst accessing the service. The age range for access to the provision should be extended upwards to ensure access to 19.

Life skills, respite and independent living

Joint planning for post 19 supported living and accommodation arrangements within Barnet. This to be linked with development of provision for education and training and social developments.

Consolidation of after school clubs provided in particular by special schools and ARPs but also mainstream schools.

Short breaks programme to facilitate involvement of the voluntary sector and link to single plan approach to meeting special educational needs

Transport and independent travel training

Joint consideration for planning and service delivery with other authorities for efficient transportation of children with SEN is underway through the WLA.

A programme for the development of independent travel training and travel buddy approaches is required. This is an area that has been discussed with the voluntary sector with a view to a lead or provision coming from this sector. Options include the provision of funds to special schools, mainstream schools and ARPs for the development of personal solutions. Tendering by the

voluntary sector for management and delivery or just delivery of the service to be considered.

Support services

Agreements across all schools in Barnet to fund and strategically maintain and develop SEN support services to avoid fragmentation and promote quality and speedy access to assessment and intervention.

Agreements across all schools in Barnet to deliver on a strategic plan to meet the SEN and emotional, social and behavioural needs of children and young people in Barnet within the identified legislative and guidance framework.

Parent support and carer and young person advocacy

Work jointly with IPSEA and develop mediation and professional practice, customer service and client approaches which reduce legal and tribunal challenge (SEN and LLDD).

Work collaboratively with schools and other providers to provide good information and practice guidelines to ensure the dialogue with parents and carers of disabled children and those with SEN is positive and remains within the required legal parameters e.g. SENDA and Equalities Act.

Provide advocacy for young disabled people and those with SEN linked to person centred planning.