

Item 6

Title of Report: Choice and achievement: A new Inclusion Strategy for Barnet

Report Author: Dr. Brian Davis, Principal Educational Psychologist/Interim Head Complex Needs, Children's Service, Barnet Council

1 Summary/Purpose of Report: To update the Children's Trust Board on the progress of the draft Inclusion Strategy, the initial drafting of an implementation plan and the outline consultation intentions and for Board to consider required associated developments

2 Details:

2.1 The previous Inclusion Strategy has lapsed. It is necessary to develop a new Inclusion Strategy up to September 2014, related to the Children and Young People Plan and the Health and Well Being Strategy to encompass our intentions for Special Educational Needs (SEN) and learning difficulties and disability, Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and positive mental health. Statutory responsibilities may be changing and increasing as we move towards the Children and Families Bill in 2013 and the intention is to have a flexible strategy moving forward.

2.2 The draft principles and work stream produced by the Inclusion Strategy Group have been discussed and broadly welcomed at the Council's Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 2 July. The intention is now to launch the strategy principles, outline implementation plan and consultation process in November 2012. The principles document, 'Choice and Achievement', and the Implementation Plan, is attached at Appendix A.

2.3 Identifying children with SEN and /or disabilities early is an important part of the Children's Service's and Health's commitment to early intervention and prevention expressed in the Children and Young People Plan. This includes the objective to 'enable every child and young person to achieve their full potential, narrowing the gap for those whose attainment is at risk'. Academic outcomes for pupils with Special Educational Needs in Barnet were the best ever in 2011 with the gap reduced in Key Stage 2.

2.4 The main risks relate to maintaining performance, managing finance, and providing for the growth in numbers and increase in complexity of the SEN and SEBD population in Barnet. Increases are due to rates of birth, moving in, and improved health care and survival. Over the next four to five years this could lead to a 15-20% increase in the total number of children and young people affected aged 0 to 25. There will also be a proportionate increase in children with disabilities and SEBD who may not require a statement but require provision. In addition, in 2013 more children with statements of SEN and /or disabilities and children with SEBD requiring alternative provision will continue in full time schooling beyond age 16 due to Raising of the Participation Age. The compounding effect of increasing SEN and disabilities child populations in neighbouring boroughs needs to be considered in terms of the effects of other authorities seeking placements in Barnet and vice versa.

2.5 The authority's relationship with schools is changing, with the greater number of academies (not including our special schools at present) and the potential for direct arrangements between schools with additional resourced provision (ARPs), special schools and alternative provision (PRUs) and other authorities providing funding.

This poses challenges in terms of Special Education and Alternative Provision local place planning and delivering services for growth. Local Authorities will also start to administer funding for 16+ placements for Learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, with an anticipated budget reduction of 17%. These increases and financial considerations will place pressure on the Children's Services and health in terms of providing education, supported living, respite and breaks and therapies for those up to the age of 25, and managing caseloads.

2.6 As well as potential benefits, inevitably there are risks associated with developing new ways of working especially for a vulnerable group such as children with SEN and/ or disabilities. Strong partnership working across the statutory agencies and the voluntary sector is crucial to support a more integrated local service that enables an holistic approach to a child or young person, which might avoid duplication and replication and hence reduce costs. Aligned and pooled budget arrangements, robust information sharing processes and appropriate supporting infrastructure will also be necessary to maximise resources. There is a risk that current IS and communication platforms may not be sufficient to support increased joint working and sharing of confidential data, especially with regard to transition.

2.7 Without a revised Inclusion strategy aimed at ages 0-25, reorganisation and joint consideration of budget arrangements, Barnet would not be able to meet the demands of current and proposed legislation.

3 Recommendations or Input Requested: The Children's Trust Board is asked to consider

1. support for the main principles outlined in the strategy for an overarching approach and any required strategic, planning and financial developments
2. the emerging draft implementation plan and how this can be best developed comprehensively across authorities and agencies to include a shared data set
3. note the intended phased consultation approach and the launch event for Children's Service and Health professionals (13 November) and consider how further consultation can be supported

Contact Information

Dr. Brian Davis

brian.davis@barnet.gov.uk

0208 359 7664