

TITLE	Equalities Support for young People
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Children's Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee
WARD	Non-specific
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR	Judith Ramsden, Strategic Director of People Services

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

Development of professional understanding of the interests of identified minority groups.
Promotion of support frameworks and development processes
Valuing diversity

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) The Committee is recommended to endorse the Children with Disability Strategy priorities
- 2) The Committee is recommended to question the indications of the current position on LGBT issues

SUMMARY OF REPORT

In considering equalities issues for Wokingham's Children and Young People, the report gives an account of the Children with Disability Strategy in terms of strategic priorities, key actions and processes. Issues of sexual orientation are known and addressed in individual cases with support as appropriate from the Educational Psychology Service and the charitable sector. The level of incidence and presenting issues have not been such as to lead to a developed policy at this stage, but an established policy from another area has been shared with schools.

Background

Children with Disabilities Strategy

The Integrated Children with Disability Strategy establishes a number of priority actions:

- Improved SEN provision;
- Integration of service delivery;
- Pre-diagnostic support extended including Voluntary Sector Support for children and families and Early Help services extended to a wider range of younger children with ASD;
- Improved Transition to adult services;

- Consolidated, effective information advice and guidance services;
- Home to school transport redesigned to give greater independence for children.

The strategy responds to the national agenda for integrated service delivery for children and young people with disability and additional needs, as established through the Children and Families Act 2014. S26 of the Act establishes the duty to make “joint Commissioning arrangements” with health service commissioners. Overseen by Children and Young People Partnership, the strategy has been developed in partnership with health partners and other lead agencies. Parents and carers are engaged in the development of the implementation plan through consultation events. Engagement work with local professionals is ongoing.

Strategy implementation will reflect the priorities established in the forthcoming Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) for sensory impairment and physical disabilities. It takes account of the adopted JSNAs for Children in Need and CAMHs. JSNAs will continue to evolve throughout the Implementation period so there is a need for flexibility to meet newly identified needs. Key priorities in the strategy are:

- To develop options for the integration of NHS and LA service delivery through the development of a “whole service design” for Alternative Provision, support for children who would not otherwise thrive and integration of services for children with Special Education Needs or Disabilities [SEND].
- The development of a formal business case to support an integrated Local Authority and NHS service by early in 2017.
- To develop models of support which encourage community building and resilient families, able to meet more of their needs drawing on their own resources
- SEN capacity increased through a new secondary resource base for high functioning children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), provision for children with ASD and challenging behaviour, and increased provision for primary children with Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) issues.
- Pre-diagnostic support services for children with ASD, including support for the further development of Voluntary Sector capacity for children and families to provide a coherent well publicised offer and WBC Early Help services extended to a wider range of younger children with ASD to reduce the future need for more intensive support.
- Transition to adult services managed from age 14 to enable maximum independence in adulthood
- A new model of inclusive home to school transport and support which enables children’s development, independent futures and self-reliance.

The strategy has been considered by the Wokingham Children and Young People’s Partnership. They agreed the following actions and changes:

- The objectives and their 3 year aims were all supported by all partners and it was agreed that they should form the basis of joint work going forward.
- It was agreed that the objectives on short breaks should include 'shared care'.
- The partnership recommended that further work should include a business case for a model of integrated services delivery based on the objectives of the strategy.

It has been recognised that delivery of these objectives requires input from key partners including Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust; a joint project team has been formed to design and deliver the work needed to produce the business case.

The Childrens and Young Peoples partnership will oversee the steering of this work.

Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Pupils

“Over the last two decades real progress has been made towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) equality in Britain. Yet, the government acknowledges that too many LGB&T people still face prejudice because of their sexual orientation or gender identity at every stage in their lives. This includes homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HB&T) bullying in schools, which, despite efforts, remains a problem. Preventing and tackling HB&T bullying in schools is important because it can stop LGB&T people reaching their full potential. Homophobia, biphobia and transphobia can also be reproduced in schools if left unchallenged.”

Evaluation of an antihomophobic, biphobic, and transphobic (HB&T) bullying programme NATCEN Date: July 2016 - Prepared for: Government Equalities Office and Department for Education

Overview

All WBC and educational settings along with any other employer and public body must comply with the Equality Act 2010. The Act identifies sexual orientation as a 'protected characteristic' group which means people who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or heterosexual/straight are protected against four types of discrimination:

Direct discrimination, for example, is refusing someone a job or service because of their sexual orientation.

Indirect discrimination is making decisions, or a public body planning services, in a way that disadvantages lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual/straight people unless the policy can be objectively justified.

Discrimination by association is about discrimination against a person because of their association with another person; for example, as a family member or a carer.

Discrimination by perception is about the discrimination against people based on

the perception that they have a particular sexual orientation even if that is not in fact the case.

In Wokingham

Anti-bullying policies have operated in Wokingham schools, where routinely behaviour is judged “good” in inspections, even when the school is seen to Require Improvement. The dominant picture from inspections is of schools which are nurturing and supportive. Thus bullying, and within that homophobic bullying, has not recently been identified as a current priority area. Schools generally have well-developed policies for pupil support, with buddy and pastoral systems linking well-being with academic benefit.

The WBC Educational Psychology Service (EPS) has recently supported four young people and their families with respect to transgender issues. This has been predominantly to advise schools and parents and signpost to appropriate agencies. The EPS becomes directly involved if there are concerns about a child or young person’s well-being pointing to the need for psychological intervention.

At this time WBC Children’s Services do not collect data with respect to the LGBT group and do not have a policy for data collection by educational settings. Privacy and dignity are key issues and consideration needs to be given to if, when, why and how this information should be sought. Schools have independently arranged awareness raising sessions for their staff and pupils from a trans gender charity, where individual cases have arisen.

An example of good practice has been identified in a recent search. Working in partnership, Intercom and Devon and Cornwall Police and Cornwall Council (Children Schools and Families Service) and Head Teachers in Cornwall have produced a new Guidance document for schools and families. It is a detailed survey of the needs of Transgendered Children and Young People who are transitioning while still at school.

The document was widely circulated for consultation during 2012, and again in 2015, and has received strong national support from Trans community initiatives and the Government's Department for Education The DfE legal team has adopted the document as national good practice.

Following a discussion at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee the document has been shared with schools in order to raise awareness and provide a source of information.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Not applicable		
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Not applicable		
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Not applicable		

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision

None

Cross-Council Implications

The strategy includes a range of proposals some of which have property and there services implications. These will be developed through lines of work on individual strategy components.

List of Background Papers

Children with Disability Strategy 2016 to 2018

Schools Transgender Guidance: Intercom Trust, Devon & Cornwall Police, Cornwall Council

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