

TITLE	SEND Strategy
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Overview and Scrutiny Committee 18 June 2019
WARD	None specific
DIRECTOR	Director of Children's Services - Carol Cammiss

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Council needs to identify and confirm its Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) strategy so as to best meet the needs of children, young people and their families. The attached strategy provides the Council and the local community with a start point for future priorities and arrangements. It has been the subject of consultation with interested parties during the Spring of this year. In addition the Council has received important comments from Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission as part of their recent inspection of local SEND services.

Work is ongoing with partner organisations to implement the outcome of the inspection letter that requires improvement from the Council and Health partners. This will be undertaken by a recently established project board. This coupled with the consultation commentary ensure that the current strategy will be augmented and amended.

In the coming months, in line with the future requirements of Ofsted and our key partners the attached strategy will be further developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:

- The attached strategy be approved as the basis for further work with key partners.
- Detailed consideration is given by the newly established SEND improvement board to the advice of Ofsted/CQC regarding the development of the future SEND strategy.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The report highlights the main issues of the Council's recently produced SEND strategy along with the issues identified by consultation arrangements and the recently published Ofsted/CQC SEND inspection report.

Background

1. Following an initial review in the autumn of 2018 of Special Educational Needs and Disability services by the Directorate a number of changes to policy and operational delivery have been planned. Among these has been the development of a SEND strategy aimed at setting the direction for the service over the next 3-5 years. In January 2019 the council set out a new draft strategy based upon the following principles and priorities:

Principles

- Encouraging independence
- Communicating well
- Working in partnership
- Identifying need early
- Ensuring financial sustainability.

Priorities

In terms of priorities for the Council the Strategy proposes to develop and promote 4 main areas of activity to improve:

- data gathering and analysis to support evidence-based approaches to provision;
- engagement and communication;
- transitions at all stages;
- provision and local capacity building.

These are outlined in greater detail in the attached Strategy document.

2. The strategy has been the subject of consultation with our key partners including parents and carers. The main outcomes of this are shown below.
3. A total of eighteen responses were received. Most respondents accepted the need to make changes to the existing strategic direction and overall responded positively to the proposed Strategy. There were however some areas where individual consultees wished to see changes including:
 - That there should be greater involvement in the planning of services by parents/carers and young people. In particular to development of co-production;
 - Further training for all staff working within the SEND service.
 - Development of further respite services;
 - Transitions services that help young people and their families move on to adulthood
 - More resources being made available to provide greater levels of one to one help for young people and their families.

4. In addition to the above, the Ofsted/CQC inspection in March 2019 identified that the service needed to address two specific identified deficits.

Firstly, the strategy needs to give wider consideration to services other than education:

“The recent SEND strategy is currently in draft form and is being consulted upon. The SEND strategy accurately identifies most of the areas where significant and urgent improvement is needed, particularly in relation to education. However, the strategy and leaders’ evaluation of the effectiveness of SEND in the local area are too focussed on education and do not consider health and care well enough. As a result, it does not effectively set out a clear enough plan for the improvements needed across education, health and care in a coherent joined-up approach.”

Secondly, inspectors emphasised the need for greater co-production and engagement with parents/carers and young people. This reinforces views that were expressed by consultees in the earlier service and partner consultation.

5. With these caveats inspectors were positive about the proposed direction and priorities for the Strategy.
6. Due to the findings of the inspection the Council and its partners are required to produce a “written statement following the outcome of the Ofsted/CQC inspection. This work will be commissioned and overseen by a recently established local SEND improvement Board. In addition to delivering the required operational improvements the Board will be responsible for ensuring changes are made to the current draft strategy. These changes are to reflect the outcomes of the recent consultations along with the recommendations for change made by the Ofsted/CQC inspection report.
7. In order for the above to be progressed it is proposed that the attached draft is confirmed with the understanding that the SEND improvement board will revise based upon the comments and recommendations already received. The final revision will then be submitted to Overview and Scrutiny and the Executive for approval.

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)	NA	NA	NA
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	NA	NA	NA
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	NA	NA	NA

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
The current provision for children with Special Educational Needs is experiencing significant financial pressures. This position is unlikely to be resolved under current arrangements. The shortfall in available resources is a national issue and will only be resolved by changes to national funding arrangements.

Cross-Council Implications
Providing direction and priority for services that support the most vulnerable within our community will assist the Council in meeting its priorities.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
SEND Strategy

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