

From: **Paul Miller** <miller.p.r@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, 29 Jan 2021 at 14:44

Subject: WBC SEND Strategy (0-25) - questions and comments

To: Sal Thirlway <sal.thirlway@wokingham.gov.uk>

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Sal,

As part of the development of the Borough's SEND Strategy you have requested that questions and observations concerning the Strategy and the consultation be forwarded to you.

As you will recall I offered the members of Schools Forum the opportunity to channel their questions and observations through Schools Forum, suggesting that I would collate their responses and pass them on to you. I know that many Schools Forum members may have used other paths and representative bodies to engage with you and the review.

Can I start by thanking you and your colleagues again for the presentation of the SEND Strategy that you made to Schools Forum in December. It was an outstanding session, even more so given the added complexities of delivering the content at a virtual meeting.

You have summarised the SEND Strategy:

"The draft Strategy has been developed in partnership with our strategic partners, including SEND Voices Wokingham, the borough's parent-carer forum. The Strategy and Action Plan within it set out the areas identified so far for improvement and development, as well as some of the strengths to build upon.

"Priority areas we are aiming to address with the new strategy include:

- building local provision
- improving the efficiency and effectiveness of how we work
- embedding real coproduction in planning and delivery
- improving our use of data and intelligence and measuring impact on outcomes for children and young people with SEND, their families and the people who care for them

"The Action Plan includes actions to improve early intervention, drive more effective information sharing to help children and young people with SEND and their families, closer and more effective communication with parents and carers, improved transport provision and better transition services for young people into adulthood.

The questions and observations that have been collated are focussed around the detail of the activities that underpin your assessment and analysis of the current and future provision, and around the approach that you may be taking to funding the future programme.

Underpinning information/detail requested by questions and comments from Schools Forum members.

EHCP analysis at the pupil referral unit (Foundry College) since the start of academic year 2016/17:

- For each academic year the number of pupils with primary needs and the number with secondary needs

- The average duration of support from Foundry College in each year for pupils in each phase
- The status of the pupils in each year and phase (PEX, AP, MV, other)
- The number of pupils in each year and in each phase who had gained an EHCP before entering Foundry College and the number who gained an EHCP whilst at Foundry College
- There are a number of areas of additional support that Foundry have been asked to provide, but that do not sit within their commissioned purpose. What are the plans with regard these additional requested services/areas?

EHCPs:

- Do the 'EHCPs issued' successes flagged in the report include naming the type of placement and/or naming a school, and/or agreement with the parent?

Tribunal Meetings:

- For each of the last four years detail the numbers of mediation meetings and tribunals, and the number won and lost (won meaning where the pupil was placed where needs could be met but in least costly provision)
- Identify the costs of the mediation and tribunal meetings held in each of the last four years

Independent Schools (ISS) and Non-Maintained Schools:

- Given the huge spend in this area and assuming the LA is attempting to bring pupils back to local provision to reduce costs, what arrangements are in place at crucial transition points in terms of:
 - o a) Any re-assessment needed that will subsequently inform which local provision is appropriate?
 - o b) Alerting and subsequently working with parents to provide information about local provision and avoiding mediation and costly tribunals?
- What arrangements are currently in place to quality assure the INMSS provision as well as monitoring any price rises?
- How many of the places in INMSS schools are residential and is this same as the 20% of INMSS placements quoted as 'jointly funded'. What proportion of these places are jointly funded with Health?
- For the INMSS the average 'cost' is £60k per child. Recognising that this average includes some children with particularly significant special needs whose funding will skew the mean (the top 15 placements accounting for over 25% of overall spend – page 17) provide a breakdown of the average (without compromising confidentiality).
 - o 125 children at £60k average = £7.23m
 - o 25% of £7.2m = £1.81m (for 15 top funded children)
 - o leaving £5.42m for 100+ children
 - o £5.42m shared between 100+ children equates to an average closer to £50k per child
- Explain why INMSS funding looks to be significantly above in-borough placements by a large margin.

Front line service from the SEND team:

- What steps are being taken to ensure the stability and ensure the capacity of the SEND team?
- Recent experience would indicate that the post-16 lead may have limited experience to challenge the match between providers and students. How are the qualifications and experience of leading roles in the SEND team matched to the role requirements?

Information about the WBC Resource Bases:

- For each school, name, phase, type of resource base, number of funded places, number of children attending the resource base (by year group), funding received for each of the last 4 years
- The number of funded places at each resource base within each of the SEN bands (see page 11)

Out of Borough placements:

- Explain the difference between the average OoB funded placements (ave £32,500) and in-borough funded places
- Share further granularity, by band (say), of the £32,500 funded placement average

Willow House resource:

- Have any decisions been recommended or taken to either close or keep the resource open?

Chiltern Way:

- What is the designated capacity of the Chiltern Way resource in Wokingham (previously Southfield School)?
- Where have the Wokingham SEMH children been placed since the change in designation?

Addington figures of page 16:

- Confirm that the Addington figures on page 16 have been corrected. These should be reported as 63% at Tier 1, 27% at Tier 2 and 10% at Tier 3.

SEND Governance arrangements:

- How are the SEND governance arrangements to be improved?
- There needs to be a bi-lateral Task and Finish group between the WBC SEND Strategic Group and Schools Forum, with particular responsibility for funding (A Schools Forum remit).

Funding the SEND Strategy:

- There appears no recognition in the Strategy that SEND expenditure (the High Needs Block through Schools Forum) has exceeded the DfE allocated and budgeted expenditure in each of the last 4 years.
- What approach is to be taken to prioritise SEND expenditure requirements / needs / wishes as identified in the SEND Strategy to ensure that future annual expenditure does not exceed government/DfE allocated High Needs Block funding?

- What steps are being taken to bring/vire funding from Social Care budgets to the evolving SEND Strategy?

I will apologise if some of this information is in the report as presented, but I have asked colleagues to try and ensure that they are not asking questions that are already addressed/answered in the report.

I am unclear how you and your colleagues are intending to answer these and the other questions that you will have received, but if there is any help that we can give in collating the written replies please let us know.

Regards

Paul