

**DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - PEOPLE**

**6 November 2019**

**Report of Strategic Director – Children’s Services**

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGIC  
REVIEW**

**1. Purpose of the report**

To inform the committee of the outcomes and recommendations of the Special Educational Needs Strategic High Needs Review undertaken between September 2018 and May 2019.

**2. Information and analysis**

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced changes for Local Authorities and their partners with regard to how children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are assessed and supported. The Act is supported by a revised Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs (SEN), published in August 2014. The principles underpinning this Code of Practice make clear that local authorities must have regard to

- The views, wishes and feelings of the child or young person, and the child’s parents;
- The importance of the child or young person, and the child’s parents, participating as fully as possible in decisions, and being provided with the information and support necessary to enable participation in those decisions;
- The need to support the child or young person, and the child’s parents, in order to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood.

Derbyshire actively responded to the requirements specified in the Act with developments overseen by the Local Area SEND Strategic Board. Key actions included the development of the Local Offer, establishment of the SEND Commissioning Hub, development of person centred planning and the instigation of Locality SEND Teams.

In November 2016 Derbyshire had its Joint Local Area SEND Inspection undertaken by Ofsted and CQC (Care Quality Commission). The inspection report noted among many strengths, that leaders had taken effective account of the reforms; that colleagues across the local area are working more closely together to support young people with SEND; that the local area has a very good understanding of how effectively it identifies and meets the needs of young people with SEND; that local area leaders understand the challenges of implementing the reforms and that stakeholders from across the local area are well represented and their voices are listened to. The inspection also highlighted a number of areas for development which have been captured in the SEND Strategic Plan, and actions taken forward and progress monitored.

In 2017 the DfE allocated funding to Local Authorities to carry out a strategic review of high needs provision. The funding could also be used to help implement the outcomes of the review with Local authorities expected to publish the outcomes of the reviews in the form of strategic plans.

The Council had already undertaken elements of development in this area, working as a Local Area and involving partners from across agencies. However, this presented an excellent opportunity for the Council to create the capacity to undertake a comprehensive review of High Needs Provision in the Local Area, building on this work, and to make recommendations to further inform the Local Area Strategic Plan. This was timely, with the review to be undertaken two years on from our Local Area inspection.

The overarching aim and outcomes in our Local Area are that:

1. The Local Area provides the opportunities for children and young people with SEND to achieve the best outcomes they can.
2. The Local Area ensures that children and young people are achieving as well as they can in their own communities wherever possible and are able to live as independently as possible.
3. The Local Area ensures that young people are best prepared for adult life and that there is support and services to aid transition.

Whilst guaranteeing that we:

- Ensure the best use of public funding and the best use of wider resources.
- Have sufficient provision, both in terms of services and capital to identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND in Derbyshire 0-25; that this is flexible and able to meet changing needs.

The recent Newton Europe work, which, alongside the specific Adult Care opportunities, looked at the lifetime disability pathway for young people into and throughout adulthood, found opportunities to improve outcomes from an earlier age. ISOS, who were commissioned to undertake our SEND strategic review, were asked to liaise with Newton Europe, in order to inform those

parts of the ISOS report that reflected operational practice and strategic direction within SEND across all three agencies of education, health and care.

## **The Review**

The SEND Stakeholder Group which includes parent and carer representatives were involved in the initial scoping work for the review. There is an expectation that a wide range of stakeholders including children, young people, parents, carers and service staff from education health and social care are closely engaged with the work and part of the co-produced response to the review.

## **Delivery**

Given the scale and scope of the project, it was considered that there were not sufficient resources in-house to deliver this review thoroughly. Through initial scoping work with stakeholders, there was a clear preference to have an independent assessment, analysis and recommendations made using an external organisation who could undertake this work on an impartial basis.

Through a robust tendering process the ISOS partnership were secured to facilitate the Strategic Review.

## **Strategic Review, Findings and Recommendations**

### **Approach**

ISOS commenced the review in September 2018 and progressed through three main stages outlined below with regular reporting back to the SEND Strategic Board, SEND Stakeholder Group and stakeholders more widely.

The scope of this work, and the definition of “high needs”, included children and young people aged from birth to 25 with SEND, both with statutory education, health and care plans (EHCP) and non-statutory SEN support, and those requiring additional inclusion support or alternative provision (AP).

The review had a strategic focus. The purpose of the work was not to judge or evaluate the quality and operation of any specific service, provision or process. Instead, the aim was to provide an objective and evidence-informed perspective on how the current continuum of support, services and provision for young people with high needs in Derbyshire was working and to help to shape an overarching strategy for developing an effective strategic approach to supporting young people with high needs in the future. To do this, the review sought to:

- gather evidence and views on the current needs, trends and likely future demand for support, services and provision for children and young people with SEND;
- shape options and recommendations for meeting the needs of children, young people and families in Derbyshire in the future; and

- work collaboratively, iteratively and in a spirit of co-production with partners and stakeholders to identify and agree solutions to meet current and future needs, in order to achieve good outcomes for children and young people in Derbyshire.

The review was undertaken in three distinct phases. The first phase focused on building up the evidence base for how the local system was operating, what were the key strengths and where there were areas that required strengthening. This involved gathering a range of quantitative evidence and qualitative feedback through analysis of published data, online surveys, and workshops with young people, parents and carers, and professionals across education, health and care services. The second phase focused on testing this evidence base, and identifying what was needed to build on the strengths or address the challenges concluded within the review. The final phase then focused on what was needed to put the review's findings and recommendations into practice.

In each phase, ISOS worked co-productively with young people, parents, practitioners and partners to share our early findings, shape recommendations and iterate what would become the overall messages from the review.

Most of the work to gather evidence and shape recommendations was carried out during the autumn and spring terms of the 2018/19 academic year, through an iterative approach of sharing interim messages, testing these with colleagues and co-producing key findings, recommendations and actions. The review concluded in May 2019.

During the period covered by the current SEND strategy, a number of innovative ideas have been introduced into the Derbyshire system. These include:

- implementing a new locality-based structure for the SEND Service;
- developing a joint commissioning hub for SEND across education, health and social care;
- introducing a process for mainstream schools to be able to access additional high needs funding without having to go through the statutory EHC assessment process – this is known as GRIP (the Graduated Response for Individual Pupils); and
- investing in preventative support to increase the inclusive capacity of the local system.

The importance and strength of many of these initiatives were recognised by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in their report following Derbyshire's local area SEND inspection in November 2016.

The report confirmed that several of the principles that had shaped the initiatives which have been introduced through the current SEND strategy echo those recognised to support effective practices seen by ISOS in other local areas through their national research.

However, during the review, some concerns were expressed about the core systems and processes for accessing support. These were expressed by both parents and professionals, and were consistent across the county. In the main, these related to the GRIP and EHC assessment processes. There were concerns that the process of requesting support was perceived to be adversarial on occasion, and not always consistent, and a belief that it should be more focused on professionals and parents finding support and solutions together.

Looking ahead to a new high needs strategy, it is suggested that this is built around three core “building blocks”:

- focus on embedding core systems and processes so that they are operating consistently effectively;
- focus on developing a clear “strategic blueprint” for high needs support, services and provision across the county that sets out clear how the local system seeks to support young people with SEND and high needs, the respective roles and specialisms of services and provisions, and how these fit together;
- focus on how services can work together seamlessly across the ages and phases of a young person’s life to support them in making the transition to a successful and fulfilling adult life.

## **Six Key Themes and Recommendations**

There were six themes that were identified through the review with recommendations and actions which will be taken forward by the SEND Strategic Board to inform a refreshed SEND Strategy and a revised SEND Strategic Plan.

These are outlined in detail within the full report. The six themes and key recommendations are;

### **1. Strategic partnership working and co-production with parents and young people**

- Build on existing strong strategic relationships with parents/carers of young people with SEND by broadening strategic engagements and participation.
- Identify and develop some specific co-production projects with parents.
- Develop a formal framework for engaging young people in strategic initiatives and questions facing the local system.

**2. Partnership working and joint commissioning across education, health and care**

- Revisit the purpose of the SEND Commissioning hub.
- Identify some specific priorities for joint commissioning.
- Continue to work with frontline professionals to ensure a consistent understanding of the local continuum of services and provision for young people with SEND in Derbyshire.

**3. Identification and assessment of needs, information and access to support**

- Update and refine the local offer so that it provides a clear overview, introduction and practical tool for parents, providers and professionals.
- Address the concerns raised about the day-to-day operations of GRIP so that it delivers, swift, pupil-centred high needs support for schools consistently effectively.
- Refine core processes related to EHC assessments and plans to address concerns about consistency, quality and specificity of outcomes.

**4. Building inclusive capacity in mainstream schools and settings, and providing targeted support for inclusion**

- Continue to develop, support and strengthen inclusive capacity in mainstream education settings.
- Refocus the offer of targeted services in a more holistic, strategic way so that they provide a coherent, consistent and responsive offer across the county.

**5. Developing responsive, effective local specialist provision**

- Rearticulate a clear offer of ERS support based on current and future needs that is equitable across localities and across phases.
- Rearticulate the offer of special school provision, ensure the offer and core processes and informed by current and future needs.
- Work with school and Alternative Provision (AP) leaders to develop responsibility-based models of inclusion support and AP to strengthen pathways, reintegration and the equitable use of local AP.

**6. Preparation for adulthood**

- Set out a shared vision of the opportunities to be open to all young people with SEND and high needs.
- Develop explicit processes for planning long-term outcomes and pathways for young people, and embed these in young people's plans and the work of all services.
- Develop a broader and more integrated offer to widen the range of pathways to young people with SEND and high needs.

## **Links to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

The context for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy states, “At a local and national level health systems are working together to develop a ‘person centred’ approach to health that focuses on the holistic needs of the individual. This approach requires health and wellbeing partners to work together to enable people to remain healthy and independent for as long as possible, working in a joined-up way across a wide range of sectors including health, social care, housing and education to create environments that support good health. “

The delivery of the recommendations and associated actions through the SEND Strategy and SEND Strategic Action Plan are closely aligned to these principles and will specifically support the following key outcomes from the HWB Strategy.

Outcome 1: All people in Derbyshire are enabled to live healthy lives

Outcome 3: All people in Derbyshire are enabled to have good mental health and wellbeing across the life course.

Outcome 4: All vulnerable populations are supported to live in well-planned and healthy homes.

Outcome 5: All people in Derbyshire have opportunities to access good quality employment and lifelong learning

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Improvement and Scrutiny Committee – People; is asked to:

- Note the outcomes and recommendations of the Special Educational Needs Strategic High Needs Review undertaken between September 2018 and May 2019.

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