

SEND reform in B&NES – progress and next steps

1. Purpose

1.1 This paper outlines progress to date on the SEND reform in Bath and North East Somerset and makes recommendations about next steps.

2. Background

2.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 together with a new SEND code of practice giving statutory guidance have set out a new legal framework for support to children and young people who are disabled and/or have special educational needs (SEN), and their families. These reforms are the most significant change in SEN for 30 years. This framework came into force in September 2014.

2.2 In response to the reforms Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) established a steering group reporting ultimately to the Health and Wellbeing Board. Project plans set out the workstreams required to prepare and then implement the reforms in year one. Work has now been completed on these project plans.

2.3 The Department for Education published a paper outlining outcome measures and an accountability framework for SEND reform in March 2015. OFSTED have now published a consultation on local area SEND inspections to commence in April 2016.

3. What has been achieved?

3.1 Our local offer has been published and first annual review completed. The searchable B&NES local offer in the form of the Rainbow Resource () is supported and being further developed by the Family Information Service in partnership with Parent Carers Aiming High (B&NES parent carers forum). Further development work is underway to improve the Preparing for Adulthood local offer and to involve young people better.

3.2 Early support systems are established to ensure early identification and support for children in early years settings through the work of health services, early years settings and other services, supported by the SENDIT team and through the SENDIP panel.

3.3 Early years settings, schools and further education providers have been supported to develop their SEN support arrangements which are published and accessible through the Rainbow Resource. Training in the principles and practice of the SEND reform has been provided to staff from a wide range of services and education settings, parents and others.

3.4 Arrangements have been established for Education, Health and Care planning and the first full year has seen a significant increase in requests for statutory assessment which is likely to be due both to the reform (widened eligibility to ages 0-25) and a continuing increase in the incidence and complexity of needs in the early years.

3.5 A transfer plan has been published and a significant number of statements of SEN have been transferred to EHC Plans in the first year (Sept 2014-July 2015). Work is underway to learn from the experience of the first year and improve the transfer process and the quality of the resulting plans. All statements of SEN must be transferred to EHC Plans by April 2018.

3.6 A personal budgets policy has been published and we are ready to provide personal budgets with EHC plans. Although the number of queries has so far been low we anticipate an increase in queries and requests over time as the new system for EHC planning becomes established.

3.7 With the completion of the implementation project there is still much work to do to realise the full benefits of the reform. A Head of Vulnerable Learners post has been established to manage the SEN Team and Educational Psychology Service and to lead on SEND outcomes.

4. Evaluation of EHC planning year one

4.1 An evaluation of the first year of EHC planning in B&NES has been carried out. This will be published shortly alongside an updated transfer plan. The key findings are in line with experience in other local authorities. A good start has been made but there is still much to do. The culture change required from all partners is very ambitious however the commitment is there.

4.2 EHC plans contain person centred information in the form of one page profiles of young people, family profiles and holistic analysis of young people setting out positives as well as needs. However many EHC plans still focus primarily on meeting SEN within education settings. There is a need for further work to ensure all plans include social and health care provision (when applicable), address all 4 life outcomes (employment, independent living, health and community participation) and take a long term view to adulthood at 25 (beyond education).

4.3 The evaluation is being used to inform the transfer plan for this year including more training for all partners in EHC planning, further work to bring together the contributions of health and social care services and education settings into more holistic and ambitious EHC plans.

5. Next steps

5.1 As well as the continuing work on transferring statements of SEN to EHC plans, work is underway to establish performance management arrangements. EHC planning is not currently well supported by existing data systems and this is being

addressed to ensure that systems support this work better and enable us to collect and analyse data both to inform commissioning better and to enable us to measure performance including outcomes achieved. This will feed into a Self Evaluation (SEF) which will enable us to know how well we are doing, and will be a requirement in any future OFSTED inspection.

5.2 Work is also underway through the Employment is Everyone's Business project (supported by National development Team for Inclusion) to improve pathways to employment for young people with SEND. A pre-apprenticeship scheme for young people with ASD is being piloted by Bath College and the Employment Inclusion Service using one-off funding provided by the DfE through B&NES Council.

5.3 As the SEND reform implementation project is now complete, we need to establish governance arrangements for SEND into the future. A separate paper sets out proposals for this.

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Links and references

SEND code of practice (and links to other government documents relating to SEND reform)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

Bath & North East Somerset SEND reform project plans, transfer plan, consultation documents and other documents

www.bathnes.gov.uk/SENDreform

Bath & North East Somerset SEND local offer & Rainbow Resource

www.bathnes.gov.uk/localoffer

<http://www.rainbowresource.org.uk/>

DfE paper on accountability and outcome measures

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-supporting-local-and-national-accountability>

OFSTED consultation on SEND inspection

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/local-area-send-consultation>