

EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 3 FEBRUARY 2021

UPDATE ON SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN OXFORDSHIRE

RECOMMENDATION

The Education Scrutiny Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note developments to date since November 2020, in order to transform the provision of education, health and care services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Executive Summary

1. This paper outlines the developments since November 2020 in transforming SEND services in Oxfordshire.

Introduction

2. As a Council and as a local partnership we are committed to achieving the very best outcomes we can for children and young people with SEND within the total resources we have available.
3. There is a growing demand on our essential services, an increasing demand and complexity of needs amongst our residents.
4. The financial challenge has provided us with an opportunity to fundamentally rethink and transform the way that we deliver local services. The focus is on equitable provision with a drive to meet needs earlier to avoid expensive last resort options.
5. **SEND Strategy and engagement**
To support shared understanding and improved communication of our local priorities, a revised SEND Strategy is being finalised for wider consultation.
6. A SEND Strategy Workshop was held with a range of key partners on 6th January 2021 with broad agreement on the key priorities that the SEND Strategy will address. The document is being updated as a result. Further input is required from schools before the draft will then be made available for wider consultation later in March 2021.

SEND Transformation

7. The SEND Transformation Board continues to meet monthly to oversee the progress of the work undertaken within the four workstreams. The success of the project is dependent on partners agreeing the direction of travel for SEND in Oxfordshire, setting the priorities and ensuring that they are achieved.

8. Each of the groups is reviewing existing provision and prioritising areas of work that will drive progress, both in relation to long-term improvement planning, but also interim arrangements that have been identified as a necessity while longer term solutions are finalised.
9. The co-ordination of this work has prioritised the involvement of as many stakeholders as possible, to support/enable those who deliver and those who will receive services to engage fully in their development from the beginning. Parents and school leaders are actively involved on the Board and the four main priority work groups tasked with identifying solutions to issues raised, with opportunities for further engagement and feedback designed into the process during the consultation stage
10. Working groups have also fielded a wide complement of multi-agency professionals who are exhibiting a positive and reflective approach to inclusive practice. Work delivered to date demonstrates the willingness to work across disciplines to identify possible solutions. Representatives are committed in approaching their peer groups to capture insight from within their school and service communities. Opportunities are being developed as a result of the feedback, with groups determining the outcomes and required actions.
11. Online forums have been held to gather the contributions of schools who may have missed the chance to become involved, allowing them to comment on issues and also make recommendations on progressive solutions that they believe would assist them in supporting children with SEND in Oxfordshire.
12. **Transformation priorities**
The four priority workstreams that will deliver the system change are engaged in the following tasks:
 - Sufficiency place planning** – with the remit of reviewing demand, geography and options and opportunities to meet the changing needs of the education of our SEND population.
 - Data analysis - past trends and current patterns, sustained trends identified and projected forward to support the development of a ten-year plan
 - Outline statutory processes affecting creation/alteration of SEN provision and timeline
 - Identification of outreach opportunities from current specialist providers with a view to supporting more children with SEND to remain in mainstream places
 - Review good practice in inclusion examples for SEN children in mainstream schools and comment on what additional needs for the physical environment prove necessary to replicate
 - Define physical and other attributes of satellite provision to confirm whether this may prove to be an option for special schools

Finance – focus on reviewing the financial support currently available to schools and develop equitable funding formulas that enable earlier intervention and investment so that Oxfordshire students can receive high quality education locally

- Sector leads identify good practice from network groups in relation to funding schemes that are equitable and work well
- Comparative review of best practice and best funding models utilising examples from other local authorities
- Review the milestones for delivering a new funding formula, with options for September 2021 and September 2022 and make recommendations.
- Develop new funding proposal which will cover all aspects, i.e. early years, mainstream, bases, special, out of county
- Model costs for identified option proposed for changes to early identification and intervention
- Model options that provide support for settings requiring resource for children who must attend school and who have needs that do not meet thresholds for statutory support.

Continuum of SEND provision and Early Intervention – the development of clarity relating to access points and improving funding to mainstream schools so that fewer students require an EHCP to gain access to the help and support they need.

- Review best practice examples of early intervention in Oxfordshire and other Local Authorities and make recommendations on the feasibility and cost of replication
- Identify gaps in provision that result in late identification and the misidentification of need
- Devise a visual presentation of the current offering for children and young people with SEND 0-25 years
- Identify any training and development needs and opportunities to provide support for teaching staff
- Review of Funding and access to support. Clarify if this is impacted across the age spectrum due to the different funding mechanisms.

Commissioning – designed to monitor and evaluate all out of county placements and to work towards improving market position, negotiation and contract monitoring.

13. The tasks of the four workstreams are maintaining pace. Exploratory work and opportunities for change/improvement are scheduled to be presented to the

Transformation Board in March 2021, with timelines for implementation clearly outlined once recommended options have been confirmed and costed.

The Accelerated Progress Plan (APP)

14. Since September 2020, we have produced and submitted an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to the Department for Education (DfE). The DfE will formally monitor progress against the plan on February 25th. The plan is a live document which reflects the ongoing work of the multi-agency teams involved in supporting children and young people with SEND. The APP will be published later in the spring when it has been approved by the DfE.
15. The APP sets out the actions which we will take in order to address the identified areas of concern, the quality and rigour of self-evaluation and monitoring in driving and securing improvement and the quality of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. DfE specialist SEND advisers are in regular communication with officers and parent/carer representatives and are satisfied with the progress we have made to date with workforce training and development, quality assurance and the quality of advice to inform the contents of EHC Plans. The DfE will formally monitor progress of the APP in February 2021.
16. Progress against the objectives in the plan is monitored via the SEND Performance Board, which meets half-terminly. The Performance Board is co-chaired by the OCC Director of Children's Services and OCCG Director of Quality and Lead Nurse.

Financial and Staff Implications

17. We know that it is likely that the need for these services will continue to grow as it has done over the last five years. Assuming no change in strategy and continuing growth in demand for support from High Needs, the in-year deficit was expected to be £11m 2021-22.

Resourcing improvement and transformation

18. We are in the process of recruiting for a permanent Head of SEND in order to lead and deliver on strategic priorities for the Service. Whilst we invest time in this process, key senior leaders from within the SEND team are responsible for the APP, SEND Transformation, Strategy and Partnerships. Other senior leaders within the Education SLT are supporting the interim line management of the various SEND services.
19. Interim contract management support is now in place, reviewing contractual arrangements for out of county placements. An interim procurement officer has been appointed and is monitoring and implementing improvements to the procurement of placements in independent non maintained special schools. A more permanent commissioning structure for Education will be implemented in 2022 through the development of the Health, Education and Social Care arm of the new OCC commissioning hub. Combined, this additional capacity will

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have a very positive impact on the rate of progress against actions, specifically on securing best value out of county placements.

20. An interim casework team is being recruited to work alongside the existing team in order to ensure statutory responsibilities are met in regard to timeliness. We expect this team to be live in February 2021 and will take a lead on annual reviews, helping to address the backlog in this area.

Equalities Implications

21. An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the High Needs Block Recovery plan.

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