

CWDL Partnership Forum MINUTES

Wednesday 5 October – 6.30pm

York House, Twickenham

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Apologies & Introductions	
	<p>Apologies: Cllr Piers Allen, Simon James, Sue Ritson, Rachel Turner, Anne Breaks, Colin Herrick.</p> <p>Attendees: Cllr Christine Percival, Cllr Susan Chappell; Cllr Malcolm Eady; Mark Gilbert., John Doherty, Stewart Jones, Joanne Kemp; Becky Powell, Keith Tysoe, Michelle Williams, Mary Mullix, Barry Woodward Parent Observers: Jacqui Hindley, Mireille Khair, Alex Hardy</p>	
2.	Minutes of the last meeting & Matters Arising	
	<p>Minutes of the last meeting agreed and signed. Amendments to the minutes Becky Powell did attend 24 May meeting <u>Matters Arising</u> Update from RPCAG – Agenda Item</p>	
3.	Feedback on SEN Workforce Questionnaire	
	<p>Keith Tysoe (KT) circulated the findings of the SEN “Workforce Questionnaire - Summer 2011” and highlighted the confidentiality of the information.</p> <p>The response rate was 63%</p> <p>The questionnaire was developed in response to RCPAG’s question “are staff trained” and its focus was on staff who work with statemented SEN pupils</p> <p>The findings show there is a mature workforce which is mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White • Women. <p>The group discussed the reason for this and the issue of recruitment.</p> <p>Issues to be improved upon are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance Management, whilst this is happening in the majority of cases it is recognised that it is good practice and needs to be improved. • Recent training, whilst the majority have received recent training it is acknowledged that there is work to be done to ensure staff receive training on a regular basis. 	

	<p>Joanne Kemp (JK) raised the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How long have staff been in school as she disapproves of Teachers leaving classes to go to meetings, which results in a lack of continuity • Request for a new building to facilitate children with autism • Physical disability – out of borough • Heard that there is a problem with Strathmore relying on satellite schools for some subjects – this is time wasting • Difficult to access teaching for some children - really need two schools one for pPrimary up to secondary, one for children on spectrum and one for those with a physical disability. <p>In response to these issues a discussion regarding the utilisation of staff at Crofters, ensued, however Becky Powell (BP) said this was not possible because these staff are usually working in other fields e.g. doctors</p> <p>Cllr Percival did not think that it was good to segregate children, however she does recognise there might be a problem and it was recognised by a few of the group that it was both a nationwide and government issue .</p>	
	<p>SEND GP Response Form to Green Paper</p>	
	<p>Stewart Jones (SJ) presented the “SEND GP Response Form to Green Paper” (circulated with Agenda prior to the meeting) which was for noting.</p> <p>The document was produced by Colin Herrick from the work of the Task Group. It was a large amount of work, with collaborative working containing a cross section of views.</p> <p>Mark Gilbert (MG) commended the work completed and said that it was a balanced and good response from the authority’s perspective and a good attempt to receive comments from various sources.</p> <p>No further update on the Green Paper</p> <p>Pathfinders Authorities are leading on this aspect the next step is to feedback on the work they are doing. The Department for Education (DFE) is taking the lead and there should be information on this in November.</p> <p>No specific date for White Paper as yet but the authority is keeping a careful eye on what is happening.</p> <p>RCPAG to distribute paper to parents</p>	<p>RCPAG</p>
	<p>Aiming High</p>	
	<p>BP circulated the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Richmond and Twickenham Times Article 	

- “Helping hand for families” dated 23/09/11
- Report on “Short Breaks for Disabled Children (previously the Aiming High Project)” - October 2011_this document has links to further information on the council’s public website regarding;
 - October Statement
 - Commissioning
- Short Breaks Statement for children with a disability and/or additional needs 2011/12 – September 2011

BP confirmed that although there will no longer be an Aiming High project; the Council will continue to use this name. The report on the end of the 3 year project for Aiming High can be found on the council’s public website it contains a good overview, with quotes and statistics.

October Statement

The local authority Short Breaks duty, effective from April 2011, is published on the council’s public website (See Appendix A for website link)

Commissioning

BP informed the group on the commissioning process, the key factor is that the focus is on provision and not budget. Further information can be found on the public website (See Appendix A for website link)

Early Intervention Grant (EIG) discussed the Richmond and Twickenham Times press release and confirmed there is an increased level of funding (£567,000) and a commitment to continue short breaks funding for a further 2 years

Short Breaks Statement

BP presented “Short Breaks Statement for children with a disability and/or additional needs” this document sets out what Short Breaks are available locally. BP explained the commissioning and consultation process. RCPAG confirmed they had been included in consultation and were pleased about this involvement.

JK requested that as she is unable to participate further as the parent carer rep for consultation due to conflict of interest, that Jacqui Hindley replace her, this was agreed at the meeting.

Single Quindrat Commissioning Board (SQCB)

BP informed the group on the Single Quindrat Commissioning Board (SQCB) priorities which can be found on the public website (See Appendix A for website link)

Other

Windham Croft Centre for Children will be moved back into by the Disabled Children Service and the Three Wings Trust on 17 October there will be a formal opening in November.

	RCPAG agreed there needs to be a formal opening to celebrate such a big achievement.	
	Update & Feedback from Richmond Parents Carers Action Group	
	<p>JK was concerned about the Kingston and Richmond Children's Services Merger and the lack of information surrounding this.</p> <p>Cllr Percival confirmed that the information regarding the Achieving for Children (AFC) Social Enterprise proposal was in the public domain; it had been presented at Scrutiny Committee on 17 July 2011 and will be an item for discussion at Cabinet in November 2011. To date no decision has been made.</p> <p>Cllr Eady also confirmed that it had been in the public domain since May/June this year.</p> <p>MG confirmed that he had seen the published papers on the council's public website and he will send a link to RCPAG.</p> <p>JK was still concerned that RCPAG was not included in consultation and sited the privatisation of transport services as an example.</p> <p>RPCAG to update next meeting</p>	RPCAG
	Any Other Business	
	<p>RCPAG thanked BP for funding 100 tickets for in the Night Garden</p> <p>BP informed the group that the Short Break Provision commissioning will be through a reference group which includes parents reps (Barry Woodward and Jacqui Hindley) however voluntary org representation and making the minutes of the group public was not possible due to conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 8.15pm</p>	
	Date of Next Meeting	
	Tuesday 17 January 2012 at 6.30pm, Room 7, York House, Twickenham (Please note Room 7 is on the first floor and is accessible by lift).	
	Signed	
	Date	

Appendix A

1. Aiming High Report Web Links to the Council's Public Website

- **October Statement**
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/aiming_high_short_breaks_in_richmond_upon_thames
- **Commissioning**
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/sqcb_supporting_information.htm

2. Minutes of CWDL Meeting

The minutes are online at

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/council_government_and_democracy/council/partnerships/cwld.htm

REPORT TITLE: Short Breaks for Disabled Children (previously the Aiming High Project)

REPORT TO: CWDLD partnership

DATE: October 2011

SUBJECT: Short Breaks for children with disabilities and additional needs

PURPOSE OF REPORT: Information

End of the Aiming High programme

The final report of this programme has now been written as the Aiming High programme ended in March 2011. The report entitled 'A report on difference Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Breaks Programme 2008-11' shows the difference the programme made to families through publishing the details of increased level and choice in breaks and through quotes from parents and providers.

October statement

The new short break statement has been published on the Council website in order to meet the local authority short breaks duty which came into force April 2011. The statement was created by the Short Breaks reference group and will be reviewed by this group regularly.

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/aiming_high_short_breaks_in_richmond_upon_thames

Commissioning

The Single Quindrat Commissioning Board (SQCB) is overseeing the commissioning priorities for short breaks funded by the Early Intervention Grant (EIG). £567,000 of this non ringfenced government funding has been allocated by the council to continue to offer increased short breaks. The agreed priorities are based on the outcomes from the Short Breaks Consultation which is now open for public feedback. They are; Weekend, evening and school holiday short breaks, Transition work programme, Disabled Children's information service, Short breaks grants programme, Sibling carers support, Specialist under 5's day care, and a Specialist sitting service. http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/sqcb_supporting_information.htm

Windham Croft Centre for Children

The Windham and Jigsaw Nursery are already using the new reception and Jigsaw classroom. The rest of the newly refurbished and extended Windham Croft Centre for Children is now nearly complete. The building contractors are finishing painting and the handover of the building is planned for w/c 10 October. The Disabled Children's Service will move back in and start working from the new building on 17 October with short break services recommencing October half term. The opening of the independence flat is planned for April 2012 to give the service time to register with the Care Quality Commission. (CQC)

AUTHOR / CONTACT

Becky Powell
Aiming High Project Manager

Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 30 June
2011

Your comments must reach us by that date.

THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online response facility available on the Department for Education e-consultation website: (<http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations>).

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes, primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998.

If you want all, or any part, of your response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data (name and address and any other identifying material) in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential.

Reason for confidentiality:

Name	Nick Whitfield, Director of Education, Children's and Cultural Services
Organisation (if applicable)	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Address:	Education, Children's and Cultural Services, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham, TW1 3BZ

Contact Details

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact:

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If your enquiry is related to the Department For Education e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the Consultation Unit by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or e-mail: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk

Alternative Formats

An easy read version of the Green Paper will be available shortly from the Department for Education e-consultation website:

www.education.gov.uk/consultations

If you require other alternative formats please contact:

send.greenpaper@education.gsi.gov.uk

Please mark ONE box which best describes you as a respondent.

<input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Carer	<input type="checkbox"/> Child/Young Person	<input type="checkbox"/> School/College
<input type="checkbox"/> Headteacher/Teacher	<input type="checkbox"/> SENCO	<input type="checkbox"/> Governor
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/> National Voluntary Organisation	<input type="checkbox"/> Local Voluntary Organisation
<input type="checkbox"/> Children's Service	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Association/Union	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Psychologist
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/> Consultant/Professional	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		

Please Specify:

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Chapter 1: Early Identification and Assessment

1 How can we strengthen the identification of SEN and impairments in the early years, and support for children with them?

Comments:

Strengthening links with other agencies is vital for improving the identification of SEN and impairments in the early years and for putting in place the necessary support. Although there is an appetite for multi-agency working, practical difficulties arise as a result of the following:

- Changes to services and staff to achieve efficiency gains
- Mergers between agencies with differing protocols
- Changes in working practices
- Complexity in commissioning responsibilities

We need to ensure that staff teams in all private, voluntary, independent (PVI) and maintained nurseries and schools are trained to identify and support children. They also need to have reliable routes for early advice and referral e.g. Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) services available to all via children centres.

2 Do you agree with our proposal to replace the statement of SEN and learning difficulty assessment for children and young people with a single statutory assessment process and an 'Education, Health and Care Plan', bringing together all services across education, health and social care?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Yes but there are many children currently with statements for whom detailed clinical and social care assessments would not be a good use of time e.g. children with specific learning and moderate learning difficulties. Parents and the voluntary sector coordinator could agree which areas require an assessment, unless the revised Code of Practice states that high incidence disorders should not normally require a statement.

It would be important for different agencies to be responsible for funding the recommendations in their reports. Also, professionals should confine their recommendations to their area of professional expertise to avoid unnecessary disagreements over funding.

3 How could the new single assessment process and 'Education, Health and Care Plan' better support children's needs, be a better process for families and represent a more cost-effective approach for services?

Comments:

Having an integrated team that is commissioned by one body to undertake the assessments would help to ensure a seamless service.

The child's health and social needs would have the same legal status as educational needs and would have to be met. The voluntary sector key worker could take responsibility for drawing up the assessment programme with dates and times. This could be done on line at a meeting with the parents. There is a limit to the number of assessments that a child can be expected to undertake in a short period of time, although existing timescales could be reduced significantly. Some assessments e.g. Educational Psychology, normally need to be undertaken in a school setting so delays owing to holidays need to be factored in. Children's Centres could be used for non school based assessments for younger children. Greater use could be made of school nurses to provide medical reports where there are no significant medical implications.

4 What processes or assessments should be incorporated within the proposed single assessment process and 'Education, Health and Care Plan'?

Comments:

The reports obtained currently are not too far off the mark although social care reports are not always specifically related to the assessment process which can raise issues of confidentiality. Duplication should be avoided where parents wish to fund their own therapy and EP reports, although this should be less likely if greater independence is brought into the process. Greater efficiency could be achieved in the case of Health reports as outlined in the response to Question 8

5 What is the potential impact of expanding the scope of the proposed single assessment process and plan beyond education, health, social care and employment?

Comments:

Depending on the thresholds set this could be a big mistake as it would give a financial incentive for parents to seek the new Plan. National criteria and moderation would be necessary if benefits are to be awarded fairly. Appeals may be lodged with SENDIST with the primary purpose being to obtain a higher level of benefits. There could also be implications for the SENDIST and Social Security and Child Support Tribunal processes, depending on how the legislation is framed.

6a) What role should the voluntary and community sector play in the statutory assessment of children and young people with SEN or who are disabled?

Comments:

The voluntary sector could provide a key worker for all children under assessment to guide the child and parents through the process and exercise oversight over the assessment programme. The voluntary sector could chair the multi agency meeting when levels of support are agreed or alternatively an independent chair with no connection to the authority could be appointed. However, individual agencies must retain responsibility for their own budgets. Local authorities should retain responsibility for the administration of the process to ensure timescales are met and there is proper budgetary control. It is also important that parents retain the right to complain to the local government ombudsman regarding mal-administration.

Would the LA still retain accountability for decisions or would appeals to SENDIST be against the voluntary sector organisation/ independent chair?

Parents should always be invited to attend key meetings when their child's needs are being discussed and levels of support being determined

6b) How could this help to give parents greater confidence in the statutory assessment process?

Comments:

It is not difficult to see why there is a perceived conflict of interest with LAs being responsible for the assessment process and decisions relating to the level of support. In practical terms LA officers are trying to protect funding for mainstream pupils being constantly eroded by increasing demands for SEN funding, which comes out of the same Dedicated Schools Grant pot. If there were national criteria linked to indicative funding parents would be clearer as to what to expect.

A greater role for the voluntary sector or other independent body providing support and guidance to parents throughout the process and chairing the multi agency meeting at which levels of support are agreed would give parents greater confidence. For the process to be transparent, it is crucial that parents are invited to attend key meetings concerning their child.

Government proposals to enable groups such as educational psychologists to set up mutuals and cooperatives would also inject a greater degree of independence into the process.

7 How could the proposed single assessment process and 'Education, Health and Care Plan' improve continuity of social care support for disabled children?

Comments:

Joining up the assessment process would ensure information is shared between the key agencies and lead to fully informed care plans.

The responsible department/agency would need to have a good understanding of care co ordination and think about the needs of the child and their family from a multi faceted mind set to ensure the care plan is reflective of the child and families needs.

The spectrum of children who would be eligible for an assessment within the proposed joined up process would require teams of workers with skills and understanding of need across the wide spectrum of SEN

8 How could the arrangements for provision of health advice for existing statutory SEN assessments be improved?

Comments:

Current regulations refer to medical advice, not health advice. It is not necessary for all children to be examined by a doctor, nor is it always a good use of paediatricians' time. Using the term 'health advice' would help change expectations in this respect. Children with significant needs are normally well known to the medical profession and necessary reports, including therapy needs, could be obtained via the child's GP practice or the school nurse. Parents should be able to opt out of any health assessment where there is agreement that it is unnecessary. Where it is decided that health advice is required for a child without significant medical needs the examination could be carried out by a nurse and if necessary, in a minority of cases, referred to a paediatrician, CAMHS or appropriate therapist.

9 How can we make the current SEN statutory assessment process faster and less burdensome for parents?

Comments:

The proposed reduction in time limit from 26 to 20 weeks is realistic although account needs to be taken of the summer holiday period. Where necessary, a voluntary sector key worker could collate the parents' views and take them through the necessary documentation, which could be simplified. The present process discriminates against parents who have learning disabilities or limited command of English and advocacy skills.

Parents could be provided with a programme of key dates so that they know to expect and when.

It needs to be borne in mind, however, that current delays are often caused by parents missing medical appointments and the number of these could be reduced – See No 8.

The statutory provision to prosecute parents who do not present their child for assessment should be dropped as it is rarely, if ever, used.

Chapter 2: Giving Parents Control

10 What should be the key components of a locally published offer of available support for parents?

Comments:

It will be important to make clear that 'offer' is not the same as 'entitlement'. Inevitably there are thresholds which have to be met, or criteria which apply, for most services to be accessed and this needs to be made clear to parents.

The existing regulations are too complex and much of the information required is not relevant or of interest to many parents. Authorities should be required to publish a SEN prospectus which would include sections on education, health and social care. Authority's school admissions booklets generally provide good examples of how complex information can be presented in an accessible way. The education section should include descriptions of the statutory process, special schools and any specialist resourced provisions the authority may have. Headings for the descriptions of special schools and provisions could include:

- Aims and purpose of the school
- Provision, staffing and facilities
- Entry criteria / designation
- Identifying and reviewing need
- Access to a broad and balanced curriculum

- Home-school links
- Links with mainstream schools
- Transition to the next stage of education
- Contact details

The authority's and/or government's expectations of schools, including academies and free schools, in meeting children's SEN should also be clear and linked to the requirements of the revised Code of Practice together with any changes to funding arrangements.

Care Plan criteria and an indication of the funding attached to the levels of need should be included for Education, Social Care and Health. All three services should provide a brief description of the support services they run.

11 What information should schools be required to provide to parents on SEN?

Comments:

The Green Paper includes the Council for Disabled Children's four recommendations which Richmond upon Thames Authority supports. Added to the list should be a statements on how:

- the curriculum can be differentiated to meet the needs of children with SEN.
- the admission of children with SEN benefits the whole school community i.e. it needs to be explicit that children with SEN are welcome at the school.

12 What do you think an optional personal budget for families should cover?

Comments:

The use of personal budgets should be linked to the objectives set out in the Care Plan. As a minimum they could cover the purchase of equipment (although parents may wish to take advantage of authority procurement savings) and non specialist support for social care and health needs, i.e. activity in the family home. It could also be advantageous for parents to contract direct with therapists and organise short breaks.

It should be noted that at the moment the NHS cannot make direct payments and so the PCT or GP commissioners would be unable to contribute towards this.

There are potential difficulties with schools in that headteachers are responsible for their internal management and organisation. This is essential for schools to run effectively and for the delivery of the Government's reforms. Staff employed in the classroom to deliver education programmes should be accountable to the headteacher, not individual parents. However, staff employed to meet a child's physical needs could be included in the personal budget, subject to the head's right to bar anyone from the school site should this be necessary. In some circumstances heads may agree to involve individual parents in the appointment of staff who are not covered by the personal budget but this should be for the head to determine. The legal requirement for specificity in statements can work against responding flexibly to children's changing needs and meaningful parental involvement, particularly in the mainstream environment. If the legal requirements for the new Plans were less rigid, parents could agree with the head how support should be delivered to meet the objectives in the Care Plan.

Parents who home educate could be provided with the education support budget. Many parents who go down this route do so as a result of a disagreement with the education service, not through philosophical conviction. Rarely do they receive financial support from the LA and as a consequence meeting the objectives set out in the child's statement can be very difficult.

13 In what ways do you think the option of a personal budget for services identified in the proposed 'Education, Health and Care Plan' will support parents to get a package of support for their child that meets their needs?

Comments:

- Ownership of the care package as opposed to having things done to them and their child
- Employ staff who relate well to their child with greater stability.
- Greater flexibility over support provided, the balance of the package and more responsive to their child's changing needs
- Support that continues in holiday periods as not tied to the school
- See above re NHS funding

14 Do you feel that the statutory guidance on inclusion and school choice, *Inclusive Schooling*, allows appropriately for parental preferences for either a mainstream or special school?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

It is right that parents should be able to place their child in a mainstream school if this is their preference.

Although injecting greater autonomy into the system may improve the quality of education in individual institutions it will not necessarily create a system which offers greater parental choice. There will remain an important role for LA's to encourage Academies to establish specialist provisions/units, change the designation, capacity and age range of special schools and encourage the setting up of free special schools.

Thought needs to be given as to how local provision can be rebalanced to meet needs where academies do not wish to participate in reorganisations. For example, a special Academy may evolve to cater for children over a wide area to the exclusion of local children with low incidence disorders, who as a consequence have to travel a long way to find suitable provision. This could be a particular problem in rural areas.

15 How can we improve information about school choice for parents of children with a statement of SEN, or new 'Education, Health and Care Plan'?

Comments:

See response to Question 10. Choice is not just about providing information on the provision available, it is also important that documentation leads parents and schools to have realistic expectations of levels of need that mainstream schools should be expected to meet. There are still some schools and academies that actively discourage parents of statemented children with quite low level needs from pursuing their request for a place by stating that they are not geared up to meet a particular need and admittance of the child would be prejudicial to the efficient education of other children. Parents are reluctant to pursue a place for their child when they know he/she is not wanted.

The revised Code of Practice needs to be clear about the levels of need that can normally be met in mainstream schools

16 Should mediation always be attempted before parents register an appeal to the First-tier Tribunal (SEN and Disability)?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Authority officers and parents normally meet, sometimes on numerous occasions, before an appeal is lodged and often continue to do so up to the date of the hearing. Formal mediation, therefore, could often be a pointless activity that would only work if one of the parties is prepared to compromise further. Rather than compromise, many parents prefer to take their chance with the Tribunal which doesn't have any budget responsibility and is therefore more likely to be sympathetic to the parents' point of view. LA officers also see the Tribunal as making inconsistent decisions and in many cases make a judgement on whether they should continue to a hearing based on the cost of conceding. Officers are mindful that the cost of additional support or an independent sector place, ordered by SENDIST, is met from the dedicated schools grant. They feel that they have a responsibility to protect the budgets of all schools in the authority from continual erosion by increased expenditure on SEN, particularly when in many cases there is little or no evidence that this

additional expenditure will lead to improved outcomes for the children concerned.

17a) Do you like the idea of mediation across education, health and social care?

Yes

No

Not Sure

17 b) How might it work best?

Comments:

If good partnership working is in place then a mediation process should not be needed. In the future with GP commissioning it may be that it will be needed as partnerships become fragmented. Having an identified budget that one commissioner holds should reduce the need for mediation, however pooled budgets are cumbersome to manage and audit and so a different way would need to be found.

Chapter 3: Learning and Achieving

18 How can we ensure that the expertise of special schools, and mainstream schools with excellent SEN practice, is harnessed and spread through Teaching Schools partnerships?

Comments:

The Government's proposal to permit outstanding special schools to apply to become Teaching Schools is welcomed. The establishment of mixed mainstream and special school federations and the co-location of special schools on mainstream school/academy sites also encourages the dissemination of good practice.

As part of their role in securing a range of high quality provision LA's should take responsibility for establishing networks to share good practice in their areas and make linkages with neighbouring authorities.

19 How can we ensure that we improve SEN expertise, build capacity and share knowledge between independent specialist colleges, special schools and colleges?

Comments:

Ensure that outreach work/support is a requirement for these establishments

20 How can we continue to build capacity and SEN specialist skills at each tier of school management?

Comments:

By providing a statutory amount of SEN training within initial teaching training. Bringing in a points system for CPD with a requirement to complete a certain amount of training in this area

21 What is the best way to identify and develop the potential of teachers and staff to best support disabled children or children with a wide range of SEN?

Comments:

Teachers who are committed to meeting the needs of children with SEN and disabilities and with the right personal skills, are best identified through the SENCO and senior leaders of the school. Suitable staff could be offered incentives to develop expertise in this area. Good practice should be identified, rewarded and disseminated to other schools. In some societies it is seen as a privilege and honour to teach the children with the greatest difficulties in learning. We should be encouraging this attitude. In the UK SEN pupils are frequently taught and supported by LSA often the least qualified staff. Also it still seems to be the case that the lower sets are given to the least experienced teachers.

22 What is the potential impact of replacing School Action and School Action Plus and their equivalents in the early years with a single category of SEN in early years settings and schools?

Comments:

The rationale put forward in the Green Paper for replacing School Action and School Action Plus with a single category is supported by this LA. To ensure that the new category doesn't encapsulate the same children as now, there needs to be unequivocal guidance in the revised Code of Practice. Most authorities have threshold guidance that could be drawn on to help draft the Code.

The proposal will help reverse the culture of low expectations through fewer children being identified and improve outcomes as support would be concentrated on those with the greatest need. The change should also lead to children with significant needs getting a statement sooner as there will be fewer stages to go through. It is important that the new category includes a requirement for external intervention before statutory assessment is requested, although there will always be a small minority of children, particularly in the early years, whose need for a statutory assessment is clear without the need to spend time at the new merged stage.

23 How could changing the school and early years setting-based category of SEN embed a different approach to identifying SEN and addressing children's needs?

Comments:

The Authority's Early Years' census returns show settings are not reporting high numbers of children at Early Years Action or Early Years Action Plus; the numbers are lower than those gathered through officer visits and applications for support. Reasons for this could include a reluctance by providers to use the SEN terminology of the Code of Practice with parents early on, or that they are used to planning for a wide range of individual needs in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Scheme curriculum.

24 How helpful is the current category of Behavioural, Emotional and Social Development (BESD) in identifying the underlying needs of children with emotional and social difficulties?

<input type="checkbox"/> Very helpful	<input type="checkbox"/> Helpful	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very helpful
<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all helpful	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not sure	

Comments:

The current Code of Practice gives guidance on how the behaviour can be managed (para 7.60) as its primary focus is access to the curriculum. There is no expectation in the Code that schools should identify the underlying needs of child, although of course they invariably do, often through the involvement of EPs and other agencies. The new Education, Health and Care Plan will help shift the focus so that underlying needs are met regardless of the category description. Without a robust multi agency assessment the support required to address the underlying needs will not be identified.

The category is more meaningful for younger children than for those in say Y10 and Y11 where it is often difficult to distinguish between those students without statements who have been excluded and those in mainstream schools with BESD statements (who also may well get excluded).

25 Is the BESD label overused in terms of describing behaviour problems rather than leading to an assessment of underlying difficulties?

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Sure
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Comments:

There is no simple answer as to whether or not behavioural difficulties constitute a special educational need. Clearly underlying difficulties should be addressed but whether a child should be afforded the protection of a statement depends on the individual circumstances and severity of need. This LA would agree that the thresholds currently applied are generally too low and that needs may be better address through intervention/support from agencies working in cooperation with the school.

26 How could we best ensure that the expertise of special schools in providing behaviour support is harnessed and shared?

Comments:

What is the evidence that special schools are better at managing difficult behaviour than mainstream schools? They have different client groups. Special schools are capable of managing more extreme behaviour but they are more generously resourced and sometimes residential. They are also more prepared to resort to physical restraint which generally runs against the ethos of mainstream schools.

There is plenty of expertise in mainstream schools. Both sectors could learn from each other.

27 What are the barriers to special schools and special academies entering the market for alternative provision?

Comments:

- Limited supply of suitably qualified and experienced staff
- Availability of suitable accommodation
- The ease with which the students can get out of control resulting in the school being judged a failure
- Opposition from existing parents if the excluded children are educated on the same site.
- The current Code of Practice states that children should only be on the roll of a special school if they have a statement or are undergoing an assessment.

28 What are the ways in which special academies can work in partnership with other mainstream and special schools and academies, and other services, in order to improve the quality of provision for pupils with SEN and disabilities?

Comments:

As stated in the Green Paper many special schools already work in partnership with other schools and there is no reason why this should change following a switch to academy status. Special schools often run outreach services supporting children who have been integrated into mainstream provision and this will no doubt continue, although there could be issues over the funding of reintegration and support packages as increasing numbers of schools change status. Arrangements for supporting children with physical difficulties in mainstream are particularly strong in some areas.

29 What are the barriers to special academies becoming centres of excellence and specialist expertise that serve a wider, regional community and how can these be overcome?

Comments:

It is likely that the dynamic leadership that academies are expected to exhibit will drive them towards becoming centres of excellence and specialist expertise. However, expanding into areas not related to their existing core activity could be hampered by a lack of funding should the most schools switch to academy status and the DSG withers away. It will be necessary for pump priming funding to come from another source.

Some special school buildings are in a poor state and in urgent need of replacement.

30 What might the impact be of opening up the system to provide places for non-statemented children with SEN in special free schools?

Comments:

This depends on the category of need(s) of the school and the severity of need of the non statemented child. It may be perfectly reasonable, for example, for children with and without statements to attend a school set up for children with specific learning difficulties. Similarly, it is possible to think of examples when it would be totally unacceptable.

31 Do you agree with our proposed approach for demonstrating the progress of low attaining pupils in performance tables?

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Measuring the progress of pupils with SEN is a contentious issue. The data we currently collect nationally is not sufficiently robust. Focusing on the progress of all learners would be less divisive. However by focusing on the less able this could help to target resources to them - although it may result in schools being reluctant to admit these pupils in the first place.

32 What information would help parents, governors and others, including Ofsted, assess how effectively schools support disabled children and children with SEN?

Comments:

- Parental feedback
- Feedback from children
- SEN budget and how deployed
- Specialist training of staff
- Percentage of time taught by a support assistant rather than a qualified teacher
- Percentage of time spent in mainstream classes, small groups and one to one.
- Any areas of the curriculum not accessed
- Exclusions of SEN/disabled children
- Reported bullying and racial abuse towards SEN/disabled children
- Take up on educational visits and other out of school activities
- measured impact of interventions

Chapter 4: Preparing for Adulthood

33 What more can education and training providers do to ensure that disabled young people and young people with SEN are able to participate in education or training post-16?

Comments:

- It is accepted that the vast majority of SEN learners' needs can be met with additional support in mainstream post-16 education. However, at present it seems too 'easy' for mainstream provision to be able to say that a learner's needs cannot be met, which often leads to disproportionate amount of public funds being used to fund 3 year residential Independent Specialist Provider (ISP) placements. Sometimes mainstream post-16 providers refuse a learner a place in order to comply with parental preferences and aspirations for ISP placements without a formal education and additional needs assessment ever having taken place.
- In this borough's experience there is a lack of co-ordination and progression opportunity for students with more moderate to severe learning difficulties to progress onto other mainstream FE courses. For example the entry requirements for some catering courses still require 5 A* - C passes at GCSE. It should be possible to support SEN progression by using, for example, more flexible and person centred assessment techniques in some vocational areas, especially when it has been demonstrated that it is possible for learners with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LLDD) to access employment opportunities in these sectors.
- Richmond upon Thames would like to see all post 16 (including special school sixth form provision) mainstream supported education courses having to include a mandatory integrated and meaningful element of work placements/work trials for young people with SEN. In addition to this these programmes should include opportunities for independent travel and living skills training (away from home) in order for young people to gain real experience, with the added benefit of periods of respite for the learners' parents/carers and family. It would be possible for FE provision to offer this extended curriculum through existing Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) 16-19 Demand Led Funding methodology and the Additional Learning Support allocation. In recognition of government policy that the majority of LLDD needs should be met locally within the mainstream sector, a proportion of the present YPLA held ISP budget could be top sliced in order for local authorities to develop a more holistic education/employment/independent living package within their localities. The Authority recognises that the independent living facility would need to be

resourced together with local authority adult social care funding.

- The entry requirements for level 2 foundation apprenticeships could be reviewed and made more accessible to SEN learners who have a higher functioning capacity. A good example would be students with Asperger's Syndrome who often do achieve some L2 qualifications. The Authority would urge the Skills Funding Agency/National Apprenticeship Service to review its ending of programme based apprenticeships so that a LLDD learner could achieve the apprenticeship qualification on a flexible combination of long term work placement and supported work experience. The current incentives for employers to employ an apprentice should prioritise SEN learners.

34 When disabled young people and young people with SEN choose to move directly from school or college into the world of work, how can we make sure this is well planned and who is best placed to support them?

Comments:

- The above scenario is a rare occurrence in Richmond. In some areas the capacity for the local authority or local providers to deliver supported employment opportunities is likely to be patchy and rather a 'postcode' lottery.
- Transition planning can be variable. Local authority care workers in conjunction with education providers are best placed to provide the necessary support. The Authority would welcome the opportunity to work more directly with Job Centre Plus staff who, the Authority believes, should take a more proactive approach to moving LLDD into meaningful supported or general employment opportunities.
- There is a significant gap within the school/FE provider exit strategy for SEN learners, particularly those with Moderate to Severe Learning difficulties/disabilities. Similarly, there appears to be a gap if a young person does not reach the eligibility threshold for adult health and social care support.
- The reduction in numbers of specialist Connexions' Personal Advisers (PA) and the responsibility of the local authority to support vulnerable learners will put additional pressure on local authority transition workers and care support managers. Their role to provide both in and out of borough support for young people with SEN who want direct access into

work will increase.

- Although the Connexions Specialist PA role is likely to cease or be drastically reduced, the effectiveness of the previous 'Home/Host' borough arrangements for Connexions Specialist PA's to work with learners based in out of borough schools or colleges and how they supported direct access to employment opportunities was unclear.
- Part of the responsibility to ensure that young people with SEN are supported to access suitable employment options rests with Job Centre Plus. However it can be unclear how a young person can access their support, programmes and initiatives.

35a) Do you agree that supported internships would provide young people for whom an apprenticeship may not be a realistic aim with meaningful work opportunities?

Yes

No

Not Sure

35b) How might they work best?

Comments:

- Supported work experience should be available to as wide a range of SEN learners as possible and should be a mandatory part of transition for young people with SEN. Ideally, this should be covered by legislation in the same way that the right for suitable education placement for learners subject to a learning needs assessment (section 139a) from 16-25 is covered in the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.
- A range of flexible options for work experience internships should be available, centred around the person and in response to individual needs and capabilities. A one size fits all and a one cost flat rate for these internships is unlikely to work in practice. There is a danger that the opportunity becomes tokenistic, with the only benefits being felt by the providers/employers paid to deliver the provision.

36 How can employers be encouraged to offer constructive work experience and job opportunities to disabled young people and young people with SEN?

Comments:

- The current incentives for employers to employ an apprentice should prioritise SEN learners.
- The Authority would like to see a mandatory requirement for all work placements/apprenticeship/internships to be monitored for the number of opportunities, open to, and taken up by LLDD learners. The figures should be published.
- A robust marketing/communication strategy needs to be rolled out to employer organisations, such as the CBI, Chambers of Commerce etc. (in conjunction with Skills Funding Agency and disability groups) on the positive benefits for organisations to employ disabled people.
- Richmond upon Thames would welcome the inclusion of an equal opportunities criterion around the supported employment/numbers of internships/long term work experience places offered to young people with SEN into the achievement of business Quality marks, e.g. 'Investors in People', ISO 9000 series, and the PICASSO mark for not for profit organisations etc. It is recognised that these quality marks assist business to gain large public sector contracts and as such should be able to demonstrate a commitment to the employment and investment in the future of some of society's most vulnerable.

37 How do you think joint working across children's and adult health services for young people aged 16 to 25 could be improved?

Comments:

38 As the family doctor, how could the GP play a greater role in managing a smooth transition for a disabled young person from children's to adult health services?

Comments:

The GP needs to be aware of the transition planning process but it is difficult to see what role they will play as they will remain their doctor

39a) Do you agree that our work supporting disabled young people and young people with SEN to prepare for adulthood should focus on the following areas:
(please tick those with which you agree)

Yes ensuring a broad range of learning opportunities
 Yes transition to adult health services

Yes moving into employment
 none

Yes independent living
 not sure

Comments:

Agree with all of the above.

39b) What else should we consider?

Comments:

Chapter 5: Services Working Together for Families

40a) Do you agree with the following three core features of the role of local authorities in supporting children and young people with SEN or who are disabled and their families? *(please tick those with which you agree)*

strategic Yes planning for services	securing a Yes range of high quality provision	enabling families to make Yes informed choices and exercise greater control over services
<input type="checkbox"/> none	<input type="checkbox"/> not sure	

The Authority supports these three features, although it is not clear to what extent the GP consortia will have to pay regard to the Joint Strategic Needs assessment produced by the Health and Wellbeing Boards. In a period of changing commissioning arrangements and priorities it may be that children's services do not have a high profile as compared to say acute services, and may be seen as an area for realising savings.

40b) Are there others? If so, please specify.

Yes

No

Not Sure

Comments:

Equal weight should also be given to the responsibilities set out in 5.8 regarding identifying and assessing children's SEN, ensuring that children and young people receive the full range of services that they need, and reviewing and monitoring their progress and development.

For parents to have confidence in the new arrangements it is crucial for them to know who is ultimately accountable for drawing up their child's plan and reviewing its implementation.

41 How can central government enable and support local authorities to carry out their role effectively?

Comments:

Legislation and the revised Code of Practice needs to make clear who is responsible for carrying out the various responsibilities, whether it is the LA, schools, partner agencies, local services and professionals or the voluntary and community sector. Inevitably for a consultation document the Green Paper is a little vague in places.

The Code also needs to be clearer on thresholds for the merged school action/school action plus stage, when assessments should be carried out and give some indication of levels of support that parents can expect. At present may parents assume that more support or therapeutic input will lead to better outcomes but this isn't necessarily the case. The proposed National Banding system may be helpful should be helpful in this regard.

Under present legislation the Authority has to publish statutory proposals to set up (and close) designated SEN provisions in mainstream schools. This does not apply to academies and it would be useful if the DFE could provide a concise model agreement and any other guidance it considers necessary, without compromising the independence of academies.

Within the reform of the NHS to make the LA responsible for commissioning disabled children's services including those now commissioned by the PCTs. To ensure that services are not too fragmented it would mean in practice that all children's community services would have to be commissioned by the LA including universal and specialist.

42 What would be the best way to provide advice to GP consortia to support their commissioning of services for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled and their families?

Comments:

The proposed Health and Wellbeing Boards and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments should be key to this. The GP consortia need to be under a legal duty to have regard to the Assessment and the revised Code of Practice. There should be a GP Children's lead identified to champion children's commissioning and also a good infrastructure within the consortia that has expertise in commissioning children's services. Alternatively, make the LA the commissioner of Children's services!

However, formal structures and legal requirements are not always the best way to influence developments at local level. Giving parents the right to appeal to SENDIST on the provision of health support will help frame services. A consortia representative should be a member of the Panel that determines the Education Health and Care Plan so that needs and trends are fed back. GP consortia will need access to a parents, voluntary sector and local professionals advisory group. This group should include pupil representation.

43 What would be the most appropriate indicators to include in the NHS and public health outcomes frameworks in the future to allow us to measure outcomes for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled?

Comments:

This is a very difficult question as the range of needs are so varied and the scope for improvement is so varied.

It could be that a national tool is developed that baselines a child/young something that is important to that person and then sets a goal to improve on this?

44 What are the ways in which the bureaucratic burdens on frontline professionals, schools and services can be reduced?

Comments:

The revised Code of Practice should encourage LAs to delegate funding for high incidence disorders to reduce the need for Plans that require low levels of education support only and/or do not need input from Health and Social Care.

Many LAs do this currently as it has the advantage of increasing a school's ability to deal flexibly with their pupils' special educational needs. In addition, resources can be directed to more timely preventative action as the delays inherent in the statutory assessment process are eliminated for many children. Fewer statements reduces the bureaucratic burden on schools and other services.

As SENDIST is written evidence based this contributes to the bureaucratic burdens faced by all parties. As LAs and schools do not know which cases will end up at SENDIST all have to be treated as potential appeals. This contributes to the ever increasing number and complexity of reports, IEPs etc.

45 In addition to community nursing, what are the other areas where greater collaboration between frontline professionals could have the greatest positive impact on children and young people with SEN or who are disabled and their families?

Comments:

Children would benefit from greater collaboration in most areas:

- EPs, CAMHS and paediatricians.
- Social workers, youth workers and education welfare officers
- Therapists and EPs
- Schools and all other areas

Collaboration between teachers and social care workers would enable continuity between school and home and give consistency to the child and the care plans. This could lead to achieving the aims as set out in the care plan.

46 What more do you think could be done to encourage and facilitate local

services working together to improve support for children with SEN or who are disabled?

Comments:

Multi agency working normally works well until funding is raised. The new GP consortia need to be explicit about which activities and equipment they are prepared to fund so that other agencies and parents are clear. Currently there is no standard criteria for funding services and equipment such as specialist seating, communication aids, independent sector placements where children have significant health, including mental health, needs and therapy provision. Funding disagreements between agencies erode trust in the benefits of joint working and sometimes parents are made aware of these discussions because there is a delay or they are told to go down a different route for funding. There is a lack of understanding of how the NHS funds services and the community service split seems to have made introduced even more complexity. This may mean that it is unclear where the decision making process lies.

Again changing the fundamental way children's services are commissioned would help reduce these barriers.

The best examples of joint working often evolve bottom up and are not imposed through structural management changes. Front line staff need to be encouraged to explore different ways of the working together and in some cases redefine their professional boundaries. This would help reduce the number of agencies that parents have to deal with and the number of assessments.

Organising staff into local multi agency teams based in a single building can be a powerful collaborative force. Proposed mutuals and cooperatives could cut across disciplines/agencies.

47 How do you think SEN support services might be funded so that schools, academies, free schools and other education providers have access to high quality SEN support services?

Comments:

Any view on the future funding of SEN provision is complicated by on-going reviews currently taking place into the Dedicated Schools Grant and the possible introduction of a national funding formula for maintained schools. The current split of funding streams for pupils with SEN in maintained schools has created a hybrid system based on historical spending patterns rather than on meeting the current needs of pupils who are disabled or with SEN. The funding arrangements for pupils with SEN aged 18 to 25 who attend other education provision is also considered unsatisfactory, as it is paid directly to the external providers, and precludes the provision of a co-ordinated universal local authority offer to all children and young people with a disability or with SEN aged up to 25.

The introduction of a single assessment process and an individual 'Education, Health and Care Plan' provides an opportunity for better inter-agency working. If all funding is distributed to the lead agency, preferably the local authority, and if the distribution of funding to providers for each individual is based on a collective agreement of an individual's needs, rather than through block funding allocations, the funding would be better targeted towards the costs of those in most need.

The introduction of a single assessment process should provide the data on which funding could be determined, with increased weightings for those categories deemed to be most high-cost.

In the meantime, this authority believes there should be a weighting on the DSG guaranteed unit of funding per pupil for those attending independent or non-maintained special schools to avoid basic DSG funding being diverted away from mainstream schools to meet these escalating costs.

48 What are the innovative ways in which new models of employee-led organisations, such as mutuals and cooperatives, could improve services for children and young people with SEN and their families?

Comments:

Mutuals and cooperatives could cut across LA boundaries and be multidisciplinary, providing a range of services. As they would not be part of the LA or NHS they could draw up their own conditions of service and pay scales. This would enable them to provide the required services during both term time and holiday periods, whilst at the same time employing staff in the most efficient way. The ability to determine their own pay scales outside LA/NHS grading systems would allow them to pay market rates enabling them to recruit and retain key staff.

Mutuals could inject a degree of independence into the assessment process if for example educational psychologists went down this route. Similarly, teams currently running authority's statutory SEN functions could become independent, working in partnership with the voluntary sector.

The major disadvantage of the establishment of mutuals and cooperatives could be a loss of local democratic accountability depending upon the eventual legal framework.

49 In addition to their role in the assessment process, what are the innovative ways in which educational psychologists are deployed locally to support children and young people with SEN or who are disabled and their families?

Comments:

Educational Psychologists are deployed in Richmond to fulfil 5 key functions:

1. assessment
2. intervention
3. training
4. projects
5. evaluation and research

Richmond is also pursuing a model of community psychology which broadens the role to focus on the environment, system, school and family.

50 How do you envisage the role and service structures of educational psychologists evolving to meet local demands?

Comments:

- increased school commissioning
- more integrated multiagency working
- more preventative work at early stages
- more systems and organisational psychology

51 What are the implications of changes to the role and deployment of educational psychologists for how their training is designed and managed?

Comments:

Councils and schools will commission years 2 and 3 of the EP doctorate course.

It is likely that these will be on a bursary rather than salary scheme.

52 What do you think can be done to facilitate and encourage greater collaboration between local authorities?

Comments:

LAs are separate legal entities and there is a natural tendency for them to want to control the services and provisions they need to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. Any serious attempt to bring about greater collaboration needs to provide an alternative legal framework.

The Government's proposals for the establishment of mutuals and cooperatives could provide the necessary impetus for this, leading to the development of collaboration across a number of activity areas. Richmond upon Thames and another LA are looking at ways of merging a range of services, including SEN, under the proposed mutual/cooperative arrangements.

53 What do you think are the areas where collaboration could have the greatest positive impact on services for children, young people and families?

Comments:

- Low incidence disorders such as sensory impairments and physical disabilities.
- Special schools for children with physical disabilities, profound and multiple learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties and BESD.
- Specialist youth and social workers
- Health staff who have specialist skills in working with children with complex needs.
- Better coordinated special school/ resourced provision

54 How do you think that more effective pooling and alignment of funding for health, social care and education services can be encouraged?

Comments:

There seems to be an assumption that pooled budgets are some sort of panacea but are they? They can have a number of disadvantages-

- Lack of accountability over decision making, with parents being told that a panel has made a particular decision making it difficult for them to challenge a named officer/health worker.
- High expenditure at the start of the financial year with little left towards the end. It is too easy to place a child in expensive residential provision for example early in the year resulting in insufficient funds to meet statutory duties towards the end.
- The above can too easily lead to the education service having to plug any financial gaps, drawing funding from the DSG and thereby penalising children in mainstream schools.

Pooled funding only works if all agencies put sufficient money in the pot to meet their own responsibilities, which need to be clearly defined by central government. Ultimate responsibility/accountability for allocating the budget needs to be clearly defined.

55 What are the ways in which a Community Budget approach might help to improve the ways in which services for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled and their families are delivered?

A community budget may help with the inclusion agenda - so that when services are being developed on a community basis they have to be inclusive and consider the needs of all

56 What are the ways in which we could introduce greater local freedom and flexibility into the ways in which funding for services for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled is used?

Comments:

There are statutory blockages to NHS money being used i.e. for direct payments. It would be useful to enable GP consortia to easily devolve their responsibilities for commissioning children's services to the LA or other agency

57 What are the areas where the voluntary and community sector could have the greatest positive impact on services for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled and their families, and what are the ways we can facilitate this?

Comments:

At its best the voluntary sector makes a significant contribution in breaking down the uniformity of LA and NHS provision and is better placed to be responsive to clients' needs. It is particularly strong in the following areas:

- Advice to LAs, schools and families on meeting the needs of children with specific difficulties
- Accrediting provision (NAS)
- Provision of respite facilities and running out of school activities
- Advocacy services and generally representing the views of parents of children with disabilities.
- Running employment schemes for young adults with significant needs
- Running playgroups/nurseries
- Running parental support groups

Subject to funding being available and there being suitable providers, LAs/Health could be given greater encouragement to contract out services to the voluntary sector.

The involvement of voluntary sector representatives on partnership groups, taking notice and acting on what they have to say, can contribute significantly to their level of activity in the local community.

58 How do you think a national banded funding framework for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled could improve the transparency of funding decisions to parents while continuing to allow for local flexibility?

Comments:

Government shouldn't be too concerned about cutting back local discretion in this area as the present arrangements defy logic and must be incomprehensible to many parents. The advantages would be:

- Greater consistency of decision making both within and across LAs.
- Minimise the fears that LAs may have over the voluntary sector having a greater role in decision making.
- Parents would have a good idea as to what levels and types of support to expect. In the majority of cases the banding level could be agreed with parents and following on from this the mix of support and how it should be delivered, including through the use of personal budgets.
- Greater consistency in decisions made by SENDIST.
- A reduction in the number of appeals to SENDIST as parties would have a much clearer idea of the likely outcome.

59 How can the different funding arrangements for specialist provision for young people pre-16 and post-16 be aligned more effectively to provide a more consistent approach to support for children and young people with SEN or who are disabled from birth to 25?

Comments:

Government funding to support higher-cost children and young people with SEN or with a disability should be from a single funding source and use a transparent formula to cover all age groups and standard categories of need. Annual allocations should be based on an annual census, with weightings to reflect categories of need and differing area costs.

All funding should be paid to one agency, preferable the local authority, responsible for its subsequent internal distribution or to agencies, providers, parents or carers based on the costs and requirements of each individual's agreed Education, Health and Care Plan.

60 Please use this space for any other comments you would like to make

Comments:

The current SEN system is in urgent need of reform. It has become too adversarial, doesn't take sufficient account of the wishes of parents, is disjointed, bureaucratic and gives insufficient discretion to schools with regard to meeting the needs of some children with high incidence disorders. The London Borough of Richmond supports the main thrust of the Green Paper as it addresses these weaknesses. The Green Paper is also in line with the Council's philosophy as to how services for children with SEN and Disabilities should be delivered.

The Authority would welcome the opportunity to become a pilot authority in any of the areas identified in the 'Next Steps' section of the paper.

This response to the Green Paper has also been considered by a Task Group established by the Council's Education and Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee

61 Please let us have your views on responding to this consultation (e.g. the number and type of questions, was it easy to find, understand, complete etc.)

Comments:

The Authority found the Green Paper easy to find, read and understand. The questions relate closely to the text making the response form easy to complete. Answering the questions has helped the Authority clarify its thinking in a number of areas.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

Here at the Department for Education we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

All DfE public consultations are required to conform to the following criteria within the Government Code of Practice on Consultation:

Criterion 1: Formal consultation should take place at a stage when there is scope to influence the policy outcome.

Criterion 2: Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.

Criterion 3: Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.

Criterion 4: Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.

Criterion 5: Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.

Criterion 6: Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.

Criterion 7: Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

If you have any comments on how DfE consultations are conducted, please contact Donna Harrison, DfE Consultation Co-ordinator, tel: 01928 738212 / email: donna.harrison@education.gsi.gov.uk

Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 30 June 2011

Send by email to send.greenpaper@education.gsi.gov.uk or by post to:
Consultation Unit, Department for Education, Area 1C, Castle View House, East Lane, Runcorn WA7 2GJ.