

14th January 2014

SEN Reforms

Ward(s) All

Portfolio

Provide an overview of the SEN Reforms

Executive Summary

The Children and Families Bill 2013 is due to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2013 and will become law by September 2014. The Bill sets out the government's plan for transforming the system for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) and those with disabilities with the aim of ensuring services consistently support the best outcomes for them. This involves placing children and their families at the centre of policy and practice, a fundamental change in culture. In Walsall preparation for implementation of the reforms has progressed to a second phase which has seen the development of a SEND Strategic Multi-agency Working Group. This group is working to achieve key outcomes around engagement, communication, multi-agency assessment, the single plan and the local offer.

Reasons for Scrutiny:

To provide an overview and update of SEN Reforms

Report: SEN Reforms

The Children and Families Bill 2013 aims to improve outcomes for children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families by developing joint multi-agency responsibility and working; giving parents/carers and young people more choice and control; and ensuring effective, timely local approaches to identifying and meeting needs. The Bill is expected to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2014 ready for implementation in September 2014. The SEN Code of Practice provides statutory guidance on SEN practice and procedures and the government published a new draft Code of Practice in line with the SEN Reforms. The final Code of Practice is due to be published in early spring 2013.

SEN Work Plan

In May 2013 a report was made to the Transition Programme Board on the establishment of task and finish groups to undertake specific pieces of work to plan the initial phase of Walsall's response to the Children and Families Bill. This phase has been completed and work has now shifted to an agreed work plan devised by a

SEND Multi-agency Strategic Working Group. The work plan identifies key objectives and milestones in the following areas:

- engagement of young people and parents/carers
- communication strategy
- multi-agency assessment policy
- single plan
- the Local Offer

We have provided briefings for Walsall Council education staff, colleagues from partner agencies and for school special educational need coordinators about the reforms and the new draft SEN Code of Practice.

Update on Progress:

Engagement of Young People and Parents/Carers: Parent participation charter has been developed has been developed by the Parent Participation Group. Parent/carer consultation events have taken place to support development of the local offer. Consultation session with young people has taken place and further events are planned.

Communication Strategy: The Council Communication Team has been commissioned to help develop a communication plan which will be progressed with the Parent Participation Group.

Multi-agency Assessment Policy: Discussions are underway between Childrens and Adult Services and health colleagues to agree principles of whole life planning single assessment process.

Single Plan: A draft plan has been developed and consultation is nearing completion. The plan is being piloted across the age range using a team around the child/young person process involving parents and carers. This will support the refinement of the plan to ensure it is fit for purpose.

Local Offer: School Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) have been briefed about the Local Offer and learned from the experience of one school that has already developed their own local offer. Special Schools have consulted with parents and started work to develop their local offers. The Education local offer has been published and the agencies and services are in the early stages of reviewing their offers. The plan is that a parent Participation Group will lead on the collation and publication of Walsall's Local Offer.

Further work is planned regarding workforce development.