

London Borough of Bromley

PART 1 - PUBLIC

Briefing for Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Committee Tuesday 2nd July 2013

UPDATE FROM THE SEN EXECUTIVE WORKING PARTY

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1. Summary

1.1 This report provides Members with an update following the meeting of the Executive Member Officer Working Party for Special Educational Needs held on 19th June 2013.

2. THE BRIEFING

2.1 A number of areas were considered as part of the meeting:

Special Education Needs Activity

2.2 Members considered a report which outlined national and local management of Special Educational Needs, including statistics around the number of children with special educational needs in comparison with the Local Authority's statistical neighbours, and the action that was being taken within the Borough to mitigate spend, reduce statements where appropriate and ensure the most cost effective decisions on provision were being made.

2.3 It was noted that the way that Special Educational Needs support was delivered varied across local authorities. Some local authorities devolved a substantial level of resources and expected schools to cater for special educational needs up to a high threshold. Other local authorities devolved fewer resources, maintaining funds within the local authority to distribute to schools through a range of models depending on thresholds of need. The London Borough of Bromley had previously devolved a lower level of resources to schools and had a high level of statements of Special Educational Needs in comparison with its statistical neighbours. An increased level of resources was now being devolved to schools through the delegation of £6k for each child who had been assessed as having needs at Matrix 6, and top-up funding for children assessed as having needs above Matrix 6. It was also planned to raise the threshold at which Education, Health and Care Plans were used, and to increase the use of Pupil Resource Agreements for children with lower level needs which were developed in partnership between the Local Authority, the school and a child's family to meet a child's individual needs.

Special Education Needs Transport

2.4 Members considered a report which provided an update on work that was being undertaken around the future development of transport provision for children and young people with special educational needs in the Borough.

- 2.5 Following a competitive tender exercise, the SEN Transport Team had secured a voluntary sector partner to deliver a travel training programme commencing in June 2013 for a period of one year. The team would work with Bexley Accessible Transport to deliver travel training to young people with special educational needs to support them to become independent travellers. Travel training would commence with pupils at the Glebe School and pupils at other schools who had been identified as being able to benefit from programme.

Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Pathfinder

- 2.6 Members considered a report outlining progress with the SEND Pathfinder, developed in partnership with London Borough of Bexley to test areas within the Children and Families Bill, and providing further information on Education, Health and Care plans, which were a key component of the new Special Educational Needs and Disability reform agenda.
- 2.7 The SEND Pathfinder had tested the development and application of Education, Health and Care Plans for children and young people with complex needs, as well as areas including development of personal budgets, banded funding and preparing for adulthood (transition). In December 2012, the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley were notified that further funding had been granted to take the SEN Pathfinder work forward until September 2014, in line with the timescales for the implementation of the new SEN reforms.
- 2.8 The Government had announced that £900k was to be made available to a small number of Pathfinder areas to become National Pathfinder Champions. These National Pathfinder Champions would share learning and make a contribution to disseminating Pathfinder activity on a regional or national basis whilst also informing the local agenda. Selection for Champion status was based on a mix of skills, experience and regional factors, and following submission of a joint bid, the London Boroughs of Bromley and Bexley had been selected as one of only nine national Pathfinder Champions that would work to support non-Pathfinder areas.

Introduction of the EHC Plans and Review of Thresholds/Local Offer

- 2.9 Members considered a report outlining the requirement to have a new single assessment process and Education, Health and Care Plans in place to replace the statutory SEN assessment and statement, and bring together the support provided to children, young people and their parents and carers by September 2014.
- 2.10 Education, Health and Care Plans would provide the same statutory protections to parents as a statement of Special Educational Needs, but would extend the age range for eligibility from birth to 25 years. It was envisaged that the new plan would give parents and carers more control over support for their child and family with the introduction of options for personal budgets. There would also be a requirement for the Local Authority and schools across the Borough to publish a local offer to clarify what support was available to families, from which providers and how it could be accessed.
- 2.11 There was considerable overlap between the new statutory guidance and the education funding reforms for high needs pupils which came into effect from 1st April 2013, and it had been identified that there was a need to review the Local Authority's current practice regarding thresholds for support in order to minimise the volume of statements and Education, Care and Health Plans for which the Local Authority would be responsible for in the future.