

QUESTIONS TO THE EDUCATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Oral Questions for the Education Portfolio Holder received from Sam Aldridge, Campaigns Assistant, the National Deaf Children's Society

1. Under the new SEN Code of Practice it will become law to engage parents and young people in the development of services, how will the service specifications for the peripatetic hearing support service and the Resource Provisions link with the Bromley Local Offer to ensure this happens?

Reply:

The SEN Code of Practice referred to is currently a draft for consultation only. The draft guidance itself relates to the Children and Families Bill which is not expected to come into statute until September 2014.

The Council will ensure that the development of specifications for the SEN Inclusion Support service, as part of the market testing process for education services, is aligned with and informed by on-going reviews of education services and the local offer. Officers responsible for the development and review of the local offer will be directly involved in drafting specifications.

Supplementary question:

What is the timeframe for development of the service specification for the peripatetic hearing support service and when parents be consulted?

Reply:

Arrangements have been made to convene an initial workshop to inform the development of the specification of the SEN Inclusion Support service, to take place this month (November 2013). The initial meeting will consider the timeframe by which it is expected that the work can be completed. Arrangements for engagement, as appropriate, with key stakeholders will be considered as part of the specification development process, informed by the service teams.

2. What arrangements will be in place to ensure the chosen service provider delivers a hearing support service in accordance with a service specification which follows good practice?

Reply:

Appropriate contract monitoring and enforcement mechanisms will be developed as part of the detailed planning of the market testing process. Approval of the proposal to commence market testing was finalised by Members on the 28th October 2013 and therefore the detailed planning is still to take place.

Supplementary question:

Will the preferred service specification follow good practice and how will high quality standards be assured?

Reply:

Highly experienced officers will ensure the necessary specifications are put in place for the market testing exercise. Very specific monitoring and enforcement processes will be built into this to ensure that the highest quality standards are maintained.

3. How and when will parents be involved in monitoring that the service is meeting the needs of deaf children and also in contract management?

Reply:

The service currently engages with parents in a variety of ways, primarily through its day to day activities but also more formally, such as seeking parent feedback through service evaluation questionnaires. It is expected that the current arrangements for parental involvement will continue as normal regardless of who may be delivering the service in future, informed as they are by best practice and advice and guidance from organisations such as the National Deaf Children's Society.

Supplementary question:

No supplementary question was asked.

Oral Questions for the Education Portfolio Holder received from Nicola Ward, Regional Director – London, the National Deaf Children's Society

1. A deaf child needs speech and language therapy in order to develop their language and communication skills. Considering the change indicated in the SALT SEN Gateway Review, what process will be put in place to ensure all deaf children's needs will be met in Bromley?

Reply:

There is no proposed change in the provision of Speech and Language Therapy for deaf and hearing impaired children.

Appendix One of the report specifically identifies that Speech and Language Therapy provision commissioned by the Council at Darrick Wood Primary, Darrick Wood Secondary and Darrick Wood Pre School for Deaf Children is excluded from this proposal.

Supplementary question:

In practice can you reassure parents, carers and professionals that Speech and Language Therapy needs stated in Education, Health and Care Plans will be met and not changed?

Reply:

There is no proposed change in the provision of Speech and Language Therapy for deaf and hearing impaired children. It is specifically excluded.

2. How will parents and deaf children and young people be consulted and will there be an Equality Impact Assessment if the model of service delivery changes for Speech and Language Therapy?

Reply:

See the response to Question 1. There is no proposed change to the model of service delivery for deaf and hearing impaired children.

Supplementary question:

No supplementary question was asked.

3. Will the new service delivery model include specialist Speech and Language Therapists for deaf children? Specialist speech and language therapists for deaf children are very important. If children don't have the appropriate language skills it will have a significant impact on their development emotionally, socially and intellectually.

Reply:

See the response to Question 1. There is no proposed change to the model of service delivery for deaf and hearing impaired children.

Supplementary question:

No supplementary question was asked.

Oral Questions for the Education Portfolio Holder received from Rosalind Luff, Chair - Bromley Parent Voice

1. Children currently in receipt of a Statement may not receive an EHC plan post Sept 2014. This means there will be no statutory rights for SALT provision and no right to appeal if schools fail to deliver. How will LA ensure these children's needs are met?

Reply:

The draft SEN Code of Practice is currently open for consultation. The issue of which cohort of children will or will not receive an Education, Health and Care plan is therefore not currently defined. However, Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group commissions the majority of Speech and Language

Therapy across Bromley, including some provided within schools. This provision is based on the Clinical Commissioning Groups needs assessment and is not directly linked to children with Statements or Education, Health and Care plans.

Supplementary question:

How will the Local Authority ensure all children's needs are met as some children do not have Education, Health and Care Plans?

Reply:

The use of Pupil Resource Agreements will be extended and will form part of the local offer with top-up funding provided for children where appropriate. Pupil Resource Agreements can include therapy provision where a need is identified.

2. Bromley Parent Voice are concerned that the budget is not going up in line with the demand for the service. We would like to know if Bromley has undertaken a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and what are the needs highlighted for this group of children and young people.

Reply:

The Council has recently restructured its contract with Bromley Health Care which has resulted in greater efficiencies meaning that from September 2013 more schools are receiving more therapy support. This includes Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

The current level of Speech and Language Therapy at the Glebe and Riverside schools is under review to establish future need.

The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is presently being refreshed and the particular needs of children will be considered as part of that process

Supplementary question:

No supplementary question was asked.

3. Ref. Para 3.12 &4 of report ED13120. Many of Bromley's schools are academies with the Local Authority have little or no influence in the running of those schools. BPV would like to know how this monitoring of SEN provision will occur in practice.

Reply:

Paragraph 3.25 reflects that delegation of this funding into schools has been considered but the preferred option is to pass funding to schools under contract in a way which enables the Council to ensure funding is used for its intended purpose. The contract will set out the service required and this will be monitored.

Supplementary question:

How frequently will monitoring of SEN provision be undertaken?

Reply:

It is expected that monitoring will be undertaken on an annual basis.