

**REPORT FOR: EDUCATION
CONSULTATIVE FORUM**

Date of Meeting:	7 March 2012
Subject:	Special Schools/Special Educational Needs Placements Strategy
Key Decision:	No
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director Children's Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	No
Enclosures:	None

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report informs the Education Consultative Forum on the plans to develop a Special Schools/SEN Placements Strategy.

Recommendations:

The Education Consultative Forum is requested to consider the report and offer any comments.

Reason: (For recommendation)

To ensure there is a sufficient and comprehensive provision for pupils with special educational needs to fulfil the local authority's statutory responsibilities.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

1. This report provides the Education Consultative Forum with details of the plans to develop a Special Schools/SEN Placements Strategy.
2. This is a time of considerable change for schools and the local authority including special educational needs, being driven by changing Government policy and local issues.

National Issues

3. In Spring 2011, the DfE published the Special Educational Needs and Disability Green Paper. A consultation period followed until the end of June 2011. The Green Paper proposed fundamental reform to the SEN system to address a range of problems. The headlines were reported to EdCF at their meeting in June 2011.
4. The consultation closed in June 2011, and the Government's response is awaited. A number of local authorities started single assessment process pilots in September and also individual budget pilots have been extended. It is expected that these pilots will contribute to the Government's response. Other elements within the Green Paper, for example the Pupil Premium and the ability to establish Special Free Schools, have been implemented and the impact of these Government policy changes are informing the local context.

Local Issues and Context

5. In Harrow, there are a number of local issues that the local authority, in partnership with schools and providers, needs to address currently. These include:
 - the impact of an increasing pupil population with the associated rise in the proportion of pupils with SEN;
 - greater financial pressure arising from SEN statements;
 - changing SEN demand/profile with more complex needs, and;
 - pressure on places in special schools.
6. The Government's response to the Green Paper consultation will provide greater clarity on the SEN system and whilst it is difficult to assess the full implications for the local authority, at this time there is an imperative to progress work in this area.

Options considered

Special School/SEN Placements Strategy

7. To address the local issues the local authority, working in partnership with schools, is developing a Special School/SEN Placements Strategy. The overarching vision for the Strategy is to ensure that there is provision for pupils, young people, and their families, with special education needs or Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LLDD) that is continuous from 0 to 25, is supported by coherent services, and has a vision shared by all partners which is communicated consistently.
8. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is made through a range of settings appropriate to the needs of the children and young people. This includes provision in:
 - Mainstream schools
 - Additional resource bases in mainstream schools
 - Special schools/PRU in Harrow
 - Out-borough Placements
 - Provision in colleges
9. The focus of this element of the strategy is on the special schools and pupil referral unit in Harrow and their interface with other provision for pupils and young people with special educational needs, including mainstream schools and additionally resourced provision. The Strategy will include:
 - A Analysis of Need and Projections and Expenditure
 - B Implications of current provision
 - C Options for Consideration
10. The analysis of parts A and B will inform the development of a series of options that will be considered for implementation. The options will comprise short term actions for implementation from September 2013; and medium/longer term options for implementation from September 2014.
11. The initial focus of this element of the strategy is on the special schools and the pupil referral unit in Harrow and their interface with other provision for pupils and young people with special educational needs, including mainstream schools and additionally resourced provision. There are already plans in relation to special schools for September 2012, and the options arising from the strategy will build on these accordingly. It is expected that options to meet the increasing demand will be achieved through a combination of approaches, which may include modest changes within existing provision, re-provision and the creation of additional new provision.
12. To complete the strategy it is proposed that officers work with representative special school headteachers and SENCOs. Officer representatives from across the Council including Children's Services, Adults and Housing, and Finance will contribute to this work.

Timelines

13. It is proposed that a Report is presented to Cabinet in July with series of options for consultation. Consultation will take place during the Autumn Term with a report to Cabinet in December. If there are any proposals requiring statutory processes these will be undertaken accordingly. It is expected that there will be a phased implementation of any changes and these will be planned to coincide with the beginning of new academic years.

Financial Implications

14. Revenue funding for SEN provision is provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant and in 2011/12 the cost of in borough special schools was £7.6m, with a further £5.1m spent on SEN statements and specialist provision in mainstream schools, and £6.6m spent on out of borough SEN provision. An indicative provision totalling £1.65m has been included in the 2012/13 to 2014/15 capital programme to fund SEN provision.
15. At this stage there are no financial implications arising from this report. The proposals resulting from the development of the Special School/SEN Placements Strategy will inevitably have an impact on both capital and revenue funding. The financial implications will be reported as part of considering the options and will need to be considered when setting the future school budgets and capital programme.

Risk Management Implications

16. Directorate and corporate risk management implications for the council arising from any proposed options will be included on the directorate and corporate risk registers as necessary.

Equalities Implications

17. Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken by officers on any proposed options.
18. Harrow's schools are high achieving and inclusive and provide a diversity of provision. Any proposals arising from the SEN Strategy will build on the successful provision that already exists in Harrow's schools.

Corporate Priorities

19. These considerations will support the Council's Corporate Priorities for 2011-2012:
 - United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads.
 - Supporting and protecting people who are most in need.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	23 February 2012		
Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	22 February 2012		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Johanna Morgan, Education Professional Lead, Education Strategy and School Organisation, 020 8736 6841

Background Papers:

SEN and Disability Green Paper Report to Education Consultative Forum, 27 June 2011