

Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee

27 September 2021



Developing a new County Durham SEND Strategy

Report of John Pearce, Corporate Director Children and Young People's Services

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide the Overview and Scrutiny an update on the development of the new County Durham Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy.
2. To invite the committee to make comment and provide a contribution to the new County Durham SEND Strategy Vision and Aims.

Executive Summary

3. County Durham currently has a SEND strategy which is aligned to the wider children and young people's strategy. The strategy is prepared jointly by public services and representatives of parents and young people with SEND.
4. Development of the new strategy commenced in 2021 and engagement has taken place with a wide range of key stakeholders and service users. The new strategy is scheduled to be considered by Durham County Council's Cabinet and Clinical Commissioning Groups in January 2022.
5. A draft vision and aims statement has been developed referencing a range of sources and has been promoted by leaders of the SEND Partnership by asking service users and stakeholders a range of questions. Children and Young People's Overview and Scrutiny Committee today are being asked the same questions as a key stakeholder.

Recommendations

6. That Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Note the development of the new SEND strategy and provide views about its development, implementation and review
- b) Respond collectively as a key stakeholder to the questions set out in paragraph 13

Background

7. County Durham currently has a SEND strategy for children, young people and young adults with Special Educational Needs and Disability SEND in County Durham, with the aim of providing focus and clarity on the priorities for improving services and opportunities. This strategy is aligned with our wider children and young people strategy.
8. The strategy is prepared jointly by public services including the council and local health services and parents of young people with SEND represented by the Parent Carer Forum Making Changes Together (MCT) who work together to improve outcomes for people with SEND.
9. During 2021 we have embarked on developing a new strategy and have engaged with a wide range of key stakeholders and service users as we have developed the strategy ensuring it is relevant and purposeful.
10. It is planned that a draft new strategy will be presented to Cabinet in January 2022 and with the management bodies of the Clinical Commissioning Groups at or around the same time for approval.

Progress to date

11. The SEND Strategic Partnership have committed to developing a strategy that makes sense for children and young people with SEND and their families, schools and settings, services, teams and individual practitioners. The strategic intention is:
 - to inform and support our activity, and in turn is informed and supported by what we do,
 - enable an understanding of when progress is being made and
 - helps to identify what else needs to be done
12. A draft vision and aims statement has been developed through referencing a range of sources including the legislative framework, local strategies, consultations and reviews including that of Ofsted and CQC in their revisit to Durham in January 2020

The vision

Our Vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as it is for all children and young people in County Durham: That they are safe and part of their community, have the best start in life, have good physical and mental health, and gain the education, skills and experiences to prepare them for adulthood

This strategy should be built on a foundation of understanding and positive communication

The aims

- Where possible, for all children and young people to attend their local school which understands them and is able to meet their needs
- To work closely with families to develop resilience and feel confident that needs are understood and met
- To listen to what children and young people are telling us when supporting them and to develop their resilience and independence
- To identify needs in a timely way and have the right support available to meet needs at the right time
- For all education settings and their workforce to be confident in identifying and meeting needs and to promote inclusion
- To have a joined-up offer of support available proportionate to assessed needs

13. Leaders from across the SEND partnership have promoted the vision and aims to service users and key stakeholders across County Durham. Asking of Service Users and stakeholders a range of questions including

- Are the statements understandable?
- Do you agree on the vision and aims?
- What outcomes would we notice for children and young people if these aims and priorities are being achieved?
- What would I, my family, or my team do to support this?
- How do we promote confidence in children and young people, their families, and professionals that these will happen?
- How do we hold ourselves* to account? (* this includes accountability of schools)

14. A summary of responses so far include:

- Universal support or strong support for the Vision and Aims.
- A desire for more inclusion/less exclusion, settled schooling, positive view of neurodiversity, confidence in families and professionals, improved transitions and better mental health and understanding of health needs
- A breadth of far-reaching actions but much of the parent and SENCO response centred on positive relationships and communication and joint working/reviewing of progress, sharing good practice
- A desire to improve professional awareness of SEND, develop a greater consistency of offer between settings, promote positive communication, shared planning and solutions for transitions

An opportunity to engage school governance, making clear the SEND offer to families in each provision, peer to peer review, challenge and support

15. Emerging Headlines from specific groups of service users and stakeholders includes

- **Children and Young People** want more opportunity to be heard when choices are made for them, want more opportunity to be included in their local community
- **Parents and Carers** are focused on well-being and Mental health, Provision at SEND Support and improving Transitions, positive value for neurodiversity
- **SENCOs and Parents and Carers** consider improved communication as the key to raising confidence in provision
- **Health stakeholder** feedback is positive with an acknowledgement that the action sets which underpin the strategy ought to be a blend of health specific and joint / pooled solutions
- **Care stakeholder feedback**, strong support from Early Help Services. Keenness to improve the transition into adult services and community support.

Overview and Scrutiny as Key Stakeholders

16. We would like views from Overview and Scrutiny about the development, implementation and review of the new strategy and to engage the Committee as key stakeholders in the development of the strategy asking the same questions asked of all service users and stakeholders:

- Are the statements understandable?
- Do you agree on the vision and aims?
- What outcomes would we notice for children and young people if these aims and priorities are being achieved?
- What would I, my family, or my team do to support this?
- How do we promote confidence in children and young people, their families, and professionals that these will happen?
- How do we hold ourselves* to account? (* this includes accountability of schools)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

None

Finance

None

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

None.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

None.

Crime and Disorder

None.

Staffing

None.

Accommodation

None.

Risk

None.

Procurement

None.