

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Scrutiny Committee - Services
DATE OF MEETING	19 June 2014
TITLE OF ITEM	Review of SEN and Inclusion
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Gareth Thomas

1. Purpose of the report

1.1.1. The purpose of this report is to update you on the contents of the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Review. The following was reported upon in the original report on 3 October 2013:

- The case for change
- The cost of the provision compared with corresponding counties
- Update on the consultation that had taken place to date
- The four options that were being offered in the report from Capita
- The obstructions and risks associated with any change
- The timetable
- The Vision

2. Update on the contents of the Review

2.1. The purpose of the Review from the outset is to:

‘Ensure that children and young people (between 2 and 18 years old) with special educational needs take advantage of opportunities and gain experiences that have been effectively planned for them in order to enable them to achieve their potential.’

2.2. Having focussed on the Favoured Option that had been proposed it had to be reviewed in the context of the significant change in the field which included:

- the legislative proposals for reform of the framework for special educational needs;
- the evidence that suggests that there is a need to focus on early intervention and prevention. (Early Intervention is offering support BEFORE the child falls within the thresholds of the SEN Code of Practice – namely, before they fall far behind their peers in terms of skills or social behaviours);
- the programme to build a new Special School for children and young people with additional learning needs in the County;
- the need to identify savings as a contribution towards the Council’s general savings programme.

2.3 The outcomes we seek to achieve through the Review include:

- a provision which places much greater emphasis on the early years and seeks to identify conditions very early on in the lives of children so that this can have an impact on their education and their lives in general.
- robust multi-agency collaboration arrangements that will lead to sharing information and ensuring effective joint-planning for the education and development of children and young people who need additional support;
- a system that provides early and speedy intervention as a child's needs become apparent and respond promptly and provide additional support immediately – regardless of the age of the child;
- Offer a service that ensures high quality is part of the educational experiences and children and young people who receive the additional support make educational progress on an appropriate speed and contribute to promoting their independence.

2.4 When implementing the Review's proposals, and looking in greater detail at the preventative activities, we will achieve the following:

- reduce the demand for statements, especially for some specific conditions;
- offer a provision that is much more effective and efficient

2.5 The main facilitators in order to achieve the changes and succeed in making a positive difference will be the following:

- **the workforce** – there will be greater emphasis on developing the workforce that work with children with Special Educational Needs, and arming them with the correct type of skills and information;
- **parents** – there will be greater emphasis on better communication with the child as the focal point of the entire service and the parents will be more aware of their responsibilities and the provision that is available to support the children and young people.
- **the arrangements and shape of the service** – there will be a need to reorganise a lot within the Education Service in order to respond to the new requirements;
- **schools** – there will be better understanding and clarity in terms of the responsibilities of the schools, Local Authority and agencies in relation to the provision. There will be an effective system to track performance on a regular basis to ensure that pupils are making the expected progress against their progress targets i.e. that the provision is effective and efficient.

2.6 Given the financial climate there is by now, undoubtedly a clear emphasis for the Review to create savings, the business plan shows that it is possible to achieve this but over an extended period of time.

2.7 A report has been submitted and accepted by the Informal Cabinet on 9 April which includes 13 specific proposals to transform the service.

2.8 At the end of May this year the Welsh Government published the long-awaited White Paper which included legislative proposals for the ALN. It is heartening to see that our vision's emphasis corresponds very closely with these proposals. We are in the process of analysing the contents of these proposals carefully and we will send our observations to the Government by 25 July.

3. Engagement

3.1 Engaging with all of the stakeholders has been at the core of this Review from the outset. A specific section of the final report to the Cabinet will scrutinise this engagement.

3.2 Good practice – Arrangements were made to visit Ceredigion Council following the authority's success in receiving an award of Excellence following Estyn's recent inspection, including the field of ALN. It was heartening to see that our Review was going in the same direction. The evident merits in their provision included:

- An innovative tracking system that retained the details of every child and young person
- Emphasis on reducing statements
- Good communication with parents including the monthly "calling in" scheme
- A Central Team that collaborated well to ensure that the system was as simple as possible
- Simple method of devolving the ALN funding to the schools

3.4 Head teachers – in January a culture change Focus Group was established, namely representation from the county's primary, secondary and special schools convening to discuss and engage on the Review on a regular basis. The group has been beneficial for engaging, and in turn report back to the Project Board in setting a direction and identifying the school's concern – as well as helping us to update the other head teachers through PSCACG and SSPG.

3.3 Co-ordinators – the SEN Co-ordinators have a key role of keeping an overview of the ALN provision in the schools. The Government's legislative proposals note that mainstream schools will be required to appoint an ALN Coordinator and this role will supersede the role of the current coordinator. Therefore it is timely that we held three regional forums with the primary Coordinators and one with the secondary coordinators

during May to discuss their current role and responsibilities, to update them on the review and to identify their training needs but mainly to provide them with an opportunity to interact with each other. Clear messages that were highlighted here included:

- Inconsistency in terms of the standard of Psychologists and specialist teachers across the county
- Lack of language therapists
- Lack of accurate and current information for referring pupils
- Lack of time to complete the responsibilities of the coordinator
- Confirmation needed on the role of the coordinator
- Need to raise the profile of ALN in the schools (all the educational staff and governors) and in general
- Need specific training on the different conditions and on how to undertake PLASC

3.4 Assistants – we have undertaken an Audit of the assistants' skills via an online questionnaire to gain a better indication of the current skills and training needs. This report is in the process of being put together.

3.5 We have updated some of the central teams and the multiagency group on the Report's proposals and we will contact all of the head teachers collectively at the end of June / beginning of July.

3.6 Professional visits and a sample of schools – 13 visits have been arranged during June to provide an opportunity to hear from the workforce directly about the current ALN provision in the schools.

3.7 Parents – SNAP has already engaged with a limited sample of parents of pupils with ALN and we are currently working closely with them to prepare a questionnaire to send to the parents of every pupil on the SEN register. The purpose of the questionnaire is to raise awareness of the Review and the new legislation along with providing parents with an opportunity to state how they wish to see us improving communication and sharing information with them.

4. Next steps:

4.1 It is intended to submit the final Business Case to the Formal Cabinet at the beginning of September, at the latest October 2014. The plan includes 13 specific proposals but the majority overlap each other and are dependent on each other.

4.2 Following the publication of the White Paper we will now check the contents to ensure that we refer to all of the recommendations. We have already arranged for an officer from the Government to attend our meeting at the end of June.

4.3 The main proposals are:

- make the child the focal point and develop integrated plans
- reduce the demand for new statements and scrutinise more current statements
- target specific conditions
- restructure the Service
- give particular attention to the early years and early intervention
- restructure the workforce
- training programme
- tracking system and data collection
- target savings in specific fields and restructure the method of distributing ALN funding to the schools

5. The timing of the project

5.1 Subject to the Cabinet's approval in September/October 2014 – it is proposed that elements become operational in January 2015, including appointing new posts, training etc. It is hoped that the structure of the new workforce will be in place by September 2015.

5.2 We will gradually introduce the remainder of the review with some elements not becoming operational until after 2020. The timing of the new legislation will also be able to influence this. A detailed work programme will be prepared.