

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Services Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	2 October, 2014
TITLE OF ITEM	Additional Learning Needs and Inclusion Strategic Review
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor Gareth Thomas
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1. STATEMENTS

- 1.1. The members will be aware of points made in the past in relation to moving away from the statements procedure – a shift that, by now, has been mentioned nationally. The members are eager to consider how the proposed new procedure will meet the needs of pupils as well as, if not better, than the statement procedure. The challenge is, if the statement is a statutory summary of pupils’ real needs, how will a different procedure meet those needs? It is fair to note that some members are doubtful of the sense in moving away from the statements procedure and reducing the demand for statements as an objective for the project.
- 1.2. The proposed procedure offered in the Review gives full consideration to the statutory requirements outlined in the Welsh Government White Paper – May 22 ‘*Legislative Proposals for Additional Learning Needs*’.
- 1.3. Moving from the current procedure of creating statements to a new procedure of introducing Individual Development Plans (IDP) ensures a more integrated and collaborative process of assessing, planning, monitoring and facilitating early, timely and effective interventions.
- 1.4. It will be a requirement for the Local Authority to continue to be responsible for the quality, content and provision through the new IDP and in accordance with the current procedure, the IDPs will have to be reviewed at least every year.
- 1.5. The legislation will force Local Authorities, Local Health Boards and Further Education institutes to collaborate and share information when assessing, planning and delivering the provision.
- 1.6. This is a significant step forward which leads to securing the best possible multi-agency provision to meet the additional learning needs of children and young people aged 0-25 years old. The current statements will be limited to individuals with significant, intensive and complex difficulties. The procedure of providing new IDPs will extend to include all individuals with individual learning difficulties from those with moderate difficulties. The statutory rights also extend to include the right for all individuals with additional learning needs to appeal to a SEN Tribunal.

2. DELAY

- 2.1. There are a number of examples of delay before any action is taken under the current system with some months passing between identifying the issues before a needs assessment is undertaken and further delay before any action and support is provided.
- 2.2. The new procedure will ensure early and effective intervention and this in response to local and national proposals.

- 2.3. One of the main proposals of the Strategic Review is to intensify early years intervention. With multi-agency collaboration, the provision will reach the child sooner, and this provision will be fully integrated.
- 2.4. Currently, submitting a statement takes time – up to 26 weeks from submitting the original request for a statutory assessment. It is anticipated that the provision assessment and planning procedure will be much quicker and that the provision will reach the individual within a much tighter period (between 3 and 6 weeks).

3. SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE

- 3.1. The members will be aware of current problems in terms of the support and expertise that is available to support schools as they seek to cope with special learning needs. Is there a guarantee that the new procedure will improve this? Members will be seeking assurance that the new system will deal with this delay and will speed up the response to situations of need.
- 3.2. One of the Review's proposals is to restructure the Service. The review proposes a model which will see a much more skilful central structure that will ensure consistency of provision across the County and will be able to secure quicker and more effective early intervention.
- 3.3. The structure will include:
 - Senior Manager / Psychological Lead - Additional Educational Needs and Inclusion
 - Inclusion Officer;
 - Team of Key Workers;
 - Specialist Teachers;
 - Senior assistants;
 - We will also unlock the potential of Gwynedd's Special Schools to be part of this structure.

4. CHANGES TO THE CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS

- 4.1. We anticipate proposing changes to the existing arrangements in the following fields:
 - Monitoring and Reviewing;
 - Early years;
 - Provision arrangements – moving away from statements to introduce IDP for all pupils with ALN;
 - Workforce Structure;
 - Special Schools;
 - Commissioning the SENJC;
 - Formula for transferring ALN budgets to the schools;
 - Reviewing specific services (behaviour maintenance and ABC units);
 - Improving communication;
 - Tracking and data systems;
 - Training programme.

5. ENGAGEMENT

How much engagement has there been on those changes and what type of messages have been received from the key stakeholders?

5.1. Conversations and discussion sessions were held with users, providers and commissioners of the service throughout the Review. From the beginning, there was unanimous support to the case for change. During the engagement, our main findings were reiterated from time to time and some fields which had not been adequately addressed were highlighted.

5.2. The following were engaged with during the process:

- A **workshop** to discuss **Transforming Services for the Vulnerable Children of Gwynedd** in September 2013 – attended by close to 30 participants / stakeholders from different sectors, including health, social services, head teachers and parents;
- **Visits to a sample of 16 schools** to discuss the current situation in the context of their ALN provision with the head teachers and the coordinators;
- Collective engagement meetings were held with Head teachers, teachers and assistants during the Review;
- All the county's head teachers and Education Psychologists were invited to a collective meeting to discuss the proposals of the Review and the new legislation;
- Special forums were held for all **ALN Co-ordinators** of the schools;
- Specific sessions were held with a multi-agency liaison group and with the authority's ALN central workforce;
- Details of an **online questionnaire were sent to all assistants** to seek more information about the work situation of the ALN assistants;
- A **Changing Culture Group** was formed which included a range of primary and secondary head teachers which met regularly during 2014 to discuss the proposals of the review;
- During the summer of 2014, in collaboration with SNAP, the parents of all pupils on the schools' ALN registers were given an opportunity to fill an online questionnaire. A further consultation with a group of parents of the more vulnerable and two groups of secondary school pupils will be held early in September. Unfortunately, only a small percentage responded, however the results were significant;
- A visit to Ceredigion Council was arranged following the publication of its Excellent report by Estyn;
- A meeting was held with a specific officer from the Welsh Government to discuss the new legislative proposals in the White Paper;
- We will be engaging on a high level with the Health Service, Isle of Anglesey County Council and the Special Educational Needs Joint Committee during September 2014.

5.3. Findings:

- Need to raise the status of the Additional Learning Needs field as a crucial service and provision within Gwynedd Council;
- Need to identify a post for a designated person as an education key worker to support the procedures of catchment areas and the schools, parents, children and young people of Gwynedd;
- Need to ensure professional development for Assistants;
- Need to improve the understanding of the responsibilities of ALN assistants by all the workforce which provides the service;

- Schools require guidance in terms of deciding on the needs and the provision;
- A large number of parents have not received any information about the additional support that their children receive and 31% were not clear as to what type of support they receive;
- A large number of parents either do not know or note that their children do not have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) – and only half of those who responded to the questionnaire had been part of planning their child's IEP;
- The Government was happy with the principles of the Proposals for this Review;
- Need much more clarity from the Government in terms of the new Code of Practice and the implementation of the new legislation;
- A very effective tracking / data system in Ceredigion - crucial to be able to measure and monitor the efficiency of the service.

6. What are the drivers behind these changes - financial savings or improving the service?

6.1. The case for change: The engagement findings; the need to secure an improvement in the service along with the emergence of new legislation are all driving the changes. However, naturally, there is a need to ensure that the service is effective and efficient and that it will not lead to any additional permanent monies being released for the changes.

7. In what way are the proposals being developed likely to improve collaboration between agencies in order to cut down on the bureaucratic elements of the current procedure?

7.1. Have already opened discussions with Health, and intend to reconvene a multi-agency liaison group to work specifically on developing the Individual Development Plans along with associated processes to coincide with legislative requirements.

7.2. The new Key Worker's role will include specific responsibilities for promoting collaboration between agencies to reduce duplication or work, and to speed up processes to ensure appropriate provision for the pupils – in addition to supporting the pupil and families.

8. How are any new procedures likely to be better at dealing with children who move to the area with specific needs?

8.1. The new arrangements will mean that it will be possible to review the provision for these pupils earlier and on a multi-agency level with the parents - without having to comply with requirements for a decision of another LA for a fixed time.

8.2. Due to the emphasis on releasing the potential of the special schools, it will be possible to respond sooner to the specific needs as we will have a higher range of expertise within the workforce as a result of the investment in training.

9. What is the new timetable for submitting the proposals?

9.1. The intention was to submit the proposals to the Cabinet on 1 October. Due to the need for further detailed work on the Business Plan, we will not be submitting them until December. However, we are continuing to work on detailed plans for the proposals and this has not caused any delay in terms of the timings for implementing the transformation.

9.2. We still intend for some of the proposals to be operational by September 2015.

9.3. Due to this delay, the proposals are not currently sufficiently mature to be submitted in full to the Committee.

ITJ/EIO/Is
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