

REPORT TO: Children, Young People & Families
Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 14th June 2021

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children & Young People

SUBJECT: Halton Local Area SEND Strategy 2021-25

WARD(S) All

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To advise the board on the outcomes of the consultation on the proposed local area SEND Strategy for 2021-2024 and how it will be implemented.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- i) **Members consider and comment on the report and appendices.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Following the SEND Partnership Board's approval of the draft SEND Strategy for 2021-25, consultation took place during March and April 2021. The consultation was hosted on the Halton Local Offer and was widely publicised both prior to and during the consultation phase (see appendix 1).

3.2 In addition to making stakeholders aware through social media and email, a number of presentations and consultation events were held with a range of stakeholders (see appendix 1). The ability to consult more broadly and effectively was impacted significantly by lockdown restrictions in place during the majority of the consultation phase due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

3.3 PPB should note that in addition to the consultation on the strategy, feedback has been given and gathered on how we can more effectively reach out to a broader range of stakeholders when consulting. Feedback included the need to:

- reach out to a wider network of parent groups;
- provide more and better differentiated consultation with children young people;
- hold events over a wider variety of times including more

- evening consultations;
 - provide more notice of consultation events and use the disabled children's register and synergy to inform families who are registered or have live EHCPs.
- 3.4 Moving forward Officers will look to respond positively to all the above. One of the ways identified that consultation could be swiftly improved is by establishing a new parent/carer database or register accompanying the statutory Disabled Children's Register. This would require parent/carer permission to comply with GDPR. Following approval from the SEND Strategic Partnership this is being further explored by the CYP Policy and Performance Team.
- 3.5 The consultation period for the SEND Strategy closed at midnight on Friday 23rd April after been open for eight weeks, including the school Easter holiday. A total of 86 people responded to the consultation of which 49% were parents of children and young people with SEND. Live, zoom based consultation events included representation from parents and a number of young people. The information in the consultation summary is anonymous and these may be included in the summary total. Appendix 2 contains the full consultation summary.
- 3.6 Overall the draft strategy was well received in its intention with 99% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the proposed vision and 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the principles. However, the detail contained in the comments presented a more balanced picture with comments including:
- *I think they are strong statements based on good values, and are aspirational*
 - *This what a caring society would want.*
 - *I agree but don't feel Halton follow this*
 - *I wish this was an actual vision. But no one is heard and nothing is actioned.*
 - *It would be good but again it's all spoke about and never delivered.*
- 3.7 In terms of overall priorities and outcome measures again there was a consistently high level of agreement with 82% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the key outcome themes and 92% responding that the delivering on the priorities would improve the lives of children, young people and families.
- 3.8 Again, however, the tone of consultation events and the comments gathered suggest a significant scepticism on the local area's ability to deliver its priorities. Addressing this scepticism must be at the

forefront of the partnership's considerations when agreeing implementation and monitoring and accountability if it is to succeed. With this in mind an extraordinary meeting of the SEND partnership is convened in June 2021 to focus solely on ensuring that appropriate governance and accountability processes are in place to make sure the objectives are delivered.

3.9 Some telling examples from the comments from the consultation feedback include:

- *agree be bold, take a stance, make it simple De- complicate it all This will Inspire and innovate the whole process. Over[h]all the system in Halton and lead the way.*
- *Those appointed to implement the scheme(s) should be required to PROACTIVELY search for potential beneficiariesSpecial consideration should be given to related groups of beneficiaries, e.g. siblings. The benefits provided by the scheme(s) must be INTEGRATED into a background of other provisions (financial, housing, clothing, books and equipment, computers, travel, accommodation, food sufficiency, ability to do homework etc.etc.) without which it will all be in vain. Very special help and consideration should be given to potential beneficiaries in particular situations (excluded from normal schooling, whether temporarily or permanently, young offenders, those on probation or other restrictions imposed by authorities).*
- *Not all schools are inclusive, but this would be nice*
- *Only if they are matched by sufficient levels of funding.*
- *Priority 4 will only be possible if waiting times for funding are cut. New pupils arrive at school and clearly need additional support however without appropriate funding schools cannot make this happen*
- *Parents need to understand the parameters in which Halton are able to work so that they have realistic expectations and are willing to discuss options to find the most effective and appropriate one for the young person at each stage of their development.*
- *Will waiting times for support be reduced?*

3.10 Appendix 3 shows the work carried out to date in incorporating the feedback and the potential impact on the draft strategy that the comments suggest. While there was clearly overall agreement on the direction of travel contained in the draft strategy the partnership board agreed to reconvene the strategy development task and finish group to fully consider the feedback given and ensure that it was

appropriately captured in the final strategy.

3.11 Next Steps

- June:
- Extraordinary meeting of SEND Partnership to approve strategy and governance.
 - Priority sub-groups to develop action plans to deliver objectives and agree performance indicators and milestones.
- July:
- Scheduled SEND Partnership meeting to de-conflict and approve action plans including completion dates/phasing, objective milestones and KPI/ outcome measures.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Although the local area SEND Strategy does not have a direct impact on policy the vision and principles in the SEND Strategy will need to be reflected in council policy changes as they happen.

4.2 Some of the objectives from the strategy will require reviews or amendments to policies to facilitate achieving the strategic outcomes. However such amendments or changes to any Council policy remains subject to the council's policy review processes including EIA and executive approval.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The SEND Strategy has been developed to be delivered within existing revenue budgets and no implementation fund has been identified.

5.2 The overall impact of the strategy is to increase joint working and service efficiency, including appropriate provision and sufficiency in the education sector. This will ease pressure on budgets and contribute significantly to eliminating the overspend in Halton Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The purpose of the 2021-2025 Halton SEND Strategy is to improve outcomes for, and the lived experience of, children and young people with SEND and their families. Currently children recognised as having a special educational needs and/or disability make up over 17% of the areas school age population therefore the strategy will make a significant contribution towards ensuring that Halton's

children and young people have the best possible start in life.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Young people with SEND and Learning difficulties are disproportionately likely to be NEET or unemployed. Elements of the strategy are aimed at improving employability and skills for these young people leading to meaningful employment.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Children and young people with SEND are disproportionately likely to be overweight, lack opportunities to access healthy lifestyles and leisure activities and die young. Improving health outcomes for these children and young people is a core objective of SEND Strategic Priority 3: Preparation for Adulthood.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Contextual safeguarding considerations are a significant element with respect to ensuring that we build inclusive communities for children and young people with both visible and invisible disabilities.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

None identified.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 Without a coherent and joined up strategic approach to meeting the needs and improving the life outcomes and lived experience of children and young people and their families it will be considerably more challenging for the local area to meet its statutory and morale duties.

7.2 Individual objectives within the strategy will, in some cases, contain projects that may require separate risk analysis. Where this is the case these will be overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Individual objectives within the strategy will, in some cases, contain projects that require separate and individual equality impact analysis and assessment as part of good practice. Where this is the case these will be overseen by the SEND Strategic Partnership.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.