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To: Education Cabinet Committee – 19 March 2013

Subject: Priorities for the Strategy for Special Education Needs and Disabilities

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report seeks member views on the proposed priorities for the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Strategy in Kent, based on a review carried out during 2012 and anticipating statutory change through the Children and Families Bill which is likely to be enacted with effect from September 2014.

Recommendations: Education Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- i. note and comment on the priorities for the strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
  - ii. endorse the plans for stakeholder consultation
  - iii. note that the outcomes of consultation will be brought back to this Committee for its further consideration in June before final approval by Cabinet in July 2013.
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## **1. Introduction**

1.1. In May 2012, Education Cabinet Committee endorsed the framework for a review and development of a Strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disability for the children and young people of Kent.

1.2 A Strategy development group involving Headteachers, KCC Senior Officers in Education and Social Care, NHS and other practitioner representatives and other key stakeholders representing parents was established to carry out the review and develop the draft strategy. The overarching aim is to improve the health, well being, attainment and progress, and the quality of provision, for children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The key issues for improvement were agreed as follows:

1. Review and develop the capacity of special schools (defining existing offer and building in future need and development)
2. Develop and identify better resourced specialist provision in mainstream schools
3. Develop and improve post 16 provision and services
4. Review funding streams/mechanisms to achieve better value for money (delegated and non delegated)

5. Increase parental/carer engagement and confidence in the system
6. Review and improve the statutory assessment process and the timescales for completing assessments
7. Build professional capacity and skills in mainstream schools to meet the changing needs of pupils
8. Improve integrated working and joint commissioning arrangements between education, health and social care
9. Review the process and operation of local forums and panels to ensure children's needs are met more effectively
10. Define and rationalise local decision making arrangements

1.3 Work to develop a strategy for disabled children under the direction of the KCC Children and Young People's Joint Commissioning Board is underway. It is designed to ensure a robust, co-ordinated multi-agency response to the needs of disabled children and those with special educational needs and their parents carers, and ensure the development of a continuum of provision to meet their needs.

## **2. Financial Implications**

2.1 Although there will be immediate financial implications arising from the emerging SEND Strategy, it will be necessary to prepare a fully costed action plan to implement proposals which receive support from the consultation and any future expansion of provision.

2.2 At present nearly 20% (£187m), of the Dedicated School's Grant (DSG), is invested in schools to meet the additional and special educational needs of pupils in Kent. Changes arising from the introduction of a new national funding formula will impact on the approach to resourcing SEND. Funding for high needs pupils (and with effect from September 2013 to 6<sup>th</sup> forms and Colleges) will be passported to schools as top up funding, on an individual pupil basis.

2.3 The developing proposals in the Strategy will ensure resources, including those delegated to schools are spent in the most appropriate and effective way to meet the outcomes and targets in Bold Steps for Education.

## **3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

3.1 The development of a SEND Strategy will support the delivery of Bold Steps for Kent, priority 3 - *Ensure all pupils meet their full potential* and priority 15 - *Improve services for the most vulnerable in Kent*. It also supports the priorities set out in Bold Steps for Education:

- pupils with special educational needs and disabilities in Kent will achieve better progress and outcomes than nationally
- All special schools will be good or outstanding
- The number of pupils requiring a statement of SEN will be reduced by developing more effective early intervention
- 95% of SEN statutory assessments will be completed within required timescales
- The number of independent and non maintained special school placements will be reduced by 10% to ensure the needs of more Kent children are met in their locality

## **4. Strategic Context**

4.1 The SEND Strategy will be developed to enable Kent to implement significant changes in national policy, following the SEN Green Paper and proposals set out in

the Children and Families Bill published on 5 February 2013, as well as changes to national funding arrangements. These include :

- ◆ National formula funding changes for school funding, particularly element 3 funding for high needs pupils
- ◆ Reform of SEND framework through the Children and Families Bill; a single and shorter assessment process leading to a combined Education, Health and Care Plan to replace both SEN Statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments for 0-25 year olds.
- ◆ Kent's role as a Pathfinder authority testing Government proposals in the Children and Families Bill, developing a common framework for assessment, a single plan and publication of a local offer. The Kent and the SE7 Pathfinder was initially due to complete in March 2013, but has now been extended by the Department of Education to September 2014.
- ◆ The raising of the participation age to 18 by 2015 and the requirement to make provision for young people with SEN or a disability to age 25
- ◆ The role of schools and KCC in commissioning services
- ◆ From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, health services for children move from Primary Care Trusts to new Clinical Commissioning Groups.

## **5. The Draft Aims of the Strategy**

5.1 The over-arching draft aim of the strategy will be to improve educational, health and other outcomes for all of Kent's children and young people with SEN and disabilities. They do significantly less well in comparison to other children and young people.

5.2 The second key draft aim is to ensure Kent effectively delivers the necessary changes to the assessment of needs and joint commissioning of provision by 2014, as set out in the Children and Families Bill, so that children and young people have better integrated support across education, health and social care.

5.3 Our third key draft aim is to address the gaps in provision, and improve the quality of provision, for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. This will mean developing the range of providers and encouraging a mixed economy of provision across the maintained Special schools and mainstream schools in Kent, as well as the highest quality and cost effective independent and non maintained Special schools where some children and young people are placed.

5.4 There is considerable good practice in Kent across all agencies but there are also significant gaps in what we provide. The strategy will address those gaps.

## **6. A summary of the draft Strategy priorities**

6.1 We have identified 11 key priorities which need to be addressed in order to improve provision and close the attainment gap for disabled children & those with SEN:

- Improve access to local education, care and health provision by developing the quality and capacity of early years providers, schools and colleges to meet the need of local children with SEN and disability;
- Improve progress rates and have good outcomes for all children and young people with SEN and disabilities so that we close the gap between those with SEN and those without; set aspirational targets for all children in Kent;
- Build parents' confidence in the support provided and improve the engagement of parents by providing timely information, advice and support for parents;

- Develop and improve services for children and young people with them and their families, through co-production and meaningful participation.
- Deliver greater local integration and co-ordination in services for children and families in Kent, across education, health and social care;
- Improve early intervention and ensure preventative support is more targeted to reduce poorer outcomes and prevent escalation and rising levels of need;
- Develop a systematic and joint strategic commissioning approach to improve quality and availability of provision 0-25, with good transition to adult services
- Ensure the provision of high quality specialist services as appropriate and necessary;
- Ensure we are making the most effective and efficient use of our resources to meet increasing demand (such as removing perverse incentives);
- Successfully deliver the Kent approach to integrated education, health and care planning by September 2014.
- Ensure disabled children and families have timely access to appropriate community equipment and wheelchair services to meet their current and future needs.

6.2 The SEND Strategy will be a key element of Kent County Council's (KCC) policy framework for supporting the needs of all children and young people between the ages of 0-25. The Local Authority (LA) has a statutory duty to keep under review its arrangements for special education provision.

## **7 Consultation**

7/1 It is proposed to undertake consultation during April to June 2013.

It is proposed to provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to comment on the draft proposals through publication of a draft strategy in an online format and to raise awareness of the consultation through participants in the strategy development group. Where possible this will utilise existing SEN & Disability service users networks, parents forum and support groups as well as through links and regular meetings Headteachers and governors, and other school staff.

## **8. Recommendations**

Members are asked to:

- i. note and comment on the priorities for the strategy for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
- ii. endorse the plans for stakeholder consultation
- iii. note that the outcomes of consultation will be brought back to this Committee for its further consideration in June before final approval by Cabinet in July 2013.

### **Lead Officer contact Details**

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**Background Documents**

KCC Bold Steps for Kent-Medium term Plan to 2014-2015

KCC Scoping Review and the Development of a Strategy for Special Education Needs and Disabilities, 9 May 2012