

REPORT TO: Schools Forum

DATE: 16th October 2019

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Education, Inclusion and Provision

SUBJECT: Independent Review of High Needs

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To report on to date in responding to the review of High Needs Provision undertaken by independent consultants Peopletoo.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

2.1 Note the report;

2.2 Support the progress of the revision and redesign of High Needs; and

2.2 Request a further report to be submitted at the next School Forum meeting.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In February 2019 Executive Board approved the recommendations from the independent review of High Needs Provision undertaken by external consultants Peopletoo. They also approved funding for Peopletoo to lead on the next steps of the project, the revision and redesign of both the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) process and provision within the borough.

3.2 It was agreed at the SEND Strategic Board that the work would be split into three workstreams; Identifying Need, Meeting Need and the Pupil Referral Unit. Each of the workstreams was independently Chaired by Peopletoo and representatives across the workstreams included parents and carers, schools and settings, Riverside College, Social Care, colleagues from Health, Educational Psychology, Early Years, Commissioning, Admissions, Virtual School, Education Welfare and LA SEND. Peopletoo also undertook separate consultation with parents and carers and children and young people. The Children Young People and Families Policy and Performance Board of the Council also set up a series of meetings to scrutinise the work and progress undertaken.

3.3 The Identifying Needs Workstream has met 4 times. In addition there has been two separate consultations with parents and 3 sets of consultation

with young people. More are planned over the next 3 months. A national best practice audit has been undertaken, as well as case audit of Halton EHCPs. There has also been significant engagement with the professionals working on or contributing to EHCPs.

- 3.4 To date a number of key themes have started to emerge which include the opportunity to streamline the current process, the need for a better understanding by all partners of what an EHCP is and what it is not, the need for better involvement with young people and the development of a “pledge”, more use of the graduated approach, clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities of those involved in EHCPs, development of a banding model for funding, the extent to which there is a focus on independence and preparation for adulthood and better triangulation of education, health and social care contributions.
- 3.5 The focus of the second task group is Meeting Needs. The themes considered to date include the need for better inclusion in Halton Schools, identifying need early through understanding the need in the early years, need to share expertise within the borough through developing clusters of mainstream and specialist provision, providing a continuity of specialist resource provision and special school support across the age range linked to the main primary identified SEND needs and revision of SLAs and their monitoring.
- 3.6 The role and remit of the third task group is to change the operating model of the PRU and its relationship to schools so that it can maximise the integration of pupils back into mainstream. Emerging issues included the impact of the “Care Schedule”, role of the Educational Psychology team in terms of early intervention, the role of CAMHS, the need for a more positive narrative for parents underpinned by the PRUs role in early intervention and evidenced by case studies, need to gain the views of young people and the role and capacity of vocational provision offered by the PRU.
- 3.7 The aim is for the three workstreams to complete their work by December 2019. In January 2020 a report will be submitted to the Executive Board of the Council setting out the proposed changes for their consideration. If the recommendations of this report are agreed formal consultation on the revised arrangements will then be undertaken.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Through supporting schools to become more inclusive, streamlining the assessment arrangements and revising the offer of our specialist provision including the PRU it is hoped that we will be better able to meet the needs of Halton pupils through our local provision. Developing support from specialist settings to mainstream schools should ensure more children and young people can be educated within their local mainstream school alongside their peers.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Current provision does not meet the needs of children and young people in the Borough. High numbers of children are being educated in independent provision with many pupils having to travel outside the borough to access provision. This is not in their best interest and is not sustainable.
- 6.2 Ensuring mainstream schools are more inclusive will reduce the demand on specialist settings and out of borough provision. Remodelling specialist provision so that it better meets local need and special schools provide places for only the most complex children and young people with SEND, reducing the level of placements in independent provision.
- 6.3 The newly established Placement Division will visit all independent settings checking on the quality of provision, outcomes for the children and young people and attendance. They will also review the price ensuring each placement represents good value for money.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 The aim of the task groups are to better understand High Needs in Halton so that we can improve the quality of SEND provision within the borough, the outcomes of children and young people with SEND and encourage all our schools to become more inclusive.