



ISLINGTON SCHOOLS FORUM

Chair: Abi Misselbrook-Lovejoy
c/o Governor Services
222 Upper Street
London N1 1XR

SCHOOLS FORUM

MEETING DATE	15 July 2021
AGENDA ITEM 10	High Needs Cluster Funding
RECOMMENDATIONS	That Schools Forum: a) Notes the proposals and provide comments

1 Context

1.1 The current national context of SEND is seen as critical:



SEND Community Alliance



NEU



1.2 The Council for Disabled Children (CDC), who advise the DfE on SEND matters describe:

- 'A system now characterised by anger and disillusionment'
- 'A system which is no longer financially sustainable.'

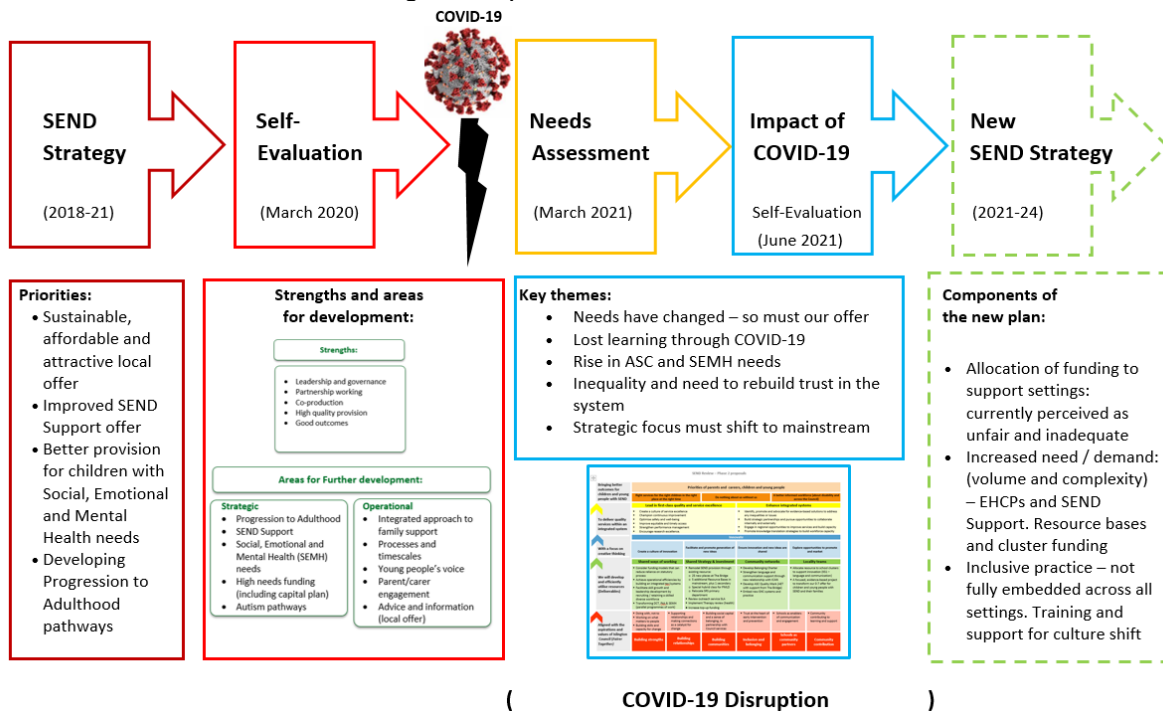
1.3 A national SEND Review was launched in 2019 and due to report in March 2020. Due to COVID-19 disruption, the time frame has shifted, most recently to mid-July of this year. The report was promised as a Green Paper (indicating legislative change) and likely to recommend measures to 'back' mainstream schools to better meet the needs of the majority of children with SEND. According to CDC this is likely to include a rewritten SEND Code of Practice that sets out a Universal Offer – (i.e. the support the Government expect all schools to offer; a different approach to mainstream funding and accountability that better aligns responsibility, funding and accountability; school groups with pooled resources to jointly commission SEND services; a stronger school led system.

1.4 Vicky Ford (Minister of State for Children and Families) gave the following statement to update the Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) on the SEND Green paper on 8th July...

'I would like to turn now to the SEND Review as I know many of you will want to know how we're getting on with this piece of work.

We know systemic change is needed ... We know the SEND system does not identify and respond to need quickly enough and is driving an adversarial climate where parents only feel confident their child will get the same opportunities as every other pupil through an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan), which in turn is driving up unsustainable pressure on budgets... We need to take the time to get this right and to ensure we are designing a system which is protected against unintended consequences... The Review team and I will continue to work ... at pace over the coming months so we are in a strong position to publish bold proposals for public consultation as soon as possible.'

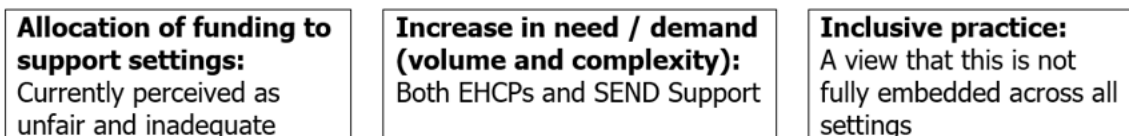
1.5 We must also review our local SEND Strategy to reflect both the above national as well as our local context, including the impact of COVID-19 and lockdowns:



1.6 Ten Head Teachers have stepped forward to help our thinking, and have been meeting with officers weekly since May 2021. Key themes from early discussions were:

- Huge potential / willingness for local change and the time is now
- Lots of ideas, but the narrative need to be clearer (are these the 'right' ideas?)
- A strong feeling that children and young people with support needs are not fairly distributed and that some parts of the system are not demonstrating inclusive practice

1.7 The group have helped clarify the drivers for change as follows:



1.8 The group has further advised on a survey to all schools, setting out:

- Why we need a new approach
- Our long term vision and delivery objectives
- Principles and beliefs that sit beneath the vision / objectives
- Financial and delivery models for consideration
- A timeline for the next 12-18 months

The closing date for the survey was 9th July 2021 and we have received over 40 responses, which are currently being analysed.

1.9 In terms of 'cluster funding' (i.e. funding groups of schools to develop SEND practice and help embed inclusion), the group has recognised that this will need leadership and facilitation (i.e. will not happen organically), will take time to embed, and care would need to be taken to avoid it becoming 'another layer of bureaucracy'. The benefits in terms of sharing and developing a baseline of good practice were also recognised however. Subject to the outcome of the survey, we will therefore pilot one (and possibly two) cluster groups from September, with a focus on whole school development / CPD, data-sharing and moderation across schools and language development.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 This will leave approximately £150K of money set aside for cluster funding unallocated. It is proposed that this should be allocated across schools with most immediate SEND need in terms of volume and complexity. The group has looked at anonymised school-level data for SEND Support / EHCPs over a five year period. Head teachers have asked to consider a wider data set however as SEND Support is unmoderated and so, they feel, a less reliable indicator.
- 2.2 Once a fair model has been agreed, options for distribution could include schools in the top quartile, schools with above average levels or across all schools. We would ask the group to make a recommendation once all of the data has been considered.

3 SEND Capital Funding: Addendum

- 3.1 Officers were asked to provide an update on SEND Capital Funding. The deployment of these funds has been overseen by the Education and Childcare Commissioning Board and in line with the priorities set out in the SEND Strategy.
- 3.2 The allocation for 2018-21 was £2.2m, targeted as follows:

Project	Amount
Extensive remodelling work at New River College (Elthorne Road) to create a vocational suite and individual learning spaces for those children and young people who cannot be taught in a group. Work currently underway	£1,983,586
Extension of The Bridge Primary to create 24 additional places. Work currently underway – completed by September 2021	£189,000
Modifications at Samuel Rhodes School to improve accessibility	£68,315

- 3.3 A further allocation of £1,834,419 was announced for Islington in April 2021. This will be directed towards the cost of Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) in mainstream schools. Expressions of interest are currently being sought from schools; we are looking at models in other LAs and will be visiting some sites in Camden, Newham and Barking and Dagenham in September 2021 with interested Head teachers. The possible location of ARPs will be considered in tandem with the School Place Planning review currently underway. Any residual funds will be directed towards smaller projects that will improve inclusive practice in schools; this will be announced once we have a clear position on the likely ARP location and costs.

Contact: Candy Holder
 Head of Pupil Services
 Tel: 020 7527 5639
 Email: candy.holder@islington.gov.uk