

Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Halesowen Area Committee 17 November 2004

Report of the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning

Inclusion Strategy Action Plan consultation

Purpose

1. To inform the committee of the formal consultation of the Inclusion Strategy Action Plan on the future provision for children with special educational needs and invite formal responses to the consultation.

Background

2. Having consulted widely over the past two years on the draft Inclusion Strategy, this draft Inclusion Action Plan ('the Plan') sets out the Council's intention for a gradual but planned move towards a new model of provision for the education of children with additional and special education needs.
3. The Plan builds on the outcomes of the earlier consultations and much work carried out by professionals in schools and in the Directorate. The Plan supports effective inclusive practices and builds upon existing expertise and good practice in the Borough.
4. The Plan also takes positive account of national developments in the area of children's services. Specifically, the concepts of all schools being inclusive schools serving all children, and of schools being part of a closely integrated multi-agency support framework, are exactly in line with the proposal in 'Every Child Matters' and the Children Bill.
5. The vision is to provide high quality education for as many children as possible alongside their peers in their local community, through flexible access to a continuum of provision that meets the diversity of need.
6. Flexible arrangements will be created around the specific needs of young people in discussion with their family and relevant professionals.

7. There is much existing good practice within Dudley, but this is not universal, and some provision is not geographically best placed to meet children's needs.
8. The Plan is based on a commitment to the retention of expertise in the Borough, the further development of classroom skills and training, and the strategic redevelopment and relocation of our provisions to meet children's needs as fully as possible within their local community.
9. The Plan sets out a continuum of provision, which builds upon special schools as centres of excellence and expertise.
10. We are committed to ensuring that Plan ensures short-term, medium-term and long-term sustainability of excellence of provision. As a matter of principle, we will continue current placements unless this is at the parent's request or is a result of the Annual Review of their child's Statement of Special Educational Need.
11. The Plan sets out three phases of activity. Throughout the implementation of the Plan there will be regular reviews involving the professionals, parents and children, as well as scrutiny by the Select Committee on Lifelong Learning. The review process will take account of provision for individual children, teachers' views, and statistical information relating to pupil outcomes in order to inform and shape future phases of the Plan. The review process will also take into account any changes in the national environment, either through legislation or DfES guidance.
12. The Plan takes account of the requirements of the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 and sets out the arrangements we will have to work with schools to ensure that the Directorate and schools have appropriate provision in place for the education of young people with a variety of needs or disability.
13. Consultation on the Plan will run to the end of October 2004. All responses will be taken into account, and the Inclusion Action Plan will be subject to Council approval in November 2004, after which it will form Council policy and will be implemented over the period to 2010 subject to the review process set out above.
14. Until the Inclusion Action Plan has received Council approval, no binding decisions will be made that pre-empt the consultative and decision-making processes with the exception of decisions that relate to external funding

streams. For example, the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) proposal presently with the DfES incorporates outline plans for the creation of locality special schools alongside re-built secondary schools.

15. There are two important safeguards built into this Inclusion Action Plan. First, no child will be relocated without parental agreement, except in the case of a change of placement determined through the Annual Review process. Second, during the period of the Inclusion Action Plan, all staff who wish it will have a guaranteed post at the appropriate grade after any phase of the Plan, subject only to governing bodies supporting the redeployment process.
16. By 2010 we will have in place a model of provision that meets the majority of our children's needs within their local community and is used in flexible ways. We will retain but reorganise our special school provision across the Borough. Most children with additional educational needs will continue to attend their local school, as they do now, but some will require more intensive levels of educational support for part or all of their school career, and this will be provided in a special school or other specialist provision.
17. We will have developed our special schools and specialist provisions in 'state of the art' purpose-built or specially adapted buildings. These centres of excellence will make direct provision for some children and support outreach provision for others, depending on their needs. The special schools and specialist provisions will also be centres of professional development for education staff from across the Borough.
18. There will remain a small number of children with exceptionally complex needs that will require educational provision outside Dudley. However this will be increasingly rare, as the special schools and specialist provisions develop their capacity to include children with these complex needs while living in their local community.
19. We will work with parents and children, and schools, to consider children's placement through the Annual Review process and respect the rights of parents who wish their child to move to a mainstream school.
20. Dudley currently has seven special schools, one for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), two for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and the remainder for children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD). By 2010 we want to have realigned our special schools from seven into six, of which four will be purpose built, 'state of the art' special schools each serving an area of the Borough.

21. The four new locality special schools will be new build similar to the Campus 21 model, in which The Brier special school has moved to a new building collocated on a single site with a primary school and a secondary school. The Brier special school will be the first of the four new locality special schools. All four schools will be developed along generic lines catering for children with a range of complex needs. These children will increasingly come from the immediate locality that the schools serve.
22. With The Brier as the first of the four, by 2010 there will be a further three new schools built on, or adjacent to, local mainstream school sites to facilitate greater interaction and integration opportunities. The other three new special schools will be developed so that there is one in the north, one in the south and a further school in the centre of the Borough. Each of the new locality special schools will cater for approximately 100 children.
23. Each of the four locality special schools will include a new language and communication unit within the school to cater for children with complex language and communication needs similar to that provided currently at The Brier's Alpha Unit. The Alpha Unit meets the needs of a small group of identified children within a special school environment with small numbers and specialist staff and programmes.
24. In addition to these new locality special schools we will continue to develop other Borough-wide provisions to cater for specific areas for which there is not sufficient demand to justify locality-based provision.
25. A new special school for 24 primary children with EBSD from across the Borough will be opened, and the existing special school for secondary children with EBSD will be expanded to 56 places and relocated onto a better site.
26. In addition other specialist provision such as the Hearing Impaired Units in a primary and a secondary school, which serve relatively small numbers of children, will continue to operate on a Borough-wide basis.
27. The new locality special schools will be centres of excellence working with a cluster of local schools according to a 'hub and spoke' model. Within each cluster we will be realigning our other provision for specific areas of additional need, so as to ensure that each cluster can meet flexibly and responsively the needs of its local population across a continuum of need.

28. Each of the four clusters will have two Individual Needs Centres (INCs) catering for children with more complex Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD); one located in a local primary school, and one located in a local secondary within the cluster. There will be a total of four primary INCs and four secondary INCs across the Borough. Over a period some existing Individual Needs Centre provision will need to be realigned and relocated to serve the new clusters effectively. We will be considering further the number of places available in each Individual Needs Centre and the criteria for placement and exit.
29. For children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) there will be new specialist units at secondary phase, one in each locality with clear criteria for placement and exit. Children with ASD at primary phase are generally well placed at their local schools and this will remain but with increasing expertise available from the outreach service.
30. Pupils at keystage one who meet the criteria will continue to access speech and language units which will be relocated.
31. The Action Plan is available in public libraries and on www.Dudley.gov.uk for full details.
32. Spare copies will be available at the Committee meeting and have already been distributed to Councillors. Anyone requiring a copy please contact Carol Williams on 01384 815737 at Westox House.

Finance

32. There are no financial implications of the consultation process itself. Once an analysis of the consultation responses has been made and a political decision has been made on the way forward, the final action plan will be produced with actual costings, both revenue and capital. Much of the new capital build finance will be supported through the Building Schools for the Future Programme (DfES).

Law

33. The SEN Code of Practice 2001 and School Standards and Framework Act 1998 apply over the placement of pupils with identified Special Educational Needs and the council's responsibilities over the provision for such pupils. The Disability and Discrimination Act 1995.

Equal Opportunities

34. The DMBC Equal Opportunities policy applies.

Recommendation

35. The committee accept and acknowledge the content of this report and invite public consultation responses.



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Background Papers

Previous consultation papers on the Inclusion Strategy

The Dudley Inclusion Strategy – 14 October 2002 – 31 January 2003

Revised Dudley Inclusion Strategy – 1 September 2003 – 28 November 2003