

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: **LIFELONG LEARNING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

DATE: **THURSDAY, 15TH JANUARY 2015**

REPORT BY: **CHIEF OFFICER (EDUCATION AND YOUTH)**

SUBJECT: **STATEMENT OF SPECIAL NEEDS – PROGRESS REPORT ON PERFORMANCE**

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To report on progress of the Statutory Assessment element within the Inclusion Service.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The special educational needs of the great majority of children should be met effectively within mainstream settings through Early Years Action and Early Years Action Plus or School Action and School Action Plus without the Authority needing to make a statutory assessment. Where this is required, the local authority and partner agencies have strict guideline to adhere to as dictated by the Special Education Needs Code of Practice for Wales (2002).

2.02 The local authority makes good use of ONE to support officers in their work. The system has been set up to support adherence to the identified timescales within the process and training has been provided to schools to ensure their understanding of the need to comply with these.

2.03 Work is ongoing to support understanding of special educational needs and the range of strategies and resources that should be implemented to support successful outcomes. Money has been delegated to the secondary sector to enable schools to make appropriate use of this within their setting and this will be replicated within the primary sector from 2015.

2.04 Officers work closely with all agencies and particularly with parents and young people to ensure they are supported through the statutory assessment process which can be lengthy and complex. The Code of Practice specifies that the process from initiation, to the issuing of the final Statement of SEN should be completed within 26 weeks. The process defines permissible exceptions for which the timescale may be extended such as:

- The authority have requested advice from a health authority or a social services authority respectively and the health authority

or the social services authority have not complied with that request within 6 weeks from the date on which it was made;

- The child fails to keep an appointment for an examination or a test during the 10 week period between the authority agreeing to undertake an assessment and the completion of the assessment; and
- The child's parent indicates that he or she wishes to make representations to the authority about the content of the statement after the expiry of the 15 day period for making such representations

2.05 Throughout the process, parents have specific rights of appeal to the Special Education Needs Tribunal for Wales (SENTW). From January 2015, this right is extended to children and young people. Officer work hard to reduce the need for appeals whilst adhering to the Code and the assessment criteria for Flintshire.

2.06 The Welsh Government is going through a period of reform in the area of additional learning needs and Flintshire officers have been involved through pilots and ongoing focus groups to support knowledge of the forthcoming changes. As yet, it is unclear what the changes will be, although Person Centred Thinking has been identified as a process that will form part of the reforms. As a consequence of this, a training programme is underway for officers to ensure they have the knowledge to support schools in the future.

2.07 The Inclusion Assessment Service is being restructured as part of the Inclusion Service Review and the council efficiencies work. Consideration to the reforms and future service requirements is feeding into this process to try and ensure that the service will be fit for purpose when the national reforms are implemented.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Adherence to Statutory Assessment timescales is monitored internally within the Education Improvement and Modernisation Strategy as outlined below. Performance data is collected and published nationally against the two outcomes below:

| Target/Outcome | 2013 Outcome | 2014 Outcome | Wales Average | 2015 Target |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
| The percentage of final statements of special educational need issued within 26 weeks, including exceptions | 90.8% | 92.3% | 69.6% | 90%+ |
| The percentage of final statements of special educational need issued within 26 weeks, excluding exceptions | 100% | 100% | 96.6% | 100% |

3.02 Officers are aware of the range of permissible exceptions but aim to adhere to the 26 week timeline to support parents, children and young people. The outcome of 92.3% for 2013-14 is the third highest value for Wales, placing Flintshire within the upper quartile nationally. This compares favourably with the Welsh average of 69.6%. The authority has maintained 100% success in terms of meeting the 26 week timeline where there were no permissible exceptions.

3.03 Appeals to SENTW remain low for the authority as the table below indicates:

| | 2010 - 2011 | 2011 - 2012 | 2012 - 2013 |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Number of Appeals | 2 | 0 | 2 |

This reflects officer commitment to work collaboratively with parents and carers to achieve an appropriate outcome for children and young people.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That Members note progress on Statutory Assessment within the Inclusion Service.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

SEN Code of Practice for Wales
Education Improvement and Modernisation Strategy

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