

Record of Decision by the Executive Director (People)

COMMISSIONING AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT ORGANISATION TO ENGAGE WITH AND PROMOTE THE VIEWS OF PARENTS AND CARERS WITH CHILDREN WHO HAVE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Details of the Decision

The decision concerns a proposal to commission an independent, third party organisation with experience of engaging with and promoting the interests of parents and carers of children and young people with special educational needs, including a disability (or SEN(D) and thereby enable such parents and carers to help inform decisions affecting the development, progress and wellbeing of their children. The increasing number of children with SEN(D) including those with an Educational and Health Care Plan, together with the outcome of a recent survey of parents and carers which indicated that a large majority favoured and were willing to work with such a model, has made this proposal the most sustainable. This is reflected in Paragraphs 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5 of the enclosed report.

Authority

The decision to authorise the proposal is taken in accordance with the Council's revised scheme of delegation limits, originally agreed by Full Council, at its meeting held on 24th November 2014. The proposal is derived from the recent approval by Cabinet of the Borough SEN(D) Pupils Education Placement Sufficiency Strategy (2017-20) in which a specific objective is to ensure the views of parents, carers, children and young people is central to the development of plans at strategic, operational and individual level and through which the commissioning and implementation of a revised mechanism for parental and carer engagement is an immediate priority (*Cabinet Minute Reference 122. Barnsley SEN(D) School Placement Sufficiency Strategy (2017-20) (Cab. 15.11.2017/10)*

Decision Taken

To approve the commissioning of an independent, third party organisation for the purpose described in this report

Date Of Decision

Elected Member Conflict Of Interests

No Elected Member conflicts of interest have arisen in the recording of this Decision.

Executive Director (People)





PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT OF PARENTS AND CARERS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

1.0 Purpose Of This Report

- 1.1 To obtain the required level of approval for the commissioning of an independent, third party organisation to engage parents and carers of children with special educational needs, including a disability (or SEN(D)) and promote their views as part of enabling them to inform the planning and delivery of relevant services.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Part 3, Section 18, Paragraph 9 of the Children and Families Act (2014) requires local authorities to set out how it will involve parents and carers in the planning and development of services as part of its 'Local Offer' to children and young people with SEN(D). However, since 2016 when the Barnsley Parent Carer Forum was dissolved, there has been a gap in such provision.
- 2.2 The Education, Early Start and Prevention Service has taken steps to bridge this gap, notably through the Barnsley SEN(D) Pupils School Placement Sufficiency Strategy (2017-20) which was recently approved for adoption by Cabinet.
- 2.3 One of the broad aims of the Strategy is to *"..Develop a partnership approach to ensuring the appropriate range and capacity of provision is available locally to meet the (educational) needs of pupils with SEN(D)".* As part of this, a specific objective is to ensure the views of parents, carers, children and young people is central to the development of plans (for children and young people with SEN(D)) at strategic, operational and individual level. A key, immediate commissioning intention within the Strategy will be to develop and implement a revised mechanism for parental engagement.

3.0 Proposal

3.1 Rationale

- 3.2 Research by the Service into the practices of other areas within this Region, has shown that the commissioning of an independent, third party organisation can have a positive impact on relationships and parental confidence within the SEN(D) system. For example, an issue which constrains communication and consultation with all SEN(D) parents and carers is the lack of a comprehensive and up to date local disability register. Where local authorities have commissioned an independent organisation to engage and promote the voice of parents and carers of SEN(D) children, they have requested the organisation to develop the disability register on their behalf. This has led to a significantly increased take-up among parents and carers and greatly improved the value added, through communication and consultation activity.

- 3.3 A recent survey of parents and carers with SEN(D) children found that the majority of respondents wanted to be involved in the development of plans, policies and strategies relating to the progress and wellbeing of their children and this majority supported the commissioning and development of an independent, third part organisation for this purpose.

3.4 Potential Options

- 3.5 The Service has previously employed a Part Time Parent Participation Officer (0.5 fte) however, this post has remained vacant since 2016 and attempts to recruit and appoint to this post have proved to be unsuccessful. Moreover, given the increasing number of pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans in the Borough, together with further pressures within the local SEN(D) system, this option is considered to be insufficient to meet the needs for parent/carer engagement within this context.

4.0 Recommended Approach

- 4.1 As a result, the recommended approach is to commission an independent, third part organisation with experience in engaging with and promoting the perspective of parents and carers of SEN(D) children, as part of ensuring they have a voice in informing and influencing service planning and delivery at strategic, operational and individual levels.
- 4.2 A service specification will be developed with the insight of parents and carers, through the use of multiple communication channels. It is also envisaged that the appointed organisation will work with parents and carers in order to be able to access Barnsley's participation grant through 'Contact A Family' who are the DfE's appointed national facilitator of parent and carer engagement.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The commissioning of an independent third party organisation to engage with parents and carers in the planning / development of its local offer to SEND children is expected to cost around £45k per annum. This cost would be funded from uncommitted resources (£31k) within children commissioning / partnership and realigned resource from a vacant post £14k (parent participation officer) in early start / family services. Discussion is ongoing with the CCG for a funding contribution towards the cost.

6.0 Council's Corporate Plan

- 6.1 The proposal will provide further help to children and young people with SEN(D) to progress in terms of their learning and wellbeing, thereby giving them a better chance to achieve their potential, reduce the effects of deprivation and alienation and enable them to make a successful transition into living independent, satisfying lives within thriving communities. These considerations also form part of our overall 'Vision' and strategic priorities in improving the range of outcomes for all children, young people and families, within the Barnsley Children and Young People's Plan (2017-20).
- 6.2 No risks have been identified in adopting the proposal and there are no implications emerging for the local environment or the health and safety of the public..

