

## BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has been included in the relevant Forward Plan

### REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES TO CABINET

#### **COVID-19 FINANCIAL RECOVERY STRATEGY: INVESTMENT PRIORITIES FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN THE BOROUGH (TEMPORARY INCREASE IN STAFFING CAPACITY TO ADDRESS THE BACKLOG OF ANNUAL REVIEWS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS)**

#### **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek Cabinet's approval for funding a temporary increase in staffing resources to address the backlog of annual reviews for children with special educational needs (SEND) as part of fully complying with our statutory responsibilities in respect of this group of children and young people.

#### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That Cabinet approves for implementation, the investment proposal outlined in Section 4.0 of this report with immediate effect.**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1 The Council's Covid-19 Financial Recovery Strategy, including the moratorium on non-essential expenditure and the review of planned capital and revenue investments, makes provision for immediate investment priorities to be accorded funding if they support the efficient delivery of statutory services
- 3.2 These include investments in the provision of services for children and young people with special educational needs or disabilities which form an integral part of the Council's post Covid-19 Recovery Theme of "*Supporting Wellbeing and Managing Demand for Statutory Services*"

#### **4.0 PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION**

- 4.1 Temporary Increase in Capacity to Address the Backlog in Annual Reviews for Children with Special Educational Needs
- 4.2 It is proposed that Cabinet approves the allocation of funding for the above purpose leading to the appointment of the following temporary posts:
- Two Senior Education, Health and Care Co-ordinators
  - Two Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) Coordinators
  - One Project Manager (Education and Health Care 'Hub')

4.3 As well as ensuring that annual reviews for children and young people entitled to an EHCP are up to date, the benefits to be accrued through the proposal will include the following:

- Increasing capacity within the Local Authority's Education, Health and Care Team to meet rising demand, statutory responsibilities and timelines
- Timely issuing of new EHCPs for children and young people with SEND.
- Improving the quality of case management, together with the overall efficiency of the local EHCP system
- Further development of inclusive practice across the system and consistently high quality plans and support

4.4 The implementation of the Borough's Education, Health and Care Hub is crucial to achieving our improvement ambitions as articulated within the recently refreshed SEND Strategy, including the timely assessment, review and issuing of EHCPs.

#### 4.5 Impact of Covid-19

4.6 The Pandemic has caused some disruption to the planned roll-out of the Education, Health and Care Hub which was originally scheduled for launch in September 2020. This has now been planned for November 2020, following the full re-opening of schools next month in order for schools to be able to prioritise accordingly. Therefore, any outbreak of Covid-19 in schools will have to be considered as part of the implementation and embedding of the 'Hub' and to mitigate against such risk, the Service is considering a 6-month extension to the Project which would be supported by this investment proposal.

4.7 This will enable the current, temporary post of Education, Health and Care Hub Project Manager to be extended for 6 months until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 in order to support the project; assist in mitigating the disruption caused to the education system by Covid-19 and help oversee the initial roll-out of the 'Hub' leading to a successful and sustainable implementation of the new system. The cost of supporting the proposals is detailed in Section 7.0 of this report.

### **5.0 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

5.1 The justification for the proposal is that it will provide additional support enabling statutory services to fully meet the needs of an increasing number of vulnerable children and young people with SEND through timely assessments and reviews, together with the issuing of EHCPs and whose needs have been compounded by the impact of Covid-19.

5.2 In this context and as the leader of its communities and place-shaper, the Council would not consider any other alternative that would render this vulnerable group of children to any potential additional disadvantage or risks.

### **6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS**

6.1 The proposal outlined in this report will enhance the capacity of the Education, Health and Care Team to conduct the timely assessment and review of children with SEND across the whole of the Borough, leading to the issuing of EHCPs that meet their needs in full and in compliance with our statutory responsibilities.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Service Director – Finance (S151 Officer).
- 7.2 One-off investment funding of £0.773m has been allocated for the increase in capacity to address the backlog in annual reviews of children with SEND. This is in addition to the part year funding provided in 2019/20 to specifically address the existing backlog of reviews and the implementation of the Education & Health Care ‘Hub’ system.
- 7.3 The £0.773m investment funding allocation is made up of the following:
1. The balance of accelerated investment funding provided in 2019/20 to address existing backlog of SEND annual reviews by August 2020 (£0.153m). This balance of funding also includes associated programme management costs relating to the Hub implementation.
  2. Additional funding (£0.620m) to cover the cost of additional permanent posts within the EHC team in 2020/21 and 2021/22 (£0.310m each year). The enhanced capacity is to allow the timely assessment and review of SEND children / young people (and therefore prevent backlog of reviews in the future).
- 7.4 The £0.310m annual funding requirement for the additional permanent posts will be included in the Council’s medium term financial strategy (MTFS) from 2022/23 onwards to reflect the recurrent nature of the investment.

## **8.0 EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Subject to Cabinet’s approval, the recruitment of the posts indicated within Paragraph 4.2 of this report will be progressed via the Scheme of Delegation and in consultation with the Service Director (Business Improvement, Human Resources and Communications) and the Service Director (Finance).

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are no legal implications emerging through this report for the Council to consider.

## **10.0 CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no implications for customer access to the range of Council services or for the onus towards the digital transaction of business, emerging through the report.

## **11.0 COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 The approval of this proposal will assure families with vulnerable children of the Council’s commitment to supporting their physical, emotional and social wellbeing, together with their improved resilience to the challenges which lie ahead,

particularly when schools fully re-open and the extent of the impact of the lockdown becomes increasingly known to the Authority and statutory partners.

## **12.0 CONSULTATIONS**

12.1 The Senior Management Team has been consulted on the investment proposal and is supportive of its adoption.

## **13.0 THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

13.1 If approved, the proposal will add support for the Council's Corporate Objective of enabling local people to achieve their potential through investing in early help; safeguarding young people from the impact of all forms of harm and ensuring they become healthier and independent.

## **14.0 PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

14.1 Cabinet's approval of this proposal will enable all children and young people with special educational needs, including complex needs, to benefit from timely assessments; improved participation and engagement with education, together with improvements in the quality of practice. This will enable them to close the gap in health, wellbeing and achievement with their peers and promote inclusion and social mobility through education.

## **15.0 TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY**

15.1 The proposal will form part of our commitment to levelling up opportunities for disadvantaged children and young people and to help place them in a position from where they can achieve their potential, acquire skills in order to participate in the employment market and improve social capital in our communities.

## **16.0 TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

16.1 Please see Paragraph 14.1.

## **17.0 REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

17.1 There are no implications for tackling crime, disorder or anti-social behaviour emerging through consideration of this report.

## **18.0 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

18.1 Progress against the required outcomes will be monitored and, if required, immediate remedial action taken in response to any risks impacting upon progress. This will be reported through the quarterly SEND performance and finance framework.

## **19.0 HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES**

19.1 The proposed investments are in response to the challenges experienced by vulnerable children, young people and families as a result of the impact of Covid-19

and aim to bolster the provision of statutory services in order to mitigate any further impact upon their wellbeing and potential.

## **20.0 COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

20.1 The proposals accord with the Articles and Protocols of the Convention concerning the rights of children.

## **21.0 CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY**

21.1 There are no adverse implications for the local environment, tackling climate change or the conservation of biodiversity emerging through this report.

## **22.0 GLOSSARY**

22.1 None, applicable.

## **23.0 LIST OF APPENDICES**

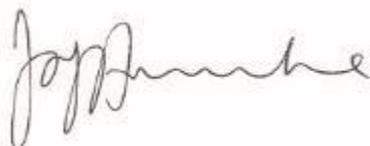
23.1 There are no appendices to this report.

## **24.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

24.1 If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email [governance@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:governance@barnsley.gov.uk) so that appropriate arrangements can be made

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Financial Implications/Consultation



Joshua Amahwe (12/08/2020)

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(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer)