

'SCHOOLS OFFER' – BRIEFING NOTE FOR SCHOOLS

Background

As you will be aware, the Government is reforming the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system for children and young people aged 0 to 25 in England. A key part of these reforms is the production and publication by the Local Authority and its partners of a Local Offer, setting out in one place information about services and provision expected to be available across education, health and social care for children and young people who have SEN or who are disabled.

The Local Offer has two key purposes:

- To provide clear, comprehensive, accessible and up-to-date information about the available provision and how to access it, and
- To make provision more responsive to local needs and aspirations by directly involving disabled children and those with SEN and their parents, and disabled young people and those with SEN, and service providers in its development and review

The local authority **must** set out in its Local Offer an authority-wide description of the special educational and training provision it expects to be available in its area and outside for children and young people who have SEN or disabilities from providers of relevant early years education, maintained schools, non-maintained special schools, pupil referral units, independent institutions approved under section 41 of the Children and Families Act 2014, and the full range of post-16 providers. This includes information about the arrangements the local authority has for funding children and young people with SEN, including any agreements about how providers will use any budget that has been delegated to them. Further work is being carried out on the authority-wide offer. Schools have additional duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014. Schools **must** publish more detailed information about their arrangements for identifying, assessing and making provision for pupils with SEN.

SEN Information Report ('school offer')

As part of our ongoing commitment of engagement with Hertfordshire schools in the co-production of this important piece of work, we recently attended both the Primary Heads Forum (PHF) and Hertfordshire Association of Secondary School Heads (HASSH) to inform the groups of the work already undertaken and to get their views on the next steps.

The SEND reforms go live from September 2014, subject to Parliamentary approval. In order to assist schools to fulfil their statutory commitments under the new legislation and Code of Practice in relation to the SEN Information Report, the Council has, over the past few months, worked with parents, headteachers, SENCos and support services to develop a suggested template that schools could use to develop their 'school offer' (SEN information report).

There is no standard format that a school has to follow but the information required is set out in the SEN and Disability Regulations 2014. The attached extract from the Code of Practice (para 6.79) lists the information that must be included and published on the school's website.

The draft template (attached) has been devised through co-production with Hertfordshire Parent Carers Involvement Board as well as Head teachers and SENCOs. The Code of Practice expects that information is 'easily accessible by young people and parents and is set out in clear, straightforward language'. Parents/carers and schools felt that setting out the information under a set of key questions would be helpful. If schools use these they will meet the requirements of Hertfordshire parent/carers as well as the Code of Practice. Of course schools may wish to add further information. A number of schools have been completing a format that was devised earlier this year to help them set out the SEN provision they offer from their resources. Feedback from schools was that this was helpful. Although this remains useful in itself it does not cover all the requirements of the information regulations. It is suggested that schools append this to the SEN Information Report template.

The culture shift of the SEND reforms requires local authorities and schools to work even more closely with parent/carers and young people to ensure they have a voice. Schools developing their 'school offer' in partnership with parent/carers and pupils is a good example of ensuring they are involved in co-production of this key requirement.

Next Steps

In meetings and discussions with schools several headteachers and SENCOs have indicated that they have already made a start on producing a 'school offer'. Both PHF and HASSH, at their recent meetings, suggested that the latest template be circulated to all Hertfordshire schools as presently drafted so schools could populate the template with their individual offer.

In order to support schools further and share developing practice next term a further working group is being arranged, consisting of parent/carers and a mixture of school Heads and SENCOs. This group will review examples of what has been developed so far and draft out exemplars so that these are available in the Autumn for schools to use to develop or refine their offers.

Obviously, each school will need to complete the template individually in accordance with the individual processes/provision in place in that setting for children and young people with SEND, and this will form the basis of that school's offer. Running alongside this, the work of the working group will also contribute to the local authority's statement of what it expects schools to deliver. Once the exemplars and statement have been finalised this will be sent to all schools.

We would like to thank you for your continued co-operation and support with this and should you wish to discuss this please do not hesitate to contact David Coolbear, david.coolbear@hertfordshire.gov.uk 01438 843872.

Debbie Orton
Head of Integrated Services for Learning (ISL)

David Coolbear
Senior Commissioning Manager
Joint Children and Young People's Commissioning Service