

<b>Item No.</b> 7.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 25 September 2012	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Response to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-committee's review of support for parents and carers of disabled children and young people	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Children's Services	

## **FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Providing effective support for children and young people with a special educational need or disability and their family is a central priority of this council. The service seeks and welcomes feedback which enables it to improve the support it offers, and it continues to identify areas for improvement. The Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee's report and recommendations are received in this context. The recommendations will help the service ensure that families with children and young people with a special educational need or disability receive the support and information they may need to fulfil their potential and lead healthy, safe and independent lives.

I am pleased to note that Southwark received a special mention in the London Evening Standard on the 10 September highlighting the fact that staff at our Fusion leisure centres since March 2012 have received disability training and that each leisure centre has a 'disability' champion. Surrey Docks watersports centre offers adapted sailing and as part of our £2 million Olympic legacy funding we have committed £85,000 on a new outdoor disability multi-sports court for Peckham Town Football Club. This facility will provide an all weather venue that will allow members of Peckham Town FC disability teams and surrounding areas special needs schools players and local disability groups an opportunity to take part in football development sessions, competitive games and coaching programmes.

I am also pleased to note we have installed a new disability pool hoist in order to increase inclusivity for disabled users at the Peckham Pulse Healthy Living Centre.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

1. That Cabinet note and agree the response to the recommendations of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

#### **Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

2. The then Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee conducted a review of support for parents and carers of children with special educational

needs and disability (SEND). It reported its recommendations to cabinet on 19 June 2012. Cabinet agreed that the recommendations be noted and that the cabinet member for children's services bring back a report to cabinet in order to respond to the sub-committee by 25 September 2012.

### **Report summary**

3. The review focused on how best to support parents and carers so that they in turn can have a better quality of life and be in the best position to parent their disabled child, look after their wider family and participate in community life. Evidence submitted to the review included responses from parents, Contact A Family, the Southwark Parent Carers Council, and council services.
4. The review identified 18 recommendations, many of which were already being addressed by children's services. This report contains a detailed response to each of the recommendations.

### **Response to recommendations**

5. The report and its recommendations complement ongoing work in the special educational needs (SEN) and children with disabilities (CwD) teams to develop and continue to improve support for parents and carers of children and young people with SEN or a disability.
6. For example, this has included development work to give children and their families greater choice and control over the services they receive, in line with the recent SEND paper, and the Children and Families Bill which is due to be published in the autumn. The council has established a personalisation pilot to take these ideas forward, and is working with families to ensure it meets their needs. Up to 30 personal budgets will be developed in this financial year, with a gradual roll-out from April 2013 onwards in line with learning from the initial pilot families and the national personalisation pathfinder projects which are due to report in 2013.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Recommendations from sub-committee/response**

7. The scrutiny sub-committee made 18 recommendations, to which responses, grouped by theme, are set out below.

#### Sport and leisure

8. Recommendation 1: Improve the accessibility of universal services by developing and promoting disability awareness training for staff in Southwark's sports and leisure facilities; such as libraries, museums, swimming pools and parks. Ensure this includes training on meeting the needs of hearing and visually impaired children and children with autism.
9. Response:  
Southwark already provides free online disability awareness training for sports and leisure staff as well as voluntary partners. In addition, all libraries have induction loops and access to Supernova software, which provides magnification, speech and Braille support. There are plans to offer access to Supernova on all library computers by early 2013. This summer the annual

summer reading challenge in libraries included multi-sensory storytelling for all special needs children with staff being specially trained to deliver this. This was also be offered during the Boundless Festival in September.

10. Recommendation 2: Encourage sports and leisure facilities to increase the accessibility of mainstream services and provide special sessions suitable for disabled children and young people.
11. Response:  
The council already works closely with mainstream sports and leisure facilities to encourage inclusive sessions, and is investing in its leisure centres to ensure all are fully accessible. The community sport team includes a sports equity officer, responsible for promoting disability sport to improve access and quality of provision. In addition, the community sports team has launched a £15,000 legacy grant scheme alongside the Olympic and Paralympics Games, and Southwark's team at the London Youth Games for disabled young people secured a £2,000 grant from Balfour Beatty to develop the local teams.

#### Short break activities and work plan

12. Recommendation 3: Take forward the short break work plan.
13. Recommendation 4: Evaluate the services in place to support parents and carers of disabled children over the age of 5; particularly recognising the evidence received of the additional stresses that families experience when young people reach adolescence and in times of transition.
14. Recommendation 5: Where resources allow, provide additional services and support for children and young people with autism; particularly those with challenging behaviour or ADHD and for children under 8.
15. Response:  
The council is already taking forward the actions agreed in the short breaks workplan, which includes actions to improve provision in line with recommendations 4 and 5. Progress to date includes establishing an autism post-diagnosis support worker at Sunshine House and expanding the range of holiday schemes for children aged five and over as well as revising the school travel policy and developing provision which siblings of disabled children can also attend.

There is already a wide range of support at times of transition from the early help and SEN teams, and independent parent partnership. In addition, we have already established an integrated adults' and children's services 'transition team' for 14 to 19 year olds will further support a smooth transition to adulthood.

#### Disability register

16. Recommendation 6: Keep Southwark's Council Disability Register updated and set up a dialogue with partners on protocols to share data in ways that are transparent, lawful and that will assist families and partner organisations supporting families.
17. Response:  
The CwD team accepts this recommendation and will establish a steering group, with parent carer representation, to review the eligibility criteria for inclusion on

the disability register and the information available about the register on the council's website and in the form of leaflets and other written information.

#### Information and data sharing

18. Recommendation 7: Explore how the council can do data sharing better and more sensitively. Particularly look at the request that social workers take into account information available from health practitioners when making assessments of children and families.
19. Response:  
The CwD team carries out its assessments in line with the national assessment framework and this requires that information from health and other professionals should be taken into consideration. Clear guidance already exists for social workers on when and how they can share information. The service will continue to explore how it can do this more sensitively.

#### Assessments and use of CAF

20. Recommendation 8: Guarantee that all children will receive an assessment by social and educational services if referred by a professional. Undertake these as early as possible in recognition of the importance of timely support.
21. Recommendation 11: Ensure that the common assessment framework (CAF) enables organisations to support families of disabled children, that there are no unnecessary barriers and that the CAF acts as a collaborative system for statutory and voluntary services to identify and support families in need.
22. Recommendation 12: Ensure assessments and consultations take into account parents' and carers' responsibilities for other children or work commitments, particularly when taking decisions about the services and support these families receive.
23. Response:  
Children referred to social and educational services by professional always receive an assessment. These are conducted according to statutory guidance, which include thresholds for the provision of statutory support. All social work assessments are undertaken as early as possible, and all must take a holistic view of the family, including the other pressures parents and carers may be under, when determining what support services families receive.

Those children who do not meet thresholds for statutory support are signposted to services that can offer support. The council is reconfiguring these services to better support families and prevent the need for statutory intervention. This includes developing teams around schools, settings and children's centres which can provide extra support for children and families, such as support for autism, educational welfare or educational psychologists.

There are no barriers to the use of the CAF, and the council continues to promote its use including providing free training sessions. As a collaborative tool, the CAF can help speed up the assessment process, in part because parents need tell their story only once.

### Information, advice and guidance

24. Recommendation 9: Provide clear advice and support to parents and carers on their rights, through publications and support organisations.
25. Recommendation 14: Provide families with information on statutory, community and generic services available through events, publications and support organisations.

26. Response:

Parents and carers can access a wide range of information on events, activities and their rights from the family information service, the parent partnership service, the SEN, early help and CwD teams, and commissioned provision such as Contact A Family. This is available in written publications as well as by telephone or in person. New publications include the parent partnership's A to Z of SEN guide for parents and its guide to secondary SEN provision in schools.

The council is also working to expand the information available online, as well as develop innovative solutions such as online user forums. The information that council services provide, however, is reliant on the cooperation of providers to notify the council of events and activities on offer, and the council strongly urges community and commissioned providers to work with the council to better coordinate the information available to parents and families.

### Schools and statements

27. Recommendation 10: Ensure that statements of special educational need are adhered to.
28. Recommendation 15: Work with all schools to promote better relationships and communication between home and school for families of disabled children and young people.

29. Response:

Schools are responsible for the annual review of statements, and interim or emergency reviews can be called by the school or parent or carer at any time. The council must be invited to any such review. The council also continues to work closely with schools to promote better relationships and communication with parents, primarily through the parent partnership. Key activity for this team includes supporting parents at meetings at school and visiting schools with parents; advising parents on the types of schools suitable for their child, transition, navigating the statementing process; and training sessions. In addition, the early help service can put in place support identified through a CAF, and will move to a statutory assessment if no progress is made. The SEN team will then work with parents and schools directly.

### Employment support

30. Recommendation 13: Promote provision for parents of disabled children to find meaningful employment, whilst also fulfilling their caring responsibilities. Parents recommended a pilot developed by the London Borough of Wandsworth.

31. Response:  
The council already provides a wide range of back-to-work support, including through children's centres and commissioning voluntary sector organisations. In developing new commissioning contracts from April 2013, the Wandsworth pilot will be considered. The parent partnership also provides a wide range of support to boost parents' confidence, including training on assertiveness and being a volunteer, which for many parents is a vital stepping stone towards employment.

#### Consultation and peer support

32. Recommendation 16: Improve consultation and engagement by:
- a. Ensuring that results of consultations are shared; wherever possible explain why some requests cannot be honoured
  - b. Offer various methods to collect feedback (ie face to face consultation, questionnaire, electronic survey, telephone survey)
  - c. Provide opportunities for parents to participate in the strategic planning of services wherever possible
  - d. Use robust methods to engage children and young people and include their views

33. Response:  
The council already uses a range of consultation methods, including face-to-face, telephone and written surveys. The council also continues to support the local independent parent-led parent carer council, through providing co-located office space and seconding two workers to support the parent carer council's development. Key milestones for the year ahead include developing a participation strategy and preparing joint good practice guidelines.

34. Recommendation 17: Value parents as a resource and the power of peer support; particularly in times of scarce financial resources.

35. Response:  
The council strongly agrees that parents and carers are the experts in their child's life, welfare and upbringing. This belief underpins the council's investment in peer support through the parent carer council and voluntary organisations including Contact A Family. In addition, the personalisation pilot offers further opportunities to empower parents and carers by increasing the choice and control they have over the services they receive, and ensure they are at the heart of decision-making about their care.

#### Voluntary sector

36. Recommendation 18: Commission contracts for as long as reasonably possible.

37. Response:  
In line with the Southwark Compact, the council remains committed to supporting the voluntary and community sector, including the need to take early, clear decisions on contracting arrangements.

#### **Community impact statement**

38. The council is committed to supporting children and young people with SEN or a disability, and their families, to lead healthy, safe and independent lives. This includes providing clear, accessible information, advice and guidance, as well as

timely assessment and support. The recommendations detailed in this report support these commitments.

### Resource implications

39. No additional resources are being requested to deliver the recommendations of this report.

### SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

#### Departmental Finance Manager, Children's (Ref: CS0226)

40. The resource implications are as set out in the body of the report.

### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Support for Parents and Carers of Disabled Children and Young People - Report from the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-committee	160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH  <a href="http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=3127">http://modern.gov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=3127</a>	Scrutiny Team 020 7525 0514

### APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

### AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Dora Dixon-Fyle, Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Romi Bowen, Strategic Director of Children's Services	
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