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| Committee | Dated: |
| Safeguarding Sub-Committee | 07/06/2021 |
| Subject: Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Update | Public |
| Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly? | 3 |
| Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending? | N |
| What is the source of Funding? | The Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block |
| Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department? | Y |
| Report of: Andrew Carter, Director of Community and Children's Services | For Information |
| Report author: Theresa Shortland, Head of Service – Education and Early Years | |

Summary

The SEND Strategy 2020–2024 sets out the City of London's (COL's) ambitious vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) from birth to 25 years, and details what we will do to achieve this vision.

This report informs Members of the key priorities identified in the strategy, which will be progressed over this year. This report provides an update on the progress in implementing the SEND Strategy and an update of the SEND work the Education and Early Years Service have undertaken since September 2020 at the start of the new academic year.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, the Education and Early Years Service has maintained the capacity to provide services and has continued to meet statutory deadlines in relation to Education, Health and Care needs assessment and annual reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The SEND Team has maintained regular contact with all children and young people with EHCPs to ensure their continued access to education and other essential services. At the start of the pandemic, a Vulnerable Children's Register was set up with the Children's Social Care

Service, and access to education and essential services has been regularly monitored through this register.

2. During each COVID-19 lockdown, schools have been required to remain open for vulnerable pupils, and on average, 50% of children and young people with EHCPs continued to attend school, with home-to-school transport enabling those with EHCPs to attend where required. For the remaining children and young people with EHCPs, the SEND Team has actively encouraged their attendance at school where appropriate and confirmed that they have been able to engage with, and access, the remote learning with the required IT and digital technology. All childcare providers in the CoL have remained fully open since June 2020.
3. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) reported concerns about the number of children who did not return to school after the first two periods of the national lockdown, and who were being home educated because of fears about COVID-19. As reported previously, this was also seen in the COL. The COL Education Welfare Service and schools worked with families during the lockdown periods to ensure that they were fully aware of the undertaking and their responsibilities.
4. With the reopening of the schools in March 2021, all children and young people with EHCPs, including those who previously expressed concerns about returning, are now being educated in school.

Current Position – update

5. The SEND Strategy 2020–2024 sets out three key outcomes to be achieved by 2024:
 1. We have a robust and inclusive multi-agency approach to identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.
 2. All children and young people with SEND are well-prepared for and have successful transitions to adulthood.
 3. Children and young people with SEND are integral and valued members of the City of London community.
6. A self-evaluation form (SEF) and action plan are in place to plan and track the progress of these outcomes. These are being monitored through the SEND Programme Board and will be reported to the Sub-Committee during the year.
7. The SEND Implementation and Development Project was commissioned to provide the expertise needed to support the SEND Team with the development of the SEND Strategy priorities. The new contractors have been engaged since 1 April 2021, they bring a wealth of experience gained in advising local authorities on SEND issues and is a former teacher, headteacher and Ofsted Inspector.
8. In terms of the first priority, the Principal Educational Psychologist and Early Years Advisor have resumed making visits to schools and Early Years settings. These visits comply with all necessary COVID-19 guidance and

protocols. This engagement has been important in meeting the needs of our children and young people.

9. In March 2021, the Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator.(SENCO) Network ran a special training session on 'Returning to School: the wellbeing of children and adults in school' to help prepare the SENCOs in schools where children and young people from the City attend. This was led by the Counselling Psychologist who supports the Aldgate School through the City and Hackney Wellbeing and Mental Health in Schools (WAMHS) Project.
10. Guidance for schools and settings around the provision that the local authority expects to be available for children and young people with SEND, and provision tables showing the interventions, responses, resources and outcomes that could be expected, have been refreshed. These will further support schools and settings in identifying and assessing needs. We are already considering how this can be further strengthened to provide guidance for post-16 and to also inform decision-making at the SEND panel meetings.
11. COL Early Years providers can access Early Years SENCO Level 3 training and six staff are currently enrolled on the course. Further training is currently being planned to ensure that practitioners have the necessary knowledge and skills to assess and support the needs of children attending their settings.
12. The work of the SEND Consultant will further strengthen this work as they undertake visits and works with all education settings attended by COL children and young people. This work, which will begin in the second half of the summer term, will assess how the educational settings are identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.
13. March 2020 to April 2021 saw a 25% increase in the number of children and young people with EHCPs, and a 50% increase in children and young people being referred for an EHC needs assessment. The majority of those with EHCPs are from black and Asian ethnicity. Despite this increase, statutory timescales have been met and the rigour around assessing needs and arranging provision has been maintained.
14. In terms of children and young people transitioning to adulthood, there has been an increase since March 2020, with 35% of those with EHCPs within the 14 to 25 years age group. Person-centred planning meetings for those in this age range have been further developed to ensure that their views about the life they would like to have are captured during the annual review of their EHCPs. An independent facilitator has been commissioned to use creative ways to develop plans with children and young people which focus on the three key areas for preparing for adulthood: employment, further education and/or training; independent living; and community inclusion and health. These collaborative and informal meetings, which include the young person's family, friends and key professionals, ensure that their views, wishes, and aspirations are at the heart of the meeting.

15. Transition to adulthood is a key area for us to develop further. There are also plans for a task and finish group with the SEND Team, Children's and Adult's Social Care to develop a pathways document for families and young people, which will detail what to expect and consider at key stages from 14 to 25 years old.
16. Alongside the Education and Skills Service, the SEND Team is pursuing opportunities in the City for work experience and apprenticeships for children and young people with EHCPs.
17. These three outcomes were co-produced with COL families and we want to ensure that children and young people, as well as their parents and carers, are integral and valued members of the COL community are fully aware of these outcomes. We want their views to be at the heart of decisions when services are being developed. To support this, an easy-read version of the SEND Strategy is in production and consideration is being given to developing a video with children and young people so that they can readily understand and access the strategy and the plans. These will sit on the COL Local Offer, alongside the SEND Strategy.
18. We are also planning to carry out a review of how we work with the City Parent Carer Forum (CPCF) to ensure that we have a wider representation of the views of the local SEND community.
19. Ensuring that the needs of children and young people with SEND are considered when policies are being developed is an important part of our work.
20. The City of London's Children and Young People's Plan is currently being reviewed. It is essential that the voice of children and young people with SEND is reflected within this plan, and that this includes support for them to transition into adulthood.
21. The City and Hackney Emotional Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2020–26 is currently being consulted on and the Education and Early Years Team have been actively engaged in providing feedback to ensure that it meets the needs of COL families. It is therefore hoped that we will see improved services for our young people with SEND in this strategy going forward.
22. It is essential that we have access to up-to-date data that shows trends and tells the story about the COL SEND community to properly inform our work. There continues to be work on developing the SEND Data Dashboard with the Strategy and Performance Team, who are leading on this, and the progress of this is reported to the SEND Programme Board.

Key Data

23. The key data on those in transition to adulthood is held on the Transitions Register with the SEND Service. A SEND Data Dashboard is in development to provide the SEND Programme Board with a data overview of SEND and quarterly monitoring. The numbers of children on EHCPs and SEND support in the City are small, and much of the data cannot be shared in the public

domain due to safeguarding issues. The data held by the SEND Team is used to keep an overview and monitor EHCP process from referral for assessment to final plan.

24. Key data from health services is available but COL does not currently receive health data systematically. Some data is shared on individual cases, but not for the City as a whole. Disaggregation of data for COL can be difficult for health services to complete. The effective commissioning of services to meet the needs of those children and young people with SEND in the City relies on accurate and current data. We are in the process of developing a data dashboard for SEND and finalising the data-sharing agreement with Homerton University Hospital.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

25. Strategic implications – Corporate outcome: Contribute to a flourishing society by ensuring that all children and young people with SEND and their families have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
26. Resource implications – The SEND functions are resourced through the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block.
27. Financial implications – The SEND functions are resourced through the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block.
28. Legal implications – The duties on local areas regarding provision for children and young people with SEND are contained in the Children and Families Act 2014. This legislation sits in the context of the Equality Act 2010. The Ofsted/CQC inspection framework sets out the legal basis and the principles of inspection.
29. Risk implications – If children's SEND issues are not identified early, assessed and supported, this will impact the educational attainment, progress and wider lifetime chances for those young people.
30. Equalities implications – All children and young people, regardless of their special educational needs and disabilities, will be part of a community where they can learn, achieve and participate in activities with other children and young people, and will be prepared to have a fulfilled adult life.
31. Disability and Race are protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.
32. Climate implications – n/a
33. Security implications – n/a

Conclusion

34. Progress in implementing the SEND Strategy is on track and work has commenced on the three key outcomes to be achieved by 2024. The SEND service continues to meet statutory deadlines and provide resources to support schools. The SEND service also continues to work with children and

young people with SEND and our key partners to deliver SEND services in the City.

Appendices

- None

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