

Special Educational Needs in Tameside



Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

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Introduction by the Chair

I am very pleased to present this report of a review undertaken by the Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel into Special Educational Needs in Tameside.

It is important to understand the range of special educational needs (SEN) that children may have, which can affect different parts of their lives. Some learning difficulties may only require limited intervention from parents or professionals, while others may require large amounts of support on a daily basis to provide assistance with mobility, personal care and education.

The method of identifying SEN is crucial and plays a key role in ensuring that a child can reach their potential, regardless of disability. It is vital that the work carried out by schools and the local authority is carried out openly and cooperatively with the child and their parents/carers.

The provision for children with SEN is extremely important and it is crucial that the correct guidance and intervention is provided to children at the best possible time, to promote inclusion and involvement.

Tameside Council has an important role to play in ensuring that the correct processes are in place to identify and assess the needs of a child and ensure the correct provision from a social and educational perspective is provided to children with SEN and their families.

It is important that all the relevant stakeholders are fully involved in the identification and assessment process and the local authority ensures that all methods of intervention have been exhausted before a statement of educational needs is issued.

The Panel are aware of growing concerns around the possible over identification of SEN and the potentially negative effects this can have on a child reaching their potential.

On behalf of the Services for Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel, I would like to thank all those who have participated in this review.



Children and Young People Scrutiny Panel

2. Summary

The number of children that have been identified as having SEN during recent years has been steadily increasing.

A child's background can influence how they develop both educationally and socially. The identification process for SEN can take place at many different stages in a child's life. A severe learning disability can be apparent at birth while a moderate learning disability may be identified at school when a gap becomes apparent between children of a similar age.

If a child is living in poverty this can affect their ability to succeed at school in many different ways. The number of Children that are in receipt of free school meals can often be positively correlated with educational attainment and this can be used as an indicator for SEN within schools.

SEN is present in all schools across the borough. Children have different levels and complexities of need and it is important that their needs are identified and met in a way which allows them to achieve their potential regardless of disability.

This review focuses on the work carried out by schools, the local authority and relevant professionals to put the right procedures, interventions and support in place to help children with SEN and their families.

It is important for the review to look at parent and child involvement during the processes and the options that are available to them with regards to advice, decision making, out of school activities and respite options.

3. Membership of the Scrutiny Panel

Councillor R Welsh (Chair), Councillor C Francis (Deputy Chair).
Councillors H Bowden, Y Cartey, P Fitzpatrick, M Fowler, P Harrison, C Patrick, G Peet, J Sullivan, D Ward, C White, B Wild.

Mrs L Aspin (Roman Catholic Church)
Mrs S Marsh (Church of England)
Mr N Ahmed (Muslim Faith)
Mrs T N Sharma (Hindu Faith)
Mrs A Gregory (Parent Governor)
Mr M Osmond (Parent Governor)

4. Terms of Reference

Aim of the Review:

To understand how Tameside Council and its partners are working together to support better outcomes for all children and young people with special educational needs.

Objectives:

1. To explore special educational needs backgrounds of children in Tameside.
2. To understand the approaches to identify special educational needs.
3. To understand the role of the local authority, health agencies and schools in ensuring better outcomes for those with SEN and children around them.
4. To examine strategies/placements to support special educational needs and to understand what support is available to parents and carers.
5. To understand best practice from high performing mainstream and special schools.
6. To understand best practice for children with SEN from services such as transport and respite.
7. To produce workable recommendations for the Council and schools to deliver sustainable improvements in outcomes across special educational needs in Tameside

Value for Money/use of Resources:

It is important for all children and young people with special educational needs to feel encouraged and supported to achieve well and to live as independently as possible. Parents and carers need to feel confident and in control of supporting their children to progress. Therefore, effective strategies creating inclusive environments both at home and in an individual's education should maximise better life outcomes for young people, resulting in a more prosperous and learning Tameside.

Equalities issues:

Special educational needs can impact on all sections of Tameside's communities. The review will consider strategies that lead to inclusive environments so that children and young people will receive an equal opportunity to achieve well and live as independently as possible.

Tameside Area Agreements:

The following targets from the Tameside Area Agreement relate to special educational needs.

KEY QUALITY LIFE MEASURES	
Prosperous Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worklessness • Wages • (N)EET – (Not) Education, Employment or Training
Healthy Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Expectancy • All Age All Cause Mortality
Learning Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE – 5 or more A* - C incl. English & Maths • Skills – Level 3 (age 19) • Early Years Attainment
Supportive Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention/Prevention • Low income households
SUPPORTING MEASURES	
Prosperous Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships • Skills: No qualification, levels 2, 3 & 4
Safe Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st time entrants to the youth justice service system
Learning Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Stage 2 – Level 4 – English & Maths • Skills – Level 2 (age 19) • Schools rated good or outstanding
Supportive Tameside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helped to live at home • Re-ablement services • Vulnerable people – achieve/maintain independent living • Homelessness • Teenage Pregnancy • Formal childcare – low income working families

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The Panel met with Bev Connolly, Head of Integrated Services for Children with Additional Needs (ISCAN); and Liz Heeley, Education Officer, Tameside MBC to provide an overview of SEN provision in Tameside and look specifically at the assessment process for children with SEN.
- 5.2 The Panel attended a tour of Aldwyn Primary School and Hawthorns Community School.
- 5.3 The Panel met with Steve Clark, Executive Head Teacher, Aldwyn Primary school; Caroline Charnock, Associate Head Teacher, Aldwyn Primary School; and Moira Thompson, Head Teacher, Hawthorns Community School to explore how children with SEN are encouraged to participate in mainstream education and the work carried out by a special school.

- 5.4 The Panel met with Sheena Wooding, Deputy Service Manager, ISCAN, Tameside MBC and Elaine Healey, Chair of Parents' Forum to provide an overview of the respite services available within Tameside for children with SEN and their families.
- 5.5 The Panel met with Nick Caws, Head of Inclusion and Personalised Learning, Tameside MBC to provide an overview of the work carried out by the Youth & Family Team.
- 5.6 The Panel met with Mark Ellison, Transport Manager; and Catherine Moseley, Head of School Support and Access to Learning, Tameside MBC to provide an overview of the transport services that are available to children with SEN and their families.

6. Background of the Review

- 6.1 A child is seen to have SEN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.
- 6.2 Children have a learning difficulty if they:
 - a) Have greater difficulty in learning compared with children their same age; or
 - b) Have a disability which prevents or hinders the child from making use of educational facilities, of the kind provided for children of their age.
 - c) Are under compulsory school age and fall within the definition at (a) or (b) above or would do so if special educational provision was not made for them.

Special Educational Provision means:

- 6.3 For children two or over, educational provision which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the education provision made generally for children of the child's age in maintained schools, other than special schools in the area.

7. Review Findings

SEN provision in Tameside

- 7.1 The Government feel that potentially there are too many children being identified as having SEN. If a child is prematurely identified as having a SEN this has the potential to impact on the goals that are set for the child and potentially reduce the child's aspirations. This can prevent them from achieving their true potential.
- 7.2 Tameside Council has created a seven year vision for SEN. The overarching vision for all children and young people with special educational needs or disability is to maximise inclusion, achievement, attainment and progress for all.
- 7.3 To achieve the vision, improvements need to be made to how Tameside works with partner agencies, schools and parents. It is important to work closely with parents to actively reduce the number of assessments required.
- 7.4 Integrated Services for Children with Additional Needs (ISCAN) has emerged from the Tameside vision. A lot of the work carried out by ISCAN involves promoting collaborative working between groups such as health, social care and education professionals.

- 7.5 The Council already has a highly regarded integrated service, which includes services such as Pennine Care, Tameside Hospital NHS Trust (Acute) and Community Workers. Pathfinders are working on how each service can work together in the future to develop a single plan for assessment.
- 7.6 To enable the Council to introduce a single Education, Health and Care Plan, involvement is required from all sectors. The choices that are made by parents will need to be strengthened and a more personalised budget scheme will need to be introduced.
- 7.7 The Government wants to include parents in the assessment process and introduce a legal right by 2014 to give parents control of the funding used to support their child's needs.

The SEN and Disability Green Paper

- 7.8 The 'Support and Aspiration' Green Paper outlines a new approach towards special educational needs and disability.
- 7.9 There have been long-standing frustrations from children, their parents and the professionals that work with them. Their concerns focus on the number of professional a child may need to see, which can increase the length of the identification and assessment process. The new vision is informed by the views of the stakeholders involved with SEN and aims to move certain areas forward and remove any existing boundaries.
- 7.10 The proposals put forward by the Green Paper aim to introduce a single assessment process along with a combined education, health and care plan. This will allow professionals to work together to give families one single package of support, tailored to their individual needs. This will help to speed up the assessment process.
- 7.11 If the Green Paper is made law, the existing school action and action plus systems will be replaced with a simpler school-based category to help teachers focus on raising attainment. Teacher training will also be overhauled to help them teach pupils with SEN better.
- 7.12 The local authority can work with schools to ask them what they want or need support with and also look at the resources the school has available.
- 7.13 The Council's Behaviour, for Learning and Inclusion team carried out an exercise that involved asking schools what they want. Classroom observations took place to determine whether all children's educational needs were being met and to identify any barriers to learning.
- 7.14 It is crucial that diversity within schools is promoted at all levels and work is done to ensure there is a high expectation for all children, regardless of their SEN or disability. The Council is working closely with schools to raise the awareness of SEN.
- 7.15 Parenting voice groups and social community groups provide parents with more control and provide a voice to help contribute to how a service is shaped and delivered. The Council is currently working with parent and community groups to utilise personal budgets, which can contribute to better life outcomes for young people.

Education and Poverty

- 7.16 The latest estimate (September 2010) using local data shows that 27% of all children in Tameside are living in poverty; this equates to 12,722 children.
- 7.17 The highest ranked (worst) ward in terms of child poverty is Ashton St Peters with 39% of children living in poverty, followed by Denton South 34% and Hyde Godley 34%. The

Denton West and Audenshaw wards have the lowest level of child poverty in Tameside with 12% and 18% respectively.

- 7.18 Poverty affects a child's ability to succeed at school in many ways. By the time a child is 5 years old they are assessed in 13 areas of the foundation stage profile. A child is classed as having a 'good level of development' if they achieve 78 points across all the 13 areas and at least 6 points in each of the 7 areas relating to personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy.
- 7.19 Only 49% of children living in areas with the highest levels of housing benefit claimants attained a good level of development compared to 71% of children in areas with the lowest levels of housing benefit.

Conclusions

1. If children are prematurely identified as having a SEN, through stigmata this can have a negative affect on them reaching their true potential.
2. The current SEN assessment process used by the Council can be complicated and time consuming, and for some children it is one of many assessments they have to undergo.
3. The proposals put forward in the green paper will move towards a single assessment process, which will help reach children quicker and with more effectiveness.
4. Links can be made between child poverty and SEN, and previous reviews have highlighted links between deprivation and educational attainment. It seems demonstrable that these links are not inevitable.

Recommendations

1. That the Council closely monitors the number of children that are being identified as having a SEN. Ensuring that any significant increases are comprehensively reviewed to reduce the possibility of over identification.
2. That through the development of a single family assessment the Council work to make the process more streamlined, reducing the number of professionals a child and their family need to encounter.
3. That the Council works to reduce the levels of SEN in areas where there are high levels of child poverty, by working closely with schools and parents to help improve awareness and promote early identification and intervention.

Identifying SEN

- 7.20 The identification of SEN can vary dependent on a child's age and the severity of the disability. For children that are born with a severe learning disability it is often identified by health professional at birth or before they reach school age.
- 7.21 Once a child reaches school age they may have already seen health and educational professionals, and a learning difficulty may already have been identified. In lesser cases the identification of SEN will be made by parents or schools. In schools it is carried out by teachers and teaching assistants; any concerns are raised at weekly inclusion meetings.

- 7.22 If a child requires an Individual Education Plan (IEP) it is written by the teacher and shared with the child's parents/carers, other teachers and teaching assistants. The IEP generally runs for 6 weeks, but can be reviewed at any stage. The IEP will focus on the areas where the child may be showing early signs of difficulty and is aimed to narrow any educational gap appearing between the child and children of the same age.
- 7.23 Occasionally a child may require further intervention and more formal arrangements are made. The school can choose to use School Action or School Plus dependent on the views of the teachers and other professionals.
- School Action – 2 x 30 min group sessions per week, reading or writing etc
 - School Action Plus – 2 hours of group work and 1 hour of one to one , IEP
- 7.24 If a child does not achieve the expected level of progress and through consultation with parents and Educational Psychologists a decision is made whether to apply for a statutory assessment of the child's need.

Educational Psychologists

- 7.25 Educational Psychologists are involved in promoting the development and learning of all children and young people age 0-19. They work with teachers, parents, carers and other professionals to help bring about a positive change for children with SEN.
- 7.26 Each school generally has a contact person that liaises with an Educational Psychologist (EP). This is usually the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo).
- 7.27 Schools in the borough and other educational settings are able to buy in sessions with an EP from the local authority to help enhance their work in addressing the learning and emotional needs of their pupils. It is important that a child's parents/carers are involved in every stage of the process.

Conclusions

5. Teachers and teaching assistants play a key role in identifying SEN and ensuring that the necessary interventions are put in place.
6. There are a number of interventions that a school can incorporate to help children with SEN before any referral to the local authority is required.
7. Once a child is showing no signs of improvement a referral will be made to the local authority and Educational Psychologists will become involved in promoting the child's development.
8. Throughout the identification process the work carried out is aimed to improve a child's learning and reduce gaps appearing between the child and other children of a similar age.

Recommendations

4. That the Council work to improve parent involvement in work carried out by schools and the local authority, increasing the impact they have in decisions made such as IEPs and other forms of intervention.

The Assessment Process for Children with SEN

- 7.28 The Council follow the SEN code of practice guidance 'Matching Provision to Need' (2004) which helps promote an inclusion friendly framework for effective identification, assessment and provision of SEN within Tameside.
- 7.29 The fundamental principles written in the code of practice are that a child with SEN should have their needs met, the views of a child should be sought after and taken into account and children with SEN should be offered full access to a broad, balanced and relevant education.
- 7.30 The Council can receive a request for a statutory assessment either from a school or parent. A large majority of the requests that the Council receives are from schools.
- 7.31 Schools have a statutory right to ask the local authority to conduct a statutory assessment of a child. The school has to provide evidence that the parent's views have been recorded at School Action and School Action Plus, the child's views have been considered, there is evidence of an on-going IEP and advice has been sought from health and social services, where necessary.
- 7.32 Schools in the borough need to ensure that the pupil for whom they are making the request for a statutory assessment meets the following criteria:-
- Little or no progress is made despite receiving a differentiated curriculum, specialised learning and/or behavioural intervention strategies.
 - The pupil appears to have significant and/or complex long-term SEN.
 - Requires greater attention than most children as a result of his/her learning and/or behaviour difficulties and/or disability.
 - Difficulties have not responded to the relevant and purposeful measures already taken by the school in partnership with external specialists and the LEA.
 - The pupil's needs may call for provision which cannot reasonably be provided with the resources available.
- 7.33 If a parental request is received the local authority must investigate the parents' concern. It may be that the parents feel that the school is not doing enough. During the initial investigation the local authority will collect information from the school to determine whether all the available options have been exhausted, this includes School Action, School Action Plus and the IEP.
- 7.34 'Matching Provision to Need' ensures that the correct mechanisms are put in place to help support children, after they have shown no signs of progress from support provided at school.

Statutory Timescales

- 7.35 Once the request has been received, the local authority has to adhere to a 26 week timeframe. From the receipt of the initial request the Council has 6 weeks to decide whether or not to proceed.
- 7.36 If the Council chooses to proceed they have 10 weeks to seek advice from the school, Educational Psychologists and anyone else who has worked with the child. A form is also sent to the child asking for their views.
- 7.37 The Council then has 2 weeks to write a proposed statement or notify the parents of a decision not to make a statement, a further 8 weeks to finalise the statement, which will then runs for 12 months.

- 7.38 If the parents are unhappy with any decisions that are being made at any point, they can contact their named officer or appeal through an independent tribunal.
- 7.39 In some circumstances the local authority is unable to comply with the statutory timescales. This can be when a child's additional needs increase very quickly and immediate intervention is required. In such circumstances the Council will always try to accommodate the needs of the school/parent as soon as possible.

Making the Decision

- 7.40 A SEN Panel meeting is held every fortnight. The Panel is made up of an Educational Psychologist, Assistant Education Officer, Education Officer, Inclusion Consultant and a primary or secondary school representative.
- 7.41 Each individual case is presented by the Assistant Education Officer and includes written advice that has been received from parents, the child, school, Medical, Psychological and social care services.
- 7.42 The Panel discuss the child's background information with regards to literacy and numeracy scores, along with findings from the EP and any personal information that may be available about the child's parents and general circumstances outside of school.
- 7.43 Once the information has been reviewed the Panel decide whether a statement should be issued and what type it should be. There are many different types of SEN statements ranging from general learning disability (GLD) to severe learning disability (SLD).
- 7.44 The Panel will not issue a statement if they feel that the assessment information they have is out of date or they are waiting to receive additional information that will provide a more accurate representation of whether the child is showing any prolonged periods of progression.
- 7.45 During 2010/11 the SEN Panel discussed 80 requests for a statement of special educational needs. Of which, 66 received statements and 14 were refused. The Panel have also experienced some problems with the gathering of information and had to wait for missing information from schools.
- 7.46 The largest number of assessment requests came from children with moderate learning difficulties (MLD), along with autism and behavioural needs. The average age of children being assessed is around ages 7, 8 and 9 (Key Stage 2). Children with severe learning difficulties are generally identified at preschool age and below.

Assessment Requests 2010/11

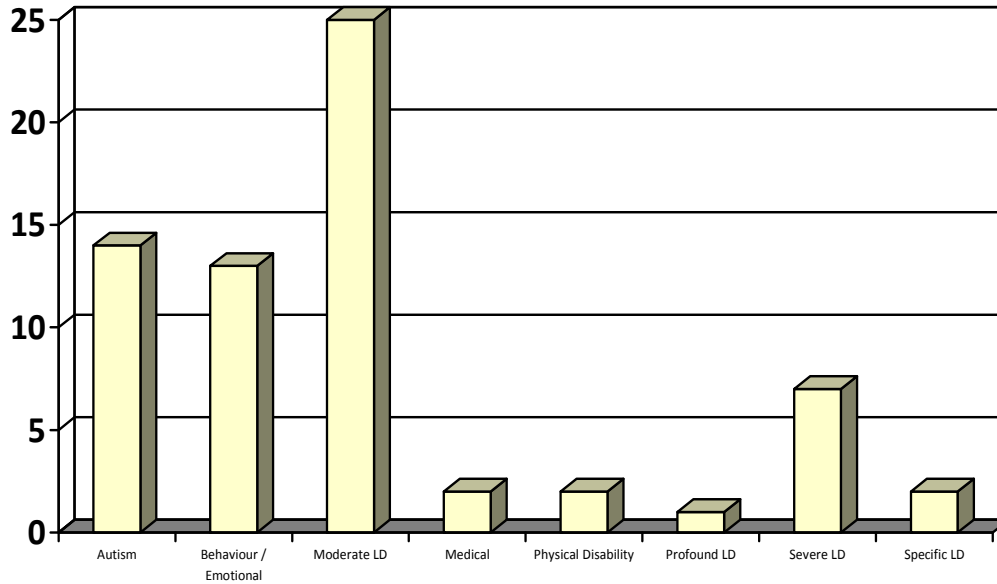


Chart 1: Assessment requests made to the Council, 2010/11

- 7.47 The above chart shows the range of SEN assessment requests that the Council receives. The chart shows that the highest numbers of requests are related to MLD, autism, behavioural and emotional needs and severe learning disability.

Conclusions

9. The Council currently follow SEN code of practice guidance 'Matching Provision to Need' (2004).
10. If little or no progress is shown from the intervention provided at school a request for a statutory assessment can be made to the local authority.
11. The decision whether a statement is issued is made by the SEN Panel.

Recommendations

5. That the Council frequently monitors that parents/carers and the child are fully informed during all stages of intervention and the assessment process, and their views are taken into account at all times. This is with a view to help tailor any intervention to the child's needs.
6. That the Council look for alternative methods of collecting the relevant data from schools and other professionals, such as email and fax, which will help speed up the assessment process.

Funding for Special Educational Needs

- 7.48 Tameside schools currently receive their funding directly from the local authority. The school's additional educational need allowance is agreed by the School Forum and each school receives an allocation.
- 7.49 The local authority also receives funding for out of borough placements, including hospital placements. Hospital placements include children that are in long term inpatient care. This could be from a child being sectioned under the Mental Health Act or due to a terminal illness. The local authority has a statutory obligation to meet their educational costs.
- 7.50 The school funding formula was agreed by the Schools Forum in 2007 and was originally intended to be used from 2007/8 to 2010/11. With a change of Government and uncertainty surrounding school funding and the fact that plans have failed to materialise, the forum have agreed to continue with the existing formula for 2011/12 and 2012/13.
- 7.51 Local Education Authority (LEA) funding for schools is managed centrally by the local authority and each school apportions a notional 4% of their budget to be used for SEN purposes.
- 7.52 A school will use the SEN part of their budget to help provide intervention for children by creating IEPs, School Action and School Action Plus programmes along with Educational Psychologist services that are bought in from the local authority. Schools will also carry out a lot of additional, more informal intervention such as additional reading and literacy, which will also use the SEN part of their budget.
- 7.53 If the school requires any support staff for pupils with SEN, this also comes from the SEN part of their budget. It can be difficult for schools to plan for future support needs, so while support staff may currently be required based on current need, there is a possibility that the school can be left with a financial burden of over staffing if the number of children with SEN reduces in future years.
- 7.54 There are three main elements to the SEN funding that mainstream primary and secondary schools receive. This area of the school funding is called Additional Educational Needs – SEN. The three elements are:
- The first element takes the number of children that attend the school and multiplies it by the formula rate of £20.80.
 - The second element provides a lump sum of £12,000 for primary schools and £41,100 for secondary schools.
 - The third element is derived from bandings of SEN that were calculated for each school in 2007. The bandings range from 0 to 5 and dictate if any additional rate per pupil, additional to item (a) above, is paid to the school for the number of pupils that attend the school.

School	School Banding	Notional 4%	Separately Identified AEN/SEN Funding
Gorse Hall	0	£40,958.08	£20,823.00
Moorside	0	£35,545.12	£20,359.00
Leigh Primary	4	£29,682.72	£22,412.00
Lindon Road	5	£19,498.56	£18,660.00

Table 1: School bandings and SEN funding received.

- 7.55 The table above shows examples of four mainstream primary schools in the borough, the banding they received in 2007 and the SEN funding they receive for 2011/12. From the

table it is clear to see that a school with a high SEN banding will receive a large amount of separately identified funding in proportion to their original 4% allocation.

The Pupil Premium

- 7.56 The Pupil Premium is additional to main school funding. It is a method which was introduced to address the underlying inequalities between children eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) and their wealthier peers.
- 7.57 It is down to the individual schools to determine how the premium is spent. For pupils that are in non-mainstream schools the local authority decides how to allocate the premium. The local authority must consult with special schools about how the premium should be used.
- 7.58 The Pupil Premium is allocated to children from low-income families who are currently known to be eligible for FSM in both mainstream and non-mainstream settings and children who have been looked after continuously for more than six months.
- 7.59 Total nationwide funding through the Pupil Premium will increase from £625m in 2011-12 to £1.25bn in 2012-13.
- 7.60 The level of the premium in 2011-12 was £488 per pupil for pupils eligible for FSM and for pupils in care who have been continuously looked after for six months; it will increase to £600 per pupil in 2012-13.
- 7.61 The Pupil Premium was introduced in April 2011, and paid to local authorities by means of a specific grant based on January 2011 school census figures for pupils registered as eligible for FSM in reception to Year 11. For looked after children the Pupil Premium was calculated using the Children looked after data return.
- 7.62 The Pupil Premium is also paid to academies via the Young Peoples' Learning Agency.
- 7.63 The Government has decided that eligibility for the Pupil Premium in 2012-13 will be extended to pupils who have been eligible for FSM at any point in the last 6 years.

Funding for Special Schools

- 7.64 The funding that a special school receives is different to that received by a mainstream school.
- 7.65 A special school receives funding based on a specific amount of places. The places are weighted, which is dependent on the complexity of the children's needs. Although a school may receive funding for 80 places, this doesn't mean that they have capacity for that many children.
- 7.66 The Panel were provided with example information from the Head Teacher at Hawthorns Community School which showed they currently receive funding based on 72 weighted places, which equates to £10,236.00 per pupil for 2011/12. The Pupil Premium is also received which equates to £488.00 per pupil.

Funding Types and Costs

Funding Type	2009	2010	2011
School Additional Educational Needs top up	£2,327,299.00	£2,477,367.00	£2,441,585.00
Out of Authority Placements inc. Hospital Schools	£430,000.00	£500,000.00	£525,000 (est)
Independent and Non-maintained Placements	£780,387.66	£914,896.00	£1,052,152.79 (est)

Table 2: Annual funding costs for 2009 to 2011

7.67 The above table shows the types of funding and their annual cost per annum. It is clear to see from the table that the annual costs relating to SEN have been increasing year on year.

Aldwyn Primary School

7.68 Aldwyn Primary school is a mainstream school located on the same site as Hawthorns Community School, which is one of the borough's special schools.

7.69 The school monitors the number of children with SEN or disability and submits the data annually to the local authority.

7.70 In January 2012 no children in the school had a statement of special educational needs. There were 23 children in School Action Plus and 11 in School Action. The large majority of their needs relate to numeracy, literacy, speech and language. There are 4 children with a physical disability and 5 children with behavioural difficulties.

7.71 In comparison to other primary schools in the borough Aldwyn has a fairly low number of children with SEN. They currently have 7.9% of pupils in School Action Plus compared with the national average of 11.3%. However, this can change significantly each year dependent on the new children entering the school.

7.72 Children at the school receive whatever support they need, whether it is extra time, resources or support. As mentioned the number of children with SEN at the school is comparatively low, which means that they receive the level of teaching, care and guidance they require to make good progress.

7.73 Some schools that have higher numbers of children with SEN may need to closely manage how certain interventions are carried out and staffing required.

7.74 Management at Aldwyn will relocate staff from different areas to meet additional needs. By relocating staff this can result in a cut to other interventions carried out by the school that are not related to SEN.

7.75 Children that attend mainstream schools who may have more severe learning or physical disabilities will require a high level of support on a daily basis with education and mobility. At the moment each school is responsible for employing additional support staff, which may carry out work on a one to one basis.

7.76 If additional support staff is employed, the cost would come from the SEN funding the school receives. In some cases an extra teaching assistant/support worker has been employed to work with one child and this has meant that some individual cases take up a large part of the budget.

- 7.77 Once the child then transfers to secondary school the support staff may no longer be required. In such circumstances the school may be left with additional staff that are not directly utilised.
- 7.78 If the school were to exceed the available resources then the school would contact the local authority and ask for additional funding.
- 7.79 The funding that Aldwyn receives from Tameside Council is paid into three cost centres, inclusion, bought in services and staffing.
- 7.80 In 2011/12 the school's allocated budget for SEN was £18,465, the projected spend for the three cost centres was £21,409. The over spend is due to a child that requires a high level of supervision on a daily basis.
- 7.81 The funding that Aldwyn has received over recent years has remained fairly constant. The school works closely with the local authority and have also found them to be very supportive with regards to any additional help they require.

Hawthorns Community School

- 7.82 Hawthorns is 1 of 5 special schools in the borough and is co-located with Aldwyn Primary School. The school has a strong reputation for achieving outstanding outcomes for children with SEN.
- 7.83 All the children that attend the school have received a statement of SEN. The school accommodates children with MLD, however in reality some children have more complex learning difficulties, with some children having multiple learning needs.
- 7.84 The school currently has 58 pupils and year on year the profile of the school can change, because they are unaware of the ages and needs of future pupils.
- 7.85 There are two foundation classes, two key stage 1 classes and two key stage 2 classes. It may not be the case that a child will progress in the same way a child does in a mainstream school.
- 7.86 The children are taught in small classes by highly skilled teachers and support staff and a differentiated primary curriculum is delivered to meet the needs of the children. The school promotes a creative curriculum that includes art, cooking and music etc. The school aims to work with children and parents to promote independence.
- 7.87 Children that attend the school are learning at significantly below age related expectations. Children may be operating at between P4 to Level 2 of the National Curriculum, some children at the end of Key Stage 2 have achieved Level 3. These levels of attainment are below what would be expected in a mainstream school. The school uses the Progression Guidance to analyse progress, and it highlights that most children at the end of Key Stage 2 are making outstanding progress.
- 7.88 The school works closely with parents to understand what they want their children to achieve. It is important that regular contact with parents is maintained and the school works to achieve this in many different ways, by phone, email, texts and home school books. The partnership with parents begins right from the initial visit and parents are encouraged to articulate what they would like their child to achieve whilst they are at the school.
- 7.89 As mentioned the school is 1 of 5 special schools in the borough, there are 4 primary schools that have Resourced Provision for 9 pupils each. Buckton Vale, The Heys,

Oakfield and Russell Scott. It is important that the schools work together to create plans for children with MLD. Each school is located in a separate geographical area of the borough and it is important that interdependence between the schools is created to make sure the best possible provision is available to all children with SEN in Tameside.

- 7.90 It is important that the cooperation between the special schools promoted, this will allow them to benefit from sharing knowledge and experiences.
- 7.91 At the moment each school has a limited number of places and certain schools are attracting more interest from parents than others. By working together they can ensure the same standard of learning is available to all children closer to where they live.

Conclusions

12. Mainstream schools apportion 4% of their budget to be spent on SEN provision.
13. Additional funding can also be received which is dependent on a schools SEN banding and the number of pupils that attend the school.
14. The local authority does not base funding on the individual SEN makeup of the school.
15. A schools SEN funding is used to provide interventions such as IEPs, School Action and School Action Plus. It is also used to pay for additional support staff that may be required.
16. Schools also receive a Pupil Premium which is based on pupils in receipt of FSM.

Recommendations

7. That schools across the borough look at the possibility of sharing support staff, to improve the way they are used. This can potentially reduce the financial implications that arise when support staff are fixed to one school and under utilised.
8. That special schools in the borough actively work together to share information and experiences, which will help raise standards across Tameside.

Tameside Respite Services

- 7.92 The Council has been able to increase its short break services over the last three years with the Aiming High for Disabled Children Grant. New legislation also requires councils to provide short break services on a statutory basis.
- 7.93 There is a broad range of short break services that allow children & young people to enjoy a range of activities, which also allows their parents and carers to have a much needed break from their caring responsibilities.
- 7.94 Short breaks can be arranged for a broad range of children. Some are informal which require no formal assessment and take place at local clubs and leisure facilities. At some of the clubs parents have the opportunity to stay. This allows them to meet and socialise with other parents that are in a similar situation.
- 7.95 The clubs and activities help promote independence and allow children with SEN to socialise. Many activities are run by Tameside Sports Trust and parenting groups including

Our Kids Eyes. The activities include football, swimming, dance, holiday clubs and many more.

- 7.96 More formal arrangements are also made where a child will receive away from home respite. This is where a child will stay in a residential or family setting. These types of breaks are usually on a short term basis, which can be once a week or twice a month etc.
- 7.97 Boyds Walk Residential Respite Unit provides short breaks for approximately 35 children. There are six beds available and the unit operates 7 nights a week.
- 7.98 The unit can accommodate a spectrum of needs from behavioural difficulties to physical disabilities. The unit is comprehensively staffed due to the fact that some children may require one to one support.
- 7.99 The unit is registered with Ofsted under Children's Home Regulations and is one of the few residential respite units that have been rated as outstanding for five consecutive years.
- 7.100 There are activities taking place across the borough everyday and most evenings. Many of which are commissioned through parent support groups. Many of the informal activities are now run by parent volunteers due to reduced resources that are available.
- 7.101 Parents are actively contributing approximately 5,000 hours, which significantly reduces the cost of service provision. This also allows parents to contribute towards the development of short break services, which will have a direct impact on their children. This can help provide a service that is more personalised and committed to meeting the children and their parents/carers.
- 7.102 The children that have access to the short breaks will typically have a higher level of need. This can range from children with moderate to severe learning disabilities, autism or more complex health needs. This service is also vital to children with SEN whose parents may be ill or disabled and haven't got the parenting capacity to meet their child's needs all of the time.
- 7.103 Parents are made aware of the respite services available on the Tameside Council website, leaflets are also available at schools and clubs. There is also a close link between ISCAN and Tameside Hospital help inform new parents with children who may potentially have a SEN about what services are available.

Direct Payments

- 7.104 Direct Payments are an alternative to traditional care and support services. Cash payments are provided for individuals to purchase services to meet their assessed needs.
- 7.105 This gives a person receiving services more choice and control over how their needs are met.
- 7.106 People in receipt of Direct Payments can choose to employ their own care worker(s) known as personal assistants. Some people use their Direct Payments to meet some of their needs while traditional services meet the rest.
- 7.107 Most people who are assessed as needing care or support services are eligible for Direct Payments. This includes parents of disabled children.
- 7.108 Direct Payments actively form part of the Council's short break service. The size of the support package can vary dependent on a person's ability and also the willingness of a child's family to accept periods of respite. Work is carried out to approach parents and help them work towards benefiting their child in all areas.

7.109 There are approximately 100 families across the borough that are in receipt of Direct Payments. Packages can range from 4 hours to 15 hours per week.

7.110 Support is provided to access facilities, promote independence and social integration. The main aim is to provide support for children and their families, at the moment around 70% of families in receipt of Direct Payments are using it for their child to gain support and attend activities.

Partnership Working

7.111 Parents are fully involved in the assessment processes and are able to contribute to their child's assessment. This ensures that their needs as carers are identified and work is done to meet those needs.

7.112 A Parents' Hub has been created at Jubilee Gardens in Droylsden which helps to bring all parent groups together and it can provide understanding to parents about why certain decisions have been made.

7.113 The Council's social care team has developed strong links with child development workers, and collaborative working takes place between ISCAN, special schools, Council staff, parents and the SEN assessment team.

7.114 Some areas of the service are due to be reviewed, which includes the transport service and whether a more efficient and less costly service can be achieved through partnership working and parent volunteer involvement.

7.115 The Parents Forum and other parenting groups play an active role in all areas of the services. They will put forward any suggestions and ideas they may have which they believe will enhance the service for children and young people.

7.116 The respite service and parent representatives are currently meeting with the Tameside Council's transport service to discuss concerns with regards to costs and efficiency, with the view that parent volunteers can potentially work alongside the Council to deliver an improved and cheaper transport service to children with SEN and their families.

Conclusions

17. The work carried out by the respite service allows parents and carers to have a much needed break from their caring responsibilities.

18. A large number of activities are now provided by parent volunteers, at a much lower cost to the Council.

Recommendations

9. That existing and new parent groups, along with volunteers are supported to maintain and improve vital respite services and options are explored to increase their representation in meetings and service decisions.

Tameside's Youth & Family Team

- 7.117 The Youth & family Team was formed in April 2011. The service works with young people across Tameside aged 0 to 19 years old and provides multi agency teams which cover the four geographical localities in Tameside.
- 7.118 The team is made up of Locality Managers, Senior Practitioners, Educational Psychologists, Community Development Workers and Education Welfare Officers.
- 7.119 The Youth & Family Team work closely with preschool and their families in children centres to help build awareness and provide services for children that live in areas with the greatest levels of need and deprivation.
- 7.120 Each locality in Tameside has its own Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) that works towards identification and provision for children with SEN. There is also a Portage Team which works in early years intervention, providing home visiting services which can help improve links with families and professionals to help build awareness of the assessment process.
- 7.121 The Youth & Family Team provide activities to enhance parent child relationships and provide parental training sessions. Work is also carried out by Educational Psychologists to focus on children at risk of experiencing a poor transition from portage to school.
- 7.122 A lot of the work undertaken with primary school children is aimed at strengthening families by helping parents improve the way they communicate with their children and work collaboratively with the school and the local authority.
- 7.123 The team also work to support attendance at schools, combat bullying and improve the links between parents, schools and professionals.
- 7.124 The processes that are put in place are there to help schools find additional support. In some circumstances a school may find themselves holding/monitoring a problem in relation to a child with SEN. It may be the case that all options have not been explored and finding the correct support for the child, family and school can have a positive outcome.
- 7.125 The work that the team carry out with older children aged 10 to 19 and their families requires flexibility from a range of professionals and service providers to meet the needs of differing age groups.
- 7.126 The Behaviour for Learning and Inclusion Services (BLIS) workers are increasing the amount of work they carry out with a child's family, rather than just concentrating on schools.
- 7.127 Services have been commissioned to deliver diverse and positive activities. Parent groups and other organisations are working collaboratively with the local authority, which has involved the sharing of buildings and resources.
- 7.128 The Youth and Family Team promote their services throughout schools and local radio. A key aim of the work that is carried out is to ensure people become engaged and explain what they want to do with their time.
- 7.129 There has been a rise in the number of children being diagnosed with conditions such as autism. The reasons for this can be due to the range in complexities of the condition, along with improvements in the identification and assessment process.

7.130 The work carried out by the Youth & Family Team and schools aims to ensure that the correct services and interventions are in place to allow children with SEN to remain in mainstream education.

Transport Services

7.131 The basic aims of the Transport Service are to support healthy and sustainable travel solutions, promote good attendance at schools, work in partnership with parents and carers, promote independent travel, support families in short term crisis and apply the policy in a consistent and fair manner.

7.132 The service accommodates pupils with SEN statements, pupils with temporary need and young people who are in receipt of respite care.

7.133 Tameside Home to School Transport Policy came into effect in 2008 and follows the guidance provided by the Department for Transport.

7.134 There are currently 162 contracts with 34 different suppliers transporting children to 48 separate destinations across the borough. During 2010/11 an average of 431 pupils were transported per week, which equates to a total cost per year of £1.3 million.

7.135 Application forms for transport are completed by parents/carers and returned to the Integrated Transport Unit. A child's eligibility is assessed against the criteria by a Transport Coordinator and the transport is either approved or refused. If the transport is approved the necessary arrangements are made in order for the transport to commence.

7.136 The only way that some parents/carers realise their child is ineligible for transport is when their application is refused.

7.137 If an application for transport is refused further evidence may be requested from medical professionals. A re-assessment will then take place based on the additional evidence provided.

7.138 If the transport is still refused the parents/carers can appeal the decision, the final decision is made by the Transport Manager.

7.139 In September 2011 the Council received 216 additional applications for transport, 95 were agreed at first assessment, 63 were refused. The remainder were either withdrawn or additional information was required. From the 63 applications that were refused 10 went to appeal, of which 7 resulted in the original decision being overturned.

7.140 A relatively high proportion of the application forms that the Integrated Transport Unit receives are ineligible and therefore refused. This results in a significant amount of officer time being used to process ineligible applications.

7.141 For children with SEN there are two categories of transport, a free bus pass or formally arranged transport. If a child has a SEN statement they are automatically entitled to a free bus pass. For a child to receive transport it is determined by the nature of their disability and the availability of the parents/carers to accompany the child to school.

7.142 Transport will be provided for a child to and from school or if they are going to respite directly from school. Transport is not provided for social provision such as youth clubs and other activities. The transport is provided by a Council bus or through an external contract such as a private taxi.

- 7.143 Under current arrangements if a child is ineligible for transport and in receipt of a free bus pass parents/carers do not receive a bus pass and they have to pay for their own bus fare when accompanying their child to school.
- 7.144 Tameside currently follows the minimum standards with regards to walking distance to and from schools that forms part of the Development for Transport Policy. Within Tameside there are currently a low number of children without a bus pass or eligible for transport that have to walk more than the maximum distance of 2 miles to school.
- 7.145 The Council has a statutory responsibility to provide transport services to children in the borough. While parent involvement and volunteering in transport could be seen to be beneficial, there are legal implications and long term commitments that can create barriers.

Conclusions

19. The Transport Service accommodates children that have received a SEN statement, have a temporary need and children in receipt of respite care.
20. The application form is assessed by a Transport Coordinator and all appeals decisions are made by the Transport Manager.
21. A relatively high percentage of applications are refused at the first stage or additional evidence is required.
22. The Council have a statutory obligation to provide transport services to children in the borough.

Recommendations

10. Schools should coordinate directly with Tameside Sports Trust in relation to the activities that are provided for children with SEN.
11. That the Council create a leaflet which details the eligibility criteria for transport, with the view that this will inform parents/carers before they complete the form.
12. That the Council automatically send a transport application form to parents/carers when a SEN statement is issued.
13. That the appeal for transport is reviewed by a panel rather than just one individual Transport Manager.
14. The Transport Service look at piloting work with volunteers and parent groups to potentially increase their involvement in transport.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 If children are prematurely identified as having a SEN, through stigmata this can have a negative affect on them reaching their true potential.
- 8.2 The current SEN assessment used by the Council can be complicated and time consuming, and for some children it is one of many assessments they have to undergo.

- 8.3 The proposals put forward by the Green Paper will move towards a single assessment process, which will help reach children quicker and with more effectiveness.
- 8.4 Links can be made between child poverty and SEN, and previous reviews have highlighted links between deprivation and educational attainment. It seems demonstrable that these links are not inevitable.
- 8.5 Teachers and teaching assistants play a key role in identifying SEN and ensuring that the necessary interventions are put in place.
- 8.6 There are a number of interventions that a school can incorporate to help children with SEN before any referral to the local authority is required.
- 8.7 Once a child is showing no signs of improvement a referral will be made to the local authority and Educational Psychologists will become involved in promoting the child's development.
- 8.8 Throughout the identification process the work carried out is aimed to improve a child's learning and reduce gaps appearing between the child and other children of a similar age.
- 8.9 The Council currently follow SEN code of practice guidance 'Matching Provision to Need' (2004).
- 8.10 If little or no progress is shown from the intervention provided at school a request for a statutory assessment can be made to the local authority.
- 8.11 The decision whether a statement is issued is made by the SEN Panel.
- 8.12 Mainstream schools apportion 4% of their budget to be spent on SEN provision.
- 8.13 Additional funding can also be received which is dependent on a school's SEN banding and the number of pupils that attend the school.
- 8.14 The local authority does not base funding on the individual SEN makeup of the school.
- 8.15 A school's SEN funding is used to provide interventions such as IEPs, School Action and School Action Plus. It is also used to pay for additional support staff that may be required.
- 8.16 Schools also receive a Pupil Premium which is based on pupils in receipt of FSM.
- 8.17 The work carried out by the respite service allows parents and carers to have a much needed break from their caring responsibilities.
- 8.18 A large number of activities are now provided by parent volunteers, at a much lower cost to the Council.
- 8.19 The Transport Service accommodates children that have received a SEN statement, have a temporary need and children in receipt of respite care.
- 8.20 The application form is assessed by a Transport Coordinator and all appeals decisions are made by the Transport Manager.
- 8.21 A relatively high percentage of applications are refused at the first stage or additional evidence is required.
- 8.22. The Council have a statutory obligation to provide transport services to children in the borough.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 That the Council closely monitors the number of children that are being identified as having a SEN, ensuring that any significant increases are comprehensively reviewed to reduce the possibility of over identification.
- 9.2 That through the development of a single family assessment the Council work to make the process more streamlined, reducing the number of professionals a child and their family need to encounter.
- 9.3 That the Council works to reduce the levels of SEN in areas where there are high levels of child poverty, by working closely with schools and parents to help improve awareness and promote early identification and intervention.
- 9.4 That the Council work to improve parent involvement in work carried out by schools and the local authority, increasing the impact they have in decisions made such as IEPs and other forms of intervention.
- 9.5 That the Council frequently monitors that parents/carers and the child are fully informed during all stages of intervention and the assessment process, and their views are taken into account at all times. This is with a view to help tailor any intervention to the child's needs.
- 9.6 That the Council look for alternative methods of collecting the relevant data from schools and other professionals, such as email and fax, which will help speed up the assessment process.
- 9.7 That schools across the borough look at the possibility of sharing support staff, to improve the way they are used. This can potentially reduce the financial implications that arise when support staff are fixed to one school and under utilised.
- 9.8 That special schools in the borough actively work together to share information and experiences, which will help raise standards across Tameside.
- 9.9 That existing and new parent groups, along with volunteers are supported to maintain and improve vital respite services and options are explored to increase their representation in meetings and service decisions.
- 9.10 Schools should coordinate directly with Tameside Sports Trust in relation to the activities that are provided for children with SEN.
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