

London Borough of Enfield

Cabinet

Meeting Date 21.04.21

Subject: Use of High Needs Block funding to support Early Intervention for children and young people

Cabinet Member: Cllr. Rick Jewell

Executive Director: Tony Theodoulou

Key Decision: KD 5296

Purpose of Report

1. This report details Enfield Council's proposed response to help remedy the current High Needs Block (HNB) overspend.
2. The Schools Forum has recommended the approaches suggested and the investments proposed.

Proposals

3. Endorsement is sought from Cabinet for the use of High Needs Block (HNB) funding to invest in two Early Intervention models:
 - Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)
 - Autism

Reason for Proposals

4. In 2020, EY (previously Ernst & Young) carried out an independent review of the High Needs Block and suggested several recommendations to aid with management of its current overspend. Two recommendations proposed were to:
 - increase early intervention, being a cost-effective way of meeting needs;
 - expand in-borough provision and reduce independent placements.
5. In addition, the Enfield Poverty and Inequality Commission (EPIC) produced 'All things being equal' (2019), an independent report commissioned to better understand the forces driving poverty and inequality in the Borough. One of the responses to the barriers preventing accessible learning opportunities is given as Recommendation 12 within the EPIC report; seeking to ensure that children are 'school-ready'. Part of this

recommendation focuses on the need for development and implementation of a robust way to commission speech, language and communication services.

6. Each project within this Cabinet report is based on an invest-to-save, early intervention model of practice. The intention is to ensure that children and young people receive a service as soon as it is required, helping to prevent the need for more intensive intervention in the future. The models proposed are designed to ensure that the Council meets its statutory obligations in relation to children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), whilst also taking consideration of future need within the Borough.
7. As proposed changes are embedded into working practices within schools and specialist services, it is envisaged that this will lead to a reduction in requirement for more expensive support and yield savings to support reduction in the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) overspend.

Relevance to the Council Plan

8. Early intervention will help to sustain strong and healthy communities by providing specialist support that enables children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities to realise their potential and achieve maximum independence, improving their learning and life outcomes, and helping them to contribute to the local community and workforce.
9. The services support the Council's aim to move, as far as possible, to a position whereby Enfield children and young people are able to remain in Enfield and be educated at their local school.

Background

10. Local Authorities have a duty under the Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure that children and young people with SEND are supported to facilitate their development, and to help them achieve the 'best possible educational and other outcomes'.
11. Provision of efficient and effective services helps ensure that children and young people are given the same educational, health and social care opportunities as children without SEND, preparing them for independence and adulthood.
12. Building early intervention into services allows children and young people to be supported as soon as they need to be, rather than waiting for assessment without receiving interim support.

Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

13. It is proposed that Enfield invests in a Speech, Language and Communication Hub (SLaCH) to support the speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) of children and young people. The Hub will be multi-disciplinary to support the associated additional needs – such as occupational therapy and psychological therapy – of children who present with SLCN.
14. The SLaCH model recognises that resilience needs to be created within the education sector. This will be achieved by the Hub initially training and supporting staff to deliver the model, and subsequently embedding and maintaining it.
15. This project will provide a four-stranded model of delivery incorporating:
 - Training in identification
 - Targeted intervention
 - Parent- and carer-focused training and support
 - A practitioner- and school-based training programme
16. Expected outcomes of this SLCN model include:
 - Fewer children and young people will require an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to allow them access to a specialist SLCN treatment pathway.
 - By the end of the second year of the project, all schools will have received a core offer to support them in identifying the needs of children and young people.
 - Children and young people will be identified early and will receive initial support for their SLCN promptly.
 - The core Speech and Language Service will be better prepared and resourced for an expansion in education placements within Enfield, helping to sustain the service and ensure the most intensive SLCN service is provided for those most in need.
17. **The total annual cost to provide the SLCN model is £454,526.**
The full SLCN model proposal is available upon request; an implementation plan is being developed for the academic year 2021-22.

Autism

18. It is proposed that Enfield provides additional investment to the Enfield Advisory Service for Autism (EASA) to support, reinforce and extend its current provision, both for families and for education settings.
19. Currently, the EASA service is available only to school-aged children and young people. The proposal will extend the level of provision to include Early Years (Under 5's) and post-16's; often the age groups most at need of this type of provision.

20. Similarly to the SLCN model, the project will create a specialist team across education, health and social care. The team will incorporate early years autism practitioners, specialist advisory teachers and teaching assistants, parent support advisors, speech and language therapists, educational psychologists and assistant educational psychologists. The objective of this model is to strengthen Enfield's autism partnership and service offer.
21. This project will provide a four-stranded model of delivery incorporating:
 - Support for families, including sibling support
 - Developing autism friendly settings
 - Targeted support for children/young people
 - Statutory and crisis support
22. Expected outcomes of the Autism model include:
 - Fewer children and young people will require an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) to allow them access to a specialist autism pathway.
 - The number of parents/carers receiving early support and training will increase. This will lead to a greater number of families understanding their child's needs and being able to support development at home.
 - A greater number of young autistic children will have improved school readiness, having received early learning experiences in the home and early years settings.
 - The number of children experiencing effective transition from early years to school settings will increase, and transitions from primary to secondary school will be well-informed. The proportion of autistic young people moving into positive destinations after school/college will increase.
23. **The total annual cost to provide the Autism model is £276,294.**
The full Autism proposal is available upon request; an implementation plan is being developed for the academic year 2021-22.

Main Considerations for the Council

24. The SLCN and Autism services are funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) portion of the High Needs Block (HNB).
25. The total amount of recurrent funding requested is £730,820. Of this, £454,426 will be used to fund the SLaCH for SLCN and £276,294 to increase the reach of autism services provided by EASA.
26. Each proposal is based on the concept of an invest to save model, aligned to the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). As funding is invested in early intervention, the amount of funding required for statutory provision will eventually reduce.

27. The number of EHCPs is currently rising approximately 10% every year. The most common types of primary need within Enfield EHCPs are: Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), accounting for 32% of EHCPs and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) accounting for 26% of EHCPs.
28. In terms of the SLCN project, an initial reduction target of 2% in the number of EHCPs will allow the SLCN Service to deliver a sustainable service, whilst also ensuring that children and young people receive intervention for their SLCN as soon as possible. The Autism model similarly projects an integrated local offer that enables improved provision early in each autistic child/young person's pathway, enabling identification of needs and appropriate planning, training and provision. Demonstrably improved confidence in local provision will reduce demand for more costly alternatives.
29. To ensure that children and young people can attend school close to home, and to reduce the associated costs of out of Borough placements, the Council increased the number of special school places within Borough by approximately 150 places for 2020/21. This is expected to increase by a minimum of 86 by September 2022. Additionally, a private independent special school will be opening in Enfield, which will cater to between 40 and 50 SEND pupils. The extra pupil places impact service delivery; putting early intervention measures into place will ease pressure on services.
30. The SLCN and Autism proposals have been agreed by the Departmental Management Team, the Education Resource Group and the Schools Forum, subject to approval of detailed business plans.

Consultation

31. Consultation on both the SLCN and Autism proposals has taken place with school representatives at the Schools Forum, Education Resources Group, SEND Partnership Board, Early Years Board and Headteachers' briefings. Schools have committed to work in partnership to deliver the anticipated outcomes.

Safeguarding Implications

32. Amongst other safeguarding requirements, all staff working for the services will have a valid enhanced disclosure check regularly undertaken via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Adherence to this requirement is checked regularly. Staff are also required to be trained in Safeguarding, Child Protection and Data Protection.

Public Health Implications

33. These projects will provide early intervention services to children and young people with SEND, to help ensure that the wellbeing of service users – children and young people with SEND – is addressed in terms of their

educational, health and social care requirements. The service impacts positively on children and young people's employment, skills and educational opportunities, as it helps address the identified needs of children and young people in this area, including the requirements set out within individuals' Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The service supports the service user in accessing opportunities that can lead to employment, helps ensure their physical and mental wellbeing, and promotes family resilience.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

34. Predictive Equalities Impact Assessments have been completed for both the SLCN (Appendix 1) and Autism (Appendix 2) proposals. No negative impacts have been identified. These services comply with diversity and equal opportunities requirements.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

35. The proposals are not expected to have significant impact on the Environment or Climate Change.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

36. If current SLCN and autism services continue without systems change, the Council will be unable to continue provision of its statutory services. Investment for early intervention will allow the Council to meet its statutory obligations and help ensure that Enfield's children and young people with SEND receive the provision that they require to help them reach their personal and educational goals.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

37. Educational establishments may initially be concerned that they have a lack of resource to enable them to work directly with children and young people with SLCN. This will be assuaged by the SLaCH working closely with educational partners in designing the approach to be used, and in ensuring that there is support available for them when needed.
38. There is a risk that the programmes will not meet their objective in ensuring that provision is readily available for children and young people requiring this type of intervention. Risk will be mitigated by making sure the proposed business plans are robust in advance of the projects starting, and by putting a management board into place to ensure that milestones and outcomes are being met and expectations managed.

Financial Implications

39. The DSG is projecting to be overspent by £8m at the end of 2020/21 and this is mainly due to pressures on the High Needs Block where, for the last few years, expenditure to meet demand has been higher than the funding received. The deficit is expected to increase by a further £3m in 2021/22 based on original budget projections.
40. The authority has been looking at ways of managing and reducing the deficit and during Spring 2020, EY carried out a high needs review and the key recommendation from this exercise was to increase the range of early intervention support for children. This led to these invest to save models being developed and Schools Forum have agreed to £1m of funding from the HNB to support these projects.
41. A summary of the financial implications for each project is shown below and the funding for 2021/22 is included in original budget projections for the financial year.

AUTISM PROJECT	FTE	FY	21/22
Speech & Language Therapist	0.50	£35,759	£23,839
Occupational Therapist	0.50	£35,759	£23,839
Early Years Autism Practitioner	0.50	£35,759	£23,839
Early Years Autism Practitioner	1.00	£63,000	£42,000
Educational Psychologist	0.50	£43,000	£28,667
Assistant Educational Psychologist	0.50	£23,017	£15,345
Specialist TA	1.00	£30,000	£20,000
AET Consultant		£10,000	£6,667
TOTAL		£276,294	£184,196

SPEECH, LANG & COMM PROJECT	FTE	FY	21/22
Specialist Teachers	2.00	£103,520	£69,013
S&L Therapist	2.00	£143,035	£95,357
Occupational Therapist	0.50	£35,759	£23,839
Educational Psychologist	0.50	£42,096	£28,064
Manager	0.50	£42,244	£28,163
Admin Manager	1.00	£37,872	£25,248
Wellbeing Pack		£50,000	£33,333
TOTAL		£454,526	£303,017

42. As detailed in the report, these initiatives are expected to reduce the number of pupils with EHCPs and, therefore, the long-term support required by some pupils. This will help to reduce expenditure and the financial pressure on the high needs block. This position will need to be closely monitored to ensure that the expected outcomes are achieved.

Legal Implications

43. The Children and Families Act 2014 provides the statutory framework for supporting children and young people with special educational needs. The Act says that local authorities must exercise their functions under the Act with a view to ensuring the integration of educational provision and training provision with health care provision and social care provision, where it thinks that this would promote the well-being of children or young people in its area and improve the quality of special educational provision in its area. In addition, local authorities, in exercising a function under the Act must have regard to the need to facilitate the development of children and young people and to help them achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes as possible.
44. Schedule 2 of The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations permits a local authority to use high needs funding to provide additional or targeted support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Options Considered

45. Currently, it is necessary for the Council to provide additional ad hoc funding on an annual basis. This ensures that statutory obligations are met as more children and young people access these services. This option is costly and difficult to budget.

Conclusions

46. Funding from the HNB for the purpose of SLCN and autism early intervention provision will help ensure the sustainability of these services as Enfield's population and SEND needs are growing, whilst benefitting the children and young people by allowing them to access services more quickly.

Report Author: **Caroline Fanning**
Commissioning Manager (SEND)
caroline.fanning@enfield.gov.uk

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Appendices

- Appendix 1 SLCN Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 Autism Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Papers

The following documents have been relied on in the preparation of this report:

SLCN Bid for HNB Funding
Autism Bid for HNB Funding
SEND Places Update, June 2020