



Department
for Education



Department
of Health

9 December 2013

Dear Colleague

Support and aspiration: implementing the new 0-25 special needs system

We are writing to you to request that you give personal attention to ensuring that the new special educational needs (SEN) system is implemented from September 2014 in a way that will deliver maximum benefits for your local area, and with information to support you to do this.

As you are aware, too many children and young people who are identified as having SEN have poor outcomes in life, and they and their families can struggle to get the help and support they need. From September 2014, all local authorities, the NHS and their partners will begin to provide a new system of support to children and young people with SEN up to age 25 and their parents. Implemented well, this new system should not only result in improved outcomes for children and young people with SEN, but also has the potential to lead to efficiencies in service delivery.

Our vision for children and young people with special needs is the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college; lead happy and fulfilled lives; and have choice and control.

The SEN reforms will implement a new approach which seeks to join up help across education, health and care, from birth to 25. Help will be offered at the earliest possible point, with children and young people with SEN and their parents or carers fully involved in decisions about their support and what they want to achieve. This will help lead to better outcomes and more efficient ways of working.

What is already happening?

We have built into the reforms significant freedoms for areas to implement change in the way that makes sense locally. We know from a recent survey the Department for Education organised that a number of local authorities have made an excellent start to planning for implementation and are prioritising it locally. For example, many already have a designated person to promote and lead implementation; are engaging their local parent carer forums; and have secured senior level engagement. The survey showed appetite for further information and examples of good practice, especially on personal budgets, co-ordinated assessment, disagreement resolution, and preparation for adulthood. The Department for Education is contacting local authorities who self-assessed themselves as in the early stages of implementation, and also those who did not respond to the survey.

Some local authorities and their partners are already implementing the new system.

These pathfinder areas have highlighted the critical importance of making early progress on culture change: breaking silos and getting different services to work together in a way which puts the child, young person and family at the heart of everything they do. Since April 2013, pathfinder champions have provided support and advice to every area in every region, including workshops and tailored 1-1 support. **Today we are announcing the extension of the pathfinder champion programme until March 2015.** This will ensure support is available for all local areas during the critical period running up to September 2014, and beyond. Further details will be provided early in the New Year.

How can we support you?

To support you in ensuring that your plans are robust, we are enclosing a short pack of materials based on learning from the pathfinder areas. The pack includes a timeline; key questions for strategic leaders; information on resources and support materials available; and examples of practice. Much more detail, including information packs on specific areas such as personal budgets, local offer and co-ordinated assessment, with examples from pathfinder authorities, are available from the Mott MacDonald pathfinder support team (www.sendpathfinder.co.uk). Two example EHC plans from pathfinder local authorities are attached to this letter. Non-pathfinder local authorities have received £75,000 each in 2013-14 to allow them to develop their SEN systems and services in line with the Government's SEN policy.

You will be aware that earlier this year, the Government introduced changes to school and post-16 funding, including a new system for funding pupils and students with high needs. Some aspects of these new arrangements are taking time to implement effectively but they provide a funding framework that will support implementation of the reforms.

In the coming months, the Department for Education and the Department of Health, working with NHS England, will continue to share information and resources with you and a range of other partners, including early years settings, schools, further education providers, child and adult social care and the voluntary sector. If there are other forms of support you would find welcome, we would be interested in your feedback (please send this to: sen.implementation@education.gsi.gov.uk).

Involving parents, carers and young people

From September 2014, all children and young people newly referred for a statutory SEN assessment will be assessed under the new arrangements and, where necessary, provided with an EHC plan. We are consulting on arrangements for the transition of children and young people from existing statements and Learning Difficulty Assessments to the new system. It is very important that parents, carers and young people are involved in developing your local plans for implementation.

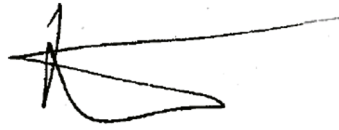
Children of Armed Forces personnel

We would also highlight the importance of Clinical Commissioning Groups, Armed Forces Networks, NHS England, and local authorities working proactively with local Armed Forces units, to ensure appropriate arrangements are in place for the children of Armed Forces personnel with SEN, when they return to England from overseas or are moved between units within the UK.

Thank you again for all that you do for children and young people in your local area.
Please do seize this opportunity.



EDWARD TIMPSON



DR DAN POULTER