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Update on the SEND Strategy - Autism Workstream

Report of the Director of Children's Services

Author:- John Short – Autism Workstream Lead
Tel:- 01992 588526

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide the Forum with an update and progress report on the Autism Workstream and the associated work program.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The paper provides a summary of the work underway to improve the approach to and support for pupils (cyp) with autism (and their parents) in order to improve their educational outcomes and keep them in a Hertfordshire school. The Autism Workstream work program has a primary focus on supporting schools/settings and education services, whilst at the same time working in partnership with health, social care, parents and the Hertfordshire All Age Autism Partnership Board with regard to improving the approach to all people with autism (regardless of them having a diagnosis or an Education, Health and Care Plan).

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Forum is asked to note and comment on the work underway to improve the support and approach to children, young people (and their families) with autism across the education sector and the progress to date.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Autism Workstream work program is based on the recommendations of the Hertfordshire DSPL Autism Review undertaken by Dr Glenys Jones and completed in June 2015.
- 4.2 The review identified that children and young people's level of need is related to a number of factors, not simply the level or nature of their autism,

but also the ability of the school/setting, the resilience of the family and the quality of advice and support provided. The review also highlighted the need to develop even better practice across all schools/settings in order to support the growing number of children assessed as having autism (a conservative estimate is 1% of the school/college age population = 3500 cyp in Hertfordshire). In particular it identified the need for an 'early help' offer, ensuring that all mainstream schools are supported to develop and improve their approach to, and support for, pupils with autism. With improved understanding and practice at this level, the review highlighted that the needs of the majority of children/young people with an autism need, could be met within mainstream schools and settings, which would therefore reduce the need for an EHC Plan, a formal diagnosis and having to access more specialist and costly settings and services. The review also highlighted a range of Autism Education Trust (AET) and National Autistic Society (NAS) materials and approaches that schools/setting could use to enhance their offer to pupils (and their families) and the importance of addressing emerging issues so that pupils and their families can be supported to remain in a local school.

5. Autism Improvement Work

- 5.1 The Autism Workstream has a broad membership drawn from a range of schools, settings, support services and includes parent representatives (appendix one). Given the level of interest in the autism work, a broader stakeholder group/contact list has been established and a stakeholder event held.
- 5.2 A work plan has been developed and is due to be refreshed in September 2016 (appendix two).
- 5.3 Key Objectives:
 1. A flexible continuum of services and the provision of education and support services to ensure that all children and young people with autism, whatever their level of need, are supported appropriately within all mainstream and specialist schools, services and settings.
 2. A continuum of autism provision is in place across the county to support children, young people (pupils and students) and their parents so that their needs are met as close to home as possible.
 3. All local schools, early years settings and colleges working within the developed framework to provide a 'local offer for autism' with an environment delivering appropriate support that meets the needs of children and young people with autism with outcomes that can be measured and show improvement.
 4. Parents, children and young people, schools and settings have confidence in the County and DSPL Area approach to meeting the needs of all children and young people with autism.
 5. A clear and comprehensive 'local offer for autism' provides a clear overview of the services available (and how to access them) to support children, young people and their families who have autism.

6. Develop an evaluation tool to assess the quality of the local offer for autism in all schools and settings.

5.4 Key achievements and work completed:

1. Engagement with stakeholders, partner services and clarification of issues that cut across the different SEND workstreams, i.e. behaviour, special schools etc;
2. Development of an autism improvement framework:
 - a. Countywide role/focus on autism improvements and a strategic approach;
 - b. DSPL Area (SEND) Lead with an initial focus on autism. The role description and accompanying guidance sets out how the role will monitor area/local need and work to improve outcomes for pupils with autism, for example by the use of, and analysis of local data and the development of a local autism improvement focus via the use of the AET audit, training approach and materials and support to schools/setting;
 - c. Development of a flexible school function/expectation regarding autism that is in-line with the recommendations of the Autism Review;
 - d. Establishment of an AET training team approach. Work is currently underway to recruit and develop a Countywide AET training team consisting of up to 10 trainers. The AET training team will have capacity to training all staff within all schools, settings and services (supporting pupils/parents with autism) to AET tier 1 (2 hour session), at least two members of staff at tier 2 (2½ days) (expert practitioners) and at least two members of staff at tier 3 (1 day) (senior leadership/managers). As part of establishing the AET training team, work will be undertaken to develop an AET outcomes monitoring framework, this will be developed in conjunction with Cambridgeshire and the Autism Education Trust and will assess the impact of the training.
 - e. The AET framework includes a self-assessment audit tool and has a set of standards and competencies which assist schools to evidence to Ofsted their inclusion approach and improvement work.
 - f. Work is underway to set out an autism training and accreditation framework that provides guidance on which schools/staff would benefit from the different autism training courses/approaches and accreditation expectations and how this integrates across the whole sector and into a strategic approach.
 - g. To accompany the AET training, a film is currently being made – ‘Achieving with Autism’ that provides examples across the age range and school sector showing how schools/settings have made adjustments and taken approaches that benefit the pupil with autism, all pupils in the school/setting and the pupils parents. Children, young people, parents and school staff have been filmed and involved in the project. Parents and schools have found the initial edits of the film to be very useful in terms of show casing examples of good practice and motivating schools towards improvements. In

addition, it is proposed that a Hertfordshire 'Autism Charter Mark', 'Autism Accreditation' system or 'Autism Friendly School' award is developed to show and highlight progress.

3. A critical element of the Autism Workstream is to explore the gaps in provision and/or the changes required to current provision/services, which will ensure that a higher proportion of children/young people can have their educational needs met within a Hertfordshire school. The aim being that parents, pupils and school/settings receive appropriate/improved support and have confidence in the County/DSPL 'autism offer'. The objective also being to reduce the numbers of pupils going to independent/non-maintained schools and reduce Tribunal cases where the need is identified as autism and/or behaviour. To support this work a comprehensive autism data set has been produced and a detailed analysis of all pupils attending independent/non-maintained schools (and the reason) will be undertaken during July/August 2016. In addition, work is underway to identify models of provision/support for pupils where their needs are not being fully met within the current school/setting framework. For example and anecdotally, a particular focus is required to address the needs of functioning/high functioning pupils with autism, many of whom have complex anxiety requirements and as a result are accessing education on a limited basis. The limited education offer often causing parents to seek redress through an educational tribunal request.
4. As a result of this analysis models of alternative provision will be presented and pilot options proposed, this may include ensuring clarity of purpose and function for services such as the Communication and Autism Team and the links to services such as PALMS.
5. Work is underway through a number of task and finish groups (that include parents) to develop materials recommended by the Autism Review, i.e. a autism consultation tool kit, communication guides, pupil profile templates and guidance etc.
6. Work is also underway to ensure that the whole school sector is involved in the Autism Workstream, i.e. mainstream and special schools.
7. Financial Expenditure:
A number of financial requests have been submitted to the SEND Executive in order to draw on the SEND Development Fund.
 - a. £150K per year, for two years has been allocated to establish the AET Training Team. The AET Training Team will be established and providing training from October 2016.
 - b. £150K per year, for three years has been allocated to appoint the DSPL Area (SEND) Lead, who will have an initial focus on the local autism improvement work. Each of the 9 DSPL areas has been allocated funding to appoint a SEND Lead for two days per week.
 - c. £55K per year for two years has been allocated to contribute to the costs associated with the County Lead for Autism.
 - d. It is anticipated that a further bid will be developed to establish an Early Years AET Training Team.

6. Conclusion

Considerable progress has been made with regard to addressing the recommendations of the recent Autism Review.

By focussing on improving the support across all schools/settings and identifying gaps in provision/changes required, the objective of the workstream is to ensure that all pupils can have their needs met within a Hertfordshire school and parents are confident in the service offer/framework.

For example:

1. Ensuring a comprehensive framework and offer is available to support all schools/settings;
2. Developing a framework to ensure that pupils who have more complex needs that are not currently being met within a Hertfordshire school can have their needs met and parents are confident with the support/offer;
3. Working in partnership with health and social care to ensure that an integrated approach is available to meet those with the most complex needs.

Appendix One

Autism Workstream Membership

John Short –	Workstream Lead
Leise Cooper –	Parent
Steph Curtis -	Parent
Sally Glossop –	Communication and Autism Team
Trevor Orchard –	Alternate Provision (<i>Roman Fields</i>) Head Teacher
Richard Haynes –	Primary Head Teacher
Joanne Summers -	Educational Psychologist
Helen Booth –	Area Manager, Integrated Services for Learning
Louise Barrell –	Herts for Learning
Francesca Ntiamoah –	Springboard Manager (Further Education)
Angela Phipps –	Professional Lead for Early Years SEND
Geraint Edwards –	Secondary Head Teacher, The Priory School
Paul Johnston –	Special Needs Head Teacher, St Lukes
Hilary Warne –	Inclusion Officer, Sele School
Sue Wilcox –	Primary Head Teacher, Dewhurst St Marys

Appendix Two

Autism Work & Task Plan