



CABINET

Subject Heading:

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision (SEND & AP) Strategy

Cabinet Member:

Cllr Oscar Ford

SLT Lead:

Tara Geere

Report Author and contact details:

**Trevor Cook, 01708 431250,
trevor.cook@[havering.gov.uk](mailto:trevor.cook@havering.gov.uk)**

Policy context:

The Local Area Partnership, comprising education, health and social care services, working with families, educational settings, and voluntary / third sector, has a range of responsibilities in regard to the delivery of services to children and young people with SEND and in AP, and is evaluated by Ofsted in regard to outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.

Financial summary:

This is a wide ranging strategy outlining a wide and varied range of services across education, health and social care. Some of the proposed actions, while not yet specified, will require additional investment, without which they will not be fulfilled and consequently there will be no improvement in outcomes / performance. This would include failure to comply with statutory obligations.

Is this a Key Decision?

Indicate grounds for decision being Key:

(b) Significant effect on two or more Wards

When should this matter be reviewed? September 2025

Reviewing OSC:

People OSC

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Things that matter for residents X

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy X

Resources - A well run Council that delivers for People and Place. X

SUMMARY

The Local Area Partnership, comprising education, health and social care services, working with families, educational settings, and voluntary / third sector, has a range of responsibilities in regard to the delivery of services to children and young people with SEND and in AP, and is evaluated by Ofsted in regard to outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.

In reference to the framework used to evaluate the local area, this strategy sets out the partnership's programme for the next five years to improve the lives of Havering families with SEND, organised around six priorities which together represent the vision for Havering's SEND and AP system.

Please note that the strategy will be made available publicly, and so the primary audience for the document is Havering families. This is reflected in the language, tone, and level of detail included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to agree the attached SEND & AP Strategy.

REPORT DETAIL

The Local Area Partnership, comprising education, health and social care services, working with families, educational settings, and voluntary / third sector, has a range of responsibilities in regard to the delivery of services to children and young people with SEND and in AP, and is evaluated by Ofsted in regard to outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.

Informed by the framework used to evaluate the local area, this strategy sets out the partnership's programme for the next five years to improve the lives of Havering families with SEND, organised around six priorities which together represent the vision for Havering's SEND and AP system.

The document is written with its primary audience being Havering families of children and young people with SEND and accessing AP, while also setting out an ambitious programme for change to which professionals across the partnership are committed. This desire to be accessible and meaningful to as much of the community as possible, is reflected in the language, tone and level of detail in the document.

The commitments listed vary in terms of the extent to which they are clear actions, or more broadly identify areas in which action will be taken to improve outcomes. This reflects the scope of the document, which covering a period of five years, would not be expected to set out clearly, in full detail, all actions that will be taken by a wide range of stakeholders.

REASONS AND OPTIONS

Reasons for the decision:

This is a wide ranging strategy outlining a wide and varied range of services across education, health and social care. Some of the proposed actions, while not yet specified, will require additional investment, without which they will not be fulfilled and consequently there will be no improvement in outcomes / performance. This would include failure to comply with statutory obligations.

Other options considered:

The current strategy ended in 2022, and so it was timely to refresh the content of the strategy to inform future actions and priorities, building on the diagnostic work completed as part of the Councils involvement in the DfE Delivering Better Value in SEND programme.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

Funding for Special Education Needs and Disabilities comes from two distinct sources. Direct Education funding including funding for Special Schools and Alternative Provision and additional learning support comes from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant while other services including home to school transport, EHCP assessment and planning and social care support are funded from the Council's General fund budget. Capital funding for educational provision is funded by the DfE.

Education funding is provided largely based on a funding formula and so has increased in recent years. However at both a local and a national level the rate of increase in funding has not kept pace with the increased demand, complexity and cost of services. Havering, along with the overwhelming majority of Education authorities has a deficit on its High Needs Block. At the end of 2023-24 this was £16m and is forecast to rise every year.

The Council's general fund budget is also under extreme financial pressure and although growth funding has been put into Home to School transport and Starting Well staffing budgets there are also forecast overspends in these areas.

Many of the actions set out in the strategy have the potential over time to improve value for money by achieving better outcomes for children at similar or even lower cost while others may be deliverable within existing resources or through additional funding being made available by central government. However it is likely that there will be very limited resources for the next few years and new investment will need to be strictly prioritised. This financial situation will be a significant constraint that unfortunately is likely to limit the scope and pace of delivery of the strategy.

Legal implications and risks:

The Authority has various duties under education legislation to provide suitable education and services for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities.

The proposed Strategy in general terms sets out how the Authority, with the assistance of partners in some cases, will seek to provide a comprehensive and well functioning SEND service, however, it is aspirational and will require significant investment if it is to be successful.

Many of the specific plans set out within this Strategy will need to be subject to separate decision making procedures whether that be by way of officer decision or through Members/Cabinet. Legal advice will be provided as and when appropriate in terms of individual decisions.

It should also be noted that some of the actions within the Strategy are outside the Council's control as they require action by partners.

The risk in terms of setting out challenging objectives as this Strategy does is that it can create a legitimate expectation on the part of stakeholders and the general public that certain actions will be taken, when the reality is that they will still need to be the

subject of separate executive decision making arrangements and will have to be considered in the context of a very challenging financial landscape. Sometimes such legitimate expectations can be utilised in support of legal challenges in relation to specific cases.

Whilst there is no statutory obligation to produce this Strategy it is good practice. It should not be confused with the legal requirement to produce a Local Offer which is a separate document covering the specific services that will be provided by the Council for pupils with SEND.

There is no requirement with the proposed governance arrangements to devolve any decision making powers to third parties and these will be retained by Council officers who attend the various Panels.

Human Resources implications and risks:

Apart from the establishment of new roles and strengthening of existing roles (both of which will be managed in accordance with the Council's HR policies and procedures), the recommendations made in this report do not give rise to any identifiable HR risks or implications that would affect either the Council or its workforce.

Equalities implications and risks:

The strategy aims to improve the outcomes and experiences of all children and young people with SEND and in AP and their families, including those with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and those identified with SEN but without an EHCP known as receiving 'SEN Support'. The strategy includes children and young with SEND and in AP aged 0 to 25 in accordance with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice.

Health and Wellbeing implications and Risks

The strategy aims to improve the outcomes and experiences of all children and young people with SEND and in AP and their families, including those with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and those identified with SEN but without an EHCP known as receiving 'SEN Support'. The strategy includes children and young with SEND and in AP aged 0 to 25 in accordance with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice.

Environmental and Climate Change Implications and risks

None arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS