

Birmingham's Strategy for SEND & Inclusion

Frequently Asked Questions – updated 9th June 2017

Is this strategy being developed just to save money?

There is considerable budget pressure and we need to use our resources more effectively. There is already a budget recovery plan in place to address the immediate pressure. In the longer term the strategy aims to re balance the use of the budget away from expensive independent providers and towards our own Birmingham schools – both mainstream and special.

Is it just about reducing the number of Education Health & Care Plans (EHCPs), which means denying children who need them?

It is hoped that more families will be confident that their local mainstream school or setting can meet the needs of their child needs via an SEN Support Plan and access resources without the need for an EHCP. This should mean that those children needing a plan will get a better service with more capacity for officers to maintain and review plans appropriately.

Will it involve moving children in and out of provision?

We want there to be more flexibility for children and young people to move in and out of specialist provision when it is appropriate. The annual review process and key transition points will be used to re-evaluate the pathway for the young person, and through working with families, we will identify how to achieve the best adult outcomes.

Anyone currently in independent provision who is settled will not be required to move but where a family are looking for a change, a place at a Birmingham school will be offered if possible.

Are we planning to close special schools?

We will need all the special school places and have no plans to close schools. We will be looking to develop more Birmingham provision for very complex cases and young people aged over 19.

I need an EHCP for secondary transfer – will this mean my child is less likely to get the place they need?

We know that secondary transfer can be a driver for an EHCP request. We want to look at our admissions policy to explore the idea of SEN support being given some priority when making decisions about places. We also aspire to having a fully inclusive secondary sector where all families can feel confident as their child moves on.

Will more children with SEN in mainstream schools affect school data used by Ofsted?

It is understandable that schools feel under pressure regarding standards and Ofsted but this must not stop us doing what is right. All schools should be inclusive as per the SEND Code of Practice and be able to present the data to show the achievement of different groups. We have schools in the city that are very inclusive and rated highly by Ofsted we plan to share this good practice and help every school be bold and inclusive.

Have mainstream staff got the expertise and qualifications to deliver for our children and young people with SEND?

We have a very committed team of SENCOs in our schools with high levels of expertise. Our SEN support services offer training and support. There are many examples of excellent practice in Birmingham's mainstream schools and we would work with the Birmingham Education Partnership to facilitate sharing of good practice.

How is this going to be different to previous years?

This has to be different because the current situation is unsustainable. This strategy is different because it has been developed by the Inclusion Commission which has representatives from a wide range of stakeholders including health, social care, education, schools, private and voluntary providers and parents and young people. The strategy aims to underpin the high level vision with practical proposals for delivery and implementation.

Will there be any further consultation taking place?

Yes it is intended to consult on more detailed proposals as they emerge. We will do this through a variety of ways to ensure engagement with families and practitioners.