

Birmingham City Council

Report to Cabinet

21st March 2023



Subject: **BIRMINGHAM INCLUSION STRATEGY**

Report of: **Sue Harrison, Director for Children and Families**

Relevant Cabinet Member: **Cllr McCarthy, Children, Young People and Families**

Relevant O &S Chair(s): **Cllr Kerry Jenkins, Education and Children's Social Care**

Report author: **Helen Ellis, Director of SEND and Inclusion**
helen.ellis@birmingham.gov.uk

Are specific wards affected?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No – All wards affected
If yes, name(s) of ward(s):		
Is this a key decision?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 011133/2023		
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
If relevant, state which appendix is exempt, and provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:		

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Inclusion is the conscious and deliberate act of embracing diversity. It is the value we place on creating an environment where everyone is welcome and included and therefore feels that they belong and fully participate. It is reflected in our desire to enable everyone to thrive and succeed. Inclusion is fundamental to ensure that all children, young people, young adults and their families, regardless of their needs, get the opportunity to the best life chances.

- 1.2 Partners are working collaboratively to ensure system wide improved inclusion across the partnership through the development of the Inclusion Strategy. An action plan is being developed which will accompany the Inclusion Strategy, once approved, which will focus on improving inclusion and supporting priority vulnerable cohorts that have been identified and agreed by partners, applied through a multi-agency response (see Inclusion Strategy: 5-year action plan to address inequalities).
- 1.3 The Inclusion Strategy has been comprehensively co-produced with children, young people/adults and families, Birmingham Parent Carer Forum, partners, senior BCC officers and councillors, to determine the vision, key principles, principles of practice and contextual factors, with action plan areas determined by partnership collaboration and decision.
- 1.4 The Inclusion Strategy therefore outlines a vision, key principles, principles of practice, contextual factors; it also outlines the areas of work for including in the action plan, all with the aim to lead to system wide improved inclusion across the partnership.
- 1.5 The Inclusion Strategy has been considered and signed off by Birmingham City Council (BCC) Children and Families Senior Leadership Team (CSLT), BCC Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and the local area SEND Improvement Board (SIB), chaired by the DfE appointed commissioner, John Coughlan.
- 1.6 The Inclusion Strategy has been 'signed-off' by: Birmingham Parent Carer Forum Chair – Sabiha Aziz; Birmingham Children's Trust, Director of Practice – Jenny Turnross; the Birmingham and Solihull Integrated Care Board (ICB/S), Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Nursing Officer – Lisa Stalley-Green; Birmingham City Council (BCC) Director for Children and Families – Sue Harrison; BCC Director of SEND and Inclusion – Helen Ellis, and Councillor Karen McCarthy – Lead Member for Children and Families.
- 1.7 An annual report will be produced every 12 months.

2 Recommendations

That Cabinet

- 2.1 Approves the Inclusion Strategy (**Appendix 2**) so that it can be fully implemented by the Council in collaboration with the partnership.
- 2.2 Note that the Lead Member for Children and Families, will retain overall oversight of this strategy and the outcomes associated with it. Councillor McCarthy has been involved in co-production and consultation events and has been kept informed about the contents of the Inclusion Strategy (via BCC Directors and the SEND Transformation team) throughout its creation.

3 Background

- 3.1 The five-year Inclusion Strategy has been developed to support and align with the Birmingham SEND Improvement program(s) of work. It is a key component of the Children and Young People's plan and will be monitored via the SEND Improvement Board and the Children and Young People's Partnership.
- 3.2 The Inclusion Strategy also supports the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities and Communities accreditation.
- 3.3 An Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) was created which is monitored via the SEND Improvement Board, chaired by John Coughlan (DfE Commissioner). Recommendations from John Coughlan were all accepted by Cabinet in November 2022.
- 3.4 As part of the APP it was decided that an Inclusion Strategy for Birmingham was required in order to collectively develop system wide improved inclusion across the partnership, throughout our communities for our children, young people and families in Birmingham.
- 3.5 The strategy aligns with the SEND Strategy and the Children and Young People's Plan, where we aim for children to thrive. We will put children at the heart of everything we do and be ambitious for our children. We aim to work together as one partnership, from a strengths and relationship-based approach, with shared priorities and principles. Ensuring a family centred holistic approach, especially for our most vulnerable children and young people/adults, wrapping around them with the right support, at the right place and at the right time
- 3.6 We have fully utilised feedback from children, young people, young adults and their families, as well as professionals' contributions at a large number of co-production events and from surveys (see table in Appendix of the Inclusion Strategy, detailing events, attendance numbers and purpose of events). These led to the development of the vision, key principles, principles of practice and contextual factors (see below). These will be implemented across the partnership, alongside an action plan which will develop an Inclusion Charter, Inclusion Pathways and will support priority vulnerable cohorts, identified, and agreed by the partnership, that would benefit from a multi-agency approach.

Vision:

*We believe that all children, young people and young adults in Birmingham should thrive. We will encourage meaningful **presence, participation and progress**, enabling a sense of belonging and opportunities to fulfil their dreams and aspirations.*

Key Principles:

- 1.) We recognise the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; through key issues raised during engagement events and through analysis of local need, we have identified a number of articles that are central to this Inclusion Strategy.

- 2.) Enabling children, young people, and young adults to thrive is everyone's responsibility and success is dependent on strong and effective partnership working.
- 3.) Some children, young people and young adults currently need support in order to thrive and achieve as well as their peers. Supporting / developing a coordinated partnership approach over the next 5 years providing the right support at the right time to identified priority cohorts of children and young people/adults.

Principles of Practice:

- 1.) Co-production and voice
- 2.) Based on right support, right place, right time, including access to universal services
- 3.) Coordinated partnership working
- 4.) Locality based working
- 5.) Relationship and strengths-based practice
- 6.) Person centred: Putting the child, young person, and young adult at the heart of everything we do.
- 7.) Family centred: Ensuring we consider and support the holistic needs of the family through a partnership approach.
- 8.) Across whole life course

Contextual Factors:

A number of contextual factors have been identified below. These factors commonly feature amongst our vulnerable cohorts and where combined with each other and other prevailing issues, this can result in an increased risk of vulnerability for our children, young people, and young adults.

- 1.) Attendance and exclusions
- 2.) Poverty and disadvantage
- 3.) Ethnicity and race
- 4.) Gender and identity
- 5.) SEND
- 6.) Adverse childhood experiences

- 3.7 The format/design of the Inclusion Strategy has been designed in line with the Birmingham Be Bold guidelines. This is the final draft version of the Strategy;

however, it is noted that there may be some minor amendments and grammatical / typographic amendments required, a final proof will be undertaken.

- 3.8 Accessible version(s), different languages and short videos will be developed to provide 'easy read' and 'easy access' versions for the communities Birmingham serves. These will be available via the Local Offer website (amongst other media/materials).
- 3.9 The action plan accompanying the Inclusion Strategy, is currently under development to implement the necessary changes. Task and Finish Groups are developing detailed actions for each of the areas identified by partners, these will include clarity on lead organisations/responsibilities, as well as the criteria against which we will monitor success.
- 3.10 The Inclusion Strategy and action plan will be monitored at the SEND Improvement Board and through the Children and Young Peoples Partnership. It is important to monitor the impact for our most vulnerable children/young people/young adults, particularly those with SEND, who face increased vulnerabilities and risk, especially when there is intersectionality across the contextual factors, to ensure that we improve their chances for inclusion and in turn opportunities to be able to thrive.
- 3.11 An annual report will be produced every 12 months to highlight progress against the outcomes within the Inclusion Strategy and action plan, illustrating impact.

4 Options considered and Recommended Proposal

- 4.1 Different formats/designs and the specific contents of the Inclusion Strategy were discussed throughout its evolution before presenting this final version.
- 4.2 This is the final draft version of the strategy; it has been agreed by all partners and is recommended to be taken forward. However, it is noted that there may be some minor amendments and grammatical / typographic amendments required, after a final proofread is undertaken.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 The Inclusion Strategy has been a comprehensively co-produced document with children, young people/adults and families, Birmingham Parent Carer Forum, partners, senior BCC officers and councillors, to determine the vision, key principles, principles of practice and contextual factors, with action plan areas determined by partnership collaboration and decision. It involved robust methodological triangulation of information, which included initial fact finding, a series of engagement events and information from surveys (see table in Appendix of the Inclusion Strategy, detailing events, attendance numbers and purpose of events).

- 5.2 There were refinements via consultation and a working group with approval through the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) / SEND Management Groups and Birmingham CSLT, CLT and the SEND Improvement Board.
- 5.3 Schools, local school leaders and different levels of staff have been involved at all stages in the development of the Inclusion Strategy.
- 5.4 The Birmingham Parent Carer Forum have been a key partner in the development of the Inclusion Strategy and have endorsed the process followed, the content of the strategy and areas of work to be included in the action plan.
- 5.5 The Inclusion Strategy has been developed to ensure system wide improved inclusion across the partnership. This Inclusion Strategy is an area wide strategy requiring partnership cooperation from a range of local stakeholders. The final draft has been accepted and is going through the governance processes for Birmingham Children's Trust and Birmingham and Solihull ICB/S.

6 Risk Management

- 6.1 If the Inclusion Strategy is not approved, momentum may be lost with the co-produced plans for delivery which have been agreed at the SEND Improvement Board through the Accelerated Progress Plan.
- 6.2 Vulnerable and at-risk children, young people and young adults require us to implement the strategy at some pace and so any delay may create unnecessary delays.
- 6.3 The Director(s) have already commenced discussions and detailed analysis with Education settings and service providers that support children and young people with additional needs.
- 6.4 Clarity regarding the 'direction of travel' is being provided at all meetings for all education settings and service providers. Delay would create confusion and uncertainty about the strategic way forward for services.

7 Compliance Issues:

- 7.1 **How are the recommended decisions consistent with the City Council's priorities, plans and strategies?**
 - 7.1.1 The agreement to this strategy is directly related to the acceptance by Cabinet in November 2022 to the DfE Commissioners recommendations for delivering better SEND provision in Birmingham.
 - 7.1.2 The City Council's plans being delivered via the Birmingham Children and Young People's Plan are interrelated and have been cross-referenced with the Inclusion Strategy.
 - 7.1.3 The City Council's plans being delivered via the Birmingham SEND Strategy are interrelated and have been cross-referenced with the Inclusion Strategy.

- 7.1.4 Ensuring that every child receives the right support to meet their needs and thrive is the top priority for the Children & Families Directorate.

7.2 Legal Implications

- 7.2.1 The Council has a legal duty to make arrangements for ensuring that its education functions are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children under section 175 of the Education Act 2002.
- 7.2.2 The recommendations in this report will support the Council to fulfil many of its statutory duties. In particular, the Council must ensure that its relevant education and training functions are exercised by the authority with a view to promoting high standards, ensuring fair access to opportunity for education and training, and promoting the fulfilment of learning potential by every person under the age of 20 and person aged 20 or over for whom an EHC plan is maintained, by virtue of section 13A of the Education Act 1996.

7.3 Financial Implications

- 7.3.1 Costs of implementing the Inclusion Strategy will be met from a combination of General Fund and Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) High Needs Block (HNB) resources.
- 7.3.2 The service will manage and contain the relevant costs of the Inclusion Strategy from within existing General Fund and High Needs Block funding allocations.
- 7.3.3 For information - The high needs funding system supports provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) from their early years to age 25, enabling both local authorities and institutions to meet their statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014. High needs funding is also intended to support good quality Alternative Provision (AP) for pre-16 pupils who, because of suspension or expulsion, illness or other reasons, cannot receive their education in mainstream or special schools. The high needs funding block provides local authorities with resources for place funding and top up funding for institutions, and funding for high needs services delivered directly by the local authority or under a separate funding agreement with institutions (including funding devolved to institutions), as permitted by regulations.

7.4 Procurement Implications (if required)

- 7.4.1 None.

7.5 Human Resources Implications (if required)

- 7.5.1 None.

7.6 Public Sector Equality Duty

- 7.6.1 There are no negative impacts with regards to service Equality and Diversity as outlined in the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 7.6.2 There will be positive impacts on all ages, genders, sexualities, religions/ beliefs, disabilities, and other protected characteristics.
- 7.6.3 An Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been completed and is appended to this report (**Appendix 3**).

7.7 Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 7.7.1 A positive impact of implementing the approaches within the strategy will be reducing travel for families to access education and support
- 7.7.2 An Environmental and Sustainability Assessment has been completed and is appended to this report (**Appendix 1**).

8 Appendices

- 8.1 **Appendix 1** - Environmental and Sustainability Impact Assessment
- 8.2 **Appendix 2** - The Inclusion Strategy final draft document
- 8.3 **Appendix 3** - Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

9 Background Documents

- 9.1 Cabinet Report 8th November 2022 “Acceptance of SEND Commissioner’s Recommendations”.