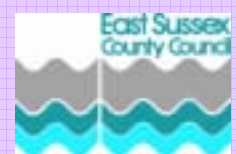


EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

**REVIEW OF
SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
PROVISION**



CONSULTATION SPRING 2005



INTRODUCTION

The consultation on the recommendations of the Project Board overseeing a review of provision for children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) in East Sussex took place in the spring term 2005.

The review has two core objectives:

- (i) To promote greater inclusion in East Sussex schools (special and mainstream).
- (ii) To improve further the quality and range of provision available in East Sussex by using existing resources more effectively.

THE CONSULTATION

The consultation booklet and response form was sent to all East Sussex schools; Education Team Managers; Social Care Managers, Health Service Managers, Voluntary Organisations (20 throughout East Sussex); Trades Union representatives, County Council Elected Members and East Sussex Members of Parliament. All parents and carers of children with a statement of special educational needs and parents and carers of children undergoing a statutory assessment were informed of the review and were sent a booklet and form on request. In total 1076 copies were distributed. The booklet and form was also available on the East Sussex County Council website and copies were distributed on request.

There were 173 written responses to the consultation. Four meetings for parents and carers of children with SEN were held at which 174 parents/carers attended and three meetings for school staff which 34 people attended. The review was also discussed at the six governors' forums through the County. Five meetings for individual governing bodies were also held. The Project Manager also attended a meeting of the East Sussex Parents' Forum.

The SEN Review Project Board would like to thank all those who contributed to this consultation. In particular, we appreciated the high level of interest and participation shown by parents/carers and staff who attended the consultation meetings around the County. All responses to the consultation, whether given through attendance at meetings, completed questionnaires, email, letters or telephone calls, have helped to inform the next steps to be taken by the Children's Services department.

Analysis of Respondents

Respondent	Number (%)
Parent	42 (24.3%)
EYDCP	4 (2.3%)
Pre-school provider	1 (0.6%)
Primary school	45 (26%)
Secondary school	4 (2.3%)
Special school/unit/facility	16 (9.2%)
Governor	29 (16.8%)
Independent/non-maintained school	4 (2.3%)
Teacher Union	1 (0.6%)
Education Department	5 (2.9%)
Connexions	1 (0.6%)
Social care	3 (1.7%)
Mental Health	5 (2.9%)
Hospital Trust	2 (1.2%)
Primary Care Trust	5 (2.9%)
Voluntary Organisation	2 (1.2%)
Unknown	4 (2.3%)
Total	173

THE RESPONSES

Recommendation 1

There should be sustained, high profile support to all schools for managing behaviour, including support and training in developing the behaviour and attendance strands of the national primary and secondary strategies and emotional literacy approaches across schools.

All respondents who commented agreed or partially agreed with this recommendation. School respondents indicated that they would like access to focused professional development, early support, a 'rapid multi-agency response' from a range of services including the School Improvement Service, Behaviour Support Service, Social Services, CAMHS and Health. There was also strong support for the extension of the emotional literacy project as well as access to increased outreach from special schools. School respondents also emphasised the benefits of schools working together in a local area.

A number of respondents, particularly parents and carers, indicated their belief that some behaviour issues may arise from unrecognised/unmet special educational needs. Parents and carers also identified that schools need good support from parents/carers over these issues, improved liaison between agencies and also access to training for school staff in behaviour management. Several parents and carers mentioned the need for

counselling/mentoring for pupils and a key worker/lead professional for children and families.

There was strong support for closer co-ordination of support and activities as well as improved communication between agencies.

“Extremely important to maintain high level of support if every child is to achieve. Behaviour impacts upon the learning of all children and teachers need a training package linked with support if they are to feel competent in dealing with challenging behaviours” Primary SENCO

In response to the question about what would be helpful to families, parents and carers stressed the need for liaison between parents/carers and schools/other agencies, information for parents and carers, parent support groups, training for parents and carers and increased access to after school activities and respite. Other respondents suggested family link workers, parenting classes, holiday activities and listening to children. Many respondents mentioned advice on diet for families.

“Parents are not trained to be parents, and those with children with special needs have an even greater need for support” Parent

Recommendation 2

A pilot scheme should be developed to delegate the funding for statements of special educational need to a partnership group of schools.

74% of respondents who commented agreed fully or in part with this recommendation. The main benefits identified were easier and quicker access to funding and support, more access to advice and support from services e.g. the educational psychology service, more cost effective, access to more imaginative solutions, reduction in bureaucracy, pooled/shared resources, decisions being made nearer to the child, enabling schools to work together to build/share resources and expertise. The most frequently raised issues for consideration were the fair allocation of funds to the cluster, sharing funds equitably within the cluster, schools feeling they are competing with each other, ensuring children have the support they require, ensuring parental confidence and increased

administration/bureaucracy at local level. There was support for pre-school settings to be part of the cluster arrangements.

“This system would allow for a speedy response and a flexible approach to support” Primary teacher

“If bureaucracy was reduced and intervention made possible earlier, the advantages would be substantial” Primary SENCO

Suggestions to address these issues included help from the County Council with budgeting and administration, extended accountability and monitoring procedures, funding ring-fenced, support/mediation for disagreements, training, guidelines, involving schools and parents and carers in developing the pilot, and a detailed evaluation of the pilot before implementing county-wide.

“Dedicated SEN Administrator for each cluster of schools” School Governor

“Maybe a mediation service if disagreements arise” Primary SENCO

Recommendation 3

- i) The range of special needs to be met by each special school, unit and facility in the medium term should be clarified.**
- ii) A process should be developed for predicting future needs as accurately as possible involving health and social services.**
- iii) How special schools, units and facilities are funded should be reviewed.**
- iv) The role and funding of each special school, unit and facility should be clarified separately in relation to (i) the places provided for pupils at the school and (ii) their collaboration with mainstream schools.**

99% of respondents who commented indicated full or partial agreement with this recommendation. Parents and carers suggested there should be improved information about the range of needs each special school/unit and facility caters for and that a common understanding of the categories should be developed. Many respondents noted that children do not fall easily into categories and it will be important to ensure that they all have their needs met. A number of school respondents indicated that they believed that

children should attend a school with specialist education and not have a wide range of needs in each school. On the other hand, others respondents indicated their belief that local special schools must be ready to meet a range of needs. Several respondents commented on the need to reduce the amount of travelling that children did across the county.

“Absolutely, we need a common understanding of each and every child’s special needs....better information for parents on schools and the services available” Parent

Many respondents mentioned that there was a need for more specialist provision for pupils with behavioural difficulties and speech and language difficulties. Many respondents suggested that there should be more special units and facilities attached to mainstream schools especially for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). Others indicated there was a need for more specialist provision for pupils with physical difficulties (PD).

There was strong support for multi-agency planning of specialist provision based on early identification of needs.

In relation to the funding of special schools, units and facilities there was considerable support for increasing the availability of outreach to mainstream schools but many believed that there was little benefit to be gained from revising the special school funding formula as it is only just bedding down. There was universal support for developing the partnership between special schools, units and facilities and mainstream schools allowing for more flexibility, part time placements, dual registration, better communication, loan of resources, training, staff secondment and greater opportunities for joint working. A number of respondents specifically mentioned the need to continue with the current programme of co-locating special schools with mainstream schools.

“Should be stronger links between mainstream and special. Both would benefit.” Special Facility teacher

“There seems to be a big increase in the number of children with ASD and ADHD type disabilities. This needs to be recognised in the provision of special education” Parent

“Why is this only looked at from one direction? Could mainstream schools have flexible places to be used in collaboration with special schools?” Parent

Recommendation 4

The range of services provided at each special school should be increased to include care before and after the school day and in the school holidays wherever possible.

98% of respondents who commented fully or partially agreed with this recommendation. There was very strong support, especially from parents and carers, for this recommendation as long as there are clear benefits to the children and that it is not just childminding. A number of issues to be addressed were raised including transport, funding, the wish to avoid additional work for school staff and the need to increase the opportunities for children with special educational needs to be able to access extended school activities in the mainstream sector. Parents and carers in particular indicated that there are issues of equality in that children with SEN want and require the same as other children. A large number of respondents indicated that the school holiday times put a particular strain on families.

“It is vital to ensure that out of school facilities, activities, holiday schemes are accessible to all children, including those with special needs.” Parent

“A separate group of leaders (not school staff who have taught all day) to provide creative and active play” Primary teacher

The respondents held a wide range of views about how this could or should be funded. These included funding from central government, funding from the County Council with a charge to parents and carers, voluntary organisations, charities and sponsorship from the private sector.

Ideas for activities before and after school included activities to develop life skills, social and sporting activities, opportunities for appointments with health professionals, breakfast clubs, computer clubs, cycling, homework clubs, music, art and outings. A number of parents and carers suggested that there should also be an opportunity for parents and carers to meet each other and times when parents/carers and children could share experiences and undertake activities together.

Suggestions for activities in the school holidays included a similar range to those listed above as well as drop-in sessions for children and parents/carers, activities for pre-school children, residential holidays and themed weeks eg sport and art. Many respondents believed these activities should be fully inclusive but others believed they should be specialist in order to meet with needs of the children with SEN.

Recommendation 5

Options should be explored for making new local provision for children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and very challenging behaviour, as an alternative to external residential placements.

97% of respondents who commented agreed or partially agreed with this recommendation. There was strong support for children to be as near home as possible and that we should be able to support our children locally. There was also acknowledgement that some children need a high level of very specialist education and care. A number of respondents suggested that any local provision could be developed with other local authorities in the region. Others suggested that a local provision could be developed at St Mary's School, Horam but there was acknowledgement that in general children with ASD and those with BESD could not necessarily be accommodated in common provision. Those respondents in favour of this recommendation tended to feel that it should be developed on a multi-agency basis including education, social care and health and providing outreach to other local schools. A number of respondents indicated that they believed that additional provision for children with behavioural difficulties is more of a priority and that additional local resources for this are urgently needed.

“If local provision existed, it would make sense both financially and to prevent separation of families and travelling strains” Parent & Governor

“A creative approach that explores different ways of managing behaviour” SSD Staff

“As the number of children with ASD continues to grow this will be essential.” Outreach teacher

Many respondents mentioned that a residential provision was needed alongside respite opportunities for children attending other schools. There was acknowledgement that such a provision would be expensive but could perhaps lead to reduced spending on long term out of county residential placements.

Recommendation 6

That co-ordinated, multi-agency services for children with ASD and their families should be developed.

99% respondents who commented agreed or partially agreed with this recommendation. There was strong support for co-ordination between agencies to simplify access to services. There was substantial support for increased provision for children with Asperger’s Syndrome/high functioning autism. A substantial number of respondents believed that such a service should not be restricted to ASD. There was considerable support for the provision of key workers/lead professionals.

Suggestions for which services/activities should be involved included: ASD specialist outreach teachers, Language and Learning Support Service, Early Years Teaching Support Services, Educational Psychology, school nurses, Parentlink, parent support groups/services, family support, music therapy, CAMHS, counsellors, early support, health, dietician, Family Intensive Support Service, Voluntary organisations, behaviour support services, behaviour therapists, housing, occupational therapy, residential respite, physiotherapy, speech and language therapy, social services, extended day and holiday schemes.

Suggestions for the support mainstream schools require included: curriculum differentiation training, specialist in-service training, access to expertise and training, accommodation, behavioural techniques for ASD, helpline, resource bank, specialist staff, visits to special schools to see strategies in action, more FISS style support, therapies, training modules for parents/carers and teachers, voluntary organisations, one to one support for children, access to multi-agency teams, ASD support service, educational psychologist, speech and language therapist, specialist units, counsellors for staff and parents and carers, outreach from special schools, one stop shop, quiet havens within schools, specialist teaching assistants, playworkers for lunchtimes. There was also considerable support for early years settings to be included in this recommendation.

Suggestions for the support families need included: access to training, advice on how to deal with challenging behaviour, after school activities, ASD support service, clear information, contact with other parents and carers, counselling, family worker, holiday play schemes, help line, respite, specialist social workers, parenting courses, support for siblings, services during school holidays, after hours contact, multi-agency support, good communication, empathy.

“A worker who gets to know a family well and gives practical advice e.g. which services, benefits etc are available.” Parent

“This is an absolute must.” Parent

“Why limit this to ASD children and their families?” Primary SENCO

Recommendation 7

That options should be explored for bringing together resources across Education and Social Services for support for children with disabilities/SEN.

99% of respondents who commented agreed fully or partially with this recommendation. Issues raised included whether this could be adequately funded in the rural areas, centred on the needs of the child rather than the organisation of services/resources, resources dedicated to education must not be subsumed to other budgets, the new Children's Trust should continue to operate 16-19 provision, should be about providing better services with

budgets available not a cost cutting exercise, agencies should work together to provide the best possible support, coordination of services is essential, need to change the ethos, budgets must be genuinely pooled and managed, need a clear union of services rather than jointly funded separate services, develop core working practices and trust before pooling budgets.

A large number of respondents mentioned that health is a vital part of the triad of support required for children with SEN and should be included in any pooling arrangements.

“If everyone worked together, it would improve the life for children with disabilities/SEN” Parent

Recommendation 8

That support for children with speech and language difficulties should be strengthened by the appointment of a qualified speech and language therapist to oversee the training and development of school staff, under the direction of the County Council.

91% of respondents who commented agreed with this recommendation in full or in part. Most respondents commented that there is a shortage of speech and language therapists and that the recommendation to employ one with such a large remit is not enough.

Issues to be addressed raised included: direct input for children is needed in schools and it is not enough to simply have existing support staff trained up, teaching assistants should be offered specialist speech therapy training, leading to a qualification with increased remuneration and additional funding to schools, must also be a trained teacher, know the National Curriculum in detail, and understand Literacy/Numeracy strategies, a lot of behaviours can be helped by having a method of communication e.g. Makaton should be implemented throughout schools.

“More therapists, shorter waiting time, more opportunities for therapists to model to practitioners by working with children in settings/schools.” Education Staff

Other respondents commented that this recommendation should be extended to include occupational therapy.

Many respondents indicated that the provision of speech and language therapy in East Sussex is insufficient and found the split of responsibilities between health and education confusing. A number indicated a belief that speech therapy provision should be managed by education whilst others believed that any new therapist employed should be managed by health.