

Committee:	<b>Children's Services Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date:	<b>7 June 2010</b>
Title of Report:	<b>Access and Disability Service update</b>
By:	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To update the Committee on how the service is working in practice following the creation of the Access and Disability Team including the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team and the Children's Disability Service, Parent Partnership and the Admissions and Transport Team and the impact that the amalgamation has had on service users accessing educational and social care provision</b>

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**RECOMMENDATION: The Committee is asked to consider and comment on how the service is working in practice following the creation of the Access and Disability Team.**

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## **1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 The budget allocation, including grants and other additional funding for the complete Access and Disability service is £33.7m in 2010/11. This includes £1.7m for the Aiming High Short Breaks initiative. The budgets for the individual service areas are as follows:

- SEN: £11.9m
- Children's Disability Service (including the Aiming High grant): £9.2m
- Parent Partnership: £167k
- Admissions and Transport: £12.4m

1.2 This paper does not in itself have direct financial implications, however, closer working and a more consistent approach to planning for children and their families leading to improved outcomes should support children to remain in their local area and therefore reduce pressures on the costs of out of authority placements and subsequent transport costs.

1.3 Financial planning and budget monitoring is undertaken for the full Access and Disability Team through the Access and Disability Business Unit supported by a senior officer from the Departmental Finance Team in order to ensure value for money, consistency of approach and planning, reduce duplication and promote efficiency.

## **2. Supporting information**

2.1 A service diagram is included in **Annex 1**. **Annex 2** describes the key roles of the teams that make up the Access and Disability Service. The work of all the teams within the Access and Disability Service is closely bound by legislation and statutory guidance including the Children Act, the SEN Code of Practice and the School Admissions Code. **Annex 3** includes background information about the numbers of children and families known to each team within the service.

2.2 In May 2006 the SEN Team, the Children's Disability Team and the Parent Partnership Service joined together under a single manager to become the SEN and Disability Service. In September 2008 the Admissions and Transport Team joined and the whole service was renamed as Access and Disability. The main difference between the Admissions and Transport Team and the other services is that they offer a universal service to all children whereas the SEN Team and the Disability Team offer a targeted/specialist service.

2.3 There are many benefits that have been derived through the creation of this service. In order to provide examples of how this has impacted on individual children and their families a number of short cases studies has been included in **Annex 4**.

2.4 The Access and Disability Service has an integrated management team consisting of the Heads of the Individual Teams led by the Head of Access and Disability. This management team has led on the development of the Access and Disability Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) which sets out the key strategic areas of development for the coming year. The key themes within the PIP for 2010/11 are Information and Transparency, Assessment and Participation and Feedback. The Management Team meets monthly to monitor progress on the PIP targets and to plan the joint work of the service. The Management Team is supported by a larger group of middle managers who form the senior leadership team of the service. This group meets quarterly to identify areas of joint working and to plan action to increase and develop integrated working within the service. Annually the whole service (which includes over 200 staff members) comes together to address areas of joint interest and to undertake

joint training.

2.5 There have been also a range of joint decision making processes which have been established so that outcomes for families are consistent and take into account their wider needs. These include the Joint Agency Placement Panel (JAPP) where proposed placements in independent and non-maintained special schools and agency care placements are considered by a panel of senior managers from across the service and also including representatives from other teams within the department. In addition, managers from the SEN Team attend the Disability Service's Resource Panel where decisions are made about the level of support which should be provided to families through the social work and related support services. A joint decision making process has also been established to consider requests for home to school transport for children with additional needs.

2.6 At a more practical level joint working takes place in relation to identifying appropriate placements for children with the most complex needs leading to a more consistent approach and more effective liaison with parents. A Choice Advice Service has been established within the Parent Partnership Service which provides advice and guidance to parents making their mainstream school preferences for secondary education.

2.7 A joint team of occupational therapists has been created which includes therapists whose work covers home adaptations, advice and provision of equipment and direct therapy input to children in schools. Paragraph 2.14 below describes how this work is being taken forward in partnership with the NHS.

2.8 Each special school which caters for children with a learning difficulty has access to an assigned worker from within the Disability Team to support liaison between home, school and short breaks providers. The Disability Team directly manage the provision of after school and holiday clubs in five special schools and the short breaks funding supports the provision in the other special schools.

2.9 There is also some co-location of staff within the service which facilitates integrated working. The Aiming High for Disabled Children Short Breaks Development Manager who is managed within the Disability Service but co-located with the SEN Team in County Hall. Aiming High Short Breaks staff undertaking financial and contractual work are managed within the Access and Disability Business Unit and based at County Hall. The 14-19 SEN Manager is based at Dorset Road, Bexhill alongside the Disability 14+ Transitions Team. The Disabled Children and Young People's Participation worker is based within the Parent Partnership Team. Further opportunities for co-location will be taken as opportunities arise.

2.10 The Parent Partnership Service which previously focused on providing the statutory advice service to parents of children with special needs has developed a wider role and now leads on all parent participation work for the Access and Disability Service as well as developing a register of parents who would like to be involved in consultations.

2.11 There has also been substantial joint working in relation to the transition to adulthood for disabled young people which is supported by a multi-agency transition strategy.

2.12 The Disability Team has grown its service to encompass a wider range of children with autism and the short breaks unit in Bexhill has achieved accreditation from the National Autistic Society alongside 2 special schools and one mainstream secondary school.

2.13 **Annex 4** contains some short case studies to give a better flavour of how the service has been able to work together to the benefit of children and young people.

2.14 Future areas for development include joint working on meeting the core offer for disabled children, establishing a joint integrated therapy team with the PCT and discussions with Adult Services around a combined team to support young people in transition.

### **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations**

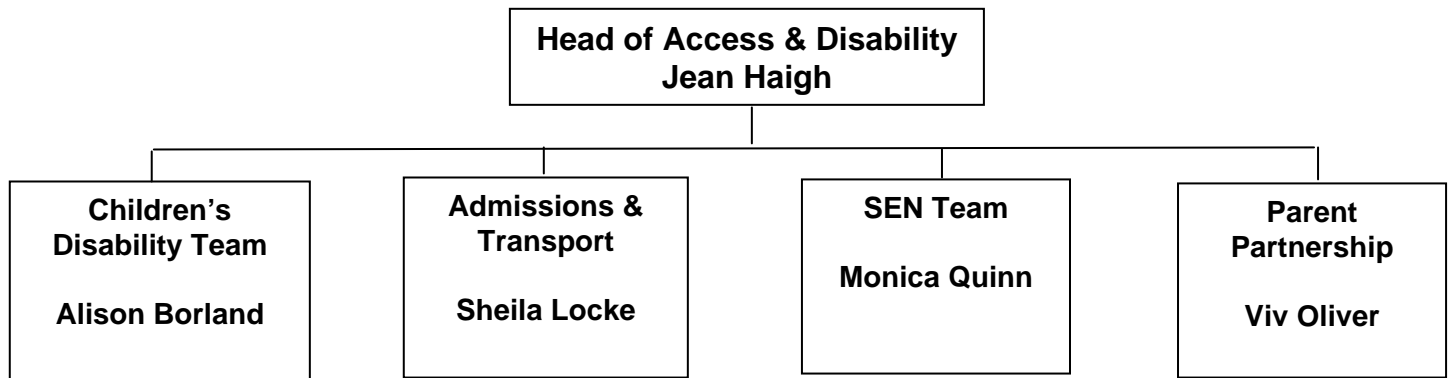
3.1 The Committee is asked to consider and comment on how the service is working in practice following the creation of the Access and Disability Team.

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Local Members: All

Background Documents: Multi-agency Transition Strategy, Aiming High for Disabled Children Core Offer



## Key roles of the Access and Disability Teams

**Jean is Head of Access and Disability** and is responsible for ensuring children and young people with a disability are able to access appropriate educational and social care provision. In addition she has responsibility for strategic planning and development in relation to SEN and disability. She is the chair of the Disabled Children's Development Group which is a specialist group reporting to the Children's Trust Executive Group.

**Alison is responsible for Children's Disability Services** for the whole of the county. This service includes duty and assessment, family support, occupational therapy and respite care: two residential units, Outreach support in the home and the short break service. Children's Disability Services are responsible for advising and supporting children with disabilities, and their families, in order to make sure that they can live at home and participate in family and community life as far as possible.

**Monica is Head of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Team.** She is responsible for ensuring that the County Council fulfils its obligations to children with SEN, in line with the SEN Code of Practice 2001, SEN Regulations and the Education Act 1996. She ensures that decisions about statutory assessments and statements are made in line with these requirements and that statutory deadlines are met. Lynne liaises and negotiates with Headteachers and SENCOs and works closely with teams in the Inclusion Support Services, staff from the Integrated Teams, Admissions and School Transport, the Standards and Learning Effectiveness service and colleagues in Health, among others.

**Viv is the Parent Partnership Manager** and her service offers information, support and advice to parents and carers on a range of educational issues and related matters. There are a number of aspects to the service:

- The Helpline - supports parents and carers in matters relating to education including special educational needs, exclusion, bullying and admissions.
- Choice Advice - All our helpline staff are trained to assist parents who have children transferring from primary to secondary school.
- Parent Information Contacts - These are people trained in schools and other settings who can help signpost parents to sources of information, support and advice on a whole range of issues.
- Parent and Disabled Young People's Participation. The team works to make sure the parent's and young person's voice are heard. The East Sussex Disability Register will help develop this aspect of the work and is coming soon.

**Sheila is in charge of Admissions and Transport** and her team is responsible for the admission of children into schools, determining policy on transport (including post 16 students) and determining applications for transport and free school meals. There are a number of aspects to the service:

- The annual transfer of children from primary to secondary school, infant to junior school and the admission of children to primary school for the first time
- Offering appeal rights, writing cases for appeals, and presenting cases on appeals for all year groups
- Servicing and clerking the School Admissions Forum
- Determining individual applications to transport. This includes arranging for individual cases to be considered by the Student Support and Transport Panel and the clerking and servicing of the Panel
- Determining the policy for post 16 transport
- Arranging for students to apply for assistance in cases of financial hardship for university visits interviews, and other allowances, and determine the outcome of applications
- Arranging for parents to apply for free school meals and determining the outcome of applications.

Number of children known to SEN Team – i.e. have a statement: **2340**

Number of children known to Disability Team - **535**

Number of children known to both teams: **466**

Number of children in Year 7: **5204**

Number of children in reception: **4871**

Number of in year admissions: **2850**

Number of cases known to Parent Link: **805**

## Joint Working Case Studies:

### Case Study 1 - Jack

The amalgamation of a number of teams to create the Access and Disability Service has created a culture of closer multi-disciplinary working and common goals to improve outcomes for young people. For example, Jack is an 18 year old young man who attended an independent specialist school in Hampshire. Close liaison between the Disabled Young People's 14+ team and the SEN team ensured effective joint working to bring Jack back to local provision in East Sussex. This involved the social worker in assessing Jack's care needs and ensuring that these could be met as well as being the main point of contact for the family, preventing them having to cover the same ground with a number of professionals. The SEN team was able to secure educational provision locally at no additional cost to the authority. With communications with the family being well managed and with a range of support systems in place, Jack was able to return to live full time with his family and attend school within his home community. Aside from this positive outcome for Jack, this has led to a saving of £55,000 a year for the authority.

### Case Study 2 - Paul

As we are now one team, I find one major benefit is the way that the education transport is now organised. The service now feels more personalised. It is much more efficient now, and focussed on the young persons needs. I recently had a case of a teenage boy, Paul who has an ASD. Paul was due to begin his tea visits at Acorns (short breaks unit in Bexhill). He was highly anxious about starting with us, and his mum was very concerned that he may refuse to stay at Acorns, if the slightest thing upset him. It was imperative that we began his stays at Acorns, as his mum has a terminal illness, and may need to go into hospital at any time. His mother needed to be reassured that there was a "safe" place for her son to stay should this happen.

Paul's mother was really concerned that if she transported her son in for his tea visits he would think that that was always going to happen, even when the overnights started. The young man really needed to have routine and consistency to make this service work. I spoke to SEN Transport Officer in the SEN Team, and explained the situation to her. She was extremely sympathetic and helpful, and agreed to transport the young man to Acorns for the tea visits. This was really helpful, and the introductions will now run smoothly, which is what our young people, and particularly the ones with ASD, need.

### Case Study 3 - David

Since the amalgamation of the Teams, there has been a significant improvement in communication and understanding of the individual roles and responsibilities between Access, SEN and Disability. This has improved the quality and efficiency of the service we provide and the outcomes for our clients. David is 17 years old and has been assessed as having a substantial learning difficulties arising from Autistic Spectrum Disorder with challenging, dangerous and anti social behaviours. Following a multi agency Core Assessment David was placed in a 52 week residential school in Devon in April 2009. This residential placement will be reviewed under LAC guidelines until David's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday in June 2010. It has been essential and effective to adopt a multi disciplinary approach in assessing, securing and maintaining David's residential placement. The SEN Team has taken an active role in ensuring that David's placement is not disrupted by attending statutory reviews and liaising closely with the allocated Social Worker. This was challenged recently when David's care plan was recently under threat of disruption. This care plan was retrieved because everyone was working together skillfully and sensitively to ensure David's placement was maintained.

### Case Study 4 - Rebecca

Rebecca has physical, learning and social difficulties. After a SEN and Disability Tribunal decision to place her in one of our maintained special school rather than the independent residential special school requested by her parent, she was out of school for some time due to her parent's concern about her care. The SEN Team, the Disability Team, the Education Welfare Service, the school and therapists worked together to address the parent's concerns and to reassure her. Rebecca has now been in school since January 2010 and is happy there. All therapies are in place and she has accessed respite provision at weekends and during holidays.

### Case Study 5 - Alan

A young man, Alan, was in need of a service as his previous outreach workers had left the service. He had been supported at the Children's Resource Centre once a week, after school. It was identified that this young man could be supported to access an After School Club operated by the Disability Team at one of the special schools. This meant that the children's disability service caseworker needed to liaise between the after schools and holiday clubs

team and the school transport team to arrange access and transport. By working in partnership, this young man is now accessing a club with his peers. Not only is this an improved service for both him and his mother but is being provided at a lower cost to the department.

#### Case Study 6 - Peter

Peter is a young man aged 17 with ASD. His educational placement is a residential special school ( in Kent) in the independent sector funded by ESCC. The young man was refusing to return school and his family were supporting him in this. However his mother was making threats against him and his attendance at school was key protective factor. The social worker undertaking the investigation worked closely with the SEN Team to ensure that the educational place remained open to the young man and to work towards the young man returning to school.

#### Case Study 7 - Rula

There is one category in the Council's agreed school admissions criteria is less objective than the others such as distance from home to school. It enables parents to apply for a particular school on the grounds that it is the only school that can meet their child's medical or social needs. Parents have to supply independent professional evidence clearly showing that (i) their child has a particular need or needs and (ii) that in the professional's opinion, the child should attend the specific school.

In the past, admissions officers have made decisions based on the evidence provided, but there is now a far more integrated approach across Access and Disability with officers from different disciplines coming together to make these decisions. In this way we are able to ensure our children are provided with the appropriate support they need.

#### Case Study 8 – Parent Partnership

Unbeknownst to the SEN Team Tom had been placed on a part time timetable by his school even though he had a statement of special educational needs. Tom's mother contacted the SEN Team who contacted the school and also informed her that the Parent Partnership Service would be able to support her in discussions with the school. The Parent Partnership Service supported Tom and his mother through the annual review process and informed them of the range of alternative provision that he might be able to access. This led to Tom being provided with the appropriate level of education through his school and also a post-16 transition plan being developed.