

# Action plan for implementing Middlesbrough's special educational needs & disability (SEND) strategic review

## Introduction

During the autumn term of 2015, Isos Partnership worked in partnership with Middlesbrough Borough Council, the SEND & Vulnerable Learners Commission, and key partners across Middlesbrough to carry out a strategic review of SEND support and services in Middlesbrough. The key findings from that review have been captured in a final report, which will be presented to the Commission in early 2016.

The report identifies four areas of current practice that are valued and should be built upon, but also four key challenges. The report recommends that the new shared strategy for SEND should address these challenges, and build on valued existing practice, by focusing on three core priorities:

1. transparent information about support and decision-making;
2. long-term strategic planning of the SEND continuum; and
3. strong leadership and robust collaboration.

The review found that there was strong support for a new, shared SEND strategy, but cautioned that this needed to be implemented swiftly and effectively to achieve rapid improvement and make a difference to outcomes for children and young people with SEND in Middlesbrough. For that reason, alongside the final report, we have worked with the Commission and key partners across Middlesbrough to develop an initial action plan for implementing the recommendations of the review, which is set out in this document. The focus of this initial action plan has been on identifying the key actions to be undertaken in the first six months, so as to focus on swift early implementation. Sustained implementation, however, will be crucial to maximising the impact of the new strategy. To that end, we suggest that this initial action plan is built upon and developed by those involved in implementing the strategy and specific priorities within it, so as to develop a comprehensive, outcomes-focused, long-term implementation plan can be developed.

This is an initial version of the action plan, based on our initial findings and discussions with local authority colleagues and Commission members in December 2015. We have put this together as a “straw man”, for further in-depth discussion, testing and refinement at our discussion on 14 January 2016. It will then be refined and finalised, ready for presentation to the final meeting of the Commission on 26 January 2016.

## Next steps

Once the action plan has been finalised and presented to members of the Commission, the next steps will relate to implementing the action plan swiftly and effectively. We think that an important aspect of the initial implementation phase will be for colleagues to continue to work in partnership. One of the suggestions raised during the review was to establish a small number of task-and-finish groups to focus on specific priorities within the strategy and to co-develop detailed ideas for implementation. It will be important to agree the precise make-up of these task-and-finish groups, their remit and how they will be supported in their work. Our initial suggestion is that the task-and-

finish groups match the core priorities within the strategy, with the second priority related to the SEND continuum split into three separate groups. This would be mean that there would be up to five task-and-finish groups.

1. **Information and decision-making** – focusing on improving signposting of support and transparency of decision-making
2. **Planning the SEND continuum** –
  - a. Focusing on support for mainstream schools, including a comprehensive, targeted outreach offer
  - b. Focusing on long-term planning of specialist SEND provision
  - c. Focusing on preparation for adulthood and post-16 pathways
3. **Leadership and governance** – focusing on developing multi-agency protocols for effective joint working

We would welcome further discussion the remit, role and support for the task-and-finish groups during our time in Middlesbrough on 14 January.

### Priority 1: Transparent information about support and decision-making

Priority action	Practical actions to take	Suggested lead(s)	Where do you want to be after 6 months?	If we did a follow-up exercise in 12 months' time, what feedback would we hear?
Develop the local offer into a practical tool for accessing support	Establish a task-and-finish group (group #1) to focus on improving information about support and transparent decision-making.  Revisit and refine the local offer so that it acts as a practical tool signposting professionals and families to the most appropriate support.  Consider developing a "front door" or single point-of-contact to SEND services to further improve signposting to appropriate services.	Task-and-finish group #1	Task-and-finish group established.  Scoped out what information is required to enable professionals and families to navigate the local offer and use it to access the most appropriate support.  Scoped out options for a "front door" approach and how it would work in Middlesbrough.  Agreed a set of principles for re-designing the local offer and mapping out routes to key support services.	Improved feedback from (a) parents & carers and (b) professionals about the clarity of information available, and the ease of identifying and accessing the most appropriate form of support to enable early help and swift support.  Data on referrals to particular services show more requests are being directed to the appropriate service swiftly and efficiently.
	Consider whether responsibility for the local offer should sit alongside other SEND services, under the Head of SEND & Vulnerable Learners.	MBC	Decision taken on where responsibility for the local offer should sit within the local authority.	Feedback from professionals that the local offer fits seamlessly with and reflects local SEND support and services.
	Continue to promote regularly existing forms of support through the local offer.	MBC – overall	A regular routine has been developed for promoting awareness of the local offer to schools, settings and colleges	Widespread awareness of the local offer among professionals and

		SENCO networks – to peers in settings, schools and colleges Parents4Change – to families	(especially new SENCOs), parents & carers, and young people.	families, including those new to Middlesbrough.
<b>Strategic, systematic engagement with parents &amp; carers and with young people</b>	Put in place a formal agreement between MBC and Parents4Change setting our clear roles and responsibilities, and shared priorities.	MBC & representatives from Parents4Change	Ways of working agreed, as well as roles and responsibilities to ensure broad and strategic engagement with parents & carers.  An agenda of priorities and matters on which to consult parents & carers for the twelve months ahead has been agreed is beginning to be implemented.	Parents & carers and professionals report positive, constructive, focused engagement that is leading to improvement on specific forms of support and services.
	Establish a strategic consultation group of young people with SEND in Middlesbrough, with a clear remit, roles and responsibilities.	MBC & young people's group (to be formed)	Members of the group have been appointed, and ways of working that the young people are comfortable with have been agreed.  A plan has been agreed relating to the matters on which the group will be consulted, and the actions the group will take to gather and reflect the views of young people with SEND in Middlesbrough.	Young people report that they have been supported in establishing the group, which has a clear remit, and that it is already beginning to influence decisions and practice relating to SEND support and services. Other professionals can feedback positively on the way the group has reflected young people's views in order to improve support and services.
<b>Review high-needs funding arrangements</b>	Review high-needs funding arrangements so that they are transparent to professionals and support personalisation of support for young people.	Task-and-finish group #1	Additional feedback has been gathered about the current high-needs funding matrix and put forward recommendations for how it should work in order to improve transparency and support greater personalisation.	Greater awareness and understanding among professionals, including SENCOs, about the way in which decisions about support and top-up funding are made. Greater confidence about how requests for SEND personal budgets are being / would be supported. Revised high-needs funding matrix in place, focused on outcomes.

## Priority 2: Long-term strategic planning of the SEND continuum

### Key areas of focus

Priority action	Practical actions to take	Suggested lead(s)	Where do you want to be after 6 months?	If we did a follow-up exercise in 12 months' time, what feedback would we hear?
<b>Building inclusive capacity in mainstream settings</b>	Establish a task-and-finish group (group #2a) to focus on identifying ways of building inclusive capacity in mainstream settings.  Develop a clear CPD offer to build the skills and capacity of mainstream settings to meet a wider range of needs, working with local teaching schools and other key partners.	Task-and-finish group 2a	Task-and-finish group established.  Identified development needs among staff in mainstream settings, and developed an offer of training and support to build skills and capacity in the short and long terms.	Positive feedback from staff in schools, settings and colleges about improved confidence in providing support to young people with needs such as ASD and SEMH.
	Develop clear protocols for transitions, based on examples of effective practice locally and nationally.	Task-and-finish group 2a	Clear protocols agreed and tested in a small number of examples, with a clear plan for how the lessons can be rolled out.	Improved feedback from professionals, parents & carers and young people about the effectiveness of planning for key transitions and the speed of putting the right support in place following a transition.
<b>Strategic planning and commissioning of a comprehensive outreach support offer</b>	Develop a clear, transparent and comprehensive offer of targeted outreach support that provides swift and timely support, builds the capacity of mainstream settings, and complements the provision on offer in specialist settings.	Task-and-finish group 2a	Existing provision mapped out, gaps identified for further targeted support, and plans in place to (re-)commission outreach and targeted support on a transparent, formal, equitable and outcomes-focused basis in place.	Feedback from professionals, particularly in mainstream schools, that they understand the offer of targeted support available and are beginning to be able to access the support that the need, specifically in relation to ASD and SEMH. Feedback also suggests that those providing outreach work attempt not only to support young people, but also build capacity and understanding in the settings with which they work.
<b>Develop capacity for long-term planning of specialist SEND provision</b>	Establish a task-and-finish group (group #2b) to develop plans for an evidence-based, collective, long-term approach to planning specialist provision.	Task-and-finish group 2b & MIC, with support from the MBC SEN team, place-planning team and MBC data analysts	Task-and-finish group established.  Scoped out available evidence to be used to inform three-year projections of likely need for specialist provision.  Scoped out a process for using the evidence to inform collective problem-	Feedback from practitioners and professionals that there is a clear, evidence-based understanding of the projected future need for specialist SEND provision, and the plans for meeting this need.

	Develop the evidence-base and process for collective long-term planning of specialist provision.		solving, including details of who needs to be involved and links to existing groups (e.g. MIC).	
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## Short-term priorities

Priority action	Practical actions to take	Suggested lead(s)	Where do you want to be after 6 months?	If we did a follow-up exercise in 12 months' time, what feedback would we hear?
Ensuring a continuum of effective SEMH support and provision	Develop plans for improving SEMH support, including commissioning high-quality provision and reducing exclusions.  Map out the continuum of SEMH support, including the specific, complementary roles to be played by outreach support, the complementary education service, the pupil referral units, other alternative provision, and the SEMH special schools.	Behaviour partnerships (through the new co-ordinator)	Behaviour partnerships co-ordinator appointed, and plans for the work of the behaviour partnerships draw up. SEMH continuum mapped out, with specific roles for different types of provision, and agreed with key partners.  Initial plans for commissioning SEMH support and alternative provision are drawn up, and are beginning to be used to shape both the provision available and how schools are using it (and adjusting their own in-school support).	Positive feedback from schools, colleges and settings that the range, appropriateness and equity of access to SEMH support and provision is improving and having a positive impact on young people and their education. Data suggest reductions in rates of exclusions.  Feedback also reflects that the full range of provision and expertise across educating settings in Middlesbrough is being used to support young people with SEMH (e.g. including alternative provision, post-16 providers, and personalised pathways).
	Agree long-term plans for the future status and operating model of the complementary education service and pupil referral units / AP academy.	MBC, complementary education service & the behaviour partnerships	Long-term model for the complementary education service and the pupil referral units are in place and understood by all partners. Clear ways of working, including commissioning support and provision, are in place between the behaviour partnerships and the pupil referral units / AP academy.	As above, positive feedback from schools and the pupil referral units / AP academy about the appropriateness, quality and equity of access to SEMH support and alternative provision in Middlesbrough.
	Agree short-term support and long-term plans for the future status of the secondary-age SEMH special school (Prince Bishop).	MBC	Short-term support is in place to enable the school to make necessary improvements.	As above, positive feedback on the long-term plan for improving secondary specialist SEMH provision. Data suggest that the number of young people placed out-of-area due

			Long-term plans have been agreed, and are beginning to be implemented, regarding the long-term future of the school, including any external organisations or sponsors chosen to work with the school.	to a lack of secondary specialist SEMH provision has stabilised and is reducing.
<b>Increasing the range of post-16 and post-19 pathways for young people with SEND</b>	Establish a task-and-finish group (group #2c) to focus on developing a broad, partnership-based approach to improving post-16 and post-19 pathways for young people with SEND.  Develop plans, including short- and long-term actions for increasing post-16 and post-19 pathways, including supported internships and personalised pathways towards independence and into employment.	Task-and-finish group #2c	Task-and-finish group established.  Key partners – including, as well as education providers, employers, regeneration partners, third sector organisations, and other relevant partners – identified and formed into a strategic partnership group. Young people and families engaged in developing options.  Short- and long-term plans for building capacity to offer a broader range of pathways developed, agreed and beginning to be implemented through pilots.	Positive feedback from young people and families who have been engaged in developing plans – they consider that the new, planned pathways will improve choice, preparation for adulthood and long-term destinations.  Education providers reflect that they are able to offer a wider range of pathways and opportunities for young people with SEND.  Positive feedback from young people and providers / partners who are taking part in schemes to pilot and test new pathways.
	Develop clear expectations about careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) for young people with SEND. Consider developing a 14-25 transition group with key partners from health, education and social care.	Task-and-finish group #2c	Clear protocols developed and agreed on ensuring high-quality, personalised, consistent and appropriate CIAG for young people with SEND.  Decision taken on the best way to co-ordinate and oversee transition planning, including through a 14-25 transitions group, with key partners identified and roles agreed.	Positive feedback from young people, families and professionals on the process, consistency and outcomes of transition planning for young people with SEND.

### Priority 3: Strong leadership and robust collaboration

Priority action	Practical actions to take	Suggested lead(s)	Where do you want to be after 6 months?	If we did a follow-up exercise in 12 months' time, what feedback would we hear?
<b>Developing robust governance arrangements to oversee the implementation of the strategy</b>	<p>Develop clear multi-agency, partnership-based arrangements for overseeing the implementation and impact of the new strategy.</p> <p>In parallel, consider how these arrangements should draw in other local authorities in the Tees Valley (e.g. where services could be commissioned across several local areas), and how these governance arrangements fit with existing groups (MAP, MIC, and any future role of the Commission).</p>	MBC & strategy governance group (tbc)	<p>Clear multi-agency, partnership-based governance arrangements are in place to oversee and shape the SEND strategy. There is clarity about how governance arrangements will work with other local authorities and other strategic groups within Middlesbrough as appropriate.</p> <p>A strategy governance group has been formed, and reporting arrangements to support the group are in place. The group is now overseeing the strategy, and able to take decisions to refine priorities and actions based on data and learning reported to the group.</p>	Clear understanding from partners across Middlesbrough about the way in which the SEND strategy is overseen, and how this fits with other partnerships and groups across the town. There is positive feedback from those involved in strategic governance and other stakeholders about the speed and effectiveness of the implementation of the strategy to date.
<b>Developing effective joint commissioning arrangements and multi-agency partnership protocols</b>	Develop long-term plans for jointly-commissioning and funding key services and support.	MBC and CCG	Plans in place that identify immediate commissioning priorities and long-term commissioning plans. Plans for immediate priorities are beginning to be implemented, and lessons used to inform refinements of long-term plans. Joint funding arrangements have been agreed to support these plans.	Clear understanding from professionals about immediate priorities and long-term plans for joint commissioning. Positive feedback from commissioners on the process for establishing joint commissioning arrangements and priorities.
	<p>Establish a task-and-finish group (group #3) to focus on developing multi-agency protocols.</p> <p>Develop a set of multi-agency protocols for how different agencies can contribute effectively to EHC assessments, plans and reviews.</p>	Task-and-finish group #3	<p>Task-and-finish group established.</p> <p>Protocols developed, agreed by relevant partners, and beginning to be implemented through pilots / tests.</p>	Positive feedback from professionals in all agencies and education settings on the protocols themselves and the way in which they are enabling agencies to work together to contribute appropriately and effectively to EHC assessments, plans and reviews.
<b>Developing a robust outcomes framework for tracking the impact of the new strategy</b>	<p>Identify key performance indicators that will show whether the strategy is making a difference to the outcomes for young people and their families.</p> <p>Develop trajectories showing progress</p>	Strategy governance group (tbc)	A robust outcomes framework and trajectories related to the long-term impact of the strategy have been developed and are in place. Regular routines for tracking the progress and	Clear understanding from members of the strategy governance group and other key partners about the long-term aims of the strategy, how the

	<p>and impact over time so that the strategy governance group can keep track of whether the strategy is proving effective and refine as necessary.</p>		<p>impact of the strategy are in place. Early signs of success have been identified and captured, with learning used to inform ongoing implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>A training offer on evaluating outcomes has been developed and offered to those involved in overseeing the strategy and specific forms of SEND support and services.</p>	<p>strategy is progressing, and evidence of early impact.</p>
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