



Better together for Children...



Walsall Council

MARCH 2014

Children's Services – Supporting Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Changes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities from September 2014

Walsall prepare for changes as outlined in the Children & Families Bill

Inside This Issue

1. Parent/Carer Forum
2. Parent Participation Charter
3. Review of Special Education Provision
4. Education, Health & Care Plan update
5. Parent Consultation Feedback
6. SEN Reform implementation timetable
7. Having a voice

Welcome to our 2nd newsletter giving you updates about our preparations for the changes to services for Children & Young People with special educational needs.

Parent/Carer Forum

Following feedback from the consultation sessions it appears that a number of parents had not yet heard of the Local Offer or Education Health & Care Plans. We therefore attended the Parent/Carer Forum on 6 February at the Crossing, St Pauls, Walsall, to discuss both the Local Offer and EHCP and answer any questions raised by parents/carers.

Parents felt that in theory the new reforms are a good thing, but that this will be hard to put in practice. Parents want to help and work together to make this happen.

Get involved and join your local Parent/Carer Forum

The parent/carers forum provides opportunities for parents/carers of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities to come together and find support, share their experiences, receive information and training, work with the local authority, education, health and other providers to make sure the services they plan and deliver meet the needs of children with SEN and disabilities.

The parent/carers forum is provided by Walsall Carers Centre, Family Voice Walsall and Walsall Parent Partnership Service. The forum usually meets once per term. If you would like to join or find out more details contact Walsall Carers Centre on 01922 610810.

Walsall Council Parent Participation Charter

Parent engagement groups have merged to make a Parent Participation Group. The parents of this group have worked with the local authority and produced a Parent Participation Charter.

The parent participation charter sets out some principles for working together:-
Better together for disabled children and young people in Walsall.

- Parent/Carer Forum is instrumental in developing and reviewing services in our area and promoting choice and control for parents.
- Parents/Carers have a right to information which is easy for everybody to understand
- Parents/Carers should be asked their views and given feedback about services which affect them or their children
- Parents/Carers need to know what they can and cannot influence
- To enable parents/carers to attend and participate in a parent friendly manner. The 'think parent first' principle will be adopted when arranging events.
- Parents/Carers should be valued and treated with respect and honesty, and everyone should be given an equal chance to participate
- Consultation will take place in a variety of ways including mail, email, text and social media sites to enable the widest possible participation

Review of Special Education Provision in Walsall 2014

We are reviewing provision in schools and academies to ensure we have enough specialist resourced places and enough special school places.

We will have a continuum of special educational provision that:

- Meets the needs of children and young people with special educational needs
- Addresses SEND and education legislative reform;
- Secures outstanding progress and achievement for children and young people, and
- Incorporates a range of provision – this will include
 - inclusive mainstream schools, -
 - additionally resourced provision and units in mainstream schools
 - special schools for a range of complex high needs pupils.

In other words: Our ambition is to ensure we have what children need and parents want in a sustainable way.

We have looked at what we have now, what we need and we are now developing a range of possible options that will ensure we have a full range of provision that provides enough of the right type of places.

We are working to create a plan that will meet the needs of all Walsall children and young people with SEND.

Education Health and Care Plan update

We have received a lot of feedback on the Education Health & Care Plan and where possible we have incorporated this information into the revised version. We are continually reviewing the document as we receive feedback and following pilot plans that we have completed for a few children and young people.



The EHC plan will replace the statement of special needs and will have the same legal status as a statement of SEN, but will also include what is important to the child and young person, what is important to the family now and in the future. These changes will be agreed between all agencies involved with the child/young person. This means a child will have a single plan – not different plans from each professional.

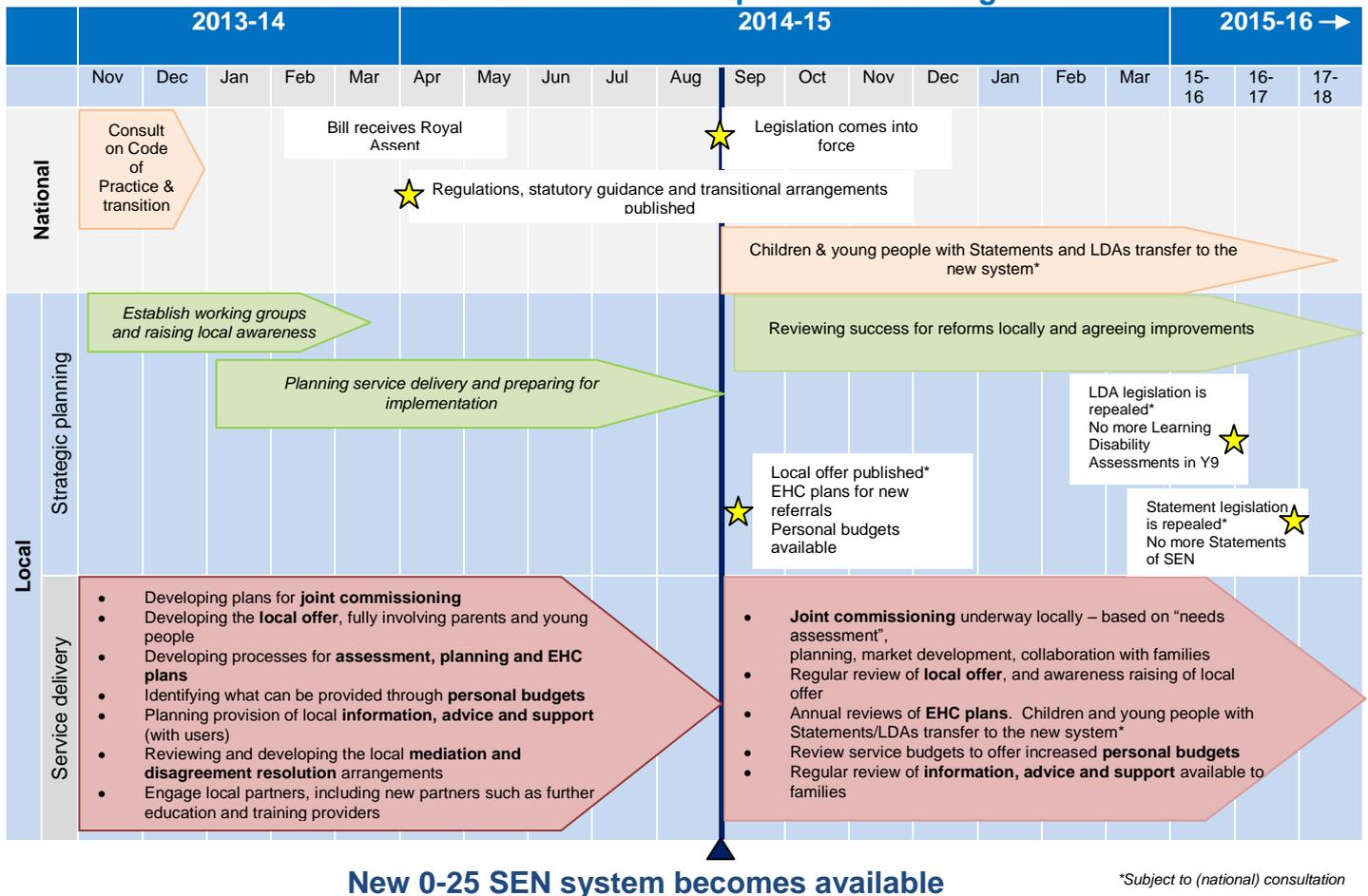
Parent Consultation Feedback

During the period November 2013 to January 2014 Education, Health and Social Care services held consultations with parents across the borough to get feedback on the Local Offer and current services provided by the Local Authority.

“You Said” 	“We will” 
<p>During our consultations most parents had not heard of the Local Offer</p>	<p>Since our consultations sessions we have produced a newsletter which has been circulated to schools, agencies, parent groups and services to share with parents, these newsletters will be sent out bi-monthly. We have attended the Parent/Carer forum to discuss the Local Offer and the Education Health & Care Plan with parents. We are currently working with services to draft their Local Offers and we will ask parents to give us feedback on these. Once Local Offers are finalised they will be placed on the Internet.</p>
<p>Those who had heard of the Local Offer were unsure of what it might be</p>	<p>Local authorities and other services will set out a local offer of all services available to support children who are disabled or who have SEN and their families. This easy-to-understand information for parents will set out what is normally available to help children with SEND, as well as the options available to support those with additional needs. Local Offers will be updated and reviewed on a regular basis.</p>
<p>You said you would look for the Local Offer at the Child Development Centre, schools, libraries, children’s Centres, doctors, hospitals, TAC, internet, Walsall Council, information leaflets, posters, media, TV adverts, radio, ask the school, want a link on medical card.</p>	<p>We will produce a “Communication Plan” and look at all possible ways of communicating with parents and services. Parents are actively involved in helping us put together the Communication Plan.</p>
<p>You said it should be accessible, structured and up-to-date information of how to access services and a planned package of support and should be information held in one place.</p>	<p>The authority will work together with children and young people, parent carers and with other services to develop the local offer. Through our communication plan we are working to make this information available in one place</p>
<p>Generally you felt that you would not know where to look for information about support and opportunities for your child</p>	<p>Our Communication Plan will consider ways of making sure information and support is available and easy accessible to all parents. It will be available in one place on the Council website.</p>
<p>Parents felt that they do not feel in control of their support and that they were not listened to. There are money restrictions and too many lengthy assessments</p>	<p>The change in the law from September 2014 is intended to make assessment faster and more useful. We are developing new ways of working that means parents have more control over what happens. Parent representatives are helping us do this. We are testing it with families and they are helping us get it right.</p>
<p>Most parents felt that their child was not involved in the development of their support package.</p>	<p>The change in the law from September 2014 will ensure children and young people are at the centre of their support package and are kept fully involved.</p>
<p>You would like schools and training providers to have “buddies” to support your child.</p>	<p>Work is currently under way with Training providers through the University, this will be pursued and extended.</p>
<p>Services need to be fairer rather than being accessed by those who shout the loudest!</p>	<p>The SEN reforms will make sure that there are robust systems in place for decision making, thus giving a fairer system</p>

More “you said, we will” in our May newsletter.

SEN Reforms Timeline for implementation diagram



Having a Voice

Comments are invited from parents/carers, agencies on any of the work done or currently being undertaken.

We have a number of parents/carers who have expressed an interest in working with us to review and implement changes, if you would like to take part please contact us.

Help us improve our information and communication. Can you find the information you need about our services? Please let us know where you look and where you would like to find updates on future developments.

Please send your comments to:- senconsultations@edu.walsall.gov.uk

Look out for our next Update in May 2014