

SE7 SEND Pathfinder programme: regional update



February 2012

The SE7 area – Brighton & Hove, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Medway, Surrey, and West Sussex – is one of the 20 SEN and Disability Green Paper pathfinder areas testing proposed reforms to the system of support for disabled children and young people and those with Special Educational Needs. The work is jointly led by the SE7 Local Authorities and the Primary Care Trust Clusters and will run until March 2013.

This is a real pathfinder opportunity – the Green Paper sets out the principles of reform, but it is for our local areas to work with our parents and children to try out different approaches and ways to improve the system. Together we are in the forefront of developing new ideas and testing whether they make things better for children, young people and their families.

1. Participation:

SE7 is committed to supporting parent carers to participate fully in our pathfinder work. This means working in partnership with our 7 Parent Carer Forums as well as with the parent carers who volunteer to test out the developing single assessment and planning process. All formal SE7 Boards include parent carers as full and equal members. Representatives from each of the Parent Carer Forums in the region meet together in a regional sub-group supported by an independent parent carer advisor. Parent carers are invited to all regional SE7 workshops and events.

We have adopted a Participation Statement for regional activity which ensures that parent carers can be remunerated for their time and commitment to regional pathfinder work. Each local area also has a local participation policy. We also have an agreed regional participation framework which identifies the essential features of true and equal participation and sets out the key responsibilities for this.

Each local area is identifying opportunities for children and young people to participate in the pathfinder, both when involved in the single assessment and planning process and also in our wider work. We are also planning how best to gather the views of children and young people across the region.

2. Assessment and Planning:

We have developed a regional assessment and planning framework which sets out our commitment to parent carers participating in the pathfinder, the key principles underpinning our approach and the key features of the assessment and planning processes in SE7.

Local areas are now working with their Parent Carer Forums to implement the new framework, tailoring it in light of local circumstances.

In particular we will look at how we can develop the new processes so that they look at the range of the child and family's needs. We will see how we can streamline the system and remove duplication. A central feature of our work will be to investigate how best families can be supported to navigate the system so that all can participate fully.

3. The Local Offer:

Our Parent Partnership Services are working with our Parent Carer Forums to agree a basic format for showing what services are available in each area. This regional framework will be completed in each area to provide information on the support available locally for disabled children and their families and increase the transparency of our systems. Parent carers will make sure that our local offer framework includes the information they want to know, and we will check out if it can help when we're planning support with an individual family.

Each local area will also test additional reforms in one or more of the following areas, with a lead local area for each one:

4. Personal budgets

Each SE7 area is piloting or planning to pilot personal budgets for a group of disabled children and young people. Some areas have already issued some budgets and others are starting to plan towards this. We are investigating how to include funding from a range of sectors, including health and some education costs if appropriate and possible.

West Sussex is coordinating our SE7 work on personal budgets.

5. Support to parents and carers

We are investigating ways to improve parent / carer experiences and their confidence in the system, including through new forms of redress and dispute resolution. We will work with advocacy organisations, the Voluntary and Community Sector and our Parent Carer Forums to look at new ways of doing this.

Brighton and Hove and Hampshire are coordinating our SE7 work on support to parents and carers.

6. Project management and communication

Regionally the work of the Pathfinder is coordinated by East Sussex. In each of the 7 areas local officers have been identified as Pathfinder Lead and they are overseeing the pathfinder work in their area. Each PCT has also identified a Pathfinder Lead Officer. NHS Sussex is the regional lead PCT.

We have set up a Regional Steering Group involving all SE7 areas, parent carers and the voluntary sector. The Regional Steering Group agrees regional action and strategy. Each local area has a Local Change Board which oversees and guides the pathfinder work. Two local change boards have a parent carer as a joint chair.

A Regional Project Manager has been appointed and she will help the Pathfinder Regional Lead and the Regional Steering Group to implement the pathfinder.

7. Evaluation

The government has appointed a company, SQW, to evaluate the national pathfinder. SQW will be looking at how well the new assessment and planning processes work and whether they lead to improved outcomes for the child or young person and support families. They will also look at the costs and value for money of the new systems.

We will also evaluate our work regionally and locally. This will be important to inform our SE7 pathfinder work as it develops.

8. Support to pathfinders

The Department for Education has funded some organisations to help pathfinder areas to implement and test these changes. Mott Macdonald has a contract to provide direct support to pathfinders and they are working with the other organisations to help us make the pathfinder.

9. Further information

National information about the pathfinder can be found on the Department for Education website: www.education.gov.uk and on the national pathfinder website: www.sendpathfinder.co.uk.

An SE7 regional pathfinder website has been set up by one of our parent carers: www.se7pathfinder.co.uk. This site is aimed at parent carers and practitioners. It is the main website for the SE7 Pathfinder and includes copies of our documents and further information. Copies of all documents mentioned in this update can be found at www.se7pathfinder.co.uk.

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