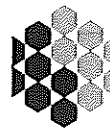


FROM THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY



Department of
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Our Ref: AGY/417/2015

Date: 9 July 2015

Dear

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY (SEND) BILL

Thank you for the Committee's letter to request an update on the Special Educational Needs Bill on the subject of HSC advice input to the assessment of special educational needs of children and the Early Intervention Transformation Programme.

These updates are provided in the following Annex.

Yours sincerely

SIMON HAMILTON MLA

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS BILL

Clause 4 places a duty on the Education Authority to request help from a health and social care body in all cases where it considers that the body could help in the exercise of its functions.

DHSSPS would be supportive of a child receiving all the help that they may need and that there should be better collaboration between schools and the HSC in respect of meeting the holistic needs of the child.

However, we must be mindful that the numbers of children with special needs attending schools is increasing significantly and therefore there is a resource issue that needs to be managed by the HSC but also recognised by the Assembly in the allocation of funding for the implementation of the Bill.

The Committee has asked for the Department's views on the application of further statutory obligations on HSC Trusts (including Memoranda of Understanding or Service Level Agreements with the Education Authority) in respect of the delivery of health services related to Special Educational Needs, and to establish if scoping work had been undertaken in order to determine the impact of additional statutory obligations in this regard.

Such scoping has not been carried out, as there is already a specific general duty on HSC Trusts to provide services for children in need and their families by way of Article 17 and other provisions within the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which addresses the circumstances as to when a child may be regarded "in need".

In addition, provisions under Article 14(3) and (4) of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 require Health and Social Care Trusts to assist the Education Authority where such a request is made, while recognising possible practical and resource constraints.

Given the pressure that the HSC Trusts are currently experiencing, it is considered that little would be gained by adding further to the existing statutory requirements. However, there is undoubtedly some scope to improve processes and procedures to ensure current arrangements work in a more timely and efficient manner.

In response to a request from the Department of Education, this Department recently hosted a meeting (on 2nd June) involving representatives from the Public Health Agency/HSC Board, the Education Authority and officials from DE and DHSSPS, with the aim of building on the work of existing professional groups and liaison arrangements to improve the processes involved in requesting and securing advice from HSC Trusts for the statutory assessments of children in the education system.

A number of areas were discussed and some suggestions were put forward which may speed-up the process of providing requested advice from HSC Trusts to the Education Authority while recognising the existing pressures and challenges to funding and capacity within Health and Social Care, and the need to ensure that education-related requests are not given precedence over HSC assessments and targets.

A further meeting is being arranged by the Department of Education to take this work forward.

EARLY INTERVENTION TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) is a £30m Delivering Social Change (DSC)/Atlantic Philanthropies Signature Programme. The Programme aims to improve outcomes for children and young people across Northern Ireland through embedding early intervention approaches. The Programme is funded jointly by six government Departments (OFMDFM, DHSSPS, DE, DOJ, DSD and DEL) and Atlantic Philanthropies.

Workstream One

EITP Workstream One aims to equip all parents with the skills needed to give their child the best start in life and will focus on three key parenting stages; *Getting Ready for Baby*, *Getting Ready for Toddler* and *Getting Ready to Learn*.

In March 2015, the Programme Board gave approval to spend to the Workstream One *Getting Ready for Baby* and *Getting Ready for Toddler* Projects to include proposed strands on *Transforming Ante-Natal Care and Education Provided by Midwives* and a strand on *Child Development Review for 3-4 Year Olds in Pre School Setting*. Approval to spend was also given to the *Getting Ready to Learn Project* within Workstream One which seeks to transform pre-school practice by using the skills of early years teachers and practitioners to support all parents to develop the confidence and skills they need to ensure that their children grow up happy, healthy and achieve their full potential.

Workstream Two

Workstream Two aims to support families when problems arise before they need statutory involvement and will focus on the delivery of an integrated regional model of early intervention for these families.

Within Workstream Two, five Early Intervention Services will be established with the delivery of the Early Intervention Service will be aligned to Family Support Hubs to deliver a joined up network of early intervention supports and services which build on and link to existing services for children, young people and families in each area. The EIS tender is now live with 20 lots being offered to provide opportunities for a range of community and voluntary organisations to deliver this Service.

Workstream Three

Workstream Three aims to positively address the impact of adversity on children.

A number of Projects have been approved by the EITP Programme Board in respect of Workstream Three.

- **The Belfast Intensive Family Support Service** provides sustained and intensive supports to the most vulnerable families with children of any age. The focus of this service is on statutory agencies working in a more integrated way with families. The service is currently implemented by Extern and is jointly managed by a multi agency panel including BELB, YJA, PSNI, NIHE and BHSCCT.
- **The *Home on Time* Project** aims to provide an opportunity for identified young vulnerable children in the looked after system across the five HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland to achieve permanence as early as possible whether that is through return to birth family or adoption. Each HSC Trust has in development their own *Home on Time* Project working to an agreed regional model, and connecting into their individual resources. In addition, the Family Care Society is supplementing the work of the HSC Trusts and aims to recruit, assess, train and support circa 20 concurrent carers for the scheme over the first three years of the project. A number of children have now been placed as part of this Project.
- **The *Edges* Project** seeks to use evidence informed practice to build and support family stability for those families with troubled and/or troubling adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17, who are on the 'edge' of school exclusion, care, homelessness, becoming NEET and formal involvement in the youth justice system.
Start 360 has now fully recruited their full complement of approximately 12 staff across the Enniskillen and Newtownabbey areas and are currently working intensively with 25 vulnerable young people.
- **The 6 in 10 Project** aims to at break an intergenerational cycle of offending behaviour with the overall objective to change the life of the young child by targeting their young parent through a mix of family, parenting and training interventions and employment for one year in a social enterprise set up

specifically to aid the young parent with developing the skills they need to secure permanent employment.

A community interest company *The Book Reserve* has now been established to include *the Thinking Cup Café* on the Lisburn Road, Belfast and the Book Reserve second-hand bookshop within the Café which also has an online platform. The Book Reserve was officially launched by Minister Ford on 3 June.

- **Professional Development (Professionals working with Children and Young People) Project** seeks to embed early intervention and prevention within the professional development of the children's workforce (at all levels). The objectives of this Project will be to:
 - Improve practitioners' understanding of child development and milestones;
 - Improve practitioners' ability to identify developmental delay as early as possible and respond effectively;
 - Improve practitioners' understanding of early intervention and 'what works' in improving parenting skills and behavioural change for young people and
 - Improve practitioners' understanding and use of evidence based approaches to improving parenting skills and outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.
- **Building Better Futures Project** aims to improve children's outcomes by providing more robust and timely evidence based comprehensive social work assessments followed by targeted and effective interventions for children and families who have reached the threshold for the involvement of Trust Social Services Family Support Teams.

EITP Contingency Projects

The EITP Programme Board has also given approval to a number of contingency initiatives including;

- **DEL Family Support Programme;**
Focuses on supporting young people and their families with a high level of need, to develop their capacity, and reach their full potential.

- **A DoJ Community Safety Project for Vulnerable Young People;**
The development of two 'proof of concept' pilots, one urban and one rural to test the implementation of a systemic change to how youth justice and the PSNI re-orientate their services to deliver early, justice-led community diversion with high-risk children who would otherwise be exceedingly likely to enter the formal justice system.
- **A Social Enterprise Project;**
To develop a model, complementary to the 6 in 10 Project that is particularly attractive to young mothers who are statutory Care Leavers (16-23) or young mothers involved in the youth justice system or who are homeless, *and*
- **A Joint DHSSPS/DoJ Care Proceedings Pilot;**
This involves 2 HSC Trusts and 2 Family Proceedings Courts. The pilot will run for 12 months, to assist in:
 - substantiating the evidence base in relation to the causes of unnecessary delay in care proceedings cases in Northern Ireland;
 - determining how causes of delay identified should be addressed.
 - Promoting good decision making thereby improving outcomes for children by reducing the time taken to process care proceedings which will in turn increase the stability of their placements and permanency.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

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12 June 2015

Our Ref: PMcC/KM/2198

Dear Jonathan

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill

At its meeting on 10 June 2015, the Committee for Education received a briefing from representatives of the Education Authority; Health and Social Care Board and the Public Health Agency as part of the Committee Stage of the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Bill.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to seek its views on the application of further statutory obligations on Health and Social Care Trusts (including Memoranda of Understanding or Service Level Agreements with the Education Authority) in respect of the delivery of health services related to Special Educational Needs, and to establish if scoping work had been undertaken in order to determine the impact of additional statutory obligations etc. in this regard. I have written in similar terms to the Department for Education.

Committee for Education

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The Committee also agreed to write to the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in order to seek an update on the Early Intervention Transformation Programme.

If you require further clarification in respect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

A response by 26 June 2015 would be greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Signed Peter McCallion

Peter McCallion
Clerk
Committee for Education

Committee for Education

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