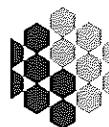


FROM THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
SOCIAL SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY



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Our Ref: COR/1664/2015

Date: 23 November 2015

Dear

ROBIN

Thank you for your letter of 5 November seeking an update on various issues in relation to the Committee's Inquiry into Post Special Educational Need Provision in education, employment and training for those with Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland.

The updated information requested is provided in the attached Annex.

Yours sincerely

SIMON HAMILTON MLA

1. Bamford Action Plan 2012-2015

Please outline how these actions are being achieved. Outline any baseline figures and subsequent monitoring and provide examples of actions taken.

- a) Action No. 25: To support the uptake of self-directed support and individual budgets in line with Transforming Your Care.

Update:

The number of people with self-directed support continues to increase as follows.

Mental Health	Learning Disability
2012/13 – 263	2012/13 – 444
2013/14 – 331	2013/14 – 538
2014/15 – 352	2014/15 – 619

- b) Action No. 46: To improve access to advice and information on services and support available.

Update:

The HSC Board, in conjunction with the DHSSPS, supports the Family Support NI Web Service which provides a range of information in relation to Family Support Services in Northern Ireland, including both statutory and community and voluntary sector providers.

The Mental Health web portal was launched by NI Direct in April 2015. In addition a new Children and Adolescent Mental Health services web page has been developed on the Family Support Network. A Learning Disability web portal is the next to be developed.

- c) Action No. 47: Improve services for children with challenging behaviours and their carers (Shared with DE);

Update:

This action is being progressed through the Children with Disability Sub Group of the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership Board.

In 2013/14, the HSC Board in 2013-14 provided an additional £1m recurrently to Trusts to develop services for Children with Disability. The focus of this investment was to allow Trusts to further develop services in conjunction with CAMHS in line with the best practice guidance from the Royal College of Psychiatrists. In addition further funding was provided to the Specialist Iveagh Centre to improve governance within that Unit.

In 2014/15 the HSC Board provided further funding to support the development of support services to Children with Disability who display challenging behaviour. This funding was to enhance early intervention and prevention services.

Since 2012-13 the HSC Board has provided an additional £7.5m recurrent to Trusts for services for Children with Disability (CWD) as follows:

- Specialist supports for CWD who display behaviours which challenge;
- Additional support for carers of CWD including those who care for CWD with behavioural issues;
- Additional short breaks respite including support for siblings.

In addition the HSC Board has funded a specific service from the NI Music Therapy Trust in relation to supporting Trusts with CWD who display challenging behaviour.

- d) Action No. 48: Develop and implement a Service Framework for learning disability services.

Update:

The Learning Disability Service Framework was launched in 2014. The Learning Disability Framework Year 1 Benchmarking against Standards was completed in 2015.

Children with Learning Disability are one group within the broader group of children with disability. In line with the current legislative frameworks for

children, all CWD are provided with services on the basis of assessment of need. This is reflected in the Children's Services Framework which includes a specific section on Children with Disability inclusive of Children with Learning Disability.

2. Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) Survey Report on Transition Arrangements for Special Schools and Mainstream Learning Support Centres to Post-School Provision (2014)

- a) Need to undertake a comprehensive review of the transition arrangements for a minority of the most vulnerable pupils. This is in order to help restore the confidence of parents and schools and improve the provision which these pupils deserve and are entitled to;
- b) It will be for DHSSPS to address the quality and availability of post-19 provision for these pupils.

What is DHSSPS statutory obligation with response to the ETI recommendations and what has been achieved?

Update:

It is important to clarify that, those leaving school post-19 are not solely the responsibility of health and social care services. DHSSPS is only 'one partner' in the delivery of services to these individuals. Other relevant Departments including DEL, DE, DSD have equal responsibilities in ensuring 'access' to services no matter what the needs of the individual. The opportunities to access further education, training and/or day opportunities should be available to all, up to the level of their ability and their personal aspirations.

It is however acknowledged that for those with profound and multiple learning disabilities (as mentioned in the report), and with complex health conditions and/or severe behavioural problems, the HSC are likely to lead and "buildings-based" care and support will be required.

Clearly, many parents of these young people do not see transition to existing adult day or education centres as the solution. The challenge is to maximise

their post-school experience ensuring that provision is age-appropriate, varied, individually designed and based in the community and is augmented, where possible with a range of other experiences and activities in which other sectors can actively contribute to.

With regard to improving the range of post-19 opportunities generally, the HSC Board has produced a Regional Day Opportunities model for people with learning disabilities which will benchmark Day Services/Day Opportunities in order to drive improvements. A Regional Inter-departmental (and cross-sectoral) Implementation Group has been established to progress this.

In the HSC's consultation with parents and professionals, they raised significant concerns with regard to the availability of provision in Further Education colleges for individuals who have the right and need to further develop their educational and life skills - this is in contrast to the ETI report which suggests only improved HSC provision.

Collaborative work on improving transitions is already being undertaken through a number of initiatives such as:-

- the cross-Departmental Autism Strategy and Action Plan;
- the Bamford Action Plan;
- the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Transitions Sub-Group; and
- the DEL-led cross-departmental Post-19 Transition Focus Group (which is focusing on young people with severe learning disability).

The Department and the HSC will play its role in the comprehensive review of transition arrangements proposed by DE and we have already committed to that. There is a need however, for DSD, DEL, other Departments, their agencies, and the new "super Councils", to ensure that people with learning disabilities post-19 (and indeed throughout their lives) have equal access to the full range of service provision and opportunities, as everyone else.

3. Northern Ireland Children and Young People's Plan 2011-2014: Regional Sub Group Transition to Adulthood of Young People with Disabilities. Please outline how DHSSPS is meeting these actions and milestones. Provide any examples of work carried out and any monitoring data on relevant indicators.

- a) Action: As a first step, the group will develop a good practice model for integrated plans to ensure that the young person has access to appropriate transition support from age 14 years.

Implementation Milestones:

- Link with Health and Social Care Trust Stakeholders.
- Scope current Integrated Plans used across NI and across agencies.
- Agree a template for an Integrated Plan across agencies throughout Northern Ireland.
- Develop the use of passports by scoping current practice and developing a good practice model.
- Ensure the review of acute and community health at the transitions stage.

Update:

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) Sub Group has undertaken to scope a number of integrated plans but noted that even within agencies work was required to ensure a co-ordinated planning approach. A focus was given to scoping this within HSC and a number of documents sourced. Currently there is work on-going in areas such as the Electronic Care Record which will assist.

The group did note the particular distinctions between jurisdictions within the UK and particularly the development of the Children's (Scotland) Act and the Children and Families act (England and Wales) which established a statutory basis for co-operation. The Children's Services Co-operation Act NI has just passed the Assembly on 3 November 2015 and will bring a statutory duty of

co-operation and planning to NI but the outworking of these remains to be developed.

While the CYPSP Plan cited the need for pooling of budgets and further co-operation the only funds to date provided to CYPSP have been from the HSC Board.

- b) Action: Scoping work across Northern Ireland to determine expected demand and creating an integrated point of access for information regarding transition from school.

Implementation Milestones:

- Scope number of young people with disabilities coming through to adult services in Health and Social Care Trusts.
- Map the range of adult services and provision across Northern Ireland - both within and outside HSC Trust provision - that are currently available to young people with disabilities.
- Create one point of access for information in an accessible format across agencies and departments. E.g. www.familysupportni.gov.uk.

Update:

The DHSSPS, Department of Education (DE), Public Health Agency (PHA) and HSC Board are currently working on issues in relation to Special Educational Needs and the interface between the different agencies. Given that currently the statutory duty for transition planning resides with the Education Authority. The HSC will continue to work with colleagues in DE where HSC needs are identified with the Transitions process. Given that not all of the 74,000 Children within the Code of Practice or all of the 16,000 children subject to formal statements of special educational need will require HSC services, which are determined on assessment of health and social care rather than purely educational needs, the role of DE in identifying those children within the transition process who may require an assessment of HSC need will remain.

4. **The Committee is also aware of the Executive's Disability Strategy, 'A Strategy to improve the lives of people with disabilities 2012-15' and should be grateful if you would provide details of any additional actions your Department has undertaken to assist the lives of individuals with learning disabilities as they transition from school to adult services.**

Update:

The response provided to Issue 2 above provides update to this Issue.