**DECEMBER 2020**

**PROGRAMME UPDATE**

***Keeping stakeholders, parents and carers informed about Dudley’s Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Improvement Programme***

**Early Years Review (including Specialist Early Years’ Service) & Working Group**

As part of our pathway to addressing the areas of concern raised by the inspection findings, one of our priorities at the beginning of this year was to undertake an independent review of Specialist Inclusion Services (SIS) which comprises of six separate teams and includes the Specialist Early Years’ Service (SEYS).

We have spent time gathering the data, looking at the numbers of children and young people who currently need SEND support, how many are likely to need support in the future and the money there is available to support the system.

We need to ensure that all children receive the most appropriate support in the most appropriate setting. We want to support nurseries and schools to ensure that the majority of children and young people are supported within mainstream school.

However, we know that for some children this will not be possible and specialist provision will always be required. We are fully committed to implementing specialist one to one support for families to help navigate accessing the right support at the right time whether that be education, health or social care. This is a fundamental aim for us in Dudley.

We are now reviewing all of our Early Years’ Services including SEYS and how we can effectively support all families with children aged 0-5.

We would like to reassure parents and carers that we are passionate about improving our offer to our youngest children, but also that we need to achieve this within the confines of the finite resources available to us.

To this end and in a shared and transparent process, we are setting up an Early Years Working Group which will include parents and carers to agree a new Integrated Early Years’ Service.

We appreciate that parents and staff may feel unsettled as we move into this period of change but through shared aims and mutual trust, we will endeavour to mitigate any concerns you may have.

On the 8 December we met with the Parent Carer Forum to outline our plans they said

"*We were pleased to be invited to an open meeting with Helen Ellis and Scott Jones …. to provide some information and clarity on the early years review. News of this review had understandably caused upset and anxiety among many parents and carers, so it was reassuring to be offered this opportunity for discussion.*

*We were pleased to hear that although the LA had begun this review already, it was still in the very early stages and no decisions had been made at this stage. We were informed that a working group is currently being set up to inform this review and are delighted to know that this group will include 9 parents/carers from the borough.*

*Although we understand it will be a number of months before the review is completed, we highlighted the need for feedback to be shared regularly. We are aware that parents on the working group will be able to feedback to their networks, and that the LA will also provide updates where possible.*

*As always the Parent Carer Forum will be available for any parents who feel they need more information and we will make best endeavours to support or signpost."*

*Dudley Parent Carer Forum*

We will continue to be working in partnership with, Working Together for Change Dudley Parent Carer Forum.

An invitation will be shared shortly for 6 parents to join a working group established to influence the outcome of the Early Years Review and shape an integrated Early Years’ Service. We are seeking parents linked to the Parent Carer Forum, Lifted Spirits and We Love Carers as well as those who are not currently connected to any of these organisations but who would like to represent the views of other parents and have a passion to work with staff from across the partnership in a solution focused way. Expressions of interest can be made by emailing one of these groups or via their Facebook pages to find out what is involved. (see emails below)

* [info@dudleyparentcarerforum.com](mailto:info@dudleyparentcarerforum.com)
* [liftedspiritsdudley@outlook.com](mailto:liftedspiritsdudley@outlook.com)
* [hello@welovecarers.org](mailto:hello@welovecarers.org)

Please be assured that any decisions or action taken going forward will be in the best interests of all the children and families that we are working for.

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