



Department
for Education



Department
of Health

To: Directors of Children's Services
Directors of Adult Services
Heads of SEN
Parent Carer Forums

8 May 2013

Support for implementation of the SEND reforms - pathfinder champions

This letter:

- **Provides an update on the Children and Families Bill and the steps you will need to take to prepare for implementation of the SEND reforms**
- **Explains the role of the new pathfinder champions and the support they can provide to your local area**
- **Explains how you can engage with the pathfinder champion in your region**

Dear colleague

We are writing to inform you about the work of the pathfinder champions, and how they can support your local area to prepare for implementation of the reforms to the special educational needs and disability (SEND) system, across the 0-25 age range, including the improvement of transition to adult services. Edward Timpson, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Children and Families, announced the appointment of the champions in March, and they are now beginning work in every region.

Preparing for implementation of the SEND reforms

The Children and Families Bill recently progressed through House of Commons committee stage, with the clauses in part three on SEN being thoroughly scrutinised. Subject to Parliamentary approval, we expect the legislation to come into force from September 2014. There are significant organisational and workforce challenges for many areas to overcome in implementing the reforms in a way that will have the greatest impact on children and young people.

The experience of the SEND pathfinders has shown that the workforce development and culture change needed to implement the reforms takes time, typically over a year. In particular, services and professionals across

education, health and care for children and adults need to work together closely, putting families and young people at the centre of assessment and planning. The proposals for joint commissioning, a local offer and personal budgets require a strategic approach to planning services and market development, based on clear understanding of the needs of children, young people and families.

There is a growing body of learning from the SEND pathfinders that the new approaches they are trialling are making a real difference to the lives of children, young people and families. There are 20 pathfinders in England, each a partnership between local authorities (of which there are 31) and the health service. They have been working since autumn 2011 and strong progress has been made overall. The pathfinder programme has been central to informing the Children and Families Bill and the development of the SEND indicative regulations and indicative Code of Practice (published in March). More information on the pathfinder programme can be found in a report published by DfE in March 2013, available at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/send/b0075291/green-paper/pathfinders>

The pathfinder champions' role

We have heard clear messages from local areas that they would value practical advice and support in preparing for implementation. Champions have been selected from the existing cadre of SEND pathfinders, on the basis that they have already made strong progress in developing their pathfinder programme and have the experience and capacity to advise and support non-pathfinder areas. The nine champions are formed from 13 pathfinders across 20 local authority areas. A list of the champions is at **Annex A**, and details on the role of the champions and what other areas can expect from them is at **Annex B**. In summary, the champions will provide a mixture of information, advice and support, through online support, regional seminars and events, and 1-1 support.

In appointing the champions, we recognise that many other areas, pathfinders and non-pathfinders, are themselves making significant progress in implementing the SEND reforms. The focus of the champions is to share and promote examples of good, emerging practice from all areas. We hope that all areas will be able to engage with the pathfinder champions in a spirit of collaboration.

Although champion funding is provided to local authorities, the work of the pathfinder champions should include the range of partners with a key role in implementing the SEND reforms, including representatives of parents, children and young people, early years providers, schools, post 16 institutions, the health service, and VCS partners as well as local authorities

(including both education and social care services for children and adults). It is important that these partners are represented at regional events.

The champions' work forms a crucial part of a suite of support and advice available to all areas to implement the SEND Green Paper reforms. Further information on other support and co-ordination will be available soon, particularly the appointment of the Strategic Reform Partner for SEND.

Contacting pathfinder champions

We know that in some regions, local areas are already engaged with the work of the pathfinder champion through existing regional networks. In other regions, initial mapping activity is taking place to enable full engagement and champions will be contacting each area in the coming weeks. If you are unsure who to contact regarding the pathfinder champion work in your region, please liaise with Mott MacDonald (our contracted pathfinder support team) in the first instance. They can be contacted at **pathfinder@mottmac.com** or **020 7651 0308**. Mott MacDonald will also be able to assist in securing pathfinder champion representatives to speak at events.

We look forward to continuing to work with you on this important agenda.

Yours sincerely,



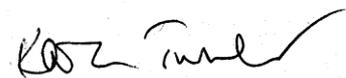
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Annex A – List of pathfinder champions

London	Bromley and Bexley
South East	SE7 (consortium of seven LAs) and Southampton
South West	Wiltshire
North East	Hartlepool
East Midlands	Leicester City
East of England	Hertfordshire
West Midlands	Solihull
Yorkshire & Humber	North Yorkshire and Calderdale
North West	Greater Manchester Group (Wigan, Trafford and Manchester)

Annex B – expectations of pathfinder champions

Champions are being provided with additional funding, with up to £600,000 available nationally in 2013-14. Funding has been adjusted depending on the number of non-pathfinder areas in each region, to ensure proportionate support. The champions are expected to provide the following types of support and advice over the course of 2013-14:

- **Regular sharing of information across each region.** This should include the showcasing of good practice from both pathfinder and non-pathfinder areas across the range of SEND reforms. To support this work, champions will have access to national tools, including a principles of emerging practice document (which sets out the ways of working that pathfinders and delivery partners have found most effective in implementing the SEND reforms) and case study materials demonstrating practical examples.
- **One regional conference.**
- **Four workshops/seminars per thematic area¹.** These should be aligned to broader local and regional collaborative networks and events. More than one thematic area may be covered at one workshop/event.
- **Contribute to developing self-evaluation tools** for non-pathfinders to use to help them prepare themselves for implementation of the reforms.
- **A minimum of one 1:1 support day with each individual non-pathfinder local authority area** (in some cases this support will be provided by a champion from a neighbouring region where they have greater capacity).
- **Quarterly case studies** demonstrating effective approaches to implementing the SEND reforms.

¹The thematic areas are:

Preparing for adulthood and post 16; co-ordinated assessment and Education, Health and Care plans; personal budgets; local offer; joint commissioning; engagement with children and young people and parents/carers