

Our Specialist Inclusion Team is changing!

The Council is currently consulting on a proposal to change the structure of the **Specialist Inclusion Team (SIT)** and **Portage and Early Years Support and Teaching (PEYST)** team.

This document will help parents/carers, families and schools/settings to understand the changes in more detail, as well as the impact it might have on services for children and young people (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Why are services changing?

Families, schools and other services have told us that they are struggling to access the right services at the right time, particularly for CYP who are pre-school aged, and those with Autism. Waiting lists for these teams are expanding too quickly for us to respond effectively.

What do the changes involve?

We are proposing to change the structure of the team to improve the flexibility and agility to respond to the needs of CYP across the borough as they arise.

We're also proposing to change the model of delivery so that we can best support schools and educational settings, to build more capacity and resilience to identify, assess and meet most CYP's needs effectively.

What does the new structure look like?

The proposed new structure is more collaborative, meaning that referrals will come into a single point of contact. Each case will go through a triage process to decide who in the team is the best person to lead the team's intervention.

This new model means that resources and staffing are spread more flexibly across the breadth of the team, and that transitions and handovers between services are more fluid.

Specialist Coordinators will oversee the strategy and development for specific areas of SEN: Cognition and Learning, Communication and Interaction, Physical and Sensory, and Early Years.

Specialist Teachers and **Specialist Officers** will work with schools and educational settings to assess and provide recommendations for further practice. They will be allocated according to their specific areas of expertise and specialism, but will be able to draw upon resources from the wider team as part of their assessment and intervention.

Specialist Caseworkers will follow up these recommendations, working with schools and educational settings to implement recommendations, trouble-shoot issues. They will also do direct work with individuals and groups of CYP. Some of the Caseworkers will also have specific areas of specialism (for example Deaf Instruction, Habilitation work, Assistive Technology, etc.)

Engagement Officers will work with CYP and their families in the community. They will help families to access SEND services, and to understand and implement recommendations.

Resources Technicians will work across all areas of SEND to procure, create and develop specialist resources and equipment (for example Braille, audiology equipment, accessible software etc.) They will also work with schools and educational settings to get the best use of SEND equipment and technology.

Will there still be specialist staff?

Yes. Our Teachers, Officers and Caseworkers will all retain specific areas of specialism, training and expertise. This will include all of the mandatory qualifications: Qualified Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Qualified Teacher of the Deaf, Qualified Teacher of the Multi-Sensory Impaired, as well as key qualifications in other areas such as Autism and Early Years.

We're also investing in robust CPD and training opportunities to ensure that staff are working in line with research-led models of best practice.

The proposed new structure retains the experience and expertise of staff, but is more flexible so that we can make sure there is enough capacity to meet the needs of CYP being referred to us. It also allows for better opportunities for succession planning, and means we can more efficiently back-fill into vacancies to avoid any gaps in service delivery.

Can families still access services directly?

Yes. Caseworkers and Engagement Officers will be available to work with families to implement the recommendations that have been made by the Specialist Teachers and Specialist Officers. They will also help to signpost families to other support services as needed.

Within the proposed new structure we are also moving toward a 'year-round' service, rather than term-time only. This means that we will be able to expand our offer for CYP and families in school holidays times.

Has the Council involved others in this proposal?

Yes. We have carefully analysed feedback from families, schools and educational settings, and other partners over the last couple of years. For example, this has included both direct feedback from families, and the information gathered in the Unique Ways annual surveys. We also surveyed schools and early years settings earlier this year about their experiences and expectations of the services provided.

Is this all just a money-saving exercise?

No. The Council are investing in SEND services across the borough, rather than reducing spend like in many authorities. These proposed new changes do not represent any savings in terms of costs. They do, however, ensure that every pound spent on services is used as effectively as possible.

Am I too late to get involved in this consultation?

Not at all. We have come up with a proposal which we think best meets the needs of CYP and their families, schools and educational settings, and which meets the themes identified through consultations so far. We are currently in a formal consultation period with our staff, which lasts until 21st October 2021.

If you would like to comment on the proposal, or if you have any questions, please email SENDreview@calderdale.gov.uk