



Department  
for Education

# **The SEN and Disability Pathfinder programme Evaluation**

## **Progress and indicative costs of the reforms**

### **Research Brief**

### **December 2013**

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# Contents

Background	3
Key findings	3
Organisational engagement and cultural change	4
Engaging and involving families	4
Setting up the infrastructure	4
Updating the indicative costs of reform	5

## Background

The initial 18 months of the SEND pathfinder programme sought to explore how to reform the statutory SEN assessment and statement framework, as a means of:

- Better supporting life outcomes for children and young people
- Giving parents confidence by giving them more control
- Transferring power to professionals on the front line and to local communities<sup>1</sup>.

Twenty pathfinder sites<sup>2</sup>, comprising thirty-one local areas were commissioned to run from October 2011 to March 2013. Each pathfinder area was grant funded to deliver local activities and was made up from the relevant local authorities, NHS agencies and a range of partners from the Voluntary and Community Sectors (VCS), parent carer groups, colleges and schools.

This report presents commentary and analysis on self-reported progress made by 31 pathfinder areas against a Common Delivery Framework (CDF) developed by SQW. It uses data from the quarterly monitoring returns completed by pathfinder areas to describe the progress they made in the first two quarters of the 2013/2014 financial year, and compares progress between Quarter 4 of 2012/13 and the end of Quarter 2 of 2013/14.

As in previous cases where areas were asked to rate their progress, they were able to report that development had not started, had been in place before the start of the programme, or that they were at early, partial or full development on each element of the CDF.

## Key findings

This report shows that the pathfinders continued to make progress between March and September 2014. By September 2013, they were generally most advanced in addressing issues around organisational engagement and cultural change, and less advanced around setting up the infrastructure. This pattern is similar to that reported previously.

Between March and September 2013, most progress (in terms of reaching full implementation) was reported against: the commitment across services to share resources; developing and implementing change management; the development of a planning pathway; the local offer and peer support. That said, the latter two started from a low base and there remained fairly few areas claiming full implementation.

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<sup>1</sup> Department for Education (July 2011) Pathfinder Specification and Application Pack

<sup>2</sup> The Bromley and Bexley consortium, Calderdale, the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly consortium, Devon, Gateshead, Greenwich, the Hartlepool and Darlington consortium, Hertfordshire, Lewisham, Manchester, the Northamptonshire and Leicester City consortium, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, the Oldham and Rochdale consortium, the SE7 consortium (Brighton & Hove, East Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Medway, Surrey and West Sussex), Solihull, Southampton, Trafford, Wigan and Wiltshire.

## **Organisational engagement and cultural change**

Project governance structures were widely established by the end of September 2013, with project plans and objectives in place. In addition, all areas had engaged local authority education, children's social care and the Parent Carer Forum in governance of the pathfinder.

Most pathfinder leads and managers had been sourced from education, or a combination of education and another service. This in part explains the 27 areas which had secured commitment from education to share resources. Commitment from social care to share resources was also high (26 areas). Commitment from health remained lower, despite an additional six areas securing health commitment between March and September 2013.

While education and social care in all areas, and health in most areas, had agreed to share staff time, fewer areas had secured agreement from services other than education to share funding to contribute to service provision or to support development of the pathfinder.

All areas had engaged parent carers and 26 areas had engaged the VCS by the end of September, representing progress since March 2013. Progress remained slower in relation to the engagement of children and young people: only 13 areas had reached full implementation by the end of September.

There had been some progress in change management, although there was still some way to go. The majority of areas reported reaching full implementation in developing a change management process, and just over half of all areas (17) had reached full implementation in delivering the change management process.

Consultation with the provider market and the development of the local offer remained less developed. Only two areas had reached full implementation for both. The majority of areas had reached partial development.

## **Engaging and involving families**

Good progress had been made engaging and involving families. The majority of areas had fully implemented or already established awareness-raising of the pathfinder with families (28 of 31 areas) and had recruited families to participate in the pathfinder (26 of 31 areas).

Implementation of peer support was more mixed. Sixteen areas had fully implemented peer support for parent carers, or already had existing structures in place. Peer support for children and young people was less prevalent, and had been fully implemented by three of the 31 areas.

## **Setting up the infrastructure**

Twenty five areas had fully implemented an assessment and plan pathway at the end of quarter 2 2013/14, which represented an increase of five areas in six months. The

assessment element of the pathway most commonly entailed bringing together a set of assessments from different agencies (reported by 24 of 31 areas) or a single assessment episode supplemented by ad hoc assessments (20 of 31 areas). Planning was executed in a single event attended by professionals and the family (reported in 25 areas) or through use of a planning co-ordinator creating the plan with the family and seeking relevant professional input (also 25 areas).

Areas had made limited progress in offering personal budgets. Six areas had fully implemented a spectrum of choice for the management of personal budget funds, and four areas had established a resource allocation system.

Development of IT resources was mixed. While the majority of areas (23 of 31) had reached full implementation in gaining family consent to share information, and information-sharing between agencies was already in place or fully implemented in 21 areas, management of this information was far less developed. Eight areas had in place or had reached full implementation in developing appropriate management information and five of the 31 areas had done so with an IT system capable of storing assessments and plans.

Safeguarding remained another less developed element of the pathfinder approach. Sixteen areas reported full implementation in reviewing their safeguarding procedures in light of the pathfinder. Fourteen areas had reached full implementation in communicating the relevant safeguarding information to families or providers and 13 had communicated safeguarding procedures to professionals.

## **Updating the indicative costs of reform**

All pathfinder authorities received minimum grant funding of £300,000 for development costs over the first two years of the programme. Slower than expected start-up of some pathfinders resulted in substantial under-spend in year 1, with differences of up to £48,200 between the funding allocation and actual costs. These pathfinders were able to apply for an uplift of their year 2 funding, and most took up the offer.

Analysis in this report updates the actual costs of developing the pathfinder approach, incorporating two additional quarters of data (Q1 and Q2 of 2013/14). The median estimated total development cost per area was £454,412 over the first two years of the pathfinder, including both financial and in kind costs. However this varied substantially by area, from a minimum of £267,584 in one area to a maximum of £744,104 in another.

The proportion of financial and in kind costs associated with organisational engagement and cultural change was highest within the first six months of the programme, while proportionate costs associated with the remaining themes of the CDF remained relatively stable across the duration of the programme. Substantial pathfinder costs were attributed to cross cutting spend, implying joint development and working within areas. Costs attributed to agencies were most commonly incurred through education.



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**Reference: DFE- RB330**

**ISBN: 978-1-78105-312-6**

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