

# **Title of report: Developing SEND services - progress report**

**Meeting: Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee**

**Meeting date: Tuesday 14 February 2023**

**Report by: Service Director, Education, Skills and Learning, Corporate Director - Children & Young People, Project Lead**

## **Classification**

Open

## **Decision type**

This is not an executive decision

## **Wards affected**

(All Wards);

## **Purpose**

To provide an update on progress and impact of activity undertaken within and across the multi-agency partnership in response to the recommendations made following the Local Government Association (LGA) Peer review carried out in October 2022.

## **Recommendation(s)**

**That:**

- a) **The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee note the activity and progress thus far in responding to the recommendations of the Peer Review conducted in October 2022; and**
- b) **The committee indicate any specific areas of practice, performance, or development that it would like to consider in the future work plan.**

## **Alternative options**

1. There are no alternatives to the recommendations.

## Key considerations

2. The Local Government Association (LGA) were commissioned by the Corporate Director for Children and Young People to undertake a peer review of local services for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or a Disability (SEND) that was conducted over the 3 – 6 October 2022. The key findings of the review are reported separately.
3. Following the peer review we have moved openly and swiftly to acknowledge the key areas for improvement and taken immediate action to bring together key partners (including Parent Carer Voice) to agree the short and medium term priorities and actions.
4. The SEND Partnership group meets approximately every six weeks. Since the LGA review, the group have used time wisely to take stock and reevaluate improvement priorities. A self-evaluation document, SEND strategy and SEND action plan are in place and moving towards final approval.
5. We have strengthened governance arrangements by establishing a SEND strategic board. This group is independently chaired by Deborah Glassbrook, our lead SEND improvement advisor. The group have met once, agreeing terms of reference and reviewing the strategy and self-evaluation documents. The strategy board plan to meet monthly.
6. Children and young people of Herefordshire, who are accepted for assessment for an education, health and care (EHC) plan, should receive their final plan within the statutory timescale of 20 weeks. Nationally, in 2021, 59.9% of new EHC plans were issued within 20 weeks. This was an increase when compared to 2020 but lower than the 60.4% issued in 2019. In Herefordshire, this year we are completing approximately 71% of new EHC plans within statutory deadlines, so are performing above the rate seen nationally. The final issue of plans in Herefordshire has also accelerated, increasing from 67% in the summer months when the service was impeded by staff absence.
7. Children and young people who are transferring schools should have their EHC plan review in time for admissions deadlines. Last year, Herefordshire missed these important deadlines for many families. This aspect has improved significantly and we are on track to ensure that the vast majority of children have their plan reviewed and are therefore more likely to secure a place in their chosen school.
8. Parents and carers have in the past told us that the local offer pages are difficult to navigate. A focus group that includes parent and carers, school representatives, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS), health and council colleagues meet regularly. We are in the process of migrating and updating content so that it sits within one place, namely the Herefordshire Council pages. Families tell us that this will make things easier to find when they need to. At the same time, we are reviewing and updating content to reflect the changes that are taking place.
9. Our self-evaluation document is in draft. It is aligned well to the recommendations of the LGA peer review and those of the current Ofsted Local Authority SEND framework (published in January 2023). We have identified core key priorities that underpin our action plan including making sure that we agree a plan to reduce the wait times for children and their families to access community paediatrician and therapy services.
10. The draft SEND strategy is written to, and for, children and young people with SEND in Herefordshire. It strongly reflects what children and young people have told us needs to improve. The strategy is currently out for comment.

11. We have welcomed support from external partners. The Service Director is meeting fortnightly with LGA SEND improvement partner. In these day-long sessions, we work alongside a variety of colleagues to consider agreed improvement actions. This allows the LGA to provide feedback aimed to further strengthen our work. Recent areas of consideration have included: the strengthening of our quality assurance process and audit work; the development of an engagement and participation strategy; and, listening to feedback from our Parent Carer Voice representatives. The Service Director also meets on a fortnightly basis to update and discuss progress with our SEND improvement lead from the Department for Education. Both the LGA and DFE have provided input into the development of our SEND strategy, self-evaluation and action plan.

## **Community impact**

12. The activity to develop and improve our SEND services will have a direct and indirect effect on the lives of both current and future children and families in Herefordshire.
13. Keeping children safe and responding to their assessed needs are among the most important things this council does and the details in this report support whatever action is required to ensure children and families receive the services they deserve.
14. The County Plan 2020-24 includes the ambition to 'strengthen communities to ensure everyone lives well and safely together', specifically the Council aims to:
  - Ensure all children are healthy, safe and inspired to achieve;
  - Ensure that children in care, and moving on from care, are well supported and make good life choices; and
  - Protect and improve the lives of vulnerable people.

## **Environmental Impact**

15. Whilst this activity will have minimal environmental impacts, consideration has been made to minimise waste and resource use in line with the Council's environmental policy

## **Equality duty**

16. Under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the 'general duty' on public authorities is set out as follows:

A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –

- a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

17. The public sector equality duty (specific duty) requires us to consider how we can positively contribute to the advancement of equality and good relations, and demonstrate that we are paying 'due regard' in our decision making in the design of policies and in the delivery of services. Whilst this is an update on the work of the partnership and in itself has minimal equalities impacts, consideration will be made in the future where changes to services are being considered.

### Resource implications

18. Currently there are none that cannot be managed within existing budgets.

### Legal implications

19. There are no explicit legal implications in respect of this report.

### Risk management

20. There are no direct risks associated with this report.

### Consultees

21. None.

### Appendices

Appendix 1: Draft SEND Strategy (currently circulated for comment)

### Background papers

None identified.

### Report Reviewers Used for appraising this report:

Please note this section must be completed before the report can be published		
Governance	Sarah Buffrey, Democratic Services Officer	Date 03/02/2023
Finance	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Legal	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Communications	Luenne featherstone	Date 02/02/2023
Equality Duty	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.
Procurement	Lee Robertson	Date 03/02/2023
Risk	Click or tap here to enter text.	Date Click or tap to enter a date.

Approved by

Darryl Freeman

Date 02/02/2023