

Cabinet

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	27 June 2018
Cabinet Member Cllr Andrew Parry– Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills Local Members All Lead Director Nick Jarman – Director for Children’s Services	
Subject of Report	Special Educational Needs and Disability Improvement Plan – Progress report
Executive Summary	<p>On 18 October Cabinet agreed to fund a three-year improvement program across Special Education Needs and Disability Services for children and young people. The funds were agreed following the Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission’s joint inspection in January 2017 and subsequent Written Statement of Action (WSOA) which was approved by Ofsted in July 2017.</p> <p>This report provides a progress report on the significant impact that the improvement plan has so far had in enabling a three year improvement drive within the Special Education Needs and Disability Services for children and young people.</p>
<p>Impact Assessment:</p> <p><i>Please refer to the protocol for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Equalities Impact Assessment: Not Applicable</p> <hr/> <p>Use of Evidence:</p> <p>(Ofsted/CQC Dorset Local Area Inspection January 2017 WSOA July 2017</p> <hr/> <p>Budget:</p> <p>A contingency budget of £925,000 was allocated to improve the SEND service and respond to concerns raised by Ofsted. e SEND Improvement work was initially funded using underspend identified within the SEND Reform Grant 2017/18. Along with some delay to appointments it was not necessary for the contingency budget to be used in the first year. In this current financial year the contingency funds</p>

	<p>are now being utilised and it is expected to be fully allocated to the work by the end of the three year period.</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment:</p> <p>Having considered the risks associated with this decision using the County Council’s approved risk management methodology, the level of risk has been identified as:</p> <p>Current Risk: MEDIUM Residual Risk LOW</p>
	<p>Outcomes: To improve the outcomes of children and young people with SEND across Dorset.</p>
	<p>Other Implications:</p> <p>Failure to issue EHCPs on time is detrimental to the quality and responsiveness of the education of children and young people with SEND. It also can lead to children and young people being without appropriate educational provision or without appropriate support to transfer to adult care placements.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>1. That Cabinet note the significant progress that has been made in improving the service provided to children and young people and their carers with SEND.</p> <p>2. That Cabinet support the continued focus on service improvement over the next two year period.</p>
<p>Reason for Recommendation</p>	<p>To build on the improvements that have been achieved in improving the Special Educational Needs and Disability Service for children and young people in Dorset.</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	<p>A. Joint SEND Strategy B. Communication Strategy</p>
<p>Background Papers</p>	<p>1. Dorset’s SEND Written Statement of Action</p>
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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 During the period 23 to 27 January 2017, the Office of Standards in Education (OfSTED) and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) conducted a joint inspection of the local area of Dorset. The purpose was to judge the effectiveness of the implementation of the special educational needs and disability reforms as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014. As a result, the inspectors produced a letter summarising the findings of the joint inspection.
- 1.2 Although the inspection identified many strengths, there were four main aspects in which significant weaknesses in local practice were identified. The local area was instructed to produce and submit a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to Ofsted that explained how the following significant weaknesses would be addressed:
- Weaknesses in strategic planning with health and social care, which included the need for clear monitoring and evaluation arrangements to ensure that leaders are held to account for improving children and young people's outcomes;
 - Low conversion rates from old-style statements of Special Educational Need (SEN) to new Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and lack of timely completions of these plans with appropriate and personalised outcomes within 20 weeks;
 - A significant proportion of parents described their concerns at the extent of the delays, the lack of support, communication, transparency and involvement at a strategic and individual level;
 - Weaknesses in monitoring and quality assurance procedures to challenge and support provision and improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 1.3 The WSOA was produced, setting out how each of these aspects could be addressed, and it was deemed fit for purpose by Ofsted in July 2017 and was published on the Dorset For You website. It set out the priorities and actions that needed to be undertaken to make the experience of children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) and their families a good one in relation to the services the authority and other agencies provide.

2. STRATEGIC PLANNING WITH HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

- 2.1 Following the approval of the WSOA, robust project management and governance was put in place to ensure progress against the WSOA. This has taken the form of a project manager and project support officer who manage the day to day running of the project and ensure that the project is delivered to plan and on time. To enable this to happen a detailed project plan and monthly monitoring take place.
- 2.2 In addition, the SEND Delivery Group is running monthly and holds officers and partners to account against the tasks contained in the WSOA. The group runs as a project board and includes representatives from across a range of organisations involved in SEND including health, special schools, elected members, Dorset Parent Carer Council, social care and other DCC officers.
- 2.3 The SEND Delivery Group has provided an invaluable place for health, social care and DCC officers to work collectively and develop plans strategically. This has resulted in:
- An education, health and care joint strategy for SEND

- A joint performance management framework for monitoring and evaluating progress for children with SEND

3. TIMELINESS OF EDUCATION & HEALTH CARE PLANS

3.1 Key weaknesses identified within the Ofsted Inspection were around the Education & Health Care Plans (EHCPs). This related to the conversion of old statements into EHCPs and the completion of the new EHCPs within the statutory timelines.

3.2 A key focus of the SEND team has been to clear the backlog of transfers and improve the timeliness of any new EHCP plans coming in. This has included prioritising the support given to Looked After Children (LAC) with SEND who require an EHCP assessment. The table below shows the progress that has been made against the transfer of statements into the new EHCPs:

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
Number of conversions from statements to final EHCPs	9	34	104	65	132	164	293
% of conversions to final EHCPs completed	47%	58%	63%	70%	80.76%	83.6%	100%

3.3 By the end of March, all of the old statements were successfully transferred into EHCPs in line with the Department for Education statutory requirements. This result was achieved by optimising the existing and new resources that came into the SEND team as a result of the previous cabinet paper. The new resources that were put in place included:

- Agency & temporary review officers
- SEND Planning Co-ordinators
- SEND Manager
- Temporary Team Leader
- Business Support
- Complaints Officer
- Enhance Agency Work
- Speech & Language Therapy provision
- Communication Support Assistant
- Partnership & Co-production Manager
- Contract Officers
- Data Systems/Finance Officer
- Advocacy

3.4 New EHCPs go through a series of gateways. The first is to complete an initial assessment and make a decision about whether to proceed to the next stage from 6 weeks of the EHCP being submitted. The second is to make a decision about whether to issue a plan. This has to be done within 16 weeks. The final gateway is to have the EHCP completed within 20 weeks. These timescales will be the focus of the team going forward over the next period with a completion date of end of June 2018. This will then result in 100% of new assessments being completed within statutory timescales. It is anticipated that the contingency budget will be fully spent in line with expectations by 31 March 2020 enabling the improvements to be completed.

4. INVOLVING CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & FAMILIES IN DEVELOPING OUR PROVISION

- 4.1 Parents raised concerns during the inspection about the lack of support, communication, transparency and involvement at a strategic and individual level. A joint plan has been agreed and is being implemented to improve communication. Representatives from the Dorset Parent Carer Council sit on the SEND Delivery Group and are helping to inform the improvements going forward.
- 4.2 A Partnership & Co-production Manager has been employed to ensure good engagement with children, young people, parents and carers. A joint participation strategy and young person's forum are currently being put in place. Two SEND events are currently being planned and will take place in June and July 2018.
- 4.3 The Local Offer is a webpage for parents and carers of children and young people with SEND. It provides information, advice and guidance and is a statutory requirement for all local authorities. Work has taken place on improving the information as well as moving the web pages over to the new Dorset for You platform. The site has an on-line feedback form. Work will take place to make further improvements over the next period.
- 4.4. A number of documents are produced both in processing EHCPs and promoting the SEND offer with parents and carers. Clear and detailed information has been added to the local offer on EHCPs. A range of template letters, forms and correspondence have been reviewed and improved to ensure accessibility for parents and carers.

5. IMPROVING MONITORING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 5.1 A new SEND Advisor has been appointed as part of the Schools & Learning Advisory Service. This has enabled the authority to focus on working with schools in meeting the needs of SEND children and young people within the school setting and monitoring their progress in school. A self-evaluation framework has also been used with the SEN Co-ordinators in schools to then identify improvements.
- 5.2 A multi-agency auditing tool has been agreed with health colleagues. This will be used to identify themes for improvement. This will run in conjunction with the performance framework which is populated by health, education and social care. In addition, the appointment of a complaints officer for DCC has enabled complaints to be dealt with more quickly and learning from these to be fed back into service improvements.
- 5.3 Following the Ofsted inspection, officers from the DfE have closely monitored progress in how the authority is jointly working with health improving services. They attend the SEND Delivery Group on a monthly basis and carry out regular monitoring visits. The most recent monitoring visit from the DfE was very positive about the improvements being made and they congratulated the SEND Delivery Group on transferring all the old statements to EHCPs within the statutory timescale at the end of March 2018.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a) Cabinet notes the significant progress that has been made against the weaknesses identified by Ofsted in its inspection of January 2017.
- b) Cabinet supports a continued focus on service improvement over the next 2 year period. This should include:

- Joint working arrangements between health, social care & education continue through the SEND Delivery Group
 - Ensuring all EHCPs meet the six, sixteen and twenty week milestones
 - Further improvements in the way professionals engage with children, young people, parents & carers around SEND
 - Monitoring and quality assurance processes continue to be reviewed and improved
- c) Cabinet are provided an update on progress in a year's time.

Nick Jarman

Director for Children's Services

June 2018