

People & Communities Overview and Scrutiny

Dorset County Council



Date of Meeting	4 July 2018
<p><u>Cabinet Member(s)</u> Andrew Parry – Cabinet Member for Economy, Education, Learning and Skills</p> <p><u>Local Member(s)</u> INSERT NAME(S) – County Councillor for ...</p> <p><u>Lead Director(s)</u> Nick Jarman –Director for Children’s Services</p>	
Subject of Report	Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disability Improvement Plan & Working with Schools
Executive Summary	<p>Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission carried out a joint inspection in January 2017. This subsequently led to a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) which was approved by Ofsted in July 2017. The WSOA provided an improvement plan that both Dorset County Council (DCC) and the NHS Dorset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were committed to in response to the four areas of weakness identified.</p> <p>This report provides an update on the significant progress that has been made with the improvement plan so far in enabling a three year improvement drive within the Special Education Needs and Disability Services for children and young people.</p> <p>This report also includes an update on the consultation with schools around the future relationship with the local authority and the support being provided to schools in the Weymouth & Portland area.</p>
Impact Assessment:	Equalities Impact Assessment: Not Applicable

<p><i>Please refer to the protocol for writing reports.</i></p>	<p>Use of Evidence: (Ofsted/CQC Dorset Local Area Inspection January 2017 WSOA July 2017</p>
	<p>Budget: N/A</p>
	<p>Risk Assessment: 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: Current Risk: MEDIUM Residual Risk LOW</p>
	<p>Outcomes: To improve the outcomes of children and young people across Dorset.</p>
	<p>Other Implications: Failure to issue Education Health Care Plans on time 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>Members are asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the significant progress that has be made in improving the service provided to children and young people and their carers with SEND post the Ofsted inspection. 2. Note the work that has taken place around the consultation on the future relationship with schools 3. Support the continued drive to raise standards in Dorset schools
<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>To continue to focus on raising standards across all Dorset schools</p>
<p>Appendices</p>	
<p>Background Papers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Dorset’s SEND Written Statement of Action

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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 manages the day-to-day running of the project and ensures that the project is delivered to plan and on time.
- 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 funding approved through cabinet. 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 improvements to the whole service will be completed by 31 March 2020.

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. Consultation with Schools

- 6.1 In the cabinet paper dated 7 March 2018, one of the recommendations was to authorise officers to conduct a consultation with schools, academies and free schools to establish their needs and wants in terms of a relationship with the Council.

- 6.2 Shortly after this cabinet paper recommendation was adopted, Children’s Services was successful in recruiting to two significant posts within the Schools & Learning part of the Directorate. These two posts are the Assistant Director for Schools & Learning and the Senior Manager for Educational Services. The Assistant Director post has already commenced and the senior manager post is to commence shortly. This has delayed the commencement of any formal consultation in readiness for their arrival.
- 6.3 However, work has progressed with The Staff College. Formally launched in July 1999 the Virtual Staff College, now The Staff College, acts as the professional development arm of the Association of Directors of Children’s Services. The college works with a number of local authorities in similar strategic arrangements to support the development of sector-led approaches to school effectiveness. They have been working with Dorset to build upon and strengthen existing partnership structures within Dorset. The goal is to help create a schools led effectiveness model, effectively redrawing the relationship between schools and the local authority (LA) in such a way that schools will lead in partnership with the LA.
- 6.4 The key objectives of this approach are:
- To support Dorset County Council and its partners as they transform their approach to school effectiveness and establish a model that:
 - Has robust accountability sitting firmly with schools.
 - Defines and clarifies the changing role of the local authority over the short, medium and longer term.
 - To promote collaborative thinking which contributes to ongoing development.
 - To provide the opportunity for an open exchange of ideas and input and encourage an iterative way of working.
 - To facilitate design discussions in order to review progress and plan future content.
- 6.5 School leaders attended a launch event led by the Staff College on the 29th January, 2018 which provided initial ideas and models for future partnership working.
- 6.6 A workshop will be delivered on 9 July 2018. This will be facilitated by The Staff College and will include headteacher colleagues as well as local authority officers. This work will progress the redefining of the relationship between the council, schools and academies. A clearly defined relationship between the Council, schools and academies is a requirement of the OFSTED Framework for LA School Improvement Inspections.

7. School Support

- 7.1 Dorset’s school improvement team are tasked with supporting and challenging maintained schools to improve standards throughout the year. The team target maintained schools where there is the greatest need. Academies have greater autonomy and are able to buy in support from the school improvement team. The Regional Schools Commissioner acts on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and takes action in underperforming schools.
- 7.2 In recent months, a series of Ofsted visits have highlighted concerns about a number of secondary schools in the Weymouth & Portland area. Officers have supported the schools in the following ways:

- Helping to secure £60K worth of additional funding for Budmouth School specifically targeted at school improvement.
- 4-6 weekly LA support and challenge visits to the maintained schools to agree improvements.
- Commissioning school-to-school and external support.
- Working in partnership with the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- Organising robust monitoring and evaluation meetings with key stakeholders to review progress against school priorities and agree future actions.

8. Summary and Conclusions

- a) There has been significant progress against the weaknesses identified by Ofsted in its SEND inspection of January 2017.
- b) There will be a continued focus on SEND service improvement over the next 2 years. This will include:
 - Joint working arrangements between health, social care & education through the SEND Delivery Group.
 - All EHCPs meeting 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 continuing to be reviewed and improved.
- c) The relationship between the Council, Schools and Academies will be progressed through working with The Staff College and wider consultation. This will be enhanced by appointments made in the Education and Learning arm of the Children's Services Directorate.
- d) The School Improvement team will continue to provide significant support to targeted secondary schools within the Weymouth & Portland area.

Nick Jarman

Director for Children's Services

June 2018