

4 February 2020		ITEM: 8
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director, Adults Housing & Health and Interim Director, Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

In August 2019 the local area, including the Council, the CCG, and schools, responded to the Written Statement of Action around our joint inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The action plan was approved on October 8th 2019. The Ofsted re-inspection visit will take place 18 months from this date.

The council and partners have been working on the action plan and we outline in this report some of the key work that has been undertaken against the areas Ofsted identified. The council meets regularly with key stakeholders and this informs the ongoing work to support SEND children and young people. The council have identified additional resources to address the issues around capacity to deliver. This will ensure that caseloads are reduced from the current 300 to under 200 thus providing a more responsive service.

Further evidence of progress against the three areas identified by Ofsted are outlined in section three of this report. The areas identified can be found in detail in the Written Statement of Action (Appendix One).

- 1. Recommendation(s)**
 - 1.1 O&S to note the updated WSoA and the work that has been undertaken to address the areas of weakness.**
 - 1.2 O&S to consider how they would like to be kept informed of progress relating to the WSoA.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council and partners are currently working on the three areas identified by Ofsted but clearly this forms part of the work we are undertaking to ensure that our SEND learners have access to high quality educational pathways to enable them to have improved life chances and to access the local employment opportunities linked to the regeneration agenda across Thurrock.
- 2.2 Children's Overview and Scrutiny – form part of the overview governance of this work and our aim is to ensure that the committee is provided with timely updates around the progress of the action plan.
- 2.3 The SEND Improvement Board, chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Education & Health is overseeing both the WSoA and the wider issues identified within the inspection outcome letter. The SEND Operational Group provides regular updates to the SEND Improvement Board which in turn reports back to Children's Overview & Scrutiny.

3. Written Statement of Action Progress Report

- 3.1 A number of key actions have taken place linked to the WSoA since the last Overview & Scrutiny update.
- 3.2 Systems and capacity were identified in the Ofsted letter and as a result of this the Council has approved additional staffing capacity as well as a significant investment in the upgrading of the data system that is currently used. This will see caseloads reduced significantly and will ensure that we are responding in a more timely manner to requests from partners, parents and young people.
 - The new senior management structure has been in place since the autumn term – this was to address some of the management oversight issues that were raised in the WSoA. The Assistant Director meets regularly with the staff to performance manage and review the work that has taken place during the month. The information from these meetings are then reported to both the Operational SEND group and the SEND Improvement Board. This evidences the strong governance structure that has been developed.
 - The SEND improvement board has signed off a new data set which will monitor and track progress against the both the quality and the timeliness of the Education Health Care Process thus providing a robust quantitative reporting structure.
 - A new telephone system has been introduced with the support from our customer service team. A report was presented to the SEND Improvement Board and we have seen a significant improvement in call return rates. Over a four week reporting period all calls were answered

and responded to within agreed timescales. This has formed part of the new data set that is monitored regularly by the SEND Improvement Board.

- Work around participation and engagement continues to offer ways in which parents, carer's, children and young people can actively engage with the service. To support this we have seconded our newly recruited participation & engagement officer to CAPA (Parent/Carer Engagement Group) for one day a week to support engagement activities. An action plan has being developed which looks at a range of ways in which we capture information to inform service design and delivery.
- The new council consultation portal has an ongoing survey to capture views from a range of different stakeholders about the Education, Health and Care plan process. This will inform how we deliver services going forward.
- The Assistant Director has met with a range of community members around how we can improve the engagement of parents. The Council is supporting an event at the end of March which is being organised and run by parents to look at ways in which we can co-design and be held to account for our engagement plan. A full report of this work will be presented to O&S in the summer term.
- The work to ensure that the quality of plans are being reviewed and monitored on a regular basis is being supported by some additional external capacity. The Council is undertaking quality assurance visits to all of our out of borough placements to ensure that they are meeting the needs of our children and young people.
- The internal quality assurance programme of EHC plans has begun and the SEND team has started to undertake audits of EHC plans – to support this process we will have an external colleague who will be working with the team to support the ongoing development work. An external view of this work is important has it was one of the areas that Ofsted identified.
- The cross directorate work between Children and Adults is being further developed. This work will ensure that we have a stronger transition for young people into adult services.
- Inspire have worked with young people to develop a range of new programmes at our outdoor education centre (Grangewaters) to offer innovative learning pathways for young people with SEND. One of aims of this work is to enable young people to develop the skills to get into work – we are utilising our employer engagement links to identify work opportunities
- The Council has supported a capital bid for the systems integration. This work will begin in February 2020 and will provide a single view of data across our Education & Skills data sets. This work will then provide the

platform to introduce the new on line Education Health Care Plan portal with the aim of using a digital solution.

3.3 The Council has identified resources to increase the capacity of the SEND team. A recent recruitment round has secured 4 additional caseworkers and a new tribunal officer role. This will ensure that the caseloads are manageable and will improve the statutory 20 week timeframes for the production of EHCP's.

- The Assistant Director meets regularly with the Ofsted regional lead who also provides updates from both a national regional perspective. We discussed at length the High Needs Funding within the Dedicated Schools Grant. This is being reviewed and overseen by our schools forum and will form the basis for our ongoing discussions with partners.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 The Council is working with partners to address some of the key challenges within the High Needs Block of the Designated Schools Grant. We have met with schools both individually and as part of our consultation processes. We are looking to co-design innovative practices to ensure the pressure on the High Needs Block are mitigated against. This work will continue throughout this academic year.

5. Reason for Recommendation

5.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny have a clear and accountable governance responsibility around supporting children with additional needs – the standing agenda item will enable committee members to be reassured of the progress and provide scrutiny in ensuring we are meeting the objectives outlined in the WSOA. We would ask committee member to consider how they would like us report back on progress.

6. CONSULTATION (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

6.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, PERFORMANCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

7.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:

- Create a great place for learning and opportunity

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**

Strategic Lead Finance

Additional resources have been identified to ensure that we implement the change programme that is being developed to support children with special needs. This will be monitored alongside the written statement of action to ensure that they have been targeted in the appropriate place to see improved outcomes for children and young people.

In addition, the Dedicated Schools Grant has prioritised resources to support the improvement plan and respond to the increase demand in EHCP.

8.2 Legal

Implications Verified by: **Lindsay Marks**
Deputy Head of Legal Social Care and Education

The Committee is asked to note the report content under the remit of the Committee's terms of reference and powers.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications Verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

Supporting our children and young people who have special education al needs is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. We have recently redesigned our work around how we engage with children young people and parents/carers who require additional support. To support with this work we have recently recruited an engagement officer who will be working with local stakeholders to enable us to gain feedback and how we can ensure it is linked to the service transformation that we are undertaking.

8.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

9. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

- Appendix 1 – SEND Local Area: Written Statement of Action

Report Author:

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Assistant Director, Education and Skills