

7 July 2020		ITEM: 12
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 of Education and Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

This report builds on the work that was reviewed by Children's Overview & Scrutiny in February 2020. The public health emergency has meant that we have had to consider how we deliver on the Written Statement of Action within a context of government guidelines related to the global pandemic. The responsibility for the delivery of the written statement of action is within the remit of Education, Health & Social Care and the impact of the public health emergency has had different challenges for different services. However the key principal has been to ensure that we pursue all best endeavours to support our children & young people who are within the SEND cohort.

For ease of reference and at the request of Children's Overview & Scrutiny we have retained in the report the significant areas of weakness Ofsted identified:-

- Inaccurate and incomplete records and ineffective oversight mean that leaders did not know the whereabouts of some children and young people and what provision they have.
- Quality assurance is not rigorous enough to ensure effective governance and oversight across the provision and services for 0 to 25-year-olds with SEND. Leaders are reliant on working relationships rather than processes. Leaders are over reliant on the limited information given to them by educational providers about the quality of the provision they purchase.
- EHC plans and the annual review process are of poor quality. The local authority has no system in place to make sure that relevant professionals and services are notified when EHC plans need reviewing or updating. Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written information within specified timescales. Too often, EHC plans are out of date

and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families. The information from EHC plans and annual reviews is not used to inform the commissioning of services, particularly, but not exclusively, for young people between the ages of 19 and 25 years.

1. Recommendation(s)

1.1 O&S to consider the evidence within the report to give a view on whether they believe we are working to address the WSOA work programme.

1.2 O&S to consider how they can support the ongoing work around SEND young people in light of the global health pandemic.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 Work has continued on the three areas that were identified – however we have seen some slippage on timelines as a result of the public health emergency. Within Education, Health & Social Care there is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of our children and young people who have special educational needs.

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 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.

2.4 The re-inspection date is likely to change as currently no Ofsted visits are being undertaken due to government guidelines around social distancing. With this in mind the Improvement Board have given permission for a review of the timelines in the action plan this will be undertaken by the operational group and reported back to the Improvement Board for consideration.

3. Written Statement of Action Progress Report

3.1 Supporting children and young people with SEND needs is a statutory requirement of LA's and as such the Council are working on ensuring that the whole system approach is taken to enable smooth transition pathways. The council recognise that both systems and capacity were outlined in the Ofsted letter and as a result of this the Authority has approved additional staffing we reported to committee at the last meeting that we were undertaking a recruitment exercise – we are pleased to report that this has been completed and staff are in post. **Impact.** EHCP timelines are being met and we have a stronger system in place to track annual review processes – these are monitored on a two weekly basis.

- The review and development of a co-produced new Education Health Care Plan – the team have worked with a range of stakeholders to redesign the EHCP. This has gone live and we are currently undertaking a training programme with SENCO's in schools to support the rollout of the new template. **Impact** training of the SEND team have ensured that we have a strong resilience model around the development and writing of EHCP's this will enable us to move away from the previous model of external plan writers – the aim of this is to improve the quality of the plans and improve outcomes for children and young people.
- 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. **Impact** The council has recognised that this work is not progressing in way in which we envisaged before the public health crisis. To address this and working closely with colleagues from public health, CCG and other stakeholders the Improvement Board have agreed to a consultation exercise this will form the basis for how we engage with children young people and families going forward. **Impact** work will enable us to gain a broader understanding of the engagement of parents, children and young people – and will link to the work that is being undertaken in social care. **Impact**. Work will enable us to reframe our engagement work and look a range of digital solutions to support this.
- The development of a quality assurance framework to ensure that all our external placements are meeting the needs of our children & young people. **Impact** we have undertaken a robust QA process with all external placement providers which has resulted in detailed information on all aspects of the provision and the progress of pupils attending. All provision is currently judged good or better.
- Digital Transformation – we reported to the board in February the programme area that was around data integration and an on line EHCP process. This work is progressing and we have agreed a timeline. **Impact** – by the beginning of September the first phase of this work is due to be completed. (See Appendix One)
- SEN Merge – Project Update: The two data sets, SEN Module and Core Pupil Database (CPD) have been sent to Servelec, the supplier of our Synergy Systems, which is the case recording software used in Education Services. Servelec are currently undertaking a host of pre-merge analysis of those data sets to assess our readiness for the merge. Once completed, which is due by close of play 5th June 20, Performance, Quality & Business Intelligence (PQBI) will review the outputs. Servelec have confirmed their schedule of works, which includes testing, error resolution, developing, mapping scripts and final data preparation/migration – which indicates a go-live date of 2nd September 20.

Regular meetings have been arranged by the Interim Strategic Lead for Business Intelligence with key personnel across ICT, Performance, Quality & Business Intelligence (PQBI) and the SEN Service, which will serve as an implementation group. The group will be responsible for:

- Producing an action plan to address any data issues/queries raised through the pre-merge analysis
- Monitor progress of the action plan
- Identify and produce process documentation to confirm consistent use of system functionality
- Identify and address training needs
- Support an efficient implementation
- Identify any future data reporting requirements to support monitoring/development of the service
- Preparing for adulthood will continue to be an area of particular focus given the uncertain future for many companies, with the likelihood of increased unemployment. The committee will be aware that this will have a significant impact on SEND learners who both locally and nationally have a high incidence of being NEET (not in education employment or training). Inspire have developed a plan on a page (see appendix two) which outlines our commitment to support young people into education, work or training. **Impact.** Plan will be monitored quarterly to ensure that we are meeting the outcomes targets that have been agreed.

4. Reason for Recommendation

- 4.1 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.

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

- 5.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

- 6.1 This report contributes to the following corporate priorities:
- create a great place for learning and opportunity

7. IMPLICATIONS

7.1 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, commissioned more specialist places and responded to the increase demand in EHCP.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Head of Legal (Social care and Education)

The Council is subject to various duties under the Children and Families Act 2014 in relation to children with special educational needs. These duties are set out in more detail in The Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 SI 2014/1530. The regulations set out various timescales for particular steps such as decisions to make and review EHC plans.

Until 25th September 2020 various timescales in these regulations have been amended by the Special Educational Needs and Disability (Coronavirus)(Amendment) Regulations 2020 SI 2020/471 where it is not practical to meet them due to the coronavirus pandemic.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**
Community Engagement and Project Monitoring Officer

Supporting our children and young people who have special educational 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. Given the public health crisis this work will be even more important as we are expecting local companies to struggle with the economic downturn.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Section 17, Risk Assessment, Health Impact Assessment, Sustainability, IT, Environmental

None

8. Appendices to this report:

- Appendix 1 - Preparing for Adulthood – Plan on a page

Report Author:

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