

8 October 2020		ITEM: 6
Thurrock Council Health & Wellbeing Board		
SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Key	
Report of: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director, Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy Corporate Director Children's Services		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report sets out an overview of the work regarding the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) around SEND to the Health & Wellbeing Board. The report also provides evidence in relation to outcomes as a result of the work that has been undertaken to address the areas of concern, as well as an update on our ambitious stretch SEND targets.

Whilst the report will focus on the WSOA, a wider system approach is being adopted, to ensure that we are listening to parents/carers and young people in the delivery of SEND services and providing learning opportunities that meet the needs and aspirations of our children and young people.

Outlined below are the WSOA 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 Too often, EHC plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families.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 Health & Wellbeing Board to scrutinise the work that has been undertaken during this period and offer challenge and support.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 This report outlines the work that has been undertaken in addressing the areas of concern within the SEND WSoA.
- 2.2 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 and the Health & Wellbeing Board.
- 2.3 As a result of COVID 19, we have reported to the SEND Improvement Board, some areas of the plan that will not be met within the timescales. The Ofsted Inspection programme was suspended for six months. Ofsted have reintroduced inspections, although these are focussed on safeguarding and do not include currently include the full inspection framework. At this point it is difficult to predict when our reinspection will take place, however we remain focussed on addressing the areas of weakness.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty to support SEND children and young people and as such we are working on ensuring that the whole system approach is taken to ensure smooth transition pathways for children. One of the key areas that was identified by Ofsted, related to systems and how they worked together. Phase one of the systems work has been completed and we now have a single view of education and skills data.
- 3.2 A number of key actions and outcomes are reported below:-
 - Phase one of the data integration project has been completed this will enable a single view of education and skills data to be viewed. The Synergy system will support routine data reporting to support data clean up and performance management.
 - Phase 2 of this development will support development off an electronic EHCP that can be accessed via a portal, this transformational piece of work will enable

us to meet some of our stretch targets. We are working closely with the provider to develop a project action plan with timelines and implementation.

- All specialist provision providers have been through a quality assurance framework a report has been represented to the SEND Improvement Board. This work is being used to inform discussions with the providers and changes to the educational offer where necessary.
- An EHCP Quality assurance process has been introduced so that a sample of plans are audited monthly and the learning is shared with contributors to the plan to support continued improvement and inform the training to both our SEND team and SENCO's in schools to ensure continuous improvement.
- 16-18 year olds Not in Education Employment or Training/Unknown is currently at 4.8% which is significantly below the Eastern Region of 7.9% (March 2019 is the latest comparative data) and National of 10% (March 2019 is the latest comparative data)
- 16-25 year olds Not in Education Employment and Training is currently at 7.5%.
- Work around participation and engagement has been challenging due to a number of reasons these include COVID 19 and the recent decision by CaPa to dissolve the parent partnership. We are working closely with Contact the national infrastructure organisation to support the development of a new parent/carer forum. We have continued to work closely with parents around our preparing for adulthood strategy and this group have informed some of the work we have committed to around transition into adult services.
- 79% of EHCPs were finalised within statutory timescales. Due to Covid, some EHCPs could not be finalised within timescales. The Government temporarily changed the law to give local authorities more flexibility around timelines for EHCPs due to the redeployment of health colleagues, schools partial closures and the inability for meetings to take place. The temporary changes to the law will expire on 25 September.
- During the partial school closures, children with EHCP could attend school. however, many parents chose not to send their children to school
- All SEND caseworkers have continued to receive bi-weekly training via MS Teams. We have also delivered face to face induction and training for the recently appointed caseworkers and they now have their own case-loads. The additional staff has allowed us to redistribute case-loads. Each full-time caseworker now has a caseload of 150 cases, which is significantly lower than at the time of the inspection. This will result in an improved service.
- There was only one stage 1 complaint reported this quarter and two compliments were received.
- Analysis of the feedback gathered via the EHCP feedback portal and random telephone survey, demonstrates that there is improved satisfaction in parents, children and young people with the EHCP process

Stretch Targets

Thurrock is ambitious and has set some additional targets these are outlined below:-

1. Reduce number of weeks for EHCP process to 16 weeks in 2021 – this timescale will need to be reviewed in light of COVID 19 and is linked to the

work around the on line EHCP portal which will not be fully operational until the end of 2021.

2. Responding to calls within 48 hours – the significant investment in both staff and telephone systems has meant we have met this target and this has led to a decrease in the number of complaints to the service.
3. Completing annual review paper is linked to the on line portal and as such the stretch target will be reviewed as we develop the project and implementation plan for the EHCP portal.

4. Reason for Recommendation

- 4.1 The Health & Wellbeing Board have a clear and accountable governance responsibility around supporting children with additional needs, and agreement was made to bring an annual report to the board. We are asking for the support of the Health & Wellbeing Board to enable us to progress with our improvement journey. We would ask committee member to consider how they would like us report back on progress.

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

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.

Implications verified by: David May Strategic Lead Finance
dmay@thurrock.gov.uk

- 7.2 Legal

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

Implications verified by: Lindsey Marks, Deputy Head of Legal
Lindsey.marks@lbbd.gov.uk

7.3 Diversity and Equality

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.

Implications verified by: Becky Lee, Team Manager – Community
Development and Equalities
rlee@thurrock.gov.uk

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

None

APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:

None.

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