

Name of meeting: Children's Scrutiny Panel
Date: 23rd September 2019
Title of report: Update to SENDACT action plan

Purpose of report: To provide the Panel with a further update to the recommendations made by Scrutiny and actions taken.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	not applicable
Key Decision - Is it in the Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)	not applicable
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	Yes
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Jo-Anne Sanders for Mel Meggs
Is it also signed off by the Service Director (Finance)?	No
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?	No
Cabinet member portfolio	Cllr Pattison, Learning Aspiration and Communities

Electoral wards affected: all

Ward councillors consulted: no

Public or private: private

(Have you considered GDPR?)

Yes GDPR considered - no service users identified

1. Summary

Further to the Briefing Paper (4.2.19), SENDACT continue to work towards the required improvements as detailed in the Scrutiny Report.

There has been further contact with the Parent Monitoring Group and another meeting took place in June.

Expectations of the team have been clearly articulated, with plans put in place on an individual and team basis. As a result there have been some changes in staffing where officers have moved on to other roles or have taken advantage of the opportunities presented through the review. This has meant that, as yet, the team has not operated at full capacity. There will be another recruitment round in September after which we hope to have a full team in place.

A SENDACT Improvement Board, chaired by the Service Director for Learning and Early Support, has been established to offer support and challenge to the team as they implement all aspects of the improvement plan.

Information required to take a decision

Recommendations and Further Responses.

Service Standards

- i. Develop a minimum level of service standards for communications (emails, telephone calls), regularly updated information. All parents know the name of their caseworker.

Timescales for response have been set and these are monitored through individual supervision. We continue to pick up some concerns about timeliness of communication, and these are challenged robustly. There are still some issues with the telephone system and the rotation for answering calls, and the SENDACT Manager is in discussions with Corporate IT to improve this. In addition, business support expertise will support the service in exploring a holistic approach.

Timescale: December 2018 with a half termly review.

- ii. **All notes relating to individual children, casework, and decisions made are detailed, accurate and can be understood by all.**

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of reporting and record keeping, with only rare occasions where this is not the case. Managers sample case notes as part of supervision, but there is further work to be done in the development of a wider audit process that incorporates the quality of casework in general through a set of Service Standards. This is a priority action that is being commissioned by the Improvement Board.

Timescale: January 2019 reviewed through supervision (case notes) and after each SEND Panel (Panel notes)

- iii. **Review the format and length of letters to parents to ensure that language is accessible, with a clear rationale for decisions made. Develop a fact sheet or FAQ sheet to explain the more formal, complex legal information.**

Letters have been reviewed and are being embedded in team practice now. The FAQ sheet, produced in partnership with PCAN, is on the Kirklees Local Offer.

Timescale: April 2019 – this action is complete and the Service will review impact by April 2020.

Effective Participation

- iv. **Ensure that a Person Centred Approach is adopted and embedded by all professionals working with children with SEND and their families, so that their views are incorporated into the EHCP process, and an explanation is given where parental requests are not implemented. The Panel recommends that the EHCP records any disparity between decision made and parental requests. Where a meeting is held for professionals only, a reason should be given for this and minutes shared.**

The principles of a Person Centred Approach have been embedded into team practice, and were identified as a strength during the recent SEND Peer Review. In order to ensure that this approach is embedded in practice, there has been an audit of the 20 week assessment to identify where person-centred tools can be used as part of the assessment and review process. This work has begun with colleagues in health, and has been discussed at the Workforce Development meetings in order to incorporate social care.

Timescale: September 2019 (engagement with wider services through the Workforce Development Plan) but this will be an ongoing focus and will be incorporated into the oversight of the SENDACT Improvement Board.

- v. **SENDACT to review its use of interpreters to ensure that they are independent of the family.**

There are resource implications, and the current budget does not take this into account. Further discussions are needed. A review of practice across the Yorkshire and Humber region revealed no use of interpreters, and so a proposal is being developed to ensure that this and other barriers are removed.

Timescale: April 2019

- vi. **Consideration to be given to the provision of advocate agencies for parents and carers as part of a package of support through the EHCP process. Additional training provided to caseworkers to better communicate with parents and carers with learning disabilities.**

This is provided through the Kirklees Independent Advice Service (KIAS, also known as SENDIASS) and is funded through the Council budget. All parents can ask for access to these services.

Restorative Practice training is to be undertaken with all the team and will be built into induction training in the future.

Timescale: April 2019

- vii. **The School Transport Team will review its processes to ensure that children with SEND are not disadvantaged.**

There are opportunities to be more holistic in terms of accessing school places, and work has begun to develop relationships in order to improve the Council's approach.

Timescale: September 2019

Parenting Courses

- viii. **Revise the parenting support offer to take into account feedback from parents about the specific difficulties they face as parents of a child with SEND, e.g. adolescent to parent violence. Develop the Children's Service Workforce Development Plan to incorporate attitudes and behaviour – to remove judgement of parenting ability and to develop an understanding of the pressures families face.**

The current offer is being evaluated by PCAN in order to provide us with information about gaps. The Additional Needs Register evaluation of responses has highlighted this as the major concern for parents with children of every age. PCAN are working with the Council in the development of the Domestic Violence Strategy to ensure that this is included. PCAN have now won the three year contract and the SEND Strategy Group is working with them to identify what type of support might be required, and how we might commission this.

Timescale: December 2019

Timescales and Content

- ix. **Improve timescales for EHCPs by ensuring that the statutory process and responsibilities within this are understood by all agencies. If timescales are not met, a letter of apology to be issued stating the reasons for the delay.**

The statutory process has been reviewed and hotspots for delay have been identified. Refreshed guidelines have been issued and are being worked through with partners currently. Current statistics are as follows:

- a) Change of phase, where children move from one school/placement to another at the end of a key stage –
- Pre 16: 95% compliance
 - Post 16: 85% compliance
- b) 20 week timescale for statutory assessment for an EHCP -
- January 2019 – 45%
 - May 2019 – 62%
 - The DfE writes to any LA with compliance of less than 30%

Timescale: September 2019

- x. **Review the SEND Panel to ensure timely decision making regarding school allocations. Consideration to be given to a summer panel to prevent delay over the long school holiday.**

There has been a significant improvement to the SEND Panel. Detailed case notes (see above) are helping to ensure that decision making is well informed, and the quality of recording of decisions is a lot better. We have received many favourable comments and feedback about the improvements to the panel, and this was recognised in the Peer Review. There are still some issues over colleague attendance and these are being challenged robustly at Head of Service level. School allocations are managed tightly. The reviewed process takes into account the school holidays, and schools have been made aware of the plans put in place to ensure that this does not cause any delay.

Timescale: January 2019

- xi. Quality of EHCPs to be developed in partnership with agencies with specific attention to measurable, achievable and child-specific outcomes and interim steps, with consideration of impact and success of these built into the annual review process.**

This was raised through the Peer Review where a sample of EHCPs was provided across the range of quality. Reviewers could see the improvements made, and were complimentary about the education element to the plans. They were less confident about the health and social care elements and this feedback is being addressed. This is a key focus for the improvement plan.

Timescale: March 2020

- xii. Develop and review the offer for those children who cannot attend school so that they remain engaged through the potential commissioning of other services. Consideration to be given to the use of flexi-schooling.**

We have now trialled a successful pilot for a flexi-schooled placement in partnership with the family and school. We are also trialling with another parent a bespoke package for a young person for whom a school place that can meet his very specific needs has not been identified. In both cases, a high degree of flexibility has been employed in order to achieve a successful outcome. There are plans to share this practise across the team and consider where appropriate. In addition we are working with ETHOS Academy Trust to strengthen our arrangements for tuition for those CYP who are out of school. It should be acknowledged that this places financial demands on the High Needs Block, and therefore evaluation of impact will be important in the coming months.

Timescale: July 2020

- xiii. Revise the post 16 provision offer for young people with SEND to enable them to continue with full-time education and achieve stronger outcomes.**

We continue to work with Kirklees College to develop their offer. However it is apparent that we must broaden the number of providers in the area in order to provide greater choice for young people and their families, but also to work with the college in managing their capacity. We have been working with Castle Hill and Ravenshall Special Schools to open an additional post 16 provision at the old Thornhill Lees Children's Centre and this will be fully functioning by September 2020. We must explore further ways in which we can develop this more bespoke provision that encourages independence and working within the community.

Timescale: September 2020

- xiv. Allocate a senior specialist caseworker to those children with long term, complex conditions, to remain with the child and plan in advance for transitions.**

This will be developed in conjunction with the parent monitoring group. It is our aim that, wherever possible, case workers remain with the family in order to develop relationships, and to ensure continuity for the family. All caseworkers are organised into geographical areas, where they manage caseloads as a small team, in order to ensure that they can be familiar with children outside of their own immediate caseload, in order to ensure consistency should absences occur, and plan for succession.

Timescale: August 2019

2. Implications for the Council

3.1 Working with People

The action plan is addressing the need to work with families in a timely fashion to ensure that their children's SEND are met appropriately.

3.2 Working with Partners

SENDACT works with health and social care in the development of provision for our children and young people. Children and their families are at the heart of decision making.

3.3 Place Based Working

We endeavour to work with parents/carers and their children at a time and place that is convenient to them and takes account of their busy lives

3.4 Improving outcomes for children

Our drive to improve the quality of Education Health and Care Plans includes a focus on outcomes for our children and young people with SEND.

3.5 Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)

SENDACT follow the Code of Practice (Children and Families Act 2014). There Are pressures on the High Needs Block as a result of the increase in the Number of children and young people with an EHCP.

3. Consultees and their opinions

The parent monitoring group continues to meet termly to review progress and input their ideas.

5. Next steps and timelines

Please see section 2 which set out the timelines and actions still to be completed.

6. Officer recommendations and reasons

SENDACT continues to improve and there have been significant changes in some regards, with slower progress in others. There are no quick fixes and the demand for SEND support and provision continues to grow. Alongside the culture change, a number of process and ways of working must be properly embedded if they are to be sustained, and there are further developments that we must consider alongside these recommendations, e.g. the quality of annual review meetings with parents and relevant agencies. The newly configured team is not yet established sufficiently well and there have been staff changes since the review, which has further slowed progress. We continue to monitor parental complaints and have seen a reduction in complaints about service received from officers in the team (timeliness, communication, etc.) The SENDACT Improvement Board is meeting each month to review all aspects of the improvement plan.

We would be keen to provide an update to Scrutiny about our improvements in six months time.

7. Cabinet portfolio holder's recommendations

Not applicable

8. Contact officer

Mandy Cameron, Head of Service (Education, Safeguarding and Inclusion)

9. Background Papers and History of Decisions

Report to Executive Team – Challenges within SENDACT

Scrutiny Report into findings – Children's Scrutiny Panel (Informal meeting) 24.2.19

10. Service Director responsible

Jo-Anne Sanders, Service Director (Learning and Support)