

6 October 2020		ITEM: 9
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
SEND Inspection Outcome - Written Statement of Action Update		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non 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 outlines the progress on the work identified within the SEND Written Statement of action, which was agreed by Ofsted in October 2019. It includes an update against the key areas identified in Appendix One.

Whilst the report will focus on the WSoA a wider system approach to improvement is being undertaken to ensure that we are listening to parents/carers and young people in the delivery of SEND services.

Outlined below are the Ofsted WSoA recommendations:

- Action 1: 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.
- Action 2: 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.

- Action 3, is about the quality of EHCP's and Annual Reviews and is broken down into the following strands:
 - Strand 1: 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.
 - Strand 2: Professionals are not routinely informed of requests to submit written information within specified timescales.
 - Strand 3: Too often, EHC plans are out of date and do not accurately reflect the needs or views of children and young people, or the views of the families.
 - Strand 4: 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

1.1 O&S to scrutinise the work that has been undertaken during this period and offer challenge and support.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 This report builds on the work that has been presented to O&S in previous committee meetings. Detailed progress against the WSoA's action plan is provided in Appendix One.

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.

2.3 A number of actions in the WSoA were impacted by COVID-19 and a revised timeline plan, with revised dates, was taken to SEND Improvement board by the SEND Operational Group. The revised dates were agreed by the SEND Improvement Board and are reported on in the WSoA plan at Appendix One.

2.4 Ofsted have begun a limited SEND inspection programme between September 2020 and March 2021. These short inspections are focussed on safeguarding and work during COVID in SEND and do not include the full inspection framework. It is not known when we will receive a SEND Inspection visit to reassess against the WSoA, however, it is likely to be within the next year.

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 a whole system approach is taken to ensure smooth transition pathways.

Appendix One gives an update around the key objectives within the WSoA, including the impact of the work and progress against those actions.

Outlined below are the areas that are not within the agreed timescales on the WSoA and the mitigation that has been put in place to address this:-

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 for parent participation, to support the development of a new parent/carer forum. The regional DfE lead who sits on the SEND Improvement Board, has confirmed that the development of a new parent/carer forum can take time – recognising this we have introduced some engagement activities whilst a new forum is formed, an example is given below:-

- 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. To support this work we have met with parents and carers which included adult social care and health colleagues. Parents identified a range of opportunities and these are being integrated into our communication & engagement strategy. Parents have volunteered to support with individual areas eg the refresh of the local offer

The Annual Review Process – this still remains a risk as we are dealing with historical backlogs in the system. Additional capacity has been introduced and the senior management team receive a weekly report of progress; this addresses the area of weakness around senior management oversight. The systems integration will support this work and the increase in capacity across the team will see this risk reducing.

The quality of ECHP's - we have introduced a quality assurance framework but this needs time to embed – audits are taking place and a report will be going to the November SEND Improvement Board which will outline the findings from the audit, including the learning undertaken as a result of the audits.

4. Reason for Recommendation

- 4.1 Children's Overview and Scrutiny have a clear and accountable governance and 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.

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

5.1 Children's Services 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 and respond to the increase demand in EHCP.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Judith Knight**
Interim Deputy 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.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Becky Lee**
Team Manager – Community Development and Equalities

Supporting our children and young people who have special educational needs is a key strategic priority for Thurrock Council. The service continues to promote practice to achieve equality, inclusion and diversity, and will carry out its duties in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and related Codes of Practice and Anti-discriminatory policy. 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 recruited an engagement officer who will be working with local stakeholders to enable us to gain feedback on service delivery and how we can ensure it is linked to service transformation.

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 – Written Statement of Action – progress update

Report Author:

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