

Report to OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

SEND Services

Portfolio Holder:

Councillor Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education

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Purpose of the Report

A request was made from the Overview and Scrutiny Board in October 2018 to provide an update in relation to the SEND Services improvement journey and describe any updated outcomes from the Ofsted/CQC recommendations once the final re-visit from the inspectors had taken place. It was anticipated, in October 2018, that the re-visit would occur before the end of the academic session 2018-2019 and the Committee had expected a report on progress in September 2019. The revisit however has not yet happened, and the expected date of the return of Ofsted is now in the autumn term. This report therefore offers a short update on the work taken place to date and sets out a request that a full report is prepared for the Overview & Scrutiny Board at the next meeting scheduled following Ofsted next visit.

Recommendations

- To note the progress made against the expectations set out in the written statement of action (WSOA) and the improvement and development of SEND Services.
- To request a further detailed report be submitted to the Overview & Scrutiny Board after the Ofsted revisit which is expected to take place during the Autumn Term 2019.

SEND Services

1 Background

- 1.1 During October 2017 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspected the arrangements within Oldham to meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The Inspection letter containing the findings of the inspection was published on the Ofsted website in November 2017 and required the Council and the CCG to develop with key stakeholders a Written Statement of Action (WSOA). Oldham's WSOA was published in March 2018.
- 1.2 The Inspection acted as a catalyst of change and has had a huge impact on the Oldham system with significant investment and changes occurring in the area of children's services. There is a strong local Partnership in place and governance focused on improving the lives and experiences of Children and Young People with SEND. From a leadership and co-production perspective, parents, carers, children and young people are central to the developments for SEND. The local Partnership as a collective, agree formal and informal activity along with shared accountability.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 Oldham's WSOA contained 5 key priority areas/recommendations which have been the subject of intense activity and outcomes across all five recommendations have been developed and improved via our local partnerships and workstreams since the date the WSOA was published.
- 2.2 A revised SEND Action Plan and Inclusion Strategy will be launched this month. The new strategy takes the work of the local partnership beyond the confines of the WSOA and focuses on newly agreed shared priorities to further improve SEND Services in Oldham.

3 Priority Area 1: Oldham is compliant with the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015

- 3.1 Leaders and officers now have full understanding of statutory processes with regards to Education, Health, Care Plans (EHCPs). There has been significant investment in Officer legal training programmes from the DfE, IPSEA and the CDC. An 8 Stage Process sets out clarity of action during the entirety of the EHC assessment process for all involved. Families have clarity on the process through information on the Local Offer.

Oldham now has a range of checks and balances to ensure that all schools are aware of and are maintaining statutory practice for exclusions for SEND pupils. Exclusion practice is discussed at secondary headteachers meetings and the Director of Education, Skills and Early Years has taken on the chair of the Fair Access Panel to ensure young people are quickly and appropriately placed in school. In addition, preventative work to reduce the overall number of exclusions continues and is having a positive impact.

4 **Priority Area 2: Oldham has effective leadership and joint partnership in leading, developing and evaluating the SEND reforms**

4.1 Effective leadership and joint partnership working is in place to lead, develop and evaluate SEND reforms and ongoing performance. Families through their representative involvement in the Task & Finish Workstreams and through the PCF (POINT) are assured that at the most senior level the needs of children and young people with SEND are recognised by policy makers. Leaders ensure that parents, carers, children and young people are central to policy and practice improvements in SEND.

Direct liaison by the DCO, Head of CWD, SEND Service, schools and health partners has resulted in health and social care needs being addressed in a timely manner, therefore meeting the health and social care outcomes in EHCPs. The Health Coordinator and Social Workers work directly with the SEND Service in developing required outcomes and provision in EHCPs.

5. **Priority Area 3: Oldham has a legally compliant and responsive EHCP pathway process resulting in quality outcomes of children and young people with SEND**

5.1 All professionals involved in the creating of EHC Plans with families have a clear understanding of the process for EHCPs, including parental input and gathering evidence from relevant professionals. Families now receive an EHC Plan that is legally compliant and of good quality.

The timeliness on EHCPs during 2018 was a challenge given the number of outstanding plans that had not been issued within the 20-week timescales. However, since January 2019 timeliness to date is at a cumulative figure of 96%.

The Annual Review Plan 2019-20 is contributing to improving the quality of revised and amended EHCPs following annual review. EHC Officers are attending all transition and looked after children annual reviews.

The revised EHCP referral pathways have improved the quality and timeliness of advice and information from education, health and social care.

There is now an up to date, co-produced and accessible SEND Local Offer available.

Quality assurance of all EHCPs is now paramount at every stage from peer to peer QA to bi monthly multi-agency QA panels to termly audits from senior leaders.

6 **Priority Area 4: Oldham's children and young people have access to safe and effective home to school transport**

6.1 The home to school Transport Policy is compliant with the SEN Code of practice and prioritising children's needs above all other criteria. Parents and Carers of children and young people with SEN who access transport for Oldham's children and young people is matched to individual needs and is safe. Children with the most complex needs now have appropriate transport plans and arrangements in place.

All Passenger Assistants are now appropriately trained to manage children and young people with complex health needs and to ensure effective and safe transport of those with SEND. The LA has also seen a reduction in complaints and appeals received in respect of transport.

7 **Priority Area 5: Annual attainment and achievement of children and young people in mainstream provision with SEND improves 1% (year on year) faster than the national average rate.**

7.1 The School Improvement Programme (SIP) for maintained schools now has a direct focus on SEND to ensure better provision to maintain children within school settings.

There have been improvements in school attendance at primary and secondary level, based on previous years' performance against statutory neighbours and national. Persistent absenteeism remains a priority for action and the behaviour and attendance groups are working with schools on this.

Primary FTE for SEND almost halved in 2017-18. Secondary FTE for SEND reduced just by under a third in 2017-18.

Implementation of the Whole School/College Approach to SEMH Wellbeing through OA funding is helping to create a more inclusive environment across Oldham schools.

8 **Recommendations**

8.1 The O&S Board take note of the improvements and development journey so far.

8.2 The O&S Board are provided with a more detailed report on progress after the Ofsted revisit takes place in the autumn term.