

Report to Performance and Value for Money Select Committee

Update on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Inspection Re-visit

Portfolio Holder:

Cllr Shaid Mushtaq, Cabinet Member for Education

Officer Contact: David Shaw, Assistant Director - SEND.

Report Author: David Shaw, Assistant Director - SEND.

27 August 2020

Purpose of the Report

To give the PVFM an update on progress to date addressing the two remaining recommendations from the Written Statement of Action (WSOA) that have formed the priorities identified in the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) being monitored by the Department for Education (DfE).

Executive Summary

Following the reinspection in September 2019 and identification of two remaining areas requiring improvement, the APP was developed to ensure significant improvement continued to be made in relation to area 3 (Education, Health & Care (EHC) process and quality of plans) and area 5 (Achievement of children and young people with SEND, including the high rates of fixed term exclusion and persistent absenteeism). The final draft of the APP was submitted to the DfE in March 20 including 6 and 12 month milestones due to the rapidly escalating Coronavirus situation.

Due to the closure of all schools in England on the 18th March, the cancellation of national performance tables and national examinations for all Key Stages it is not possible to review progress against the impact measures and milestones for area 5 this academic year. It was recommended to the DfE Advisor in June 2020, that the actions identified in area 5 should be amended and updated to reflect the changes and significant challenges presented by the Coronavirus situation ahead of schools returning in the Autumn term. This update was completed and shared with the DfE ahead of a meeting on the 31st July 2020. The meeting on the 31st July was positive demonstrating the progress made to address the two remaining areas. A follow up meeting is arranged with the DfE advisor to discuss and confirm the formal approval process for the APP and agree access to DfE funded training for members of the partnership.

Despite the challenges provided by the Coronavirus situation, actions related to area 3 have proceeded at pace through creative approaches, with the clear message of 'business as usual'. The fixed term additional team to deliver the annual review recovery plan have now been trained, inducted and are producing high quality EHC plans following annual reviews. The main education, health and care plan team continue to work effectively. Co-productive work continues to take place

across the partnership to provide challenging but constructive feedback to improve working practices and the quality of information included in the EHC plans. The quality assurance visit from the DfE SEND advisory team on the 31st July confirmed this view.

An example of the transformation journey taking place is the national timeliness indicator. Essentially the number of EHC plans issued within 20 weeks based upon the DfE published data for the 2019 calendar year. This shows the following improvement.

- Excluding Exceptions – **43rd of 151** nationally, compared to **140th last year**. Higher than 8 of our statistical neighbours (Middlesbrough & Blackburn w/ Darwen).
- Including Exceptions – **47th of 151** nationally, compared to **139th last year**. Higher than 8 of our 10 statistical neighbours (Middlesbrough & Blackburn w/ Darwen).

It is anticipated that due to the disruption caused by the Coronavirus situation the SEND strategy will be updated in the Autumn term to reflect current evaluation of emerging trends and priorities in the Autumn term ready to become operational from January 2021 – March 2024.

Recommendations

- The PVFM Select Committee commend the Local Partnership for the significant improvement in timeliness identified in the national data and the ongoing improvements to quality and consistency of EHC plans being delivered and quality assured through effective partnership work.
- The PVFM Select Committee request an update report in January 2021 on the revisions made to the APP and progress made to address the two areas of the original written statement of action not signed off in the re-visit letter.

Update on progress delivering the APP following the SEND Inspection Re-visit

1 Background

- 1.1 Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) completed a SEND inspection re-visit in September 2019 to review the progress made against the WSOA. Whilst the inspection was positive in many areas, two remaining recommendations from the WSOA were identified as still requiring further improvement. These have formed the priorities identified in the APP being monitored by the DfE.

2. Current Position – EHC Needs Assessments (Area 3)

- 2.1 EHC needs assessments continue to be processed; there are approximately 100 CYP undergoing assessment. Timeliness for issuing plans in the month of July was 96% (23 plans issued). Advice givers continue to send timely advice using alternative methods of capturing information. Educational Psychologists and health professionals are completing telephone assessments where possible. Social care advice is being received in its usual form directly from social workers for children who are looked after, on a child protection plan or identified as a child in need.
- 2.2 Person Centered Planning meetings are taking place virtually and then provision and outcomes are being coordinated by the SEND Officers via virtual multi agency meetings. SEND Officers are using telephone conversations with families to ascertain aspirations and views of the parents and the child/young person. Interestingly, this way of working has seen a significant improvement in the information the LA receive for section A of an EHC plan related to the views, interests and aspirations of the child and their parents/or young person. We will continue this way of working as we move into the next phase of school opening in September. The EHC plan resource decision making panel is taking place weekly albeit virtually. This process has become more streamlined with further enhancements planned. Draft and final EHC plan are being sent out electronically to families where possible and posted if access to the internet is difficult.
- 2.3 Co-production continues to strengthen as officers become increasingly confident in seeking constructive feedback from partners and working together to find creative solutions to challenges.
- 2.4 Quality assurance of the education, health and care needs assessment process continues via internal quality audits and collaborative scrutiny via the partnership. Robust evaluation and challenge occur during the education, health and care plan workstream chaired by the CEO of Parents of Oldham In Touch (POINT). Governance arrangements are being reviewed however the Transformation Assurance Board (TAB) resumed meetings at the end of April on a three weekly basis to drive transformation and continue to hold partners to account.

3 **Current Position - Annual Reviews (Area 3)**

- 3.1 Annual reviews continue to be led by schools and settings and are taking place virtually with only a few issues reported by schools or families, which the SEND officers are working to overcome. A virtual annual review process has been drafted by the SEND team and has been circulated to all schools and settings, with positive feedback received on the process from a wide range of schools, academies and settings.
- 3.2 Where a virtual annual review is not possible, due to the Coronavirus situation, annual reviews will take place as soon as possible in discussion with the school or setting. The annual review recovery plan, which is identified in area 3 of the APP, continues to be delivered and is on track to achieve the 6-month milestone target of a 40% reduction by November, providing staffing in the annual review team remains consistent.

4 **Current Position - Achievement of children and young people with SEND, including the high rates of fixed term exclusion and persistent absenteeism (Area 5)**

- 4.1 Following the Government instruction to close all schools in England from the 20th March due to the Coronavirus situation, the subsequent cancellation of national examinations for all Key Stages and therefore the inability to publish national performance tables, it is not possible to review progress against the impact measures and milestones for this area during this academic year.
- 4.2 It was recommended to the DfE Advisor in June 2020, that the actions identified in area 5 should be amended and updated to reflect the changes and significant challenges presented by the Coronavirus situation ahead of schools returning in the Autumn term. This update was completed and shared with the DfE ahead of a meeting on the 31st July 2020. Confirmation of the monitoring arrangements and timescales applicable to the APP will be agreed in a follow up meeting later in August.
- 4.3 However, work on several of the actions identified in this area have been progressed as part of the planning for schools to open in September. Deployment of the Educational Psychology team via traded work requests is high, covering almost all schools in Oldham. A new delivery model will support the team in meeting this demand over a two-term period from September. In addition to this specific targeted support will be provided by Council teams from September, to help schools manage the return of all children. An attendance campaign is also being developed in conjunction with Council partners, and the timing of this will be agreed with consideration of wider Public Health announcements about Coronavirus. The workstream to drive this area has been reviewed and reconstituted is now ready to become operational.

5 **Key Issues for PVFM to Discuss**

- 5.1 Discuss how the SEND strategy 2019-22 is being linked to the final two recommendations still to be achieved and support children and young people receive the support they require during this unprecedented period.
- 5.2 Discuss how the SEND strategy should be updated to reflect the significant challenges faced by SEND support services, particularly in health, during the Coronavirus pandemic and the implications for service recovery priorities and timescales.

6 **Key Questions for Overview and Scrutiny to Consider**

- 6.1 What challenges are anticipated with the return to schools and settings in September for children and young people with SEND, and how does the APP areas support us meet these challenges.
- 6.2 How the SEND strategy and development plan should be updated to reflect changes to SEND service priorities resulting from the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic. How the strategy will be used to drive future transformation and deliver sustainable improvement through efficient use of resources.
- 6.2 An update report will be issued in January 2020 updating on any revisions made to the APP and progress addressing the two outstanding recommendations. It will also include an update on the relaunch of the SEND strategy.

7. **Links to Corporate Outcomes**

- 7.1 SEND links to all the corporate priorities impacting on children and young people. It also links to the health and wellbeing priorities of the council and partners and the SEND strategy 2019-22.

8 **Additional Supporting Information**

- 8.1 It is anticipated that due to the disruption caused by the Coronavirus situation the SEND strategy will be updated in the Autumn term to reflect current evaluation of emerging trends and priorities in the Autumn term ready to become operational from January 2021 – March 2024.

9 **Consultation**

- 9.1 N/A

10 **Appendices**

- 10.1 N/A