

8 October 2019

Education, Health and Care Plans: Overview of progress and future actions

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe - Education and Skills

1. Background and the Local Authority's (LAs) statutory responsibilities in relation to Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

- 1.1 The revised SEND Code of Practice came into effect in 2015 to provide guidance on duties, policies and procedures relating to Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Notably it:
- 1.2 Places an emphasis on children, their parents and young people participating in decision making and highlights the responsibility of LAs to provide the necessary support to enable them to participate.
- 1.3 Places an expectation that LAs should normally engage directly with young people once they reach compulsory school age.
- 1.4 States that parents of children with an EHCP and young people have a right to ask for a particular educational institution to be named in the plan and for a personal budget.
- 1.5 States that education, health and social care services should work together to assess local needs, plan and commission services jointly.
- 1.6 Places an emphasis on inclusive practice and outlines that the general presumption in law is for mainstream education.
- 1.7 Promotes joint working to support successful preparation for adulthood.
- 1.8 Sets out statutory guidance in relation to EHCPs, with a shift from a sole focus on educational needs and provision to a holistic focus on education, health and social care needs and provision.
- 1.9 An EHCP is a legal document which outlines a child/young person's special educational needs (SEN), their aspirations and expected outcomes, and the provision required to achieve the outcomes. Prior to the 2015 SEND Code of Practice being issued, the equivalent level of support was provided through a 'statement of special educational needs'. The revised Code of Practice required the transfer of all statements to EHCPs.
- 1.10 If a child or young person has not made expected progress, despite the school/institution having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the SEN of the child or young person (in accordance with the graduated approach), the school/institution or parents should consider requesting an EHC needs assessment.

- 1.11 An EHC needs assessment should be carried out by an LA when there is evidence that a child or young person has not made expected progress, despite the school/institution having taken relevant and purposeful action to identify, assess and meet the SEN of the child or young person.
- 1.12 A child's parent, a young person and a school/institution acting on behalf of the parent or young person have a specific right to request an EHC needs assessment. In addition, other people are able to bring a child or young person to the LAs attention for the purpose of an EHC needs assessment, such as a social care professional or an early year's practitioner.
- 1.13 The LA is required to respond to all requests for assessment, within the timescales prescribed in the SEND Code of Practice, 2014 (see Appendix 1).
- 1.14 To inform its decision (regarding whether to carry out an EHC needs assessment) the LA will expect to see evidence of the action taken by the school as part of SEN support. It is expected that the majority of children and young people with SEND will have their needs met within their local mainstream school, with the provision of high quality first teaching, differentiation and targeted intervention funded through the school's 'notional SEN budget'.
- 1.15 All schools receive a notional SEN budget. This is not ring fenced and schools are encouraged to use funding creatively and in accordance with the needs identified across the whole school. Schools are required to provide support for children and young people with SEND (including those at SEN support) through their own local offer, up to a nationally prescribed threshold per pupil per year (£6,000). It is only when children and young people fail to make expected progress despite this support that an EHC needs assessment should be considered.
- 1.16 If an EHC needs assessment is agreed then the LA is responsible for co-ordinating an assessment, always requesting 'advice' from the parent/carer and/or young person, the educational setting that the child is attending, an Educational Psychologist (EP) (usually employed or commissioned by the LA), a qualified teacher if a child has a hearing or visual impairment, a medical professional, social care and the youth justice service if a child is known to them. Parents/young person may also request advice to be sought from other professionals. Assessments should be carried out and advice submitted within 6 weeks of it being requested (see appendix 1 for statutory timescales).
- 1.17 Once advice has been submitted the LA is responsible for deciding whether to issue an EHCP. It is required to consider the assessment of needs alongside evidence of provision already in place to meet the needs. If a child or young person has failed to make expected progress despite appropriate support then an EHCP may be required. The LA must decide whether the provision required to meet a child or young person's needs can be provided from within the resources normally available to a mainstream school/early years setting/post 16 provider. If it is beyond the resources normally available then the LA should issue an EHCP and provide additional high needs funding.
- 1.18 The current operational guidance for high needs funding states that 'Local authorities should work with providers in their area (particularly mainstream schools and academies, early year's settings and further education institutions) to ensure there

are clear processes for allocating top-up funding. Although many pupils and students receiving high needs funding will have EHC plans, local authorities have the flexibility to provide high needs funding outside the statutory assessment process for all children and young people with high needs up to the age of 19. The statutory assessment process is therefore not the sole means of securing additional support for children and young people with SEND' (High needs funding 2018-19: Operational Guide).

Funding/provision currently available to Walsall children and young people with SEND

1.19 Early Years Inclusion Funding

1.20 Access to an Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) place

1.21 Access to an assessment place at a special school for children and young people new to borough with high needs who are unable to safely access mainstream place through admissions

1.22 Provision of specialist equipment via high needs funding (for Hearing Impaired (HI), Visually Impaired (VI) and physical needs)

1.23 Top Up funding via an EHCP

1.24 Children who have undergone an EHC needs assessment but who have not been issued an EHCP (because evidence indicates that needs can be met by provision within the resources normally available to a school/setting), are issued with a 'Provision Plan' in Walsall. This is a non-statutory document which summarises the assessment information and identifies outcomes and provision required but does not attract any additional top up funding.

2. Walsall Context:

2.1 'Walsall Inclusion Strategy' sets out ambitious aims for children and young people in Walsall, including those with SEND, and the educational settings they attend. The primary aim is for all children and young people to access their entitlement to a good, full time education and wherever possible have their needs met within their local mainstream school.

2.2 'Walsall Right for Children' Transformation Program is an ambitious transformation program which involves service redesign to ensure that 'the right support is provided for the right children, at the right time, for the right amount of time'. This has significant implications for SEND provision and the need for the LA to work in partnership with schools/settings to ensure that children with SEND have access to quality first teaching, appropriately targeted provision via their school's local offer in accordance with the graduated approach, and where necessary through provision outlined in an EHCP.

2.3 As stated above, in 2015, new arrangements to jointly plan and commission services for children and young people who have special educational needs or who are disabled were implemented. Part of this was the implementation of a new Education, Health and Care plan. There was a four-year implementation phase, after which (in 2018) all local areas were expected to have new systems and processes in place to

manage the reforms set out in the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25. A new inspection framework was also introduced for Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission to inspect local areas on how well they identify, meet the needs and improve outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

- 2.4 In February 2019, Walsall Council and Walsall and Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were subject to such an inspection. The outcome of the inspection (which can be read at <https://files.api.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50075533>) was that the local authority and Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) were required to provide a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) setting out how the nine significant concerns would be addressed. The inspection report was published on 8th May 2019 and the local authority and CCG were jointly responsible for submitting the WSoA within 70 working days (13th August 2019). The WSoA must state clearly details for each action (area of concern), who is responsible for taking each action forward and the time period for completion. The nine areas of concern are:
- The lack of meaningful partnership and co-production with children and young people, parents, carers, schools and services, which has meant that the code of practice has not been effectively implemented overtime.
 - The poor quality Education Health Care Plans, which do not accurately reflect children's and young people's special educational needs, and do not adhere to the statutory timescales for completion.
 - The poor outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
 - The lack of post diagnostic support for children and young people without the autism spectrum disorder.
 - The high and disproportionate numbers of fixed term and permanent exclusions of children and young people with SEND.
 - The lack of appropriate provision and support which has led to significant numbers of children and young people missing from education.
 - The failure to ensure an impartial information, advice and support service for parents in the local area.
 - The poor quality of the local offer, which does not meet the requirements of the code of practice.
 - The week arrangements for joint commissioning, do not consider information about the local area well enough.
- 2.5 The WSoA was submitted to Ofsted on 12 August 2019. We are awaiting final sign off from them but the actions contained in the Plan are already being taken forward. See Appendix 2 for details of action taken to date and also actions currently in place.
- 2.6 Since 2016 around half of all local areas inspected and 5 out of 7 statistical neighbours have been required to submit a Written Statement of Action.
- 2.7 Progress against the WSoA will be monitored every four months by Advisors appointed by DfE/NHS England and it is expected that Ofsted/CQC will re-inspect

the local area between 18 months to 2 years after the date of the first inspection. In order to achieve a successful outcome from any future inspection the local area (including the wider partnership) will need to demonstrate improved outcomes for all children and young people with SEND (0-25) described in the SEND Code of Practice: 0-25 as;

“Our vision for children with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as for all children and young people – that they achieve well in their early years, at school and in college, and lead happy and fulfilled lives.”

- 2.8 A Special Educational Needs/ Disability Improvement Board (Local Area SENDIB) has been established to report on progress and barriers to achieving the required outcomes. The Local Area SENDIB will meet monthly to review progress and provide robust accountability and challenge. The first meeting has already taken place to agree terms of reference and an independent chair has been agreed. Membership of the Local Area SENDIB will be determined by the respective corporate bodies (Council and CCG) and partners including schools, governors and FACE. The SENDIB will be attended by the DfE and NHS England as part of their quality assurance role once every 4 months.
- 2.9 A Communications and Engagement Plan has been drawn up (Appendix 3), to ensure that co-production is embedded throughout the improvement programme, so that the views of parents/carers / children and young people, providers and commissioners are reflected at every stage of the programme.
- 2.10 The local authority is building a stronger working relationship with the Parent Carer Forum (FACE). Additionally we have liaised with a number of other parent support groups and now have agreement from all that a coalition is formed to work with the local authority and partners to take the improvement agenda forward. The terms of reference for this group have been drawn up and agreed. A key action for this group is to consider how best to reach those parents/ carers of children with SEND who do not currently access support from existing groups. They will also help to develop peer support ambassadors who, with training and support will create an action plan and timetable to identify and enable the voice of a wide range of parents/carers to be heard.
- 2.11 The Written Statement of Action sets out our plan for consulting with children and young people utilizing the skills and experience of SENCos, special school staff and post 16 providers. A training programme will be delivered to professionals to ensure that they adopt a child centred approach as set out in the Code of Practice and in line with Children's Services restorative approach.

3. Support currently available to Walsall schools in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND:

- 3.1 Schools Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) forum – termly sessions for SENCos to meet, share practice, receive local and national updates and engage in development activities.
- 3.2 Provision of a link Educational Psychologist (EP) – all Walsall schools (including mainstream, academies and special schools) have an allocated link EP who will complete an annual 'needs identification meeting' and provide support and challenge

in relation to inclusive practice (using available data e.g. exclusions data). The link EP will also carry out the statutory assessments.

- 3.3 Support provided by qualified teachers and practitioners for Visual Impairment (VI) and Hearing Impairment (HI). Our staff provide support for individual children and young people as well as training and development for school staff.
- 3.4 Allocation of a link School Nurse (locality based) to provide support and guidance in relation to health needs (including physical and mental health).
- 3.5 School improvement support for identified schools (will cover aspects related to SEN and inclusion as required). Indicators related to inclusion are used to form a holistic measure of school performance and identify schools where SEN outcomes are a concern.
- 3.6 Impartial advice and support through the Special Educational Needs Independent Advice Service (SENDIAS)

4. National context

- 4.1 Funding for SEND and Alternative Provision is an area that has attracted much national attention over the last year particularly. In May 2019 the DfE invited individuals and organisations to provide their views on changes to the national funding system in response to calls for an increase in funding and feedback that Local Authorities, schools, colleges and other providers are not able to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND within the resources available.
- 4.2 The Association for Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) provided a response to the call for evidence and outlined national concerns regarding the rising level of needs, the shortage of skilled staff (including Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Therapists and Occupational Therapists), the increasing number of CYP with EHCPs and the increasing risk that LAs will overspend on their high needs block (with 90% of LAs predicted to overspend next year, LGA, 2018). Nationally ADCS members cite managing the high needs block as one of the most pressing challenges currently.
- 4.3 Nationally school leaders are raising their concerns about their ability to meet the first £6,000 of costs for provision for a rising number of CYP with SEND, at a time when they are experiencing real time funding cuts. The reduction in funding alongside an increase in need and increased pressure to achieve high academic standards is a real risk to inclusion and is also a factor in the rising number of EHCP requests, with schools seeing this as a way of securing additional funding.

5. Walsall data

5.1 Prevalence of SEND in Walsall

- 5.1.1 Data suggests that there is an under-identification of SEND in Walsall schools, which is particularly pronounced at secondary school compared with national and statistical comparators:

10.9% of pupils in Walsall schools receive SEN support compared with 11.9% nationally and 12.8% among statistical neighbours.

This means that there are just under 6000 children in Walsall receiving SEN support but there could be upwards of 1000 children who have a special educational need who may not be receiving the support that they need.

5.1.2 The number of children with an EHCP is also lower than comparators:

2.8% of pupils in Walsall schools have EHCPs compared with 3.1% nationally and 3.3% among statistical neighbours.

5.1.3 The number of children for whom Walsall Council maintains an EHCP is increasing. Since the new code of practice was introduced, there has been a 69% increase in the number of EHCPs (and formally statements). National growth has been 49% and regional growth has been just 40%. Despite this, the proportion of children with an identified SEN in Walsall remains lower than comparators (see above).

In December 2017 there were 1,747 children with an EHCP maintained by Walsall Council. By December 2018 this had risen to 2017 children with an EHCP.

5.1.4 The proportion of children with an EHCP who attend mainstream school is just in line with the national picture, however, a slightly higher percentage attend a special school:

At the end of 2018 39.7% of children with an EHCP in Walsall attended mainstream schools and 39.9% attend special schools compared with 39.2% and 38.6% nationally.

5.1.5 The most prevalent primary need for children and young people with an EHCP is 'Autism Spectrum Disorder', followed by 'speech, language and communication difficulty' and 'social, emotional, mental health/behavioural difficulties':

26% of children and young people with an EHCP had a primary need of Autism Spectrum Behaviour, 15% had a primary need of speech language and communication difficulty and 12% have a primary need of social, emotional and mental health / behavioural difficulties.

5.1.6 Boys are significantly more likely to be in receipt of an EHCP than girls:

72% of the children in receipt of an EHCP are boys and 28% are girls.

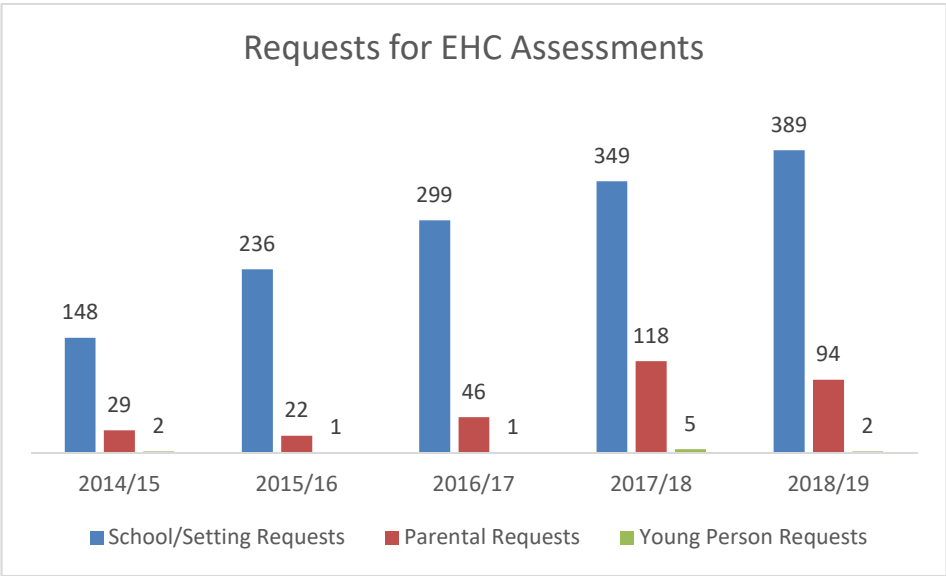
5.2 Walsall data for EHC assessments:

5.2.1 The number of requests for EHC assessments is increasing:

In 2017 412 requests for assessments were received, in 2018 this rose to 491 requests for assessments.

5.2.2 Local data shows that the number of requests from school/settings is increasing by approximately 50 each year and has seen a 163% increase since 2015. The number of parental requests has also increased significantly in the last 2 years, peaking in 2017/18. It is likely that the sharp increase in the number of parental requests reflects a lack of parental confidence in the level and quality of provision delivered via SEN support.

Figure 1. Number of requests for assessment for the last 5 years by type



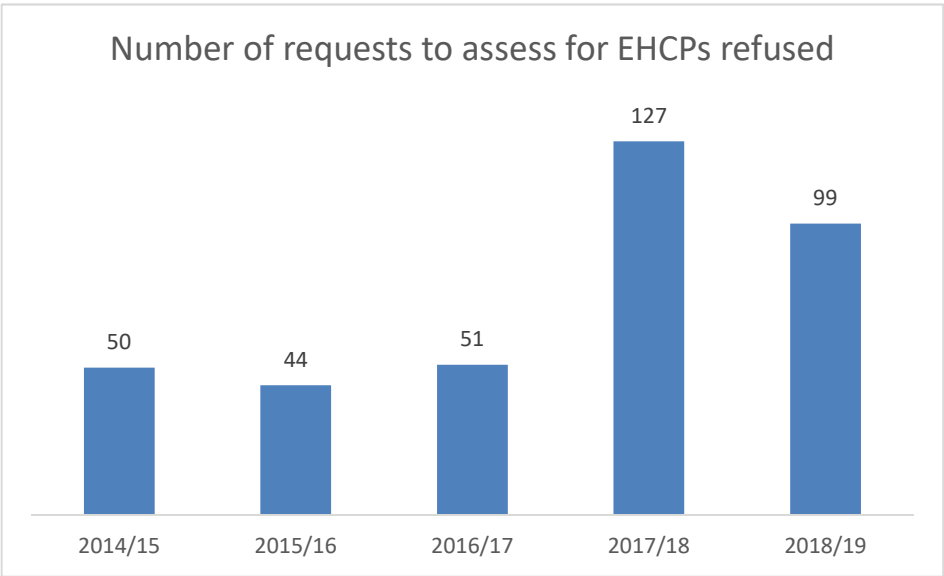
5.2.3 The percentage of requests for assessment which have been refused has varied but in 2018 a higher proportion of requests were refused in Walsall than among comparators and a slightly lower proportion of assessments results in a plan.

In 2018 32.6% of requests for assessments were refused compared with 24.7% nationally and 25.0% regionally.

In 2018 92.4% of assessments resulted in an EHC Plan compared with 94.8% national and 94.9% regionally.

5.2.4 The number of assessments refused following a request has increased in the last 2 years in line with the increase in parental requests (see figure 2), suggesting a correlation between the two.

Figure 2. Number of requests for assessment turned down for the last 5 years



- 5.2.5 Children, young people and parents and carers are currently waiting too long for their assessments to be completed and the EHC Plans to be finalised:

In 2018 34.6% of EHCPs were finalised within 20 weeks compared with 60.1% nationally and 49.4% among statistical neighbours.

A number of issues have impacted on performance in this area including, but not limited to, legacy capacity issues within the EHCP assessment team (which as of June 2019 has been restructured with additional capacity and roles to support the efficiency of the process), variation in the number of requests made per month and delays in assessment over the school summer holidays which affects the availability of children and schools and subsequently causes some challenges faced to Advice providers and caseworkers when 'catching up' in the autumn. There is also a national recruitment issue of Educational Psychologists to Local Authority services that has also had an impact.

5.3 Walsall data for complaints, mediation and tribunals

- 5.3.1 The number of complaints regarding the EHCP process (including timeliness, quality of EHCPs and response of staff) has increased significantly over the last 12 months. The majority of complaints are regarding timeliness.
- 5.3.2 When a parent/young person is not happy with the outcome of a decision to assess or issue an EHCP they can choose to go to mediation to resolve the outstanding issues. The number of mediations is increasing, as is the percentage of mediations which lead to appeal, indicating that our investment in mediation is not having the desired impact:

In 2017 there were five requests for mediation compared to 38 in 2018.

In 2017, 40% of mediations led to appeal rising to 60.5% in 2018, compared with 26.4% nationally and 30.1% regionally.

- 5.3.3 Despite the increases in mediations, the number of appeals as a percentage of appealable decisions is lower than the national average:

In 2017 0.9% of appealable decisions led to appeal. This increased to 1.0% in 2018 compared with 1.6% nationally and 0.9% among statistical neighbours.

6. Actions to address concerns identified:

- 6.1 A range of actions are already being taken across the partnership to address the concerns in relation to EHCPs demonstrated above. Additional funding has been identified to provide resource, mostly in the form of experienced specialists, to help drive forward the improvement programme at pace. The WSoA will provide a comprehensive summary of the actions being taken to address the concerns identified in relation to EHCPs and a summary of actions already taken is provided in Appendix 2.

Reason for Scrutiny:

To provide members with an overview of the legislative changes in relation to SEND and the current statutory requirements in relation to EHCPs. This report also analyses local data, highlights concerns and provides a summary of action being taken to address the identified concerns.

Recommendations

The report to be noted.

Background Papers:

None.

Resource and Legal Considerations:

Not applicable to this report.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

CH1: Children will be ready for school.

CH2: The gaps in educational attainment between the least and most deprived communities will be narrowed for all under achieving groups.

Citizen Impact:

In order for the children and young people of Walsall with SEND to be able to fully participate in adult life, it is vital that they be supported to reach their full academic potential through provision of appropriately targeted support, through an EHCP where appropriate.

Environmental Impact:

Not applicable to this report.

Reducing Inequalities:

An Equality Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

The aim of EHCPs is to reduce the impact of inequalities for children and young people with SEND, through providing appropriately targeted, specialist support and intervention, to enable them to make progress in relation to education and training.

Consultation:

Report has been prepared in consultation with our SEND team.

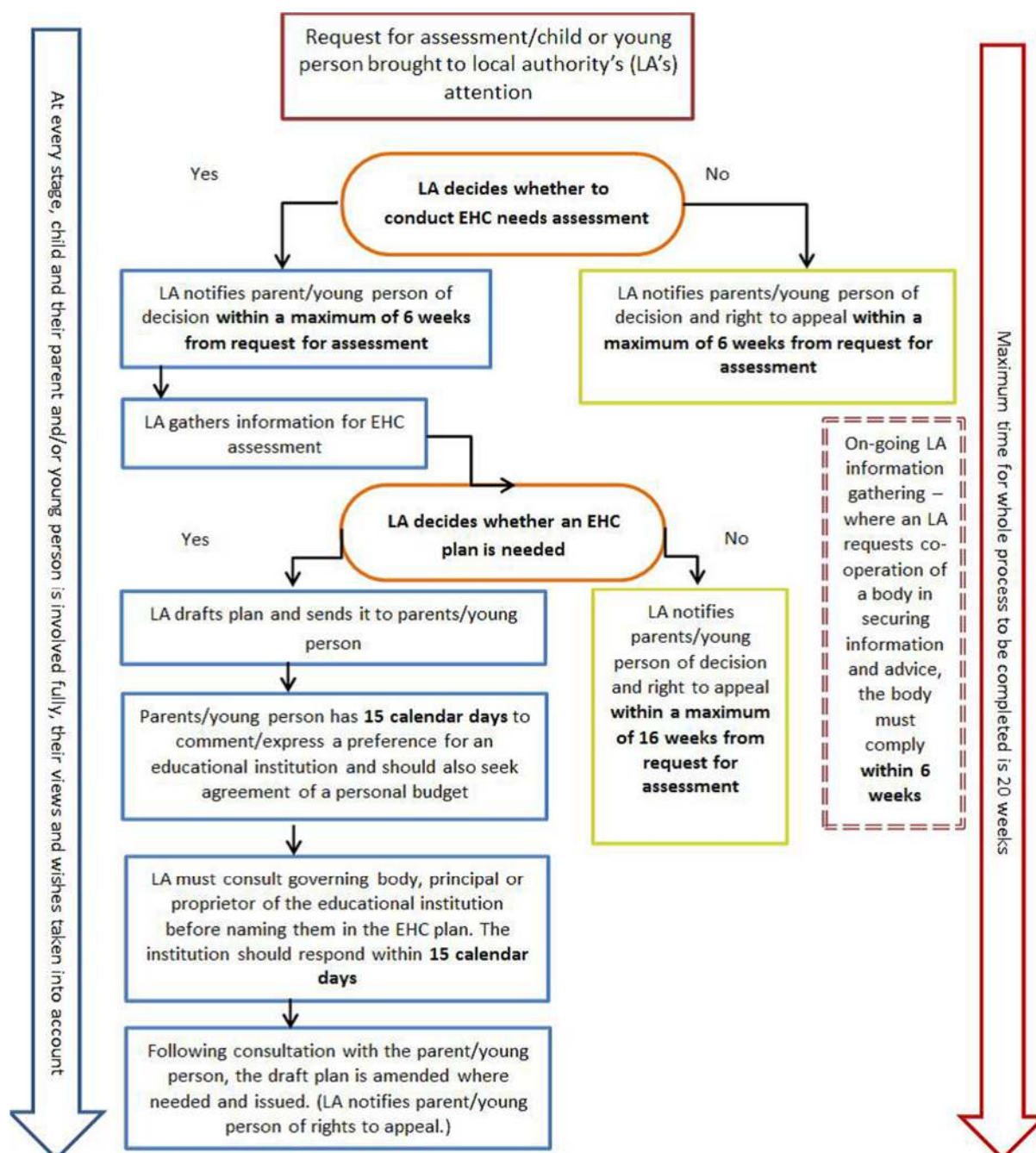
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Appendix 1 – Statutory timescales for EHC needs assessment and EHC plan development



Appendix 2 – Summary of actions already taken and those planned to address concerns identified in relation to EHCPs

Concern:	Contributory factors:	Action already taken to address concern:	Further action planned to address concern:
Increasing number of complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor timeliness • Insufficient proactive communication with parents/young people regarding progress of their EHCP • Parents not reassured/given required detail of information at first point of contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service making direct contact with parents/young people at key points within the statutory assessment process (3 & 6 weeks) • Consultation sessions with parents/carers to inform action planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service making contact with young people/parents/carers when we know timescales will not be met to provide reassurance and expected timescales • One member of staff identified to receive and respond to calls/emails from schools and parents/carers in relation to timeliness to ensure accurate information given and a timely response to enquiries • Staff training and development work in relation to restorative practice approaches and 'customer focus'
Increasing number of mediations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need improved signposting • A need to encourage parents/young people to actively engage in mediation with the aim of resolving issues and preventing the need for a tribunal appeal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complaints & Compliance post created in new structure to provide one point of contact and a senior worker to manage highly sensitive discussions and ensure the LA representative attending mediations is able to make decisions and agree provision/changes during mediation • Complaints & Compliance post advertised (interviews in Oct19) 	

<p>Increasing number of tribunals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of parental requests for assessment • Issuing final EHCP when parents remain dissatisfied with content • Concerns regarding specificity of section F - provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SENDIASS moved out of SEND service line management to ensure 'independence' of support provided • Interim Complaints & Compliance capacity provided through agency worker to be key point of contact for tribunal cases and to invest time in resolving issues outside of tribunal hearing • Partnership working group established to review current tribunal processes and make recommendations for improvements • Offer a 'co-production/advice providers mtg' to provide an opportunity for face to face discussions to resolve any disagreements before finalising the EHCP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working group to be established to develop 'graduated approach' document outlining expectations for school based/SEN support level provision • Develop joint independent SENDIASS service with Wolverhampton LA from 2020 • Increase capacity of SENDIASS service to meet needs • Tribunal pathway to be finalised ensuring timely communication across partnership and focus on resolving issues outside of tribunal • Training for Advice providers and SEN team regarding outcomes and provision, with a focus on specificity • Review wording of standard letters to emphasise the importance and value of mediation when there are unresolved issues.
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<p>Increasing number of requests for EHC needs assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of parental confidence in provision at SEN support • Poor outcomes for children and young people at SEN support • Reduced centrally funded support offer • Lack of flexibility of access to high needs funding without an EHCP • Lack of confidence in schools regarding evidence based interventions to support children at SEN support (particularly in relation to ASD and SEMH) • Lack of specialist provision/support for children and young people with ASD (e.g. no post diagnostic CAMHS support) • Financial pressures within schools increasing number of requests for assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High needs funding working group established to review funding banding to ensure equity and a needs led model. Audit currently being completed across schools • Working group established to review routes to access high needs funding, to streamline processes and ensure that schools can evidence the spend of the notional SEN budget before additional funding is provided • Working group established to review access to Early Years funding and make changes to ensure equity, a focus on inclusion and smooth transitions into school • Autism Working Group workshop event with involvement of young people/parents/carers and all partners to inform future commissioning of services for CYP with ASD • Partnership work with schools to promote cost-effective, evidence based approaches to promote the successful inclusion of CYP with SEND and vulnerable groups (Building Resilient & Inclusive Communities & Schools Project, Inclusion and Wellbeing team developed). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership working group to be established to develop 'graduated approach' document outlining expectations for school based/SEN support level provision • Clear information to be available on the Local Offer site for parents with clear expectations regarding the graduated approach and the expectations on schools/settings. • SEND reviews to be established to support schools in identifying areas for improvement in relation to SEND and Inclusion • SENCo Forum used to promote graduated approach document and evidence based interventions (informed by partnership input) across areas of need • Increase signposting to central/traded, independent and voluntary sector support services for settings and families – all information to be easily accessible on local offer site. • Review local guidance and funding processes with the aim of providing a route to access short term high needs funding, pre-EHCP • Work with health partners to ensure a clear pathway to access support and funding to meet the health needs of CYP without an EHCP
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<p>Poor timeliness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced capacity within services providing advice • Reduced capacity within EHCP assessment team • Reliance on paper based system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of market supplement to support retention and recruitment in EPS. • Use of locums to increase capacity of EPS • Project plan developed for implementation of Open Objects (pilot and full implementation) • New structure for EHCP assessment team agreed that is fit for purpose and based on need. Posts currently being recruited to. • Funding provided for interim agency support to cover posts in new structure before they are appointed to • Use of secure email to share information related to EHCP process • Review of admin and EHCP process with recommendations made for streamlining process • Weekly reporting of data to monitor timeliness and identify actions for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full implementation of Open Objects – web based portal for EHCP processes. Will link directly with partner services and reduce processing delays and admin demand. • Regional action plan to address recruitment and retention difficulties across EPS's. • Partnership approach to predicting increase in demand and planning for this in advance • Implement recommendations following review of EHCP processes
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<p>Poor quality of EHCPs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of robust quality assurance processes • Lack of permanent manager in EHCP assessment team • Lack of a shared understanding across the partnership as to what constitutes good quality advice and a good quality EHCP • Capacity issues within EHCP assessment team and advice providers • Poor communication with Advice providers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent EHCP team manager appointed • Regular SEND partnership meetings established with heads of service • Funding identified to provide interim agency support in EHCP assessment team • Funding identified to provide interim agency support in EHCP admin team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and development work across the partnership to develop a shared understanding of what quality advice and quality EHCPs look like. • Develop and implement a partnership quality assurance process to review quality of decision points and advice/EHCPs
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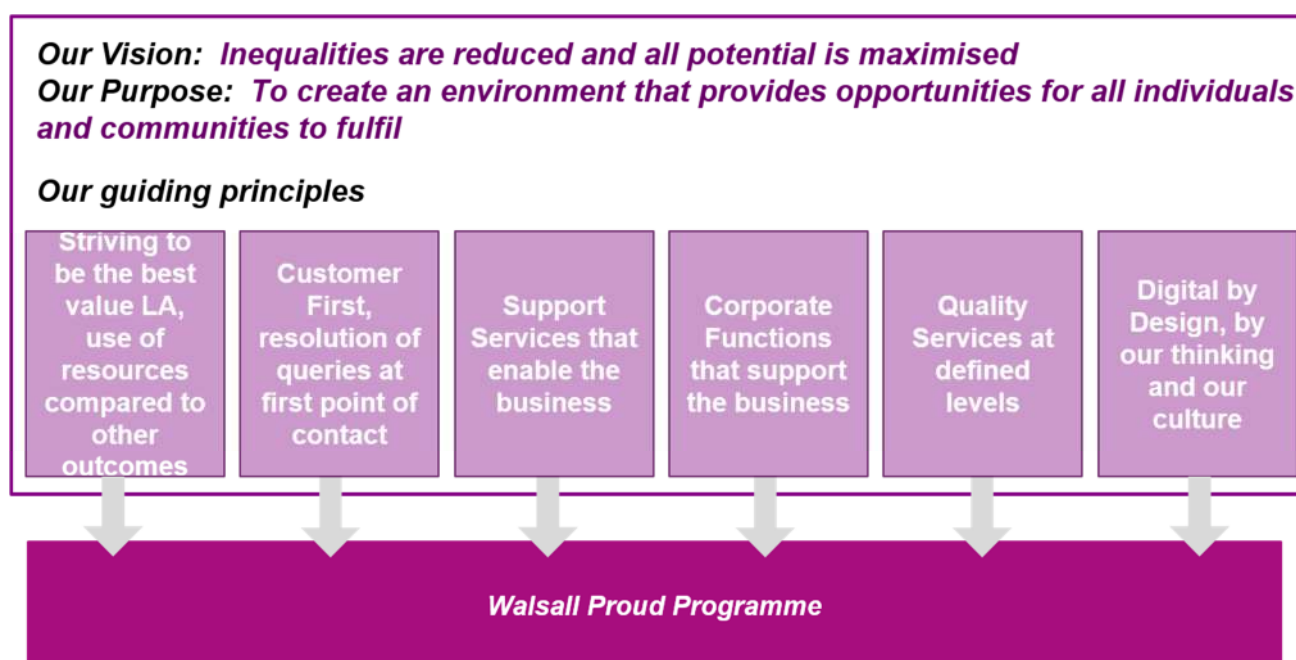
Walsall Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Improvement Programme Communications and Engagement Plan

Introduction

This plan sets out the vision and principles to communicating and engaging with children and young people with special educational needs and disability (SEND) in Walsall.

It includes information on how Walsall Council and NHS Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) will work together to communicate and engage with this audience, as well as their families, carers and stakeholders who provide services to them. It also ensures the information that is provided to this audience is consistent and shared at the right time to meet their needs.

Communications to children and young people with special educational needs, including their families, will align to the guiding principles and corporate priorities detailed in the joint corporate plan below.



Corporate Priority Campaign Supports (as detailed in the Corporate Plan 2018-2021)

- Economic Growth for all people, communities and businesses.
- People have increased independence, improved health and can positively contribute to their communities.
- Internal Focus - all council services are efficient and effective.
- Children have the best possible start and are safe from harm, happy, healthy and learning well.
- Communities are prospering and resilient with all housing needs met in safe and healthy places that build a strong sense of belonging and cohesion.

The Council and CCG are committed to working together to ensure that children have the best start in life and are safe from harm, happy and learning well.

In order to achieve this, the 'Right for Children' vision sets out the need to have:



Together, the Council and CCG will take a person-centred approach, with the views of children, young people, parents and carers taken into account. The approach is based on open communication, so that they know what is going on and why. Their knowledge and experience will also be used to support good decision-making so that organisations can continue to improve communications to children, young people and their families.

In February 2019, health and care services in Walsall were subject to a joint inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission. Their report was published in May and can be found [online](#).

The report focussed on how the Council and CCG identify, meet the needs and improve outcomes for children and young people with identified SEND. Whilst some areas were effective, they identified nine 'significant areas of concern' and now require that the Council and CCG write a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) to identify how they will address the areas of concern.

One key area of concern was around **co-production and engagement** with children and young people, including their families and carers. Through this communications and engagement plan, the Council and the CCG are determined to work together to do things differently.

A key guiding principle to the approach is '**we will do with, and not to**' and this plan sets out how this will be achieved. The local parent carer forum, FACE Walsall, will act as an equal partner to improve communications and engagement and will help facilitate this by organising sessions with families and carers.

Communications and engagement principles:

- strong relationships and shared values in the local area, putting children and families at the heart of all we do to ensure they have a voice and can influence services and provision;
- children, young people and their parents/carers should participate fully in decisions about their lives;
- clear, open and transparent communications;
- equal voices of equal value.

Audiences and communication channels

When planning communications and engagement activities, Council and CCG partners will carefully consider the purpose of the activity and the target audience, to ensure appropriate communication channels are used.

Appendix 1 outlines the audiences and associated communication channels currently identified and Appendix 2 sets out more detail of the engagement activities planned over the next 2 months and will be updated at regular intervals during the improvement programme.

Channels and audiences

Channel	Face to face	Email	Formal reports	Briefings	Letter	Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Newsletter	Everyone email	All staff email	Local Offer	Dedicated web pages	Intranet news	Head Forums	School Link	School Forums	Governors Forum	Social media	Workshops	Focus Groups	Survey	Localities meetings & network
Audience																				
Governance / political																				
Local Authority SEND board	X	X	X																	
Department for Education	X	X	X																	
Council Leader	X	X																		
Portfolio Holder	X	X																		
Cabinet / Corporate Management Team			X	X																
Party Leaders	X	X																		
Overview and Scrutiny Chair	X	X	X	X																
Overview and Scrutiny Committee			X																	
Strategic Education Inclusion Board			X																	
Shadow Cabinet		X		X																
All Councillors				X			X													

Channels and audiences

Channel	Face to face	Email	Formal reports	Briefings	Letter	Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Newsletter	Everyone email	All staff email	Local Offer	Dedicated web pages	Intranet news	Head Forums	School Link	School Forums	Governors Forum	Social media	Workshops	Focus Groups	Survey	Localities meetings & network
Audience																				
Internal and partners																				
SEND team (staff involved in process)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X		
Education Health and Care Plan Assessment Team and Educational Psychology Service	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X		
Children services staff	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						X	X		
Health and care staff							X	X	X	X	X									
Walsall Clinical Commissioning Group	X	X			X				X	X										
Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust	X	X			X				X	X										
Dudley and Walsall Mental Health NHS Trust	X	X			X				X	X										
Walsall Healthwatch	X	X			X				X	X										
West Midlands Police	X	X			X				X	X										
Voluntary and Community Sector	X	X			X				X	X										

Channels and audiences

Channel	Face to face	Email	Formal reports	Briefings	Letter	Walsall Right 4 Children (WR4C) Newsletter	Everyone email	All staff email	Local Offer	Dedicated web pages	Intranet news	Head Forums	School Link	School Forums	Governors Forum	Social media	Workshops	Focus Groups	Survey	Localities meetings & network
Audience																				
Service users & education provision																				
Family and Carers Empowered (FACE) (official participation)	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Service user groups (support systems)	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Parent / Carers Support Group Coalition	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Service Users (individuals – parents)	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Service Users (individuals – carers)	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Service Users (individuals – under 16)	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Service Users (individuals – over 16)	X	X		X	X				X	X							X	X	X	
Schools and other education settings		X			X				X	X		X	X	X	X					
Post 16 education settings		X			X				X	X			X							
Alternative education providers													X							
Individual Governing Bodies															X					
Multi Academy Trust Boards												X	X							

Channels and audiences

Confederation of schools												X	X							
Media Outlets & General Public								X	X						X					

Engagement Plan

What do we need to do?	Action	Benefit (purpose)	Who with and how	Lead	When	Learning / outcome
Identify and overcome barriers to participation	Training parents and carers to become peer support ambassadors.	Having parents trained and able to support other parents to understand and utilise ways to encourage participation/co-production in the SEND improvement agenda. This will build a wider network of peer support and enable more families to engage and have a voice.	Parents and carers via established and emerging communication links Workshops / training events	MK	January 2020	
	Provide training opportunities for Special Educational Needs Coordinator's/other professionals, to facilitate a range of activities to gain the views of children and young people.	Special Educational Needs Coordinator /other professionals, are able to support children and young people to get their views across. This method is an invaluable resource to capture views and ensure children and young people participate.	Special Educational Needs Coordinator and other professionals Meetings	MK / ET	September 2019	

Engagement Plan

What do we need to do?	Action	Benefit (purpose)	Who with and how	Lead	When	Learning / outcome
	Schools developing own activities to encourage student participation in (Personal, Social and Health Education) PSHE curriculum.	<p>Opportunity for wider student body to engage with special educational needs (SEN) pupils, deepening understanding of SEN issues, building relationships, learning to obtain views, collating and feeding back. Schools can develop their own approach that can benefit the school environment for all students and support delivery of PHSE curriculum.</p> <p>Involvement of schools in this way ensures partner ownership of improvements.</p>	<p>Heads Forum/ Schools Forum</p> <p>Support across school clusters/Multi Agency Trusts and between mainstream and special settings</p> <p>?</p>	ET	October 2019	

Engagement Plan

What do we need to do?	Action	Benefit (purpose)	Who with and how	Lead	When	Learning / outcome
Identify and develop relationships with employers	Develop links with other council/NHS services to scope opportunities to build relationships with employers for SEND young people	Identify employment opportunities and contacts for SEND young people. Building relationships support businesses to create opportunities for SEND young people. It will also help to identify what support is available for SEN young people, which can be shared with SEND young people and families.	Meet with and agree future working relationship and access to support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walsall Works Black Country Impact Business growth sector team <p>Aim is to develop an 'offer' of information, contacts and pathways for young people.</p>	KW	September 2019	
Develop events schedule / calendar	Develop a section on the Council web page (as an initial step, ultimately leading to improved local offer) that provides details of what is happening, when, and potentially manage bookings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparency of activity in relation to the WSoA for all stakeholders. Resource for parents and carers to access so they can easily see their opportunities to engage and participate. Oversight of governance and decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage web team regarding opportunities to develop. Speak to MT re ongoing management of page. Information to populate web page provided. 	HD HD MK	July/August 2019 July/August 2019 July/August 2019	

Engagement Plan

What do we need to do?	Action	Benefit (purpose)	Who with and how	Lead	When	Learning / outcome
Capture learning and feedback from engagement and participation events.	Develop techniques to capture feedback at end of engagement sessions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant feedback is routinely captured in a consistent way and used to inform future sessions. Methods are fun and easily accessible to all abilities. Opportunity to track levels of satisfaction with improvements from parents, carers, children and young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice from Council Consultation lead. Input from council P&D team regarding producing 'equipment' to facilitate (e.g. emoji cards, voting tubes) Makaton translations (Castle school) 	HD HD MK	July/August 2019	
		<p>Three workshops with health, social care, education and third sector professionals. The aim was to define the component parts of a new model of care to support children & young people who have ASD/LD/MH to stay at home, rather than being admitted to hospital</p> <p>Two engagement events with families and young people. We wanted to learn from their experiences and suggestions on how we should shape services for the future; what things should be part of the</p>	Aim is to develop an model with co-production with the information, to improve experience and pathway for young people with ASD/ LD/MH in Walsall and the Black country	SS/AT	June/ July and August 2019	<p>The principles that emerged from the workshops have under pinned the development of a framework of care</p> <p>The draft model was fed back to all stakeholders</p>

Engagement Plan

What do we need to do?	Action	Benefit (purpose)	Who with and how	Lead	When	Learning / outcome
		service commission for children and young people.				and stakeholders were asked to prioritise the 42 components care using MoSCoW (Must Have, Should Have, Could Have, Won't)
Ensure good parent participation in governance arrangements	Agree parent representation at Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration and ownership of improvement journey. • Parent/carer voice included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-design remit of participation/ Terms of Reference with Parent representative – link to Charter 	AB / MK	July 2019	
	Develop communication channels for wider cascade of information (e.g. Informal 'drop in' sessions for parents to meet Board members and have a conversation, ask questions, get updates etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency of activity to wider parent/carer body. • Offer wider participation opportunities and access to board members. • Opportunities to build relationships with parents/carers and demonstrate partnership working. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree communication channels that will be used with Board. • Included Board communications in the communication planner based on agreed communication channels. 	AB HD	September 2019 October 2019	

Engagement Plan

What do we need to do?	Action	Benefit (purpose)	Who with and how	Lead	When	Learning / outcome
Communicating improvements to parents / carers.	Identify preferred ways improvements are communicated to parents / carers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure accessibility of information (e.g. use of easy read, translations etc.) – seek advice from council equality team. • Continual 'drip' of information to parents to evidence the activity being delivered and provide transparency (e.g. post board updates). • Develop sense of 'done with' and not 'done to'. • Continual promotion of opportunities to get involved. • Utilise web page to build evidence (e.g. Vlogs, newsletters). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with equalities team for advice re easy read and translation service. • Ask parents preferred method of communication. • Develop communication channels as required. • Include all opportunities in overarching communication planner. 	MK MK MK / HD HD	October 2019 September 2019 October onwards August 2019	
Ensure we know and have included all parents / carers / support groups	Identify all parents / carers / support groups known across the partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all partners are aware of all groups and can access them. • Ensure transparency of engagement and communications (equal offer to all). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check with partners their contacts in terms of parents / carers / support groups and forums 	MK	September 2019	