

Update Report to the School Forum

Wednesday 12th January 2021

Subject: EHCP Timeliness and Performance	Confidential: No
---	-------------------------

1. Purpose

This report is to update the forum on the current position re EHCP timeliness, actions taken to reduce backlogs and provide details of progress on actions required for improvement.

2. Recommendations

To note the contents of this report.

3. Background

Under the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice (2015) statutory guidance, the local authority, health services, early years settings, schools and further education providers have statutory duties to identify and meet the needs of Children and Young People aged 0 to 25 years who have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND). SEND Inspections of all local authorities and local areas over the period May 2016 to May 2021, will be undertaken to assess how effectively these duties are being met. Walsall was inspected in February 2019 and is subject to a Written Statement of Action

The multi- agency SEND Local Area Improvement Board (LAIB) meets on a monthly basis and project manages and monitors SEND Improvement, progress on the SEND Written Statement of Action (WSOA) and EHCP timeliness. This report is extracted from the report to the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee of 5 January 2021, updated with the monthly figures for December 2020.

4. Compliance Update Figures

4.1 The compliance rate on new plans, where requests to assess were received after 1 March 2020, is currently running at 51.7%, as shown in the 10 December 2020 dashboard below.

4.1 To address the low EHCP 20 week compliance rates an **EHCP Timeliness Recovery Plan** has been initiated. EHCP performance figures are reported on a monthly basis to the DFE and are summarised below:

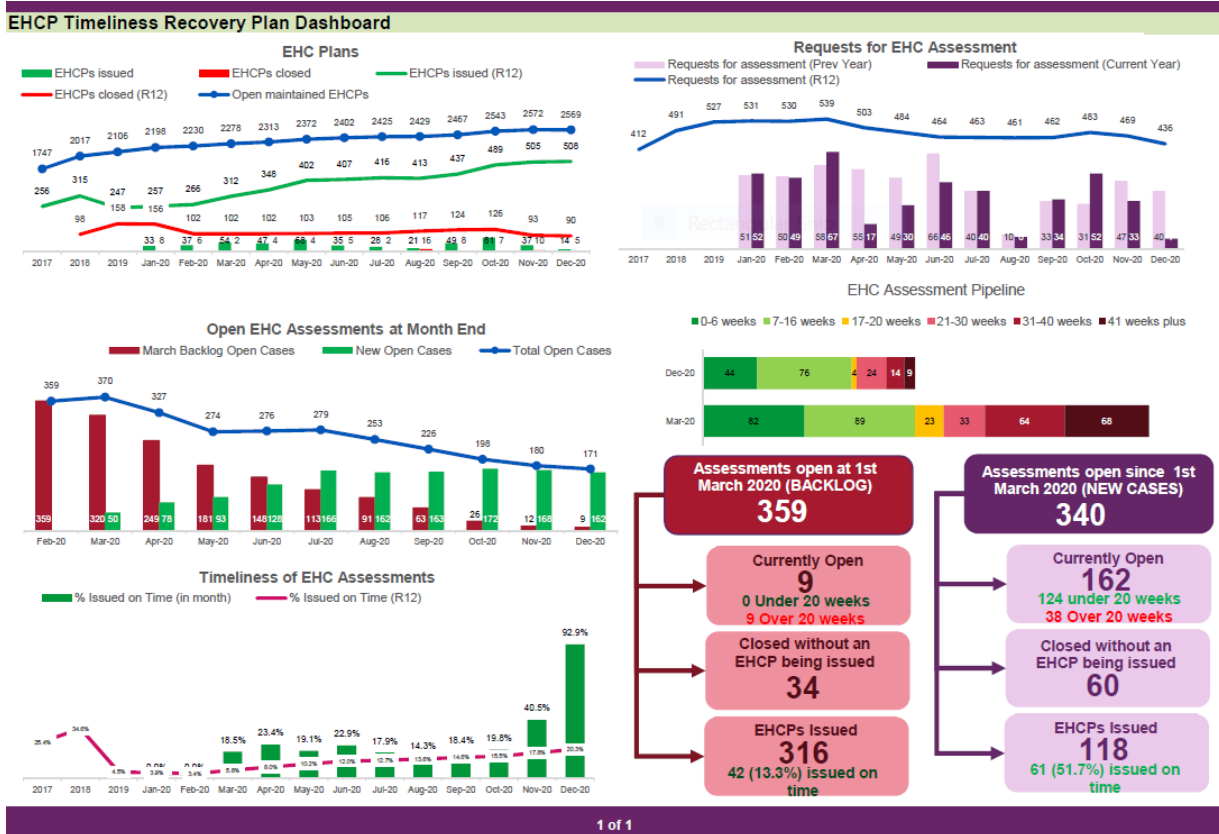
Progress Report Re Completion Of EHCP Plans in 20 Weeks 2020 – LA Name Walsall

	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Number of EHCP Plans Issued, excluding exceptions	54	47	68	35	28	21	49	81	38	29
Number of these issued in 20 weeks	9	9	13	8	5	3	9	15	15	18
% in 20 weeks	16.7%	19.1%	19.1%	22.9%	17.9%	14.3%	18.4%	18.8%	39.5%	62.1%
Cumulative 12 months to date	312	348	402	407	416	413	437	489	506	520
Number of these issued in 20 weeks	16	24	37	45	49	52	60	72	86	104
Cumulative % in 20 weeks	5.1%	6.9%	9.2%	11.1%	11.8%	12.6%	13.7%	14.7%	17.0%	20.0%

4.2 A dashboard has now also been developed to demonstrate compliance and evidence the clearing of the backlog. Headlines as at 10 December 2020 are:

- The number of assessments and plans in progress has reduced further from 359 on 1 March 2020 to 171 as at 13 December 2020, a decrease of 52.4%. This improvement is a result of the high number of plans (434 plans issued and 94 assessments closed) issued over this 9 month period.
- Of the 171 assessments open, 9(5.3%) are from the backlog (referrals received before 01st March) and 162 are new referrals (referrals received after 01st March). The backlog cases over 20 weeks were targeted with the additional temporary resources deployed in the SEND Assessment and Educational Psychology teams.
- Of the 9 from the original backlog, (now reduced to 8 as at 4 January 2021), 2 are reassessments and have existing plans, 3 have been delayed for Covid related reasons and have now progressed to completed assessments and draft plan stage. These would not be included under compliance benchmark measures. The remaining 3 are more complex and need to be compliant with coproduction and consultation requirements, but 2 have now been progressed to draft plan stage with a view to all issuing final plans in the next 3 to 4 weeks, or sooner if possible
- Timeliness over the rolling 12 month period continues to improve from 3.9% (Jan 2020) to 62.1% (Dec 2020).
- Since the 1st March 2020 340 new assessments have been opened.

- 118 EHCPs have been issued, of which 61 (51.7%) were compliant and issued on time.
- 60 were closed without an EHCP being issued (eg. did not meet threshold or were withdrawn)
- 162 are currently open



4.3 It is proposed in future to have a single dashboard focusing on the targeted compliance rate of 60% or above for all newly issued plans. The 3 residual plans and the 3 Covid exceptions can be notated and reported on separately in the report through to plans being issued, as they should not significantly affect targeted compliance rates but need to be monitored and reported on.

4.4 The January 2020 SEN2 return showed that Walsall had 2.9% of pupils with an EHC plan or statement compared against a national figure of 3.3%. Once backlog figures are cleared and plans issued, the level of EHCPs issued may be in the region of 2550 plans (at 4 January 2021 2597 plans issued), which would equate to circa 3.5%, in line with or above national average.

5 Late Assessments and Covid Exceptions

5.1 COVID 19 exceptions are relevant to some of the more complex cases, where observation or face to face assessment has not been possible for Health and Educational assessment. These cases will be specifically evaluated and recorded in line with recent government guidance as COVID exceptions, after all reasonable

efforts have been to progress them and remedial actions taken as soon as practicably possible.

5.2 As at 23 November 2020 9 Covid exception cases remain open in the following areas:

- 3 health
- 4 education
- 2 personal circumstances

5.3 These are being monitored and progressed accordingly.

6 Risks and Further Actions Taken

6.1 The number of children and young people with EHC plans has been gradually increasing since 2018 and this stands at 2,570 on 10 December 2020. This represents an increase of 18% since January 2020, a 22% increase since January 2019 and a 47% increase since 2017.

6.2 These service pressures were recognised and planned for with the additional temporary capacity within the SEND Assessment team and Education Psychology resources to address any additional demand and improve our rates of progress moving forward.

6.3 Caseloads and performance management processes are reviewed on a weekly basis to prioritise cases and maximise EHCP timeliness compliance, address any potential delays and moving along meetings actioned where appropriate. An escalation process has been adopted for cases at risk of going beyond 20 weeks.

6.4 The SEND Assessment and Education Psychology teams are working at full capacity within the designated performance framework and have made substantial service improvements over recent months and remain committed to the journey of continuous improvement.

6.5 There are currently a number of children for whom it is proving hard to find a suitable placement. Work is being progressed with these children and young people, including meetings around the child where necessary, to identify suitable placements and identify potential solutions.

6.6 Key risk factors that affect or delay compliance rates include:

- availability of suitable and specialist places
- school consultation delays
- case specific issues
- delays in finalising plans for hard to place children
- resources being diverted to deliver other or complimentary initiatives

6.7 A number of parallel pieces of work are being undertaken to mitigate these risk factors including:

- A review of SEND sufficiency and specialist provision
- Re-affirmation of the SEND Code of Practice requirements, the implementation of the inclusion agenda, completion of the High needs

Funding Review and a significant increase in the number of direction letters issued.

- Improved scheduling, documentation and process improvements for annual reviews backed up by SENCO forums and training and supported by improvements to phased transfers and post 16 liaison.
- Forward planning and more pro-active communication
- Development of the Local Offer and the pilot implementation of the Open Objects EHCP web based hub to help improve co-production, communication and engagement.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

The Forum are asked to:

7.1 note the contents of this report.

Contact Officer:

Name: Andy Crabtree

Extension: 2444