

21 September 2021

Subject: EHCP Timeliness and Performance	Confidential: No
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1. Purpose

This report is to provide an update to the forum on the current position regarding EHCP timeliness and performance, highlighting the mitigating actions taken to reduce backlogs and areas of improvement.

2. Recommendations

To note the contents and developments shown within this report.

3. Background

The Children and Families Act, (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015) present statutory guidance to Local Authorities, health services, early years settings, schools and further education providers about their obligation to identify and meet the needs of Children and Young People aged 0-25 years who have SEND.

Walsall Local Authority is subject to a Written Statement of Action (WSOA) as a result of the Walsall SEND Inspection on February 2019. The multi-agency SEND Local Area Improvement Board (LAIB) continue to meet on a monthly basis in order to monitor the progress of the SEND WSOA, EHCP timeliness and SEND Improvement.

4. Compliance Update Figures**4.1. Progress Report Re Completion Of EHCP Plans in 20 Weeks 2021 (Walsall)**

	2021							
	Jan.	Feb.	March	April	May	June	July	Aug
Number of EHCP Plans Issued, excluding exceptions	34	33	25	23	17	19	33	37
Number of these issued in 20 weeks	22	20	11	17	5	9	7	13
% in 20 weeks	64.7%	60.6%	44.0%	73.9%	29.4%	47.4%	21.2%	35.1%
Cumulative % in 20 weeks	24.8%	28.8%	30.7%	33.6%	35.8%	37.5%	37.6%	37.6%

4.2. Headline figures as of August are demonstrated in the EHCP Timeliness dashboard below:

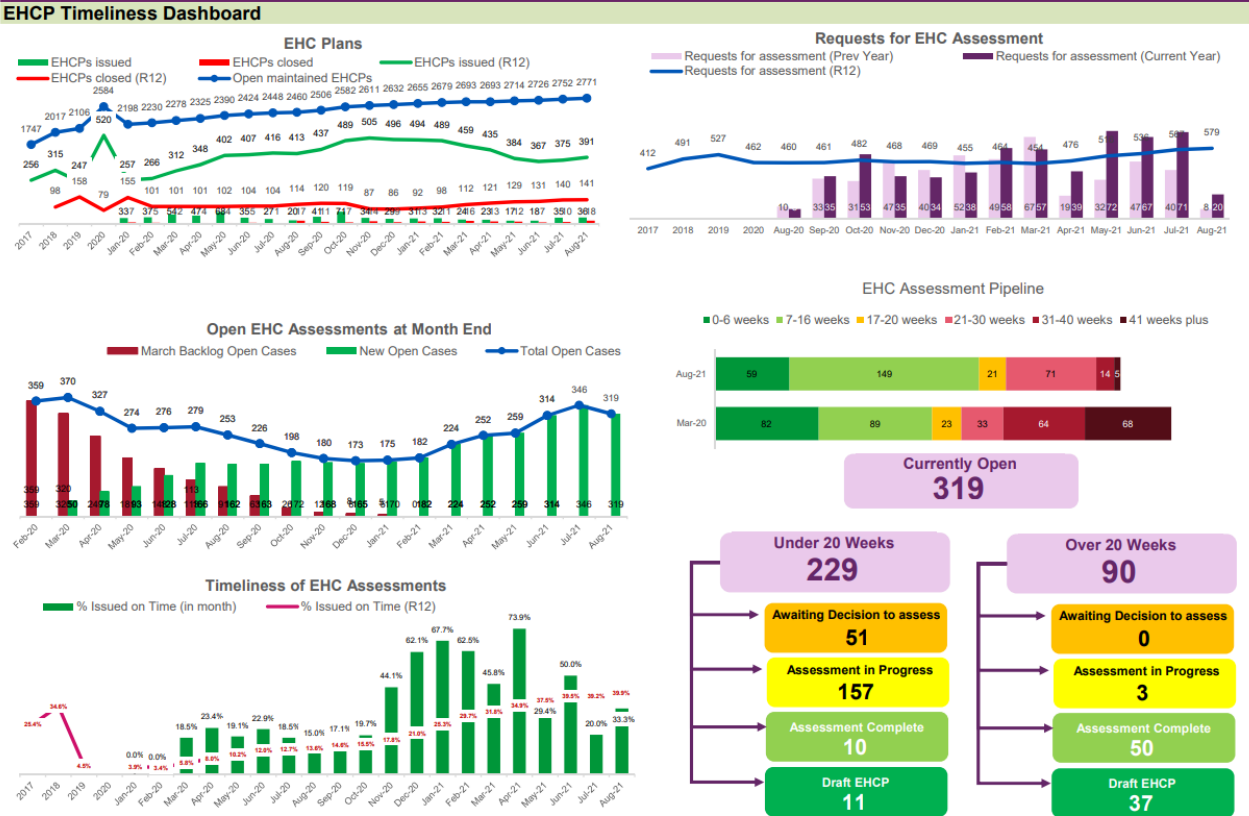
4.3. Timeliness dipped significantly over May, June and July 2021. At this current time the service has faced difficulty in maintaining the timeliness of past performance. The Covid-19 pandemic has caused an increased pressure on the EHC Assessment Service.

Following the school return, the EHC team began to receive increased requests for EHC assessments.

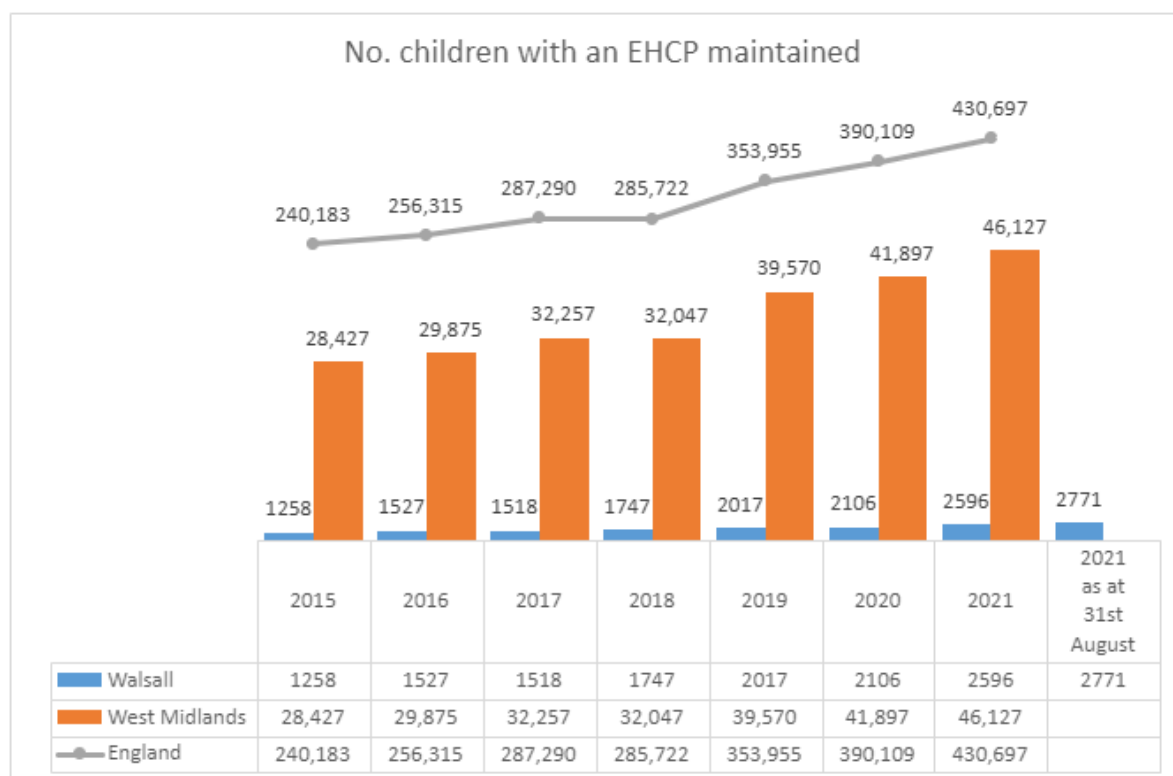
4.4. The team received 209 requests for an EHC assessment between May- June 2021, this represents a 75% increase in requests for assessments compared to that of May – June 2020. A number of permanently employed staff members have left the service over the past months, which has also caused further strain. However, these staff members have been replaced by interim members of staff, whilst we replace these members of staff.

4.5. Pressures have proactively been recognised and are being actioned accordingly by ensuring interim staff are in place whilst recruitment of 6 permanent staff members are secured. As reflected in the timeliness data for August, this has increased timeliness to (35.1%) from the previous month.

4.6. Interviews for permanent staff members within the EHCP team are commencing the week of 13th September.



5. The National and Local Context (SEN2 Data – Jan '21)



- Nationally, there were 430,697 children and young people with an EHC plan maintained by local authorities as at January 2021, this is an increase of 40,588 (10%) from 2020.
- This increase is also reflected in the West Midlands figures, with an increase of 4,230 (10%) EHC plans from 2020.
- In Walsall, there is a significant increase in the number of CYP for whom Walsall Council maintain an EHC Plan. On the return date (14th January 2021) this stood at 2,596, the highest number of EHC Plans recorded in Walsall over the past five years. Walsall's increase is much higher than National and West Midlands at 23.3% an increase of 490 EHC plans from 2020.
- The number of CYP with an EHC Plan has been gradually increasing since March 2019. In August 2020, this stood at 2,460 and has increased by 12% over the last 12 months and now stands at **2,771**.

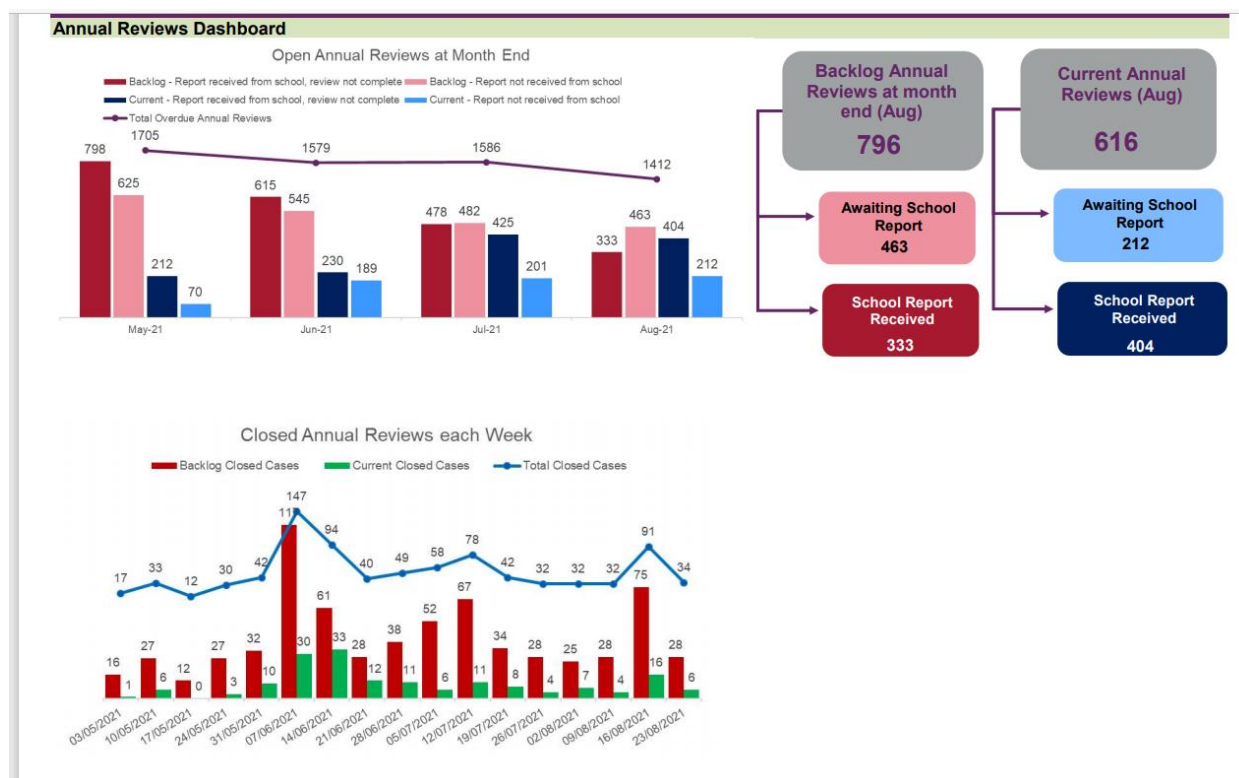
Percentage of pupils with statement of special educational needs (SEN) or EHC Plan, based on where the pupil attends school in January.

- In 2021 the percentage of pupils with a SEN or EHC Plan was 3.3%, this has increased by 0.4 percentage points compared to 2.9% in 2020.
- Walsall has the same increase between 2020 and 2021 when compared to national, while the West Midlands and statistical neighbours had smaller increases.
- The largest increase was 0.29 percentage points for statistical neighbours from 3.47% in 2020 to 3.76% in 2021.
- Walsall has seen a continued increase in the percentage of pupils with a SEN or EHC Plan since 2015 with an overall increase of 1 percentage point, from 2.3% in 2015 to 3.3% in 2021.
- Walsall has a larger increase between 2015 and 2021 than national (0.9 %pts) and West Midlands (0.6 %pts).

6. Annual Review Backlog

As referenced in the last Schools Forum meeting, a backlog of EHCP's developed as a result of Covid-19 and the subsequent school closures. Following the schools reopening, scheduled reviews progressed, however this resulted in an increase of due annual reviews each month, which caused further pressure to schools and settings, as well as creating additional resource pressures within the SEND Team

The current position is identified in the dashboard below:



As of August 2021, there are 1412 open annual reviews. This consists of 333 backlog reviews where we [LA] have received the report from the school and 463 backlog annual reviews where the report from the school is still outstanding. 409 annual reviews are currently with the EHC Assessment team i.e. the report has been received from school but the review process is not yet complete.

Additional resource has been secured within the EHC Assessment Team with dedicated interim staff members employed to manage the backlog of annual reviews.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Forum are asked to:

7.1 note the contents of this report.

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