

4 September 2018

Report on a review of Walsall Council's effectiveness in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Councillor Chris Towe – Education & Skills

Executive Summary:

The Executive Director of Children's Services commissioned a review of the Council's preparedness to test out the effectiveness of SEND practice prior to an Ofsted Inspection of how well it supports children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities (SEND) in April 2018.

This report provides a summary of the review which collected evidence over a two-month period and includes an analysis of the available data, interviews with schools, parents and the relevant local authority personal and some health services. As with any review, it has its limitations, notably the voice of the child or young person and a comprehensive view of Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and NHS services. The CCG has commissioned a parallel review and respective officers are using both to provide the fullest picture.

All the recommendations presented are based on the available evidence, some of which is anecdotal and where this was the case, the review used a number of sources to verify the evidence.

The review identified a number of strengths as well as areas for development and where possible, the good practice identified will inform future developments. An action plan, based on the recommendations is included with this report for consideration by the Committee.

Presentation:

The recommendations have been grouped under five headings set out below and each recommendation will be addressed within an Action Plan (draft attached):

1. Strategy and Vision
2. Systems and structures
3. Support for families
4. Meeting the needs of vulnerable children and young people
5. Effective Partnership working and commissioning

Reason for scrutiny:

To ensure that Members are able to consider the SEND review as part of the democratic process.

Recommendations:**That:**

1. The Committee note the main finding and establish a working group to support the implementation of the action plan.
2. The Committee monitor the effectiveness of the actions implemented on an annual basis.

Background papers:

[Local Area SEND Inspection Framework](#)
[Local Area Inspections One year on.](#)

Resource and legal considerations:

In seeking to review the way we work with health colleagues (including the CCG and NHS Trust) there will be opportunities to consider how we respectively use our limited resources to improve the way we work together.

Council Corporate Plan Priorities:

The Health and Wellbeing Strategy includes priorities linked to improving school readiness, improving educational outcomes, ensuring people possess the skills to enter and progress into work (Priority 1); improving emotional wellbeing of children and young people, enabling and empowering ...physical and mental health, removing unwanted variation in health care and ensuring services are inclusive (Priority 2).

It also mentions 'Target Groups' including children in care, NEET, Teenage parents, children and young people with disabilities, people with long-term conditions and people with complex needs and it has a number of 'Obsessions' including supporting and empowering vulnerable children and young people to improve physical and mental health.

Citizen impact:

There are currently approximately 8,500 children and young people with identified SEND who have parents and carers who will be positively impacted by the addressing the concerns set out and detailed in the action plan.

Environmental impact:

There is no identified environmental impact.

Performance management:

The Committee will be able to review, over time the impact of the action plan using the available data and any external view (Ofsted Inspection) of services in the future.

Reducing inequalities:

All children and young people are entitled to access the most appropriate, high quality educational provision available. The review tests whether this is the case and identifies where inequalities may occur.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out? No


Consultation:

The list of those consulted during the period of the review is set out below.

Name	Team
Frances Done	Chair of the SENDi Challenge Board
Health/Commissioners	
Rebecca Johnson	CCG commissioner
Paula Furnival	Executive Director Adults and Social Care
Heather Maybury	Commissioner (short breaks)
David De May	Commissioning
Linda Bromwich	Head of Child Development Centre
Local authority	
Sally Rowe	Executive Director Children's Services
Debbie Carter	Assistant Director
Claire Goss	Head of SEND
SEN Assessment team	
Connie Burnie	Head of School Improvement
Susanne Horgan	EP Post 16
Margaret Wiredu	Advisory Support Team Manager
Jeanette Knapper	All age disability service
Kay Munday	Parent Information Service
Nick Perks/ Anne Doyle	Data team
Tom Walker	Transformation team
Nicola Hart	Early Years Advisory
Kate Mann	Head of Admissions
Caroline Guest	Head of Access Team
Isabel Vanderheeran	Early Help Manager
Schools	
Head teacher Clusters	Brownlow Cluster
Head teacher/ SENCo	Rushall primary School
Head teacher/ SENCo	Alumwell Infants School
Head teacher	Blue Coat Infant & Juniors
Head teacher/ SENCo	Mary Elliot Special School
Head teacher/ SENCo	St Francis of Assisi CTC
Boards	
High Needs Transitions Board	

Strategic Inclusion Board
Parent/Carer Forum
DSPR
Inclusion Task & Finish Group
SEND Transformation meeting

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1. Report

The SEND review provided an Independent view of how well the local area supports children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities in terms of:

- SEND Strategy, outcomes and evidence of impact.
- The effectiveness of local authority systems and structures.
- The effectiveness and impact of partnership working (including any relevant strategic boards).
- Accessibility and effectiveness of the local area offer.
- Parental engagement.
- Educational and employment outcomes for pupils with identified SEND (including exclusion rates and L2/3 qualifications).
- Recommendations for improvement at strategic and operational level to address the following:
 - How well are children and young people with identified SEND supported to achieve their potential in Walsall?
 - What works well?
 - What needs attention and why?
 - Are there any barriers preventing children and young people with identified SEND being supported to achieve their potential in Walsall? If yes, how might these be removed?

Strengths

- The capacity of the authority to collect and report on relevant data is good. The data team provide comprehensive data on a daily, weekly and monthly basis in a variety of formats.
- The SENDi Challenge Board has, over the past two years brought together key partners to develop and review impact and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- The 0-5 Team Around the Child approach (which is multi-disciplinary) provides a comprehensive service for those children, under 5 years who have complex needs. The key worker approach is valued by parents and works well.
- There is a pathway for under-fives requiring assessment and intervention for possible autism spectrum.
- The Autism Working Group is a good example of co-production with parents where professionals and parents/ carers come together to share best practice and identify issues.
- The Youth Employment Initiative in the Black Country that is delivered as the Impact Project is effective in supporting Looked After Children and vulnerable learners into positive destinations.

Recommendations

- There is no clearly identifiable vision within the local authority or partner agencies for children and young people with SEND based on a strategy with evidence based priorities to inform joint commissioning. In the absence of this the work is fragmented and lacks coherence. A clear vision supported by an accountability structure to ensure appropriate management oversight is needed.
- The Strategic Inclusion Board, whilst having very clear Terms of Reference has not yet defined its priorities and how they might be achieved. It should consider revising the role and remit of the Strategy Groups and ensure that every group

attends to priority themes (SEND, Recruitment and Retention, Vulnerable learners and Transitions) (Appendix 4).

- Many of the local authority teams working with children and young people retain their own databases despite the authorities Capita and Mosaic systems providing accurate and timely data. All local authority teams should review what data they hold and ensure compliance with GDPR. The local authority should only use Capita and Mosaic for information on children and young people and focus their efforts on ensuring the appropriate teams have access to both systems.
- The EHCP assessment process is significantly hampered by reliance on a paper-based system, which slows down the process resulting in duplication and too many delays. A transformation project has recently been established to expedite the process of moving to an electronic system so the Assessment team can manage the process in a timely and more efficient manner. This is a critical piece of work which needs the resources to progress at pace.
- The Initial EHCP Assessment Panel should be reinstated with appropriate multi-agency representation and published criteria for the Panel.
- The SENDIASS Service currently lacks capacity and the existing line management doesn't support independence from the Local Authority as the Code of Practice outlines it should do. The local authority should consider alternative providers, such as a third sector organisation or partnering with a neighbouring authority to ensure independence, sustainability and increase the capacity.
- The current Local Offer is not effective and requires urgent review in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice. The local authority should identify the resource to update the website and identify where responsibility for this requirement will be managed within the local authority.
- A robust pathway is needed to ensure those children and young people MfE and CME can access appropriate education in a timely manner. This should include a review of IBSS and its role in supporting the pathway for early help, support to families with children at risk of exclusion and the placement of excluded pupils.
- The recent Ofsted judgement of the local authority PRU provides an opportunity to review its role and remit as part of a graduated response. By developing a stepdown/step up approach to managing pupils with challenging behaviour alongside early intervention and clear criteria for the role of the PRU, children and young people at risk of exclusions would be better served and have a greater chance of successfully returning to mainstream provision.
- There is confusion with schools and parents on how to access CAMHS, including the criteria and process. The CCG needs to consider the access to CAMHS and referral through GPs to ensure consistency.
- There are too many single agency and multi-agency Transition Panels and groups with no evidence of a coherent approach to ensuring transition points support the child or young person. A single transitions pathway, which identifies key transition points for all children and young people with SEND would be helpful.
- The 0-5 TAC approach could be extended to 0-19 TAC to support and manage transition through various phases of school and post 16.
- Integrated working within and between partners is not well developed. A framework for integrated working which clearly identifies need against provision supported by the Team Around the Child approach and a Common Assessment Framework that provides a graduated multi-agency response would alleviate this.

Action Plan – SEND review

Recommendation (what needs to be done?)	How?	Who?	By when?	Impact measure (how will we know that it has made a difference?)	Progress (Red. Amber Green)
Strategy and Vision					
<p>There is a need for a clear vision supported by an accountability structure to ensure appropriate management oversight.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with partners (education, social care, health and parents) on the vision for education in Walsall. 2. Draft the vision as part of Walsall’s Inclusion Strategy 3. Seek endorsement by the council and partners 4. Publish the vision and strategy 5. Workshops to launch and engage 	<p>AD A&A</p>	<p>September 2018</p> <p>October 2018</p> <p>November/ December 2018</p>	<p>Earlier identification of needs (children and families). Fewer exclusions. Fewer children and young people without a school place. Locality teams working across children’s services.</p>	<p>R</p>
<p>The Strategic Education Inclusion Board should consider revising the role and remit of the Strategy Groups and ensure that every group attends to priority themes (SEND, Recruitment and Retention, Vulnerable learners and Transitions).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consult with the SEIB on recommendations 2. Ensure the strategy groups are focused on the priority themes 3. Develop performance measures to assess the impact of the activities around priorities 4. Ensure the Board has an action plan to determine resource and outcomes by which to measure impact. 	<p>AD A&A</p> <p>Head of SI Inclusion officer/Data team</p> <p>Chair of board/ Head of SI</p>	<p>September 2018</p> <p>September 2018</p> <p>September 2018</p> <p>November 2018</p>	<p>The SEIB monitors and challenges performance against impact measures</p> <p>All schools engaged in school-to-school support aligned to the priorities. Regular reports by the Strategy groups to the Board on activity/ outcomes and impact on priority themes.</p>	<p>R</p>

Action Plan – SEND review

Recommendation (what needs to be done?)	How?	Who?	By when?	Impact measure (how will we know that it has made a difference?)	Progress (Red. Amber Green)
<u>Systems and structures</u>					
The local authority should only use Capita and Mosaic for information on children and young people and focus their efforts on ensuring the appropriate teams have access to both systems.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all teams are trained and skilled in using the Capita/ Mosaic (as appropriate) 2. Identify 'superusers' across children's services who can access both Capita and Mosaic. 	<p>Transformation team</p> <p>ADs</p>	October 2018	<p>Staff confident in using Capita/ Mosaic to inform planning and identification of need.</p> <p>All Children's Services teams will have at least one superuser to support access to both systems.</p> <p>Teams will no longer use spreadsheets for their own data.</p>	<p>R</p> <p>R</p> <p>A</p>
The EHCP assessment process should move to an electronic system as a matter of urgency.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commission a project to consult, identify an appropriate system, pilot and implement. 2. Ensure multi-agency training for all users 	AD A& A /Head of QA/PI	December 2018	<p>Compliance with statutory timescales will improve.</p> <p>Greater engagement with partners.</p> <p>Reduction in complaints.</p> <p>Improved quality of plans.</p>	A
<u>Support for families</u>					
The Independent Advice and Support Service should be commissioned from an alternative provider to ensure independence, sustainability and increase the capacity.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with NCB to identify an alternative provider for SENDIASS 2. Transfer service. 	Head of SEND	December 2018	<p>Parents/ carers will be able to access timely, independent support and advice.</p> <p>Reduce the need for parents to seek (and pay for) external advice and support.</p>	A

Action Plan – SEND review

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				Parents/ carers report an improvement in the accessibility and quality of the service. More parent/carers accessing the service.	
The local authority should identify the resource to update the Local offer website and identify where responsibility for this will be managed in the future.	1. Identify the resource to improve and manage the local offer website	Head of QA/PI	October 2018	Parents and partners report greater satisfaction in finding and using the website.	A
<p><u>Meeting the needs of vulnerable children and young people</u></p> <p>A robust pathway should be developed with schools and partners to ensure children and young people out of school can access appropriate education in a timely manner.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the Fair Access Panel protocol 2. Consult with schools on a graduated approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable CYP 3. Align all Access and Achievement teams to localities 4. Develop a nurture plus provision to support school readiness 	<p>Head of Admissions AD A&A</p> <p>AD A&A</p> <p>AD A&A/ Head of Transformation</p>	<p>September 2018</p> <p>September/October 2018</p> <p>August 2018</p> <p>January 2019</p>	<p>Fewer exclusions. Fewer children and young people out of school or without a school place. Fewer requests for EHCP/specialist placements</p> <p>Easily accessible advice and support to schools/parents.</p> <p>All KS1/2 at risk pupils in nurture plus placements</p>	R

Action Plan – SEND review

Recommendation (what needs to be done?)	How?	Who?	By when?	Impact measure (how will we know that it has made a difference?)	Progress (Red. Amber Green)
A review of the Behaviour Support Service should be commissioned to ensure it is fit for purpose in supporting children and young people at risk of exclusion.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Realign BSS team to localities. 2. Review the roles and functions of the team. 3. Consult on revised model of delivery. 	Head of BS AD A&A/HR AD A&A	August 2018 September 2018 October/ November 2018	More responsive and accessible advice and support for schools/ parents. Fewer exclusions. Improved attendance and less persistent absence. Fewer referrals for EHCP	A R
Review the role and remit of New Leaf as part of a graduated response.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Academy sponsor to develop criteria for KS3/4 PRU provision 	AD A&A	January 2018	Clarity of cohort for commissioned places. No KS1/2 students placed in PRUs	R
<p><u>Effective Partnership working and commissioning</u></p> Work with the CCG to improve access to CAMHS and referral through GPs to ensure consistency.					
A single transitions pathway, which identifies key transition points for all children and young people with SEND is needed.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify current panels and decision-making processes and streamline. 2. Agree funding arrangements with health (s75) 	Head of QA/PI AD EH/ AD A&A/ AD CSC/ CGG commissioners		Fewer panels. Greater clarity of decisions. Quicker placement Tripartite funding arrangements	R

Action Plan – SEND review

Recommendation (what needs to be done?)	How?	Who?	By when?	Impact measure (how will we know that it has made a difference?)	Progress (Red. Amber Green)
Develop a framework for integrated working which identifies need against provision supported by the Team Around the Child approach that provides a graduated multi-agency response	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review existing arrangements 2. Work with health to extend the TAC approach into schools 3. Develop the locality teams 	Head of Transformation/ AD A&A	December 2018	Parents/carers and schools report improved satisfaction with local authority/Health services in their local area.	R