

Agreed Note of Visit to Stockton on Tees

Date of visit: 3rd December 2015

Meeting attended by

Jane Harvey	0-25 SEN team Manager
Dawn Barron	Information and engagement Officer
Lizzie Porter	Education Development Officer SEN
Gill Burnett	Principal SEN Officer 0-25
Joanne Mills	Education Development adviser (SEN)
Craig Walker	Headteacher, Northfield School
Diane McConnell	Assistant Director Schools and SEN
Caroline Fell	SEND Information Advice and Support Officer
Jackie Holiday	EHCP Transition Lead
Dianne Williams	Co-Leader Stockton United for Change
Helen Crawford	Senior SEN Officer 14-25 PFA
Elisha Smith	Senior SEN Officer 0-13
Cath Hitchen	SEND Professional Adviser DfE

Management, oversight and ongoing planning

Stockton used a multi agency planning project approach leading up to the implementation of the reforms. Reporting and scrutiny was through the Service Group Management team, Children and Young People's Health and Well Being Commissioning Group and Health and Well Being and the Children's Board. In September 14 the focus changed to monitoring and further developing services through the implementation of the reforms. In the summer of 2015 a structural review took place resulting in a new Schools and SEN Service with responsibility for the 0-25 age range. This service brings together the school improvement and sen elements of work to formalize the previous joint working arrangements.

Engaging with parents

Dianne was able to describe the meaningful co-production work within Stockton including:-

- Developing and co presenting information roadshows
- Work with adult services
- Coordinated advertising of events to maximize attendance
- Jointly produced newsletters- number 6 on the way
- A Parent Carer booklet taking people from the early stages of concern with FAQs
- Headliners Project

Stockton United for Change (SUfC) also raised the issue of ensuring that parents received a very positive first interaction with teams. This resulted in training for a range of practitioners and a second run of training is about to go live.

SUfC has also used some of the funding available to buy ipads so that they can show the local Offer to parents who come to meet with them. This is proving very successful as it uses 'the moment in time' and provides a guided view of what is available.

Engaging with children and young people

Young People's services in Stockton are actively involved in the reform agenda through Youth Focus North East to consult with children and young people. Following work with CDC a working group was set up for all practitioners to develop practice on consulting.

Schools

You reported the very positive relationship which Stockton has with schools based on mutual respect using a 'support and challenge' approach. Craig was able to describe from personal experience the support his school received in their journey to substantially revisit the SEN offer in Northfield School. Staff in Stockton were able to support review, offer suggestions with 'the outsiders eye' and provide advice with the challenging HR issues linked to the review. There were some particular features which made a huge difference

- Consulting with parents revealed many didn't want to come into school and be 'seen'. School were able to give parents a new area with a separate entrance. This worked so successfully that it is no longer used
- Changing the attitude of LSAs by 'professionalising' their role, creating career development, identifying key training areas and using ipads to ensure LSAs have the lesson notes prior to entering the classroom to ensure more effective learning
- Very strong SEN governor who uses his experience as a teacher in a special school
- The use of primary trained staff

All sectors have now integrated Stockton's, Assess, Plan, Do, Review logo which appears on their documentation. All schools have their SEN information on their sites using a common format provided by the LA and work is now ongoing to look at the quality of these reports.

Stockton has developed a system of mentor SENCOs to support new or challenged SENCOs and this works alongside the SENCO networks and briefings.

Early Years Settings

Stockton has 34 PVI's and around 250 childminders. Stockton took the decision to treat all providers as equals and has, therefore provided a range of training which has been well received. Most EY providers are graded as good or better. The focus of work this year is transition and measuring impact. There are 4 SENCO training sessions planned and all providers, including childminders, benefit from the school improvement team training and guided support.

EHC needs assessments

a) Assessments

Initially there was an increased level of requests but this may have been due to people preferring to have the new assessment process. The rate appears to have settled down. Most referrals are from schools. Where the LA decides not to proceed with an assessment support is provided to the school in terms of any further action needed and this is backed up by the work described previously with SENCOs.

Initially there was an issue identified by the LA in managing to finalise the Plans within the 4 week period. The LA revisited the pathway and addressed this as an issue. You have moved a PCP meeting to before the assessment starts to allow more information to be received and you also invite Aspire to those meetings so that they can have an initial contact with families.

b) EHC plans

You provided two plans and I will send feedback separately. Your plan format was developed in consultation with families and there has been generally positive feedback from families. You initiated weekly performance clinics with regular reporting to the AD and are developing a quality assurance tool. You are also engaging in a piece of work around closer monitoring of reviews which should contribute to cultural change across the

piece, particularly for those young people further down the transition plan timescale. You also targeted Out of Area and looked after children and young people for conversion to the new system.

Conversions / Transfers

You are using the transition process to address cultural change within schools and developing the concept of using the often separate plans which are drawn up for the young people with the most complex (educationally or socially driven) challenges. You now have a full team in place and are confident about the progress possible. You have reviewed the format and have received positive parental feedback.

Local Offer

We were able to access the local offer during the meeting. You will be carrying out a formal annual check on the LO though this is done routinely by the officer in charge. You are using the LO to provide access to consultations, for example on the 20 week pathway and used the feedback from SUFC to show the documents used side by side so that parents could compare them more easily. In addition to the parents publicizing through meetings, you now have information boards which you use to take the information about the LO 'out and about'.

IASS and Independent Supporters

In Stockton there tends to be a high level of confidence for those children on plans and a lot of work the service undertakes is for children at SEN Support stage. This is a common pattern. Aspire provide the IS support and, whilst there has not been a high take up, the service has been widely promoted. It will be interesting to see if inviting aspire to the early PCP meetings results in increased take up.

Tribunals / Mediation

Three Tribunals have been registered since implementation. There has been increased use of both dispute resolution and mediation, both of which the LA views as extremely positive.

Preparing for Adulthood

The LA feel that this is an area not as well developed but there is a new pathway group including adult social care, schools and colleges, housing, regeneration and youth service. This area is also linked in to the School Improvement area as one of the EDOs has a remit for secondary and FE.

Personal Budgets

There is a PB policy in place though, as in many other areas there is a low take up and currently no education personal budgets. The LA feels that, to some degree this is a positive indicator of the fact that they have always made bespoke packages where needed and, at this stage, parents prefer this method of delivery and control.

Commissioning

Currently there are commissions being developed around S&L services and Equipment as these are the clearly identified priorities across services. CMAP is a tripartite board which oversees joint commissioning for individual cases and increasingly extrapolates information for future service development.

Youth Justice

Stockton has its processes in place and could cite an example of where it has been used effectively to ensure that a young man in custody was able to access individual literacy and numeracy programs that he required as a result of the new way of working between youth justice and SEN and the pressure that they were able to exert on the provider as a result of the legal requirements. This was a really good example of the processes actively supporting all areas of one young man's needs.

Evaluation

One of the things Stockton has spent time on is 'keeping it fresh' acknowledging the danger which would otherwise be there of changes being implemented without really changing the long term culture across all providers.

Issues that the LA / parents would like to feedback to the DfE

There are a few issues which Stockton is experiencing

- Health engagement – in particular in relation to the provision of advice in a timely manner – we discussed some possible routes to help
- EP shortages – there is a regional problem with recruiting EPs. Stockton EP service is working closely with LA officers to try to make the best use of this scarce resource and has provided training for schools around standardised tests and their interpretation
- High needs funding - significant pressures on this budget

Local area inspection – due to a delivery problem the NE region had not had the presentation from Ofsted so we took the opportunity to run through the key elements

Conclusion

Stockton appears to be making good progress in embedding the reforms. There is evidence of continuing good coproduction with the parent carer forum and officers present could show the tangible benefits from the new structures in place. The LA is aware that there is work to do with health to ensure timely reporting and is continuing to pursue this issue.

Actions following the meeting

Action	Who	By
Draft NOV to the LA aimed for	CH	11.12.15
Amendments/suggestions additions to cath	JH	24.12.15
Send NW development day documents	CH	11.12.15
Contact Stockport for Data tool and send on	CH	asap