

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

17 MARCH 2022

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Children and Young People – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Lisa Evans

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND/OR DISABILITIES (SEND) STRATEGY – PROGRESS
AND NEXT STEPS for 2022/23**

SUMMARY

The Children and Families Act 2014 introduced significant changes to the systems and approaches for children and young people aged 0-25 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In 2016 an inspection framework was introduced to assess the effectiveness of local areas in fulfilling their statutory duties and in identifying and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.

A new SEND strategy was developed by health, education and social care partners in 2021 and reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board in May 2021.

This report provides an overview of the six strategic priorities, an update on progress against them and sets out next steps.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)

The SEND strategy supports the key priority of making the Borough a place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm. The strategy provides the strategic direction for our activity as a local area, and Cabinet is asked to endorse the action plan for 2022/23 to ensure a continued focus on these areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Note progress to date in delivering against the 6 strategic outcome areas in the SEND strategy.
2. Endorse the outline action plan for 2022/23.

DETAIL

SEND STRATEGY – PROGRESS TO DATE AND PLANNED ACTIONS FOR 2022/23

1. The SEND strategy was agreed at the Health and Wellbeing Board in May 2021. The strategy is the culmination of our transformation and improvement journey so far, building upon the learning from the local area inspection in 2019, and brings together our previous strategic implementation and action plans into a single, shared vision.

2. Our vision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities is the same as for all children and young people: that Stockton-on-Tees is a great place to grow up, where children and young people are protected from harm and supported to be the best they can be in life.
3. Whilst we recognise that there is work to be done to achieve our vision, we have high aspirations and a shared commitment to improve our system by working in partnership with children, young people and their families, professionals and our local communities.
4. We identified six key priorities in this strategy which provide our focus for driving system-wide change and improved outcomes for children, young people and families.
5. The sections below outline progress to date and planned actions for 2022/23.

Priority 1 - Working in partnership with families

Progress to date

6. A co-production charter has been coproduced with families and key partners including Stockton Parent Carer Forum and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group and sets out how we have committed to work together and the principles that we will follow.
7. The Charter has an overarching commitment to **Start Together, Stay Together**, recognising the importance of having a shared understanding from the start of any project and seeks to ensure that all parties are valued and involved throughout.
8. Coproduction is a strength of the partnership work with Stockton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) . It is fundamental to all developments within the Local Area System giving families a strong voice to influence change. Examples of this are the redesigned approach, process and format of the Education Health and Care Plan, (outlined in more detail below); changes to the neurodevelopmental pathway and a recent piece of work to redesign the Down Syndrome pathway with Tees Valley CCG, HDFT and North Tees & Hartlepool Foundation Trust, illustrating the ongoing co-production and partnership working with SPCF.
9. Six weekly drop-in sessions with the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) are 'themes led' by the parents and carers to improve communication and identify gaps in services for forward planning and to support commissioning.
10. Recruitment to additional posts within SEND and Inclusion has also had involvement from parents/carers/children/young people. Visioning sessions were held prior to recruitment where partners described the skills/attributes of people they need to have in those posts to make their experience of the system better. All involved commented on the value of such work, with it being described as 'a very humbling experience' and 'incredibly powerful' when used in describing the attributes and behaviours necessary for officers in these key positions.

Planned Actions for 22/23

11. As part of our commitment to extending the reach of the Coproduction Charter, Stockton Parent Carer Forum has submitted a successful bid for charitable funding to work closely with schools and education settings to embed the values and principles of the Charter in their ways of working with families. This pilot project will work with a small number of schools and settings initially with a view to seeking additional funding should this be

evaluated to have an impact on improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

12. We have worked with children and young people, schools/settings, parents/carers to develop a set of illustrations that describe 'What makes a good SEN caseworker' in their words. These illustrations are now used in recruitment and induction of SEN Caseworkers and Casework Assistants. We will revisit this work in the next 12 months for these stakeholders to evaluate if we have met their standards.
13. All joint commissioning priorities and opportunities will be developed through co-production. Priorities will include the Speech & Language integrated pathway and the Down Syndrome pathway work to ensure the education and social care pathway are integrated with the health pathway to allow for one overarching pathway.

Priority 2 - Understanding the needs and strengths of children, young people and their families

Progress to date

14. 'Valuing SEND' (VSEND) as a tool to describe the needs of a child/young person is embedded into SEN Support and EHCP systems across the Local Area, in any documentation that are used for communicating with the LA teams to describe needs and in the revised EHCP format. This gives a common language to describing needs from 0-25 years.
15. A comprehensive, coproduced person-centred planning approach has been developed. The approach the Local Area takes is 'What Matters Island child / young person and parent/carer' (appendix 1 and 2) This is designed to be a scaffold and structure for good quality conversations leading to high aspirations and a shared understanding of the needs, provision and desired outcomes for an individual.
16. A new EHCP format is in place which is legally compliant but also user friendly and child/young person focussed. This was coproduced throughout and is being constantly evaluated by stakeholders within the system.
17. The Council's Children's Services review has allowed for a significant investment in the staffing of the SEND and Inclusion Service reflecting the views about how families and stakeholders view communication in the SEND system. The number of key navigation roles of Caseworker have been increased and Caseworker Assistants introduced to the system which will impact directly on the visibility of the Council in the SEND system. Specialist teachers have been introduced to offer direct support and challenge on the best practice in teaching approaches for children with identified needs and to also assist schools/settings when needs are proving difficult to identify accurately leading to lack of provision in the classroom.
18. The sphere of work which is being undertaken around children & young people with neurodevelopmental needs is enabling a strategic picture to be developed in terms of unmet need and gaps in provision. Outcomes from the neurodevelopmental triage panel, key worker project and 'Dynamic Support Register' are being strategically linked to inform commissioning decisions and discussions with partners.

Planned Actions for 22/23

19. VSEND continuing professional development sessions have been delivered across the Local Area with all stakeholders. This is a continuing area of development with training and

support packages available aligned to these descriptors throughout the year (to reflect the change in staffing across all sectors).

20. Person Centred Planning introduction and implementation phase of this is complete however it is recognised there will be a need for ongoing training for new staff across the system on a regular basis alongside modelling of the approach to ensure it does not become just another form to complete and the spirit of the approach is upheld.
21. Revised EHCP format requires rolling out across all 'live' EHCPs. Previous formats of the EHCP will need to be updated to the new version over time (however section A – child/young person and parent/carer views will be migrated to the new system over the coming year).
22. The revised Annual Review format, system and process has been coproduced with families and schools/settings the implementation phase is commencing with training and development opportunities across the system.
23. We will also see a focus on embedding new teams, officers and new posts in the Local Authority , induction, training to maximise the value of the changes, and in ensuring ongoing effective communication across the local area system.
24. Families have asked us to work with them to improve understanding of the links to social care, and the services and support which is available for children and young people with disabilities. To assist with this development we have introduced a Designated Social Care Officer role in the Children's services review. This will be a dedicated role that will mirror the support that the Designated Clinical Officer role offers for Health services. We are also undertaking with SPCF on the offer and will be commissioning some external review work to support this.
25. Strategic work will continue to meet the needs of our more complex children & young people with a learning disability and / or autism to prevent escalation of need. This remit will expand into complex commissioning for those children & young people who require an MDT approach to support their needs.

Priority 3 - Developing a system which meets children, young people and family's needs and is accountable for improving outcomes

Progress to date

26. We have developed a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for SEND (JSNA) to describe current and future health, care and wellbeing needs. The recommendations from the JSNA have helped to shape the priorities and commitments set out within the SEND strategy. **The JSNA document will be published on the Tees JSNA website and it will be available on the Council's website via agenda - link to Board papers**
<http://www.egenda.stockton.gov.uk/aksstockton/users/public/admin/kab71.pl?cmte=NHW>
27. We have worked to jointly commission a pilot occupational therapy service to improve educational outcomes. Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust and Horizons Specialist Academy Trust have worked collectively to jointly understand need within the population of students, design and shape occupational therapy provision and develop a performance framework to evaluate the impact of provision. The service commenced in October 2021 and by Christmas had worked with 34 students supporting their motor control and sensory needs with impacts recorded as reduction in levels of anxiety,

increased focus on academic work for longer periods of time and increased ability to participate within teacher-instigated learning opportunities. A full evaluation will be available at the end of the academic year.

28. We have developed a SEND strategic data dashboard which supports the Local Area to evaluate its effectiveness. It provides a clear oversight of performance in the 6 strategic outcome areas and includes Education, Health and Social Care data. It is constantly being refined as more data comes on stream.
29. The 'Needs Led Neurodevelopmental Pathway' has made significant progress in shifting the focus from diagnosis to meeting need across the health, education and social care sectors as reported to the HWBB in December 2021. Waiting times have reduced but it is an ongoing partnership approach to ensure needs are met in a timely manner. Likewise the introduction of key workers for Children & Young People with a Learning Disability and / or a diagnosis of Autism is enabling children to get back into education; avoid hospital admissions and upskill parent carers to help meet the needs of their child and help prevent family breakdown.
30. There is a Tees Valley Dynamic Support Register (DSR) in place with all CYP 'RAG' rated as 'red' having a key worker in line with national guidance.
31. There is now a SEND health group that meet bi-monthly to discuss service delivery and pressures, allowing the team to anticipate any difficulties in accessing services. Information is shared back to the health team by the DCO about developments within the LA so that there will be less duplication in service provision and a mutual understanding of the demands within the system allowing for a positive change in service delivery.
32. A new education support offer for Occupational Therapy was commissioned in 2021.

Planned Actions for 22/23

33. We will be finalising a joint commissioning plan to support the delivery of the SEND strategy. The plan will set out our approach to joint commissioning and our agreed areas of focus which will include:
 - a. Further embedding the Needs Led Neurodevelopmental Pathway
 - b. Developing an integrated Speech Language and Communication Pathway
 - c. Developing a Cohesive Occupational Therapy offer
 - d. Embedding the Dynamic Support Register and developing a pre-DSR approach
 - e. Joining up Independent Information, Advice and Support for Children, Young People and Families
34. Enhancing the 'Key Worker' model by extending the age criteria and increasing the number of key workers.
35. Development of Health SEND champions in each area will allow training to be targeted within a team developing the workforce to be able to respond to our SEND population more quickly and with increased skill.
36. Reviewing the OT Pilot in Horizons Specialist Academy Trust to determine whether it's a model which could inform joint commissioning for more mainstream schools.
37. We will be developing an integrated, jointly commissioned Speech Language and Communication pathway which seeks to support children in the earliest years of life and their families. It is the ambition that the pathway will provide a strong preventative offer

which harnesses the skills of parents, carers and extended families alongside early years professionals, whilst providing a clear offer for specialist speech and language therapy where clinically required.

Priority 4 - Ensuring that most children and young peoples' needs can be met in local, inclusive mainstream schools

Progress to date

38. We have rated all of our schools and settings (in partnership with them) to ensure we have an overview of the Local Area readiness to meet need. We have begun the development of a comprehensive package of training matching the training need.
39. In partnership across the local area, facilitated by NDTi (National Development Team for Inclusion) we have begun to develop Practice Hubs. An opportunity for practitioners to come together in a safe space to share what works for them, share their expertise and drive inclusion forward from the front line. This commitment to a change in culture and development of practice will be strengthened in a sector led approach.
40. The Council has established 6 primary Pathway Development Centre places in 3 mainstream primary schools for children who are at risk of permanent exclusion, or have been permanently excluded. These are proving highly effective with children receiving assessment and support to meet their individual needs along with determining the future provision they require.
41. A comprehensive SEMH offer has been developed that schools and settings can purchase to raise skills and understanding of the staff working children and young people. It also includes direct work with children and assessment of their needs. This offer has been made possible by the significant investment in Specialist Teachers in the SEND and Inclusion service areas.

Planned Actions for 22/23

42. Further develop, deliver the workforce development programme for senior leaders, teachers, SENCOs, teaching assistants, pastoral staff, early years practitioners and support staff, linked to the Valuing SEND assessment of setting readiness to meet need. This will promote and enhance inclusive practice and close gaps between need & setting readiness. We will evaluate the effectiveness.
43. A coproduced revised Annual review process has been designed, this is in very early stages of roll out (as previously described new EHCPs and legacy EHCPs are formatted slightly differently).
44. The Council has commissioned an outreach service from North East Autism Society. Training, raising awareness, assessment and support are all areas that this contract can offer to schools and settings. By raising the skills and understanding of the staff directly working with children and young people their needs can be identified earlier and intervention/adjustments can be put in place earlier.
45. Utilising strategic information relating to need (which is being identified through the neurodevelopmental pathway, key worker and DSR processes), plans will be developed to upskill the wider children's workforce, working in partnership across health, education and social care to identify effective ways to meet identified need earlier.

46. The SEND health group will support workforce development opportunities and sharing of good practice across the system supporting intervention at the earliest point allowing for improved inclusion.

Priority 5 - Developing and maintaining a range of local, high quality specialist provision for those who need it

Progress to date

47. We have opened additional places at Abbey Hill specialist academy in September 2021 for children with Communication and Interaction difficulties.
48. NEAS (North East Autism Society) will be opening a specialist Independent provision at Kiora Hall in Norton. They will be working with the identified children who will be going on roll in September over the Summer Term on a carefully planned transition into Kiora Hall.
49. A Tees Valley Free School has been awarded to River Tees Multi Academy Trust to manage. Designs are in place, site has been identified and plans are in place for a small number of children from each of the 4 LAs involved to go on roll in September 2022, with planned admissions following this until the school is at capacity.

Planned Actions for 22/23

50. Develop a sufficiency plan of specialist placements based on historical and projected SEND data.
51. Introduction of a new post, specialist teacher (Challenge and Support) into the Annual Review system (specifically focussed in the first 12 months on out of area independent/high cost placements). This will bring a level of individual scrutiny on quality of provision and aspirational outcomes previously not available. This post will evaluate the opportunities for a return to local specialist provision.
52. Continue to explore hybrid models of co-location (specialist and mainstream) for primary and secondary following the very successful provision Abbey@Northshore

Priority 6 - Ensuring children and young people achieve their potential and ambitions, and live as independently as possible

Progress to date

53. A regional Commissioning group has been established to focus on placements that Local Authorities use for SEND and Social Care. This will provide an in depth focus on raising quality whilst driving efficiencies in cost.
54. Supported Internships are a structured study programme based primarily with an employer. They enable young people aged 16-24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan to achieve long-term paid employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace. Through Health Education England, there is a Supported Internship programme for people with learning disabilities, difficulties or autism (LDDA). This is called 'Project Choice'. Their focus is 'work readiness' and matching skills to employment. Many Stockton young people continue to benefit from these internship

opportunities with the numbers increasing year on year (exception during 20/21 during Covid).

55. Working with local post 16 providers we have enabled young people to progress into academic and vocational pathways. The colleges flex their curriculum to adjust to the cohorts of young people that require provision. This ensures that learners progress at their own pace through relevant and purposeful qualifications.
56. Preparation for Adulthood outcomes have been introduced into the revised EHCP format and the person centred planning discussion prompts from the earliest age to ensure that discussions about the future and the support a child may need on that journey can be considered by everyone involved in the life of a child/young person.
57. Consultation has been undertaken with young people with autism aged 16-25 to understand their needs and opportunities

Planned Actions for 22/23

58. A focused piece of work involving all partners has begun to look at 'Getting out and about'. What this means in Stockton Borough and how we all can contribute to promoting as close to independent travel as possible leading to opportunities in adult life.
59. Finalise and launch the coproduced Local Area Preparation for adulthood (PfA) guide through a series of events with all stakeholders.
60. The continuity of support across the 0-25 age range for those with complex needs/disabilities is an area of continual change. The Local Area has agreed to focus on this over the next 12 months to enable voices of those that experience the support to influence the future development required.
61. A renewed national focus and additional funding for development of additional supported internships was announced in January 2022. This work will be actioned during this year.
62. Take a multi-agency approach to meet the needs identified through recent consultation processes

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

63. The strategy has been developed to enable the Council and partners to fulfil duties under the Equalities Act 2010, and is designed to enable children and young people with additional needs to reach their potential.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

64. Around 30% of all children in our care have some form of special educational need. Therefore this strategy directly contributes to the delivery of improved support for children in care.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

65. There are no direct financial implications from the strategy. The bulk of provision for children and young people with SEND is funded with the Dedicated Schools Grant, and in particular the High Needs Block. The proposals in the strategy will be funded by this and by existing resources held by the key partners.

66. Meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND is a shared responsibility across education budgets (mainly High Needs Funding, an element of Dedicated Schools Grant); social care via the Council's mainline resources and in the Clinical Commissioning Group and NHS providers.

67. In recent years costs have increased, as the number of children and young people with EHCPs has increased. The SEND strategy recognises the need to secure value for money, and a medium term financial plan for High Needs Funding is currently being developed which sets out a series of proposals and actions to bring the budget into balance over the next 3 years.

68. Changes in the use of the high needs funding has implications for increased requests for health funding to meet the health needs of children. There is new NICE guidance being developed around the delegation of tasks for children and young people which will allow for further discussions around responsibilities for funding support

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

69. The strategy sits within the legal framework of the Children's Act (2014) and the SEND Code of Practice (2015) which set out the legal context for how we support children and young people with SEND and their families. The strategy also takes into account the requirements of the following:

- Children Act 1989, 2004
- Autism Act 2009
- Autism Strategy 2010
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014

RISK ASSESSMENT

70. The implementation of the strategy will be managed in line with established risk assessment systems. Although the strategy is non-statutory, it has been designed to ensure that there are effective approaches in place to ensure that the needs of children and young people are identified, assessed and responded to in line with statutory requirements.

71. There is a risk to the Local Authority and partners from the following:

- All partners not meeting statutory duties under the Children and Families Act 2014.
- Lack of improvement in outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS

72. The strategy has been co-designed with partners and with the Stockton Parent Carer Forum. It will also be presented to the Children and Young People's Partnership in May.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

73. SEND Code of Practice 2015.

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