

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding)	Date of Meeting:	Tuesday 26 January 2021
Subject:	SEND Continuous Improvement Plan Update		
Report of:	Executive Director of Children's Social Care and Education	Wards Affected:	(All Wards);
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member - Adult Social Care (Chair of SEND Continuous Improvement Board) Cabinet Member Children, Schools and Safeguarding		
Is this a Key Decision:	No	Included in Forward Plan:	No
Exempt / Confidential Report:	No		

Summary:

The report provides a brief update on the progress made against with regard to the SEND Continuous Improvement Plan.

Recommendation(s):

- (1) Note the progress made and that activity continues to be prioritised during the pandemic.
- (2) Note that a further report will be brought to a future committee.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s):

The Health & Wellbeing Board provides system leadership, keeps the Council's Cabinet informed of progress and if necessary, will escalate concerns.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Children's Services and Safeguarding) provides additional scrutiny.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected: (including any Risk Implications)

NA

What will it cost and how will it be financed?

(A) Revenue Costs

The CCGs have invested a recurring £35k in SENDIASS and a recurring £100K+ in Speech and Language Therapy.

The CCGs in Sefton prioritised additional investment in the ASD pathway to provide an inclusive 0 -18 NICE compliant assessment and diagnostic service

The CCGs have provided additional short term Sefton CAMHS investment to support service resilience and capacity in response to covid.

The Council has invested some additional temporary resources (£0.400m in 2020/21) into the SEND team in order to deliver the changes required. In addition to this the Council has invested in the development of the Local Offer.

(B) Capital Costs

Implications of the Proposals:

Resource Implications (Financial, IT, Staffing and Assets):
Legal Implications: The Children and Families Act (2014) places a statutory duty on local authorities, education providers, CCGs and other NHS organisations to provide support for children and young people with SEN or disabilities aged 0-25. In doing these local authorities, NHS England and their partner CCGs must make arrangements for agreeing the education, health and social care provision reasonably required by local children and young people with SEN or disabilities.
Equality Implications: The equality implications will be assessed as the Improvement Plan progresses. The SEND Continuous Improvement Board will be kept informed of all equality implications, risks and mitigations.

Contribution to the Council's Core Purpose:

Protect the most vulnerable: The delivery of the Improvement Plan will ensure a focused response on providing improved outcomes for the children and young people with SEND and their families.
Facilitate confident and resilient communities: The delivery of the Improvement Plan responding to the revisit and the subsequent activity will need to build the trust and confidence of the community that the Council and its Health partners are delivering on their commitments
Commission, broker and provide core services: A key pillar of the Improvement Plan is the development of a Joint Commissioning Strategy. Through this strategy our ambition is to ensure adequate services that can respond when people need it most.

<p>The Joint Commissioning Strategy for SEND has been developed in the context of the Children and Young People’s Plan “My Sefton: heard, happy, healthy, achieving,.’</p> <p>On 11th March 2020 the Health & Wellbeing Board agreed the SEND Commissioning Action Plan which has continued to be delivered during the COVID 19 pandemic.</p>
<p>Place – leadership and influencer: The Council will work with partners, in particular commissioners and providers of Health Services, to work towards common goals in relation to the delivery of the Improvement Plan. The Council has a key role in holding the whole system to account on this matter and will ensure an evidence-based plan is delivered against.</p>
<p>Drivers of change and reform: The Council will work with partners, in particular Health, to make change happen so as to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.</p>
<p>Facilitate sustainable economic prosperity:</p>
<p>Greater income for social investment:</p>
<p>Cleaner Greener</p>

What consultations have taken place on the proposals and when?

(A) Internal Consultations

The Executive Director of Corporate Resources and Customer Services (FD 6266/21.) and the Chief Legal and Democratic Officer (LD 4467/21) have been consulted and any comments have been incorporated into the report.

(B) External Consultations

The Council has and will continue to engage with the CCG, other Health partners, the voluntary, community and faith sector, schools and Sefton Parent Carer Forum on this matter.

The initial parent career survey closed on 18th December 2019. The feedback gathered has been analysed and shared with the SENDCIB and Overview and Scrutiny (Children’s Services and Safeguarding) in January 2020.

Engagement with Sefton Parent Carer Forum continues on a regular basis, with new opportunities such as the use of Microsoft Teams being used in light of the COVID 19 pandemic.

In March 2020 many children and young people also took part in the Youth Conference. Schools are represented within the governance of the Improvement Plan and updated via the SEND Schools Forum.

During September and October 2020, a short mid-year survey was also undertaken.

Health providers are committed to continued engagement with children, young people and their families on the development, delivery and experiences of local health services

for those with SEND, and there are a number of established channels and groups to facilitate this. For example, there has been active involvement of young people and their carers in the ongoing development of the ASD/ADHD pathways.

Implementation Date for the Decision

Immediately following the Committee meeting.

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Appendices:

There are no appendices to this report

Background Papers:

COVID-19 Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-vulnerable-children-and-young-people/coronavirus-covid-19-guidanceonvulnerable-children-and-young-people#children-with-education-health-and-careehcplans>

Coronavirus Act 2020 Modification of section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014 (England) Notice 2020
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/882290/CV19_Act_modification_notice_SEND.pdf

House of Commons Education Committee (Special educational needs and disabilities) issued its First Report of Session 2019–20 is available at
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201920/cmselect/cmeduc/20/20.pdf>

Published version of the SEND Improvement Plan
https://search3.openobjects.com/mediamanager/sefton/fsd/files/sefton_send_improvement_plan.pdf

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report informs Overview and Scrutiny members of the progress made and improvements planned in response to the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission in the joint local area special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) revisit that took place between 15th to 17th April 2019.
- 1.2 Elected members are aware that in response the partnership has developed and is continuing to make good progress in delivering the agreed Improvement Plan. The SEND Continuous Improvement Board (SENDCIB) continue to receive support and challenge from the NHS England and DfE advisors.

2. Delivering the Improvement Plan

- 2.1 As previously reported the SENDCIB and its sub groups have continued to meet remotely to monitor progress made and agree any remedial action during the COVID 19 pandemic. All partners in the Local Area continue to prioritise the delivery of the required improvements.
- 2.2 On 8th December 2020 a monitoring visit by Senior Officials from the DfE and NHS England took place virtually with members of SENDCIB Board. The meeting was held to consider the progress Sefton has made against the SEND Continuous Improvement Plan since a previous monitoring visit which was held in January 2020. The meeting looked at the progress being made against each area of the Improvement Plan and the evidence submitted to demonstrate said improvements and any impact on the plan delivery resulting from Covid. Sefton also shared key achievements and where they had developed new ways of working through their Covid response.
- 2.3 In December 2020 we received a letter from the chair of the meeting, Fiona Nzegwu (Deputy Director, SEND Improvement and Intervention) to feedback on the outcome of that monitoring visit. The letter highlighted that the presentation, response to questions and supporting evidence (sent a month prior to the meeting) demonstrate that we have made clear and sustained progress against the improvement areas in the plan. Comments also noted that this is further supported by the positive improvements to statutory timescales for EHCPs and improvements also made to the quality of service delivery in Sefton. Officials have also informed us that they are reassured by the local partnership's ongoing commitment to making sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people in our area. Evidence of the strength of the local partnership was provided through statements from those present at the meeting including Headteachers, Parents, Health Providers, CCG Chair and demonstrated an improved understanding of the interdependent relationships required across all of the improvement plan areas. It has been agreed that as a minimum a further monitoring review will be held in six months time June 2021,
- 2.4 On the same day as the visit by officials (8th December 2020) the SEND Continuous Improvement Board met for its regular monthly to review progress being made.
- 2.5 Good progress continues to be made with regards to the completion of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) within the 20-week timescales. This has improved to 66.5% completion (SEN2 data return) within the 20-week timescales compared with 40% completed at this same point in time in 2019. This is above the national average.

- 2.6 Transition Reviews:
There are 116 pupils in Year 6. 106 Review dates already set and of these 93 already held. These reviews must be completed by 15th February 2021 and the SENDCIB was assured that we are on plan to complete within statutory timescales. There are 142 pupils in Year 11. 124 Review dates already set and of these 86 already held. Again the SENDCIB was assured that these will be completed by the deadline of 31st March 2021.
- 2.7 All other reviews:
For all other reviews there are 1680 EHCPs and 899 review dates have been arranged thus far up to July 2021 and this figure will continue to increase as we move through the school year. These reviews are delivered across the 3 terms of the school year. A report went to SENDCIB in July outlining the performance targets set for completion of these across the three term times. An update report on Reviews will be presented to the January 2021 SENDCIB meeting
- 2.8 The recently delivered training by NASEN is starting to have an impact on improving the quality of EHCPs. Feedback from the DfE Advisor who has reviewed the quality of some of the plans gives confidence that the quality of plans is improving. A multi agency quality assurance group is meeting every 3 weeks to review the quality of plans and their feedback is reported into the SENDCIB.
- 2.9 The number of SEND complaints received by the Council has reduced from 27 during 2019 (there were none in November and December 2019) to 12 from January 2020 to October 2020. In both years the complaints were received between April to October with the majority between July and September (20 in 2019 and 6 in 2020).
- 2.10 The number children and young people with SEND holding Personal Health Budgets (PHBs) has increased from fourteen in April 2019 to twenty-four, this number does not include PHBs for young people age 18 – 25 years who have a PHB outside of the CCGs contractual arrangements with Sefton Carers Centre. An updated report on PHBs will go to the SENDCIB in the coming months.
- 2.11 One of the key activities of the Improvement Plan was to establish and execute an annual survey for parents/carers of children and young people with SEND, on what is going well and what could be improved in our local area. The first survey was completed in December 2019 and provided the SEND Continuous Improvement Board with a baseline to monitor experience, involvement and satisfaction around the key areas of Education, Health, Social Care as well as information on how the system is working together. It was agreed that the SEND parent and carer survey will be conducted annually, however, following the March Board it was suggested that the sub-group would conduct a short follow-up survey in June 2020 as a way to test whether our improvements internally were having the desired impact on parents and carers and young people. Due to COVID-19 this survey was put back and was completed in September. The main (annual) survey will now take place in February 2021.
- 2.12 The Sefton Parent Carer Forum were fully involved in the design and coproduction of the short survey. SENDCIB considered the feedback from the short survey at its November meeting. The survey was completed by 243 responders, which is 13% response rate. The main findings were that parents and carers are reporting an improvement in the way health, education, social care and the SEN Casework team are working together to help and support them; education and schools stand out for

praise from respondents particularly in relation to regular contact and information and there is an increase in the number of parents who feel they are listened to. Whilst improvements are being made, there are areas parents and carers feel need further attention, these are: improved communication and information from all parties of the SEND system, waiting times for written reports and appointments, waiting times for annual EHCP reviews, feeling listened to and continuation of work done to ensure services are working together to help improve services and outcomes for children and young people. SENDCIB considered the next steps which included the items noted by parents and carers and also how to embed service user feedback into our services consistently.

- 2.13 Apart from the co-produced survey, other examples of co-production include the Local Offer refresh, Preparing for Adulthood guide, refresh of EHCO paperwork, Public Health Budgets, ASD Pathway and SEND Young People's conference and Schools Get Talking weekly sessions.
- 2.14 At its December 2020 meeting SENDCIB members sought assurance on progress the waiting list associated with Action 5.2 development of the neurodevelopmental diagnostic pathway. It was noted in order to ensure that all children and young people referred and waiting have support until a potential diagnosis a Sefton resource pack has been produced. Alder Hey has written to the remaining 91 children and young people from the pre-01 April 2020 cohort and who are not known to the LA or commenced on the ASD diagnostic pathway, signposting families to the local offer, Alder Hey website and Sefton resources pack.
- 2.16 The Resource Pack has been shared with the Sefton Parent Carer Forum, Family Wellbeing centres, schools, health providers and is available on the Sefton Council website and the Local Offer.
- 2.17 As the resource pack is linked digitally to the local offer and the Sefton Directory anyone who needs access to IT can do this through the local library public access computers in Sefton. It is anticipated that all children and young people currently on the waiting list will have started their assessment by the target date of June 2021.
- 2.18 All therapy services have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In line with NHSE guidance for community services, all but clinically urgent services were initially cancelled to support the acute response during the first wave of the pandemic and were gradually stepped-up to pre-covid levels of activity in line with NHS phase 3 directives and recovery plans. In Sefton, all community therapy services were back to pre-covid levels of activity and were meeting SEND performance target by the end of September 2020.
- 2.19 At the end of November (there is a two-month time lag for reporting by health providers as per their agreed contracts) all therapy waiting times were ahead of the SEND performance monitoring target and within the agreed commissioned waiting time standard.
 - Paediatric Dietetics - November position: 4.7 weeks
 - Paediatric Occupational Therapy November position: 5.3 weeks
 - Paediatric Physiotherapy (PT) November position: 5.2 weeks
 - Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) has seen a reduction from 21.6 weeks in August to 12.6 weeks in November 2020.
- 2.20 Mobilisation of the CAMHS 24/7 crisis service in the early stages of the pandemic

ensured that those children and young people most at risk of harm could access care and support quickly. Following the initial impact of the pandemic, some CAMHS staff were redeployed to support the implementation and delivery of the 24/7 crisis service and this impacted on both the Referral to Choice and Referral to Partnership waiting times. Since their return to the core service, there has been a gradual improvement in waiting times up until October 2020. However, due to an increase in urgent referrals and the complexity of some young people requiring support as a result of the pandemic, both measures deteriorated in November 2020.

- 2.21 In response to these challenges, Sefton CCGs have provided initial short term investment to support resilience of the local CAMHS service and provide additional capacity which will take effect in January 2021.

Notably providers have provided assurance that no children's community therapy or CAMHS staff will be redeployed to support the acute response to the current covid wave.

See the appendix for more detailed information of performance and improvements to local health services for children and young people with SEND, including the response to the current covid position.

3. Members of the Overview and Scrutiny are asked to consider the progress being made and confirm if any matters should be escalated to Cabinet.
- Casework Officers now share mobile phone numbers when they first contact families which has improved communication
 - Parents and carers are now invited to joint outcome meetings
 - Access to Kooth has been extended up to the age of 25 proving more young people with access to on line support
 - Recite Me software has been added to the Local Offer and Council website which has improved accessibility
 - The offer from SENDIAS has been strengthened with new staff recruited and new management oversight, joint funding agreed with CCG and a new website in place.
 - Understanding of the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO) role has been shared more widely and a dedicated e-mail address means that families are now able to contact the DCO directly
 - the implementation of a new appointment system at Alder Hey which is more user friendly and has led to fewer cancellations
 - and improvements to the prescribing system at Alder Hey make it easier for families to re-order medications.
 - Therapy waiting times – over the last 12 months, average waiting times for the services have reduced to within the SEND performance monitoring targets and the agreed commissioned waiting time standards, despite the impact and challenges of Covid -19 on improvement plans and trajectories.
 - Notably the SALT waiting times have reduced from 25 weeks in October 2019 to 12.6 weeks in November 2020, well below the SEND target KPI.
 - Sefton now has a fully implemented NICE compliant 0 -18 neurodevelopmental assessment & diagnostic pathway.
 - The 0 -18 ASD and ADHD backlogs are steadily decreasing in line with the backlog reduction plans and are on track to be zero by June 2021.

4. Risk

- 4.1 Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that the required change will put solid foundations in place, the Local Area remains vulnerable to a range of issues that can impact upon its financial sustainability and which impact upon the decisions that each member of the system must make. These include pressures across the system nationally such as the impact of demand pressures and most significantly central government policy.
- 4.2 The System Leadership and Governance Sub Group, jointly Chaired by the Council Chief Executive and the Chief Officer of the CCGs in Sefton, monitors risk on a regular basis and provide the risk log to the SENDCIB regularly. The SENDCIB will continue to monitor risks, putting in place mitigation where possible and escalating risks as required.
- 4.3 It is important to note that the SENDCIB has and will continue to meet virtually during the pandemic, as have all the sub groups. The Local Area recognises the stress and concern that the COVID 19 pandemic has and continues to cause families and local services remain accessible to provide support. All partners have put business continuity plans in place and are working together to ensure that robust plans and effective communication is in place during this time of uncertainty. This work has included communications confirming that local area services are still available to support families. Despite the enormous pressure across the local area, work to deliver the Improvement Plan has continued and required changes have happened at pace,

5 Conclusion

- 5.1 The Local Area continues to make good progress in delivering the Improvement Plan with partners responding to the challenges including the COVID 19 pandemic. The Local Area recognises the significant challenges that continue to be faced by Sefton families of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) especially at this time of national restrictions. The system is confident that the actions being taken are having a demonstrable positive impact in 2020.
- 5.2 The partnership continues to prioritise SEND during the Covid 19 pandemic by meeting remotely and continuing to focus our attention on this important area. The Local Area recognises the need to maintain focus, continuing to work at pace and achieve demonstrable positive impact and all joint sub groups and the SENDIB continue to meet remotely to maintain focus and oversight on the Improvement Plan objectives. The COVID 19 pandemic has meant different ways of delivery but the focus and the priority remain on delivering the improvements required.
- 5.3 Partners remain committed to delivering the required actions that will improve the lives of Sefton's children and young people with SEND, to enable them to reach their potential. The impact of COVID 19 on the Improvement Plan will continue to be assessed and partners continue to collaboratively to minimise impact.