

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services
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To: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee, 18th November 2020

Subject: SEND Improvement Programme Update

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: None

Electoral Division: All

Summary: Update on the SEND Improvement Programme, where the Written Statement of Action work is being undertaken. This report provides the committee with a progress update.

Recommendation(s):

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

1. Introduction

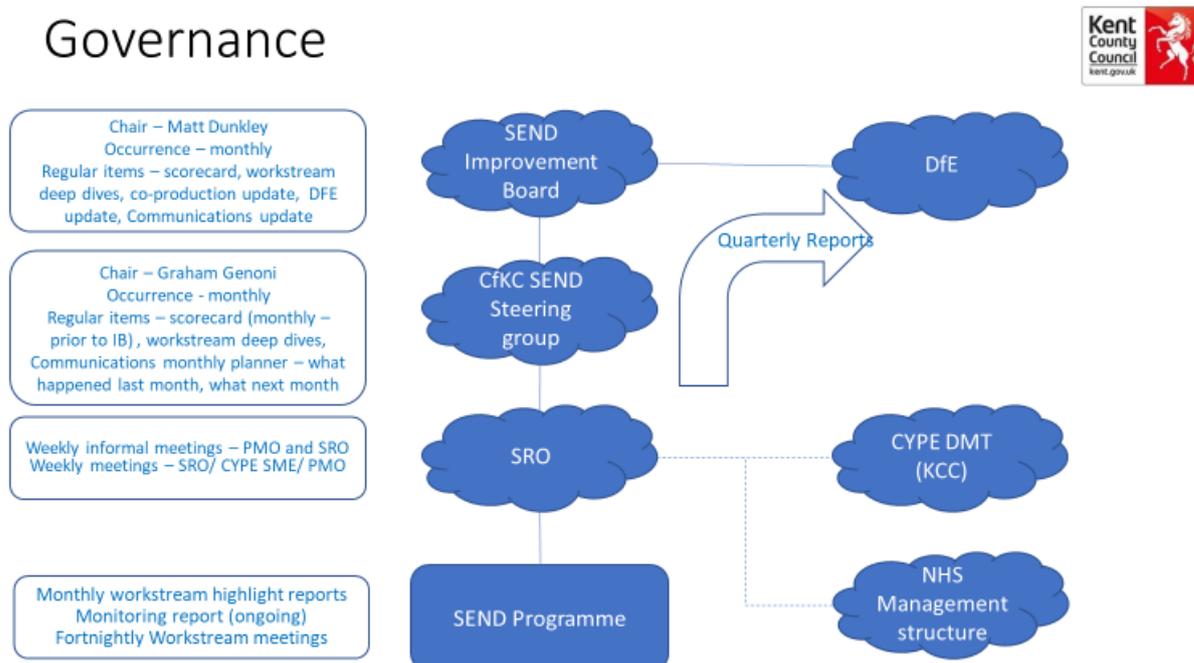
- 1.1 As members will be aware from previous meetings the outcome of the Ofsted/ CQC Local Area Inspection of SEND that took place in 2019 required KCC and Health to submit a Written Statement of Action setting out how all the relevant agencies would address the issues raised by Ofsted/ CQC and improve the provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 1.2 The SEND Improvement Programme was initiated in August 2019 and at the beginning of March 2020 a new programme structure was launched, adding resource to the programme to accelerate the pace of change.
- 1.3 The programme has 5 workstreams, addressing the 9 areas of weakness identified in the inspection. The 5 workstreams are:
 - A – Parent engagement and co-production

- B – Inclusive Practice and the Outcomes, Progress and Attainment of Children and Young People
- C – Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans
- D – Joint commissioning and Governance
- E – Service Provision

Workstreams A – C are led by KCC, D is jointly led with Health and E is led by Health Colleagues.

2. Governance

2.1 The programme has a defined governance structure within which it operates.



3. Workstream Progress

3.1 The following sections outline progress made to date across each workstream as well as proposed activity over the coming months.

Workstream A – Parent Engagement and Co-production

3.2 Workstream A has seen significant progress over the last 6 months. Between May 2019 and February 2020 our engagement programme reached 1,209 participants. The Covid pandemic had an impact during lockdown, with parents and carers having limited or no capacity to engage with the programme, however where possible engagement continued through virtual methods. Regular communications with Kent PACT (Parents and Carers Together) continued and ensured that communication lines with parents were kept open. Since lockdown we have reached a further 59 participants giving a total of 1,286 participants over 91 engagement activities. In June 2020, a letter was also sent to over 14000 families with children/YP with SEND introducing the new Interim

Director of SEND, Head of Service and County Manager, introducing the new leadership and outlining changes being made in the service.

Since schools returned in September, full engagement has resumed. The programme recognises that the involvement of parent and carers is integral to achieving improvements for Children and Young People with SEND, and has from October extended engagement with Kent PACT by working with PACT and Health to develop an agreed partnership working arrangement to ensure equity across our stakeholders in implementing change within the SEND service and beyond. PACT are also members of the SEND Improvement Board, as well as attendees across multiple workstreams and delivery working groups.

- 3.3 One of the cornerstones of communications with parents and families is the Local Offer website. This has seen significant development with the launch of extensive functionality improvements and revised content. Examples include an online “explore your options” allowing parents to gain tailored information based on their need, as well as the ability to request an assessment online. The local offer is now linked to the KCC service directory, giving direct access to SEND parents to over 4000 service materials. KCC have created permanent resource to continually improve the Local Offer and working with parents and families by creating a Family Engagement Manager post as well as an officer dedicated to the local offer development, and an apprentice to support the team in marketing and content.
- 3.4 Co-production with parents, carers and young people is a focus for the workstream, with a co-production charter being developed as part of the new SEND strategy. A virtual event is planned which will lead with co-production training designed and delivered by young people. As well as co-producing work, a continuous feedback loop with parent groups is now in place to ensure parent/carers views are at the forefront of communications and shaping service delivery.
- 3.5 We have also changed our methods as a result of engagement activities with children and young people, working with them to produce their own personal profiles as well as supporting us in designing surveys for young people with SEND. Under development is a SEND Youth Participation Manager role to lead the participation and engagement plan.
- 3.6 A draft SEND strategy has been developed by a working group which included representatives from Kent PACT. It is proposed that the draft strategy is published for consultation at the end of November, with consultation open until the end of January. The consultation will be accompanied by a communications plan to ensure that the whole Kent community are encouraged to take part, and we will be working closely with parent and carer groups, as well as educational settings to ensure the SEND strategy has as wide a reach as possible.
- 3.7 The activities in Workstream A have started to have an impact. Hits to the local offer have increased by over 20% since December 2019 and Govmetrics indicators demonstrate an improvement in satisfaction levels across all areas. This is further demonstrated with improving feedback from parents directly. However, there is still much work to do in this area, and working closely with Kent PACT, there is a feedback mechanism to ensure continuing improvement.

An annual local offer plan will be developed in partnership with PACT, along with a marketing plan to ensure Kent families and professionals are aware of the resource.

- 3.8 There has been a significant increase over recent months in the number of complaints that are being upheld at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure. Whilst this may be viewed as a negative statistic, it should not be taken at face value. Closer scrutiny of the case management relating to each complaint has resulted in identification of broader issues relating to practice within the SEN service as a whole and locally. Better responses, and an acceptance of having not done something that we should have, help resolve complaints much sooner, resulting in less complaints progressing to the next stage of the process. The number of complaints progressing to the second stage of the complaints procedure has halved since Q1 in 2019.

Workstream B - Inclusive Practice and the Outcomes, Progress and Attainment of Children and Young People

- 3.9 Workstream B is a large complex workstream, working with schools and settings on the Inclusion agenda, and the outcomes of children and YP with SEND. During education closures over lockdown, the Inclusion workstream focused on looking at the work that had been completed to date and created a framework of continuous improvement for the plan moving forward.

Work now continues at pace to work alongside our education settings. The County Education Reference group has been established, and first sat in July where the Kent Schools Systems Inclusion Statement was agreed, along with the first review of the Core Mainstream Standards, a key document outlining ordinarily available provision for SEND children in schools.

A system-wide discussion with all education providers has been taking place since mid-September on:

- Inclusion Statement
- Core Mainstream Standards
- School to school support system proposal
- Inclusion Framework
- Inclusion scorecard and dataset.

Over 145 schools have participated in Inclusion discussion events during October and discussions have also taken place across Early Years Provider Association meetings, providing feedback on the Inclusion agenda across all phases of education. This work is informing the next stage of the work to improve inclusive practices in our schools.

There has been overwhelming support from schools to engage in a school to school which develops inclusive leadership including:

- the development of peer to peer clusters focused on inclusion.
- the development of ILE's (Inclusion Leaders of Education) similar to NLE's (National Leaders of Education) and KLE's (Kent Leaders of Education) these will be leaders recognised for their expertise in this

field, to support the clusters and provide governance and leadership to this agenda.

- the addition of an Inclusive practice module to all the NPQ (National Professional Qualifications) suite of qualifications.

3.10 A request has been submitted to the DfE to fund the curriculum design and development time for the NPQ and ILE qualifications. These are being coproduced by Whole School SEND, EFF (Education Endowment Foundation) and EDT (Education Development Trust) and will be informed by nationally researched evidence-based practice. They will complement the Phase 2 EEF Learning behaviours programme already underway across the county.

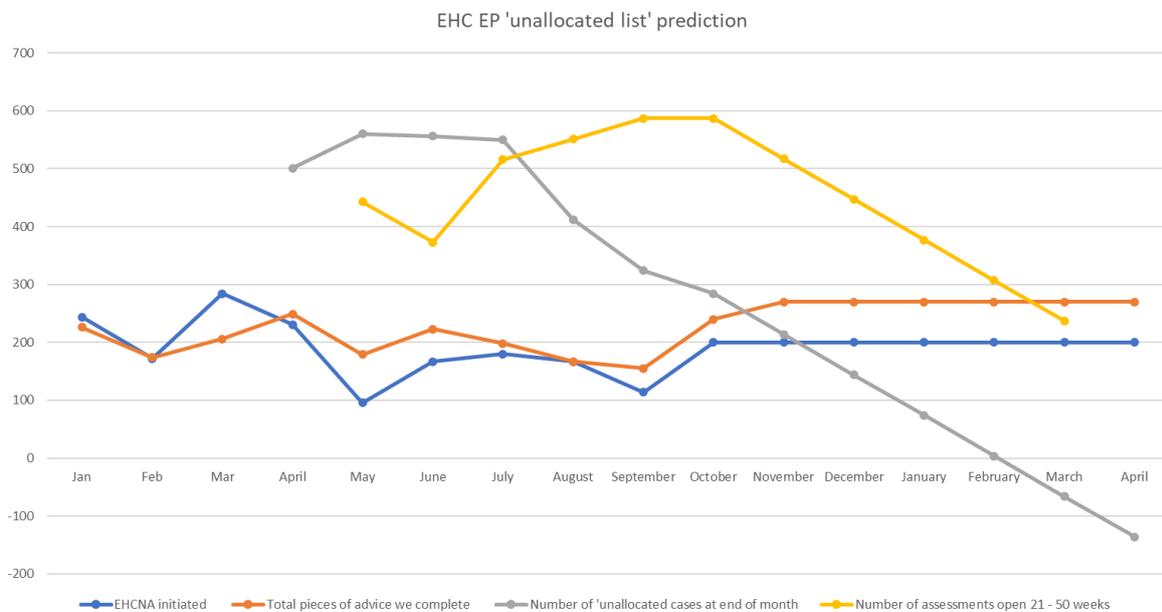
3.11 In addition, there has been a detailed analysis of the existing support offer to education settings identifying gaps including, the assessment of progress for CYP with SEND, transition support and pedagogical strategies related to need type. Quality assurance and recommissioning is ongoing. This work will inform the next phase of enhancing the offer of support in order to improve inclusion across all schools, and in particular parents having the confidence that SEND children can have excellent education within mainstream schools, with their needs provided.

3.12 Working alongside both education settings and parents, an Inclusion Strategy will be developed to further set out how Kent intends to deliver its vision to SEND children. This strategy will be closely aligned to the proposed SEND strategy.

Workstream C – Quality of Education, Health and Care Plans

3.13 Significant progress has been made within Workstream C. New EHCP templates have been created which have been approved by the Steering group and have been reviewed by the DFE. These new plan templates will see an immediate impact on the quality of our EHCP plans. Working in partnership with health and social care, training on how to complete the plans has been rolled out across the service, along with the new approved Quality Assurance Framework and Audit tool. The service has also recruited several experienced plan writers to the team to support working through the backlog as well as improving quality of plans throughout.

3.14 One of the key areas of weakness identified in Written Statement of Action was the ability of the service to deliver EHCPs in a timely manner and to an agreed quality. Much of this delay was linked to the lack of capacity within the Education Psychology Service. There is now a clear plan in place to address the issues and progress has been made across all aspects of the plan. We are addressing our lack of EP capacity by commissioning an external organisation to tackle the backlog of assessments: we anticipate reducing the waiting list from 412 in August 20 to 17 by March 21. It is anticipated that by October 2020, an additional 70 assessments per month will be completed by this additional capacity. By removing the backlog of EP assessments, the service is aiming to deliver all EHCPs within statutory timescales by the end of March 21.



3.15 A critical element to implementing sustainable change is culture change within the SEND service. There has been a significant training plan implemented since March, with all members of the SEND team undergoing training twice a week, ensuring that at the centre of the service is the child and young person. Key to the training has been ensuring that all SEND colleagues understand the legal requirements and processes.

Workstream D - Joint commissioning and Governance

3.16 Workstream D is a joint workstream with the Health service, its main focus is to set up a joint commissioning function and to ensure governance arrangements are in place to ensure accountability for the outcomes of SEND children and Young people are improved. A new joint commissioning framework has been developed and has been approved by the Steering group and Improvement Board in July.

3.17 A proposed joint structure has been defined, and it is intended to have a joint governance process in place before December 2020. The delivery plan of the Joint Commissioning framework will be used to formalise the arrangements between NHS and KCC. The document includes an outcomes framework for all Children and Young People which will be embedded across the system. This work will also be a fundamental basis for the delivery of the SEND strategy.

3.18 The SEND Health Needs Assessment has been refreshed by Public Health and was published in September 2020. The data will be used to inform the SEND strategy, the priorities for both the SEND strategy and the proposed Inclusion strategy as well as commissioning plans.

3.19 Four pilot joint commissioning projects have been initiated – Joint Resource Allocation Panel (JRAP), Independent Special School provision, Speech and Language Therapy and the Neuro Development pathway. These will be monitored through the new joint governance process.

3.20 The recruitment of special school nurses is ongoing in 3 phases, with all special schools to have staffing by April 2021.

Workstream E - Service Provision

3.21 Our health colleagues have been greatly impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic with many redeployed onto higher priority work. This has inevitably had an impact on both Workstreams D and E. Workstream E has seen the biggest impact, particularly in the neurodevelopmental (ND) pathway progress. However, progress has been made in other areas within the workstream including a universal information sharing process for the Early Years and Health Visiting service to support a 'tell it once approach' for the Early Years sector. This is being rolled out from March 2020. A Health Visiting and Early Years Workforce Survey has been developed to collate baseline data on current processes and staff feedback on the proposed targeted model. The survey responses will be analysed by the KCC Strategic Commissioning Analytics Team and support the project evaluation.

3.22 There is more immediate access for all referrals into the ND pathway to available resource and support whilst waiting for an appointment. Over 10,000 Kent ND handbooks were delivered to those on the waiting list and to all new referrals during the pandemic.

3.33 There is assurance that the most vulnerable children are priorities and receiving regular checks to ensure that any causes for concern are escalated and managed appropriately. All providers are following the same criteria to ensure that there is a fail safe system in place for any issues that might have gone unnoticed.

3.34 Clinical leads in autism, mental health and specialist nursing have all been appointed, adding substantial knowledge and resource to increase pace in Workstream E.

3.35 There are professional leads identified from Providers to take forward the Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) project and work collaboratively with the National expert in developing and implementing a new model. Parent reps are a key partner in the steering group ensuring patient voice is heard and incorporated at all stages. Children currently accessing SLCN services are being triaged, prioritised and assessed in a standardised way to avoid inequality.

4 NHS Recovery Plan

4.1 There are two key factors which have had an impact on the progress of both work streams;

COVID-19 -There are some areas in which progress has been sustained, but other key projects that have been paused to release capacity for COVID response in line with Government guidance. Across the CYP workforce, particularly Therapies, large numbers of staff were redeployed to support adult acute services, care homes or testing programmes. These staff were not returned to their usual roles until the end of July 20. Many Health services

were paused; following Government guidance and this has led to growing waiting lists and a predicted surge in referrals following the return to school of most CYP. COVID has also had a significant impact on the mental health of CYP and their families and the long-term effects are still to be understood.

CCG merger-In April 2020, the 8 CCG's of Kent and Medway merged into one larger organisation and entered a period of change and staff consultation. This consultation was finalised until October 2020 and resulted in a gap in strategic leadership and changes to some job roles and responsibilities. An Executive Director with CYP in their portfolio has been appointed, and a Director Post with direct responsibility for CYP has also been recruited. This post will be key in facilitating the implementation of a new Governance process for children's services.

There are two areas of priority that have seen the most significant impact, development of a new Neurodevelopmental pathway and the implementation of a new model for speech, language and communication needs.

- 4.2 A SEND service delivery post-Covid plan has now been developed. The intention is to refocus the programme, reset timelines and clarify leadership roles and responsibilities, and to provide assurance that Health actions will continue to be delivered.

5 Working with the DFE

- 5.1 Formal quarterly monitoring meetings with the DFE and NHSE have taken place since the start of the programme with the most recent being Friday 16th October.
- 5.2 Feedback from the most recent meeting noted improvements across the programme, particularly in the improved joint working across KCC and health, along with improved working relationships with parents and carers. Continued effort needs to be focused on evidence of impacts on the outcomes of children and YP with SEND, along with ensuring statutory timeframes are met before reinspection.
- 5.3 The timetable for reinspection is unknown, with the Covid pandemic influencing the phasing of inspections across local areas.

6 Financial Implications

The programme budget of £2.9m (provided as part of the 2020-23 Medium Term Finance Plan) is monitored monthly. The programme is considered alongside other related SEN budgets and significant variances are reported as part of the monitoring report to Cabinet.

7 Conclusions and next steps

- 7.1 The last 6 months has seen significant progress across all areas of the programme, despite the impact of the Covid pandemic. This has been

recognised by the DFE and NHSE, and work needs to continue at the same pace to ensure the ability to evidence impact before the reinspection, and more importantly to impact outcomes for children with SEND in Kent.

- 7.2 With the health recovery plan in delivery, Workstreams D and E will be refocused to ensure swift delivery of milestones, and accountable structures to ensure resources can be focused and the plan is achievable.

8 Recommendation(s)

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Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

9 Background Documents

- 9.1 Kent Local Area Written Statement of Action

10. Contact details

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