

To: **Executive**
19 March 2024

SEND Written Statement of Action implementation update
Executive Director: People

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update the Executive on progress made to the end of November 2023 on the SEND Written Statement of Action (WSOA) implementation, following the fourth review meeting with the Department for Education and NHS England.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. That the Executive notes the progress made on implementing the SEND WSOA to improve services to children and families and the feedback from the DfE and NHS England to the end of November 2023.

3. Reasons for Recommendation(S)

- 3.1. When the WSOA was produced it was agreed that the executive would have updates on progress made on implementation of the plan, following the DfE and NHS England reviews.

4. Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1. None

5. Supporting Information

- 5.1. The fourth review meeting with the DfE and NHS England took place on 11 December 2023. Written feedback provided by the DfE after the review meeting highlighted the following points:
- 5.1.1. The local area has maintained its focus of the nine areas of the WSOA and acknowledges that although the Safety Valve work has absorbed capacity from the team, the WSOA and Safety Valve work do share the same ambition of improving the lived experience of children and young people with SEND.
 - 5.1.2. There is clear evidence that actions are being taken at pace, and that evidence of impact is now being gathered.
 - 5.1.3. None of the nine areas have as yet had all planned actions complete, but this is now becoming a realistic ambition.
 - 5.1.4. DfE and NHS England were pleased to hear that SEND is part of the Corporate Business Change programme, ensuring it is high on the local area's agenda.
 - 5.1.5. Parents feel more included at a strategic level and are more aware of what is happening and what is being planned. However, the local area is aware that outcomes at a family level are still too slow, and this leads to some frustration for families.
 - 5.1.6. Schools report a noticeable shift in the ways of working, with better communication, more efficient responses and more willingness to listen to and engage with schools.

- 5.2. The review meetings take each of the nine improvement areas of significant weakness identified in the Ofsted and Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection, and review progress made, the impact of the work on children, young people and families, and next steps. These are listed below under the nine headings.

Area 1: the lack of a clear, coproduced strategy for improvement

- 5.3. The new SEND strategy has been formally signed off by the council's executive and is now published on the Local Offer. All associated strategies have been reviewed, aligned with the SEND strategy, and a forward plan has been produced for future strategy reviews. At the time of the review meeting, the joint all age carers strategy was the only strategy yet to be signed off and was awaiting a public consultation which has since started.

Area 2: parents' lack of confidence in opportunities for children with SEND

- 5.4. Process mapping workshops have been completed for the 20-week EHCP assessment process, annual review process, ceasing a plan, phase transfer and the placement processes. The new processes were coproduced with key stakeholders, including the SEND team, children's and adults social care, Parent Carer Forum, SENCOs, and health partners.

Area 3: lack of coproduction with children and their families and with fellow professionals

- 5.5. Coproduction is now routinely happening as part of the EHCP process, and the team are receiving regular compliments about the new way of working, with feedback reflecting that parents and carers feel their views are being heard and embedded into the EHCP at a much earlier stage. A SEND youth forum has been developed and the forum is split into two groups (ages 11-17 and 18-25) to ensure that young adults with EHCPs have their own group.

Area 4: the lack of specialist education places

- 5.6. Since the last DfE and NHS England review meeting, the following progress towards increasing the number of specialist places within the borough has been made: a successful bid to the DfE for a new autism free special school, feasibility studies are underway for two new secondary specialist resource provisions (SRPs), a review of primary SRPs is being conducted by a primary headteacher who has been seconded to the council for one day per week, and through the Safety Valve programme the council is seeking to open a new SEMH free school.

Area 5: the lack of support available while waiting to access occupational therapy

- 5.7. Demand for OT services across East Berkshire has continued to grow over the most recent review period. Despite this, referrals continue to be managed within the 2-week triage timeframe. The average waiting time in Bracknell Forest has had a slight increase in the number of children waiting longer than 52 weeks, however this continues to be closely monitored. Further work is ongoing to review the referral process and form to support the graduated response, strengthen the universal offer, and promote shared responsibility with parents, carers and partners. Work will continue to enhance early support and advice via online resources, including webinars which can now be booked directly, leading to a positive impact of families being signposted to interim support whilst awaiting access to services.

Area 6: the lack of mental health support for children who have reached a mental health crisis

- 5.8. A new CAMHS specialist mental health learning disability service has been set up and will be operational by January 2024. The ICB has also been successful in two investment bids to support mental health needs: CAMHS for children in care and specialist CYP mental health practitioner in primary care. Both services are currently in the mobilisation phase.

Area 7: lack of established, effective panel arrangements for the graduated approach

- 5.9. A coproduction meeting has taken place to review the graduated approach, incorporate best practice and produce a new graduated approach framework. Plans have been developed to implement the new graduated approach framework and includes support sessions for school staff. An initial pilot group of schools has been identified to test the new framework prior to a broader roll out.

Area 8: insufficient long-term planning for young people as they move into adulthood

- 5.10. The appointment of a Preparation for Adulthood (PfA) officer has had an immediate positive impact on the focus being placed on this area for older children. Support mechanisms have been developed (all of which have been coproduced). This ranges from the information captured in EHCPs during the annual review process, through to providing guidance targeting children and young people and their carers (such as the 'Moving On' and 'Pathway to Adulthood' documents) and opportunities to investigate areas of interest (through PfA events and membership of groups) and via training for professionals, so schools and caseworkers are better equipped to provide specific guidance to meet an individual's needs.

Area 9: parents' lack of awareness of available advice, support and provision

- 5.11. Content on the Local Offer website has been reviewed, and work is now underway to upgrade the platform to ensure the website is more user friendly. The new design has been completed with significant input from parents, carers, children and young people. Two new roles have been appointed to (designated social care officer and participation officer), which is enabling a greater level of support to be provided to various council services. The designated social care officer, participation officer and SEND officers have been working together to strengthen relationships between SEND and children's social care. This has supported improved decision making and collaborative working, resulting in children and young people having their social care as well as education needs met.
- 5.12. A date for the next review meeting with DfE and NHS England has been agreed for early May 2024.
- 5.13. The SEND Structure has now been formally agreed and includes significant investment to further enhance the capacity in the teams. A consultation with staff is needed as part of implementation with formal consultation currently planned to start week commencing 18th March and will be a four week process. Implementation of the new SEND Structure, dependent on recruitment and retention is anticipated on or around July. Recruitment to the Head of Service post and interviews have taken place.

6. Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1. The relevant legal issues are addressed within the body of the report.

Financial Advice

- 6.2. There are no specific finance issues relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3. A public consultation for the potential closure of College Hall Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) at the end of the current academic year, started on Monday, 11 March 2024. The consultation is open to all Bracknell Forest residents and will run until Wednesday, 24 April 2024.

This consultation comes following the College Hall Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) Management Committee advising the Department for Education (DfE) that it considers the school to be no longer financially viable.

Following the public consultation period, if the closure is agreed, it is expected that the funding will be used to enhance the overall educational provision for children in the local area, including a new social, emotional, mental health (SEMH) school. This aligns with the vision for children and young people to achieve their full potential in their early years, at school and in college and lead happy and fulfilled lives.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4. There are no specific equalities issues relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5. There are no specific strategic risk management issues relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced.

Climate Change and Ecological Impacts

- 6.6. There are no specific climate change implications relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7. There are no specific health and wellbeing considerations relating to the update on the WSOA as this was considered when the WSOA was produced.

Background Papers

DfE progress review meeting slide deck December 2023
Bracknell Forest WSOA review report December 2023

Contact for further information

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