

**Meeting:** Health and Wellbeing Board  
**Date:** 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024  
**Classification:** Part 1  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Title of Report:** **SEND and Strategic Action Plan Update**

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## **Executive Summary**

**1.1** To update the Health and Well-being Board on the SEND Area Strategic Action Plan progress

## **Recommendations**

- 2.1** To note progress
- 2.2** To request a further update on the area's progress in implementing the action plan in 6 months
- 2.3** To agree the Self Evaluation Framework (SEF)

## **3. Background**

**3.1** The Area Send inspection is a joint inspection, carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) which looks at the local area's partnership SEND arrangements. The Inspection framework was revised in January 2023 and Southend was the 4<sup>th</sup> area to be inspected under the new framework.

**3.2** Under the revised 2023 Area SEND Inspection framework there are 3 possible outcome judgements for the SEND Inspection:

1. The local area partnership's SEND arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The next Area Inspection will be within 5 years and the Area should produce its strategic action plan within 30 days of the published outcome.
2. The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The next area inspection will be within 3 years and the Area should produce its strategic action plan within 30 days of the published outcome.

3. There are widespread and/or systemic failings leading to significant concerns about the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

**3.3** The outcome for Southend was judgement 2 which was an improving position from the Written Statement of Action which arose from the last inspection. An Area Strategic Action plan was produced to address 6 recommendations, and this is being monitored by the DFE/CQC jointly. The inspection was carried out between the 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> March 2023 with the final report being published in June 23.

**3.4** The 6 recommendations as set out in the Action Plan are as follows:

1. The local area partnership and stakeholders, including the council, the Integrated Care Board and wider partnership, should ensure that leaders in education, health and social care are empowered to drive forward improvements at pace so that the Southend SEND Partnership strategy impacts positively on the experiences and outcomes of all children and young and people with SEND.
2. The local area partnership should evaluate the quality and impact of services and joint working more effectively, to inform improvements that lead to better outcomes and experiences for children and young people with SEND.
3. Local area partnership leaders should improve the effectiveness of joint working to support the co-production of EHC plans and annual reviews so that at each stage the provision that is planned takes full account of children's and young people's current and changing needs.
4. Local area partnership leaders should ensure that they share accurate data across health, education and social care to support rigorous and effective self-evaluation and inform joint commissioning.
5. The local area partnership should ensure that appropriate support is in place from health services for children and young people who are awaiting health needs assessments, so that early intervention reduces the risk of any escalation of concern.
6. The local area partnership should make sure that parents and carers and professionals receive clear and reliable information about how to access the range of support and services that are available.

## **Section 4. Strategic Action Plan progress**

**4.1** A detailed outline of all activity and progress is set out in the annual SEND Strategy Update report which is now publicly available and included as **appendix 1**. Below are summary headlines outlining areas of activity and progress.

### **4.2 Progress towards recommendation 1.**

Investment in SEND services and new governance arrangements have led to an ambitious transformation providing clearer functions for reporting and tracking progress across the partnership creating new roles within the ICB to support the SEND and Children's agenda. New governance arrangements are set out in **appendix 2**.

The strategic Area Partnership Board now has clearer oversight of delivery and impact of services which allows leaders across the partnership to be held to account for delivery of services. The newly developed area Self Evaluation Framework (SEF) is fully reflective of the whole SEND/AP system. The SEF will be revisited and updated following next year's Joint Special Needs Assessment (JSNA) and the outcomes from year 2 of the Strategic Action Plan delivery. The SEF is included in this report for agreement and sign off from the Board. **appendix 3**.

Increased stakeholder engagement has been achieved through the creation of strategic sub-groups to support wider understanding and engagement to inform the shaping of services in the future.

The Children's Joint Commissioning Group (CJCG) has been created and will be meeting bi-monthly from January 2025, draft terms of reference are included at **appendix 4**.

#### **4.3 Progress towards recommendation 2.**

A range of additional services have been created to improve identification of need, assessment and intervention across early years and schools providing a robust offer of additional expertise, training and guidance to practitioners in settings.

Development across early years services and Preparing for adulthood (PfA) are supporting increased identification of need in early years, improved transitions across the age range and the development of jointly agreed outcomes for children and young people.

Strengthened work across Inclusion and attendance services is promoting increased attendance and the increased support is leading to improved outcomes for those pupils returning from pilot programmes and alternative provision.

There is an increased offer to support mental health in schools from additional services within the local authority and joint work across the partnership to prevent admissions to inpatient mental health settings.

#### **4.4 Progress towards recommendation 3.**

Interim resources have been provided to increase the capacity of statutory SEND assessment, review and Educational Psychology teams to implement a range of recovery programmes around statutory assessment delay and to improve response the statutory review processes.

An external audit has been undertaken to identify gaps and weaknesses in the current SEND service business processes and the recommendations will form an action plan which will support service redesign and future capacity requirements. The recommendations from the audit will be reviewed against existing actions and evaluation in the SEND Action Plan monitoring and SEF to ensure consistency.

Individual quality assurance processes have been developed and ongoing work is in place to further develop the Quality Assurance Framework and multi-agency audit process.

#### 4.5 Progress towards recommendation 4.

Work is progressing across the Mid and South Essex Business Intelligence team and Southend City Council to develop a joint SEND dashboard and developments have been made to improve internal reporting across partnership areas to provide further insight into key metrics and demographics. Operational teams are routinely reporting on data and activity to inform future actions.

Improved data is being provided through publicly available systems and the co-produced Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) has now been completed.

#### 4.6 Progress towards recommendation 5.

Additional support for children, young people and families around Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) across face to face and virtual platforms has been provided through the Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT) and additional resources have been launched to support those with sensory needs.

Increased information has been made available through a range of services to support increased awareness of referral pathways, online information, guidance and additional support and resources whilst awaiting diagnostic outcomes or support for a range of needs such as EPUT and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). In addition a portal has been launched to support ASD and ADHD referral pathways and provide increased information and guidance for children, young people and families.

#### 4.7 Progress towards recommendation 6.

A range of engagement activity and events in conjunction with the Parent Carer Forum have increased the participation of families in strategic planning activities.

Seminars, surgeries and community events been provided with themes and topics devised and informed by families have helped to develop information and process guidance for parents and carers on publicly available forums around SEND processes.

Additional activity has taken place to ensure the Local Offer website is more accessible and content is kept under review following feedback from the engagement activities to support future development and increase participation.

### **5. Impact to date**

**5.1** There is strengthened governance and arrangements in place for performance monitoring. All Area Partners understand the impact of service delivery and the key issues.

**5.2** Improvements in the system have strengthened the quality of services.

**5.3** Data shows that there is increased output of new EHC assessments within timescale as 2024 progressed and reductions in those waiting for completion of EHC assessments.

**5.4** There is greater understanding across the Partnership on the impact of service delivery and identified risks and challenges.

**5.5** A number of initiatives have been launched across health providers to provide additional support to children and young people and their families waiting for assessments.

**5.6** There are significantly improved communications to stakeholders from across the SEND Partnership, and families are more aware of where to access advice and support or information.

## **6. Ongoing priorities for 24/25**

**6.1** Continued work through the new governance structures to ensure continued engagement of Health commissioners and service providers around the joint responsibility for SEND.

**6.2** Continued development of quality assurance frameworks that will evaluate and demonstrate impact on children and young people's outcomes and experiences.

**6.3** Managers across health, education and social care to embed processes to quality assure statutory advice for EHC assessment and annual reviews and work together to strengthen data reporting mechanisms.

**6.4** To implement the recommendations for the Statutory SEND services set out in the external audit action plan which is due to be released in the new year leading to continued improvement in achieving key statutory deadlines in relation to EHC assessment and review.

**6.5** Redesign of Statutory SEND services to ensure increased capacity of the assessment, plans, reviewing and tribunal officers within the establishment to meet statutory timelines and ensure children needs are met at the right time with the right support.

**6.6** Needs assessment of current specialist and alternative provision places and ensure place forecasting and plans for increasing provision is suitable for the forecast increased needs within the city

**6.7** Develop and finalise the Southend Area Partnership Quality Assurance Framework

**6.8** To finalise completion of the Area Partnership Outcomes Framework and key metrics to provide a joint data dashboard that will inform wider commissioning and delivery priorities.

**6.9** Evaluate the user experience for all community health services so that support to families that are waiting for assessment is consistent across all pathways.

**6.9** Strengthen the strategic engagement of children and young people with SEND so they are more involved in the wider decision-making of the area.

## **Appendices**

- **Appendix 1**: Strategic Action plan annual update report

- **Appendix 2**: Southend Area Partnership Governance Chart
- **Appendix 3**: Area Self Evaluation Framework (SEF)
- **Appendix 4**: Children's Joint Commissioning Group draft Terms of Reference