

**5 February 2024****Agenda Item: 5****REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES  
AND THE CHIEF NURSE, NOTTINGHAM AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE  
INTEGRATED CARE BOARD****PARTNERSHIP PROGRESS IN IMPROVING THE EXPERIENCES AND  
OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL  
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES - UPDATE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To provide an update to Committee on the progress made by the Nottinghamshire local area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Partnership in implementing improvements to the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND.

**Information**

2. A progress report was presented to Committee on 16 October 2023, outlining the activity of the Nottinghamshire Local Area Partnership to deliver the joint [SEND Improvement Plan](#), which was developed in response to the [findings](#) of the Ofsted/CQC local area SEND inspection that took place in January/February 2023.
3. Per the SEND Improvement Plan, there are six key outcomes that the Nottinghamshire Local Area Partnership is seeking to achieve, split across two Areas for Priority Action:

*Area for Priority Action 1 (APA1): Leaders, NHS Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board and education, health and care providers should cooperate to urgently identify, assess and provide for the needs of children and young people with SEND. This includes assessment of needs, timely issuing of Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans and holistic oversight of these plans through annual reviews.*

- Outcome 1: Children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire have their needs identified and assessed in a timely way through statutory processes;
- Outcome 2: Ensure our children and young people with SEND receive robust and consistent support through their EHC Plans, which have the right input, at the right time and from the right place;
- Outcome 3: Children and young people with additional needs, but without an EHC Plan, have their needs identified, met, and monitored effectively.

*Area for Priority Action 2 (APA2): Leaders, including commissioners and providers, should act urgently to identify and address the delays and gaps in access to some health services,*

*particularly speech and language therapy, neurodevelopmental pathways and equipment services. They should also ensure that they use available performance data to identify where gaps exist and whether actions taken to address these are effective.*

- Outcome 4: The needs of children and families with SEND are clearly understood so that immediate and long-term changes to health service provision can be made through effective joint commissioning;
  - Outcome 5: Children and young people receive timely assessment and treatment offer for assessment by the Neurodevelopmental Behaviour Service (NBS);
  - Outcome 6: Children, young people and families with SEND experience services that are easy to navigate, free from duplication and are adaptive to their needs.
4. These outcomes are underpinned by additional requirements for the Partnership to ensure there is a stronger focus on embedding data, quality assurance, coproduction and shared leadership and governance across all SEND improvement activity.

### **SEND Deep Dive and Stocktake**

5. As part of routine assurance and oversight processes, the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) undertook a six-monthly 'Deep Dive' on 19 September 2023, reviewing progress against Nottinghamshire's SEND Improvement Plan at an operational level. Feedback was received on 9 October 2023:
- a. *The local area's collective commitment to making sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people was clear. The Partnership communicated that governance, partnership and multi-agency working is much stronger post-inspection.*
  - b. *The evidence provided alongside the feedback from partners demonstrated accelerated improvement. These included improvements to your 20-week timeliness and reduction of the neuro-developmental waiting times. Through the Deep Dive, the partnership demonstrated that APA1 was on track as detailed in your SEND Improvement Plan.*
  - c. *We are less assured of the progress of APA2 and would like further discussion regarding the use of data. In addition, we would like to further understand your management of waiting lists. Children and young people and parents/carers may be subject to increased risks whilst waiting; either through a deterioration in their physical, emotional, or mental health OR they may require a longer period of treatment/intervention following the longer waiting period.*
6. As a result of this feedback, the DfE and NHSE held additional Deep Dive consultation sessions in relation to APA2 with senior leaders, as well as facilitating focus groups with parents, carers and health practitioners in order to gain first-hand feedback and hear from those with lived experience. The Partnership received further feedback on 7 December 2023, requesting that the Partnership, led by the ICB as the named responsible body for APA2, undertake actions urgently to address the commitments outlined in the SEND Improvement Plan.

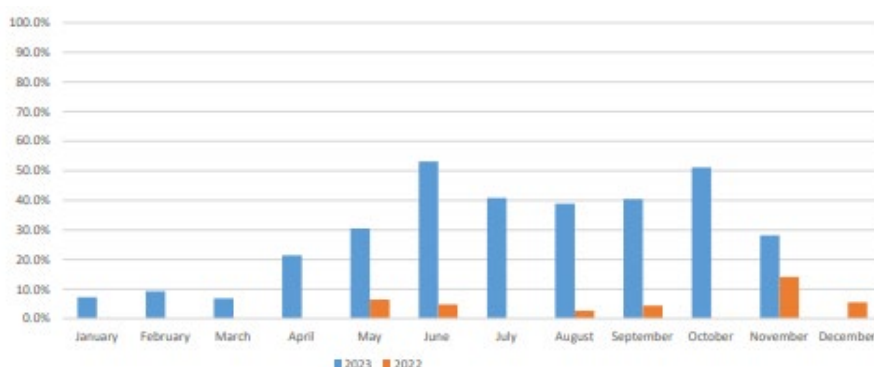
7. Progress will be further reviewed at a Stocktake on 12 January 2024. The Stocktake will be an opportunity for the DfE and NHSE to receive assurance that Partnership progress is on track and that wider SEND systems to support ongoing sustainability are effective.

## Partnership Progress To Date

### Outcome 1 (APA1): Children and Young People with SEND in Nottinghamshire have their needs identified and assessed in a timely way through statutory processes

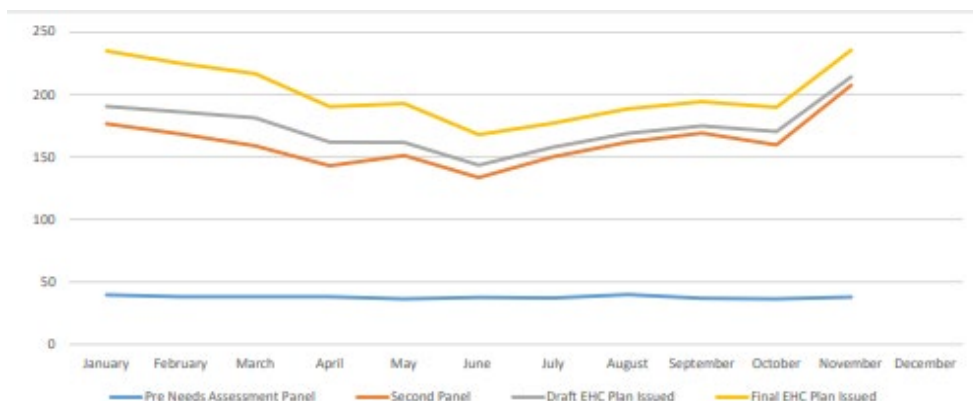
8. Additional staffing capacity has been implemented in order to reduce waiting times, better meet the increasing demand for assessments and improve the level of service and communication that children, young people and their parents or carers receive. This includes the recruitment of:
- 6 Plan Writers, dedicated to producing and amending EHC Plans;
  - 6 Education, Health and Care (EHC) Coordinators in the ICDS Assessment Team for two years (pending a further review of the establishment and structures);
  - 3 Senior Practitioners, recruited on a short-term basis to provide the necessary support and quality assurance across the assessment process.
9. Plans are in place to utilise agency Educational Psychologists (EPs) to reduce the waiting list for Educational Psychology assessments. Longer-term plans are underway to expand the Educational Psychology Service establishment and recruit 9 additional full-time equivalent (FTE) EPs and 3 additional Trainee EPs by 2025. 3.6 FTE EPs have recently been appointed, commencing in September 2024 and September 2025 (these are staff who are currently Trainee Educational Psychologists undergoing qualification). Further recruitment is planned for April 2024.
10. As a result of these measures, performance data reports as follows:
- As of November 2023, 28.3% of our children and young people received their EHC Plan within 140 days compared to 4.5% in 2022, with an aim of reaching reach 30% by 31 December 2023;
  - On average, families were waiting 5 weeks less to receive their EHC Plans in September 2023 compared to January 2023 (36.8 weeks down to 28.3 weeks);
  - The number of children and young people waiting for educational psychology EHC needs assessments reduced from 488 in September 2023 to 359 in December 2023;
  - More educational psychology assessments are being completed each month; on average 84 received an assessment in 2022/23 compared to 72 in 2021/22.

#### **Percentage of new EHC Plans issues within timescales (excluding exceptions)**



*Graph up to date as of November 2023. Improvement activity has initially focused on improving access to timely assessment of need and issuing of Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plans against a backdrop of increased demand for assessments.*

### Average time to complete each stage of the EHC assessment process



*Graph up to date as of November 2023. Average time taken to complete each stage of the assessment process has dropped and began to rise again slightly. This is attributed to increased demand.*

11. Work continues in relation to reviewing operational processes, systems and structures, in order to identify changes that can further improve efficiency. Feedback from parents and carers will continue to be utilised to focus attention on improvements that will make the most difference.

Outcome 2 (APA1): Ensure our children and young people with SEND receive robust and consistent support through their EHC Plans, which have the right input, at the right time and from the right place

12. In November 2023, the Partnership approached 1,500 families in order to obtain feedback about EHC Plan provision in place; of the 139 responses received, 75 responded positively about their EHCP. This information had not been collated previously, thus providing the Partnership with new insights and feedback to inform improvement activity.
13. A more comprehensive and consistent approach to responding to parent and carer complaints has been implemented. Where required, issues can be escalated with partners to facilitate a multiagency approach to complaint resolution surrounding the EHCP process. Feedback and learning from this revised process will be utilised in order to ensure that the support provided to families is robust and effectively meets needs.
14. There continues to be an increased operational focus on ensuring that Annual Reviews (and the issuing of amended EHCPs within statutory timescales) are completed on time, including a review of the end-to-end process for Annual Reviews. This is underpinned by focussed work to ensure that appropriate data reporting is in place to enable robust oversight, monitoring and forecasting of timescales.

Outcome 3 (APA1): Children and young people with additional needs, but without an EHC Plan, have their needs identified, met, and monitored effectively.

15. Improved systems are now in place to identify this cohort of children and young people within SEND reporting. This will enable improved tracking of the progress of children and young people with SEN support needs within our local systems (for attendance, academic progress, inclusion within mainstream schools, reduced exclusions) and reduce variance between their performance and the non-SEN support cohort. While it will take some time

to evidence the impact of this measure on children, young people and their families, measures are being developed to ensure that the impact of these measures can be demonstrated in 2024.

16. A new SEND Educational Pathway Officer (EPO) role has been created, with 3 EPOs already in post and 2 more currently being recruited. EPOs will provide dedicated 1:1 support to families and educational settings, helping them to understand and better navigate their way through applying and accessing SEN support. It is anticipated that this role will enable the Partnership to better manage demand for EHC needs assessments.
17. There has been a 20% uplift in High Needs Funding agreed for the current academic year 2023/24, to support children and young people with SEN needs in mainstream school settings. A SEN Funding Tracker is now in place, enabling improved tracking of funding allocations (this is currently being piloted by two groups of schools).
18. Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) questionnaires indicate that there are examples of strong inclusive practice that support confidence in the graduated response pathway in Nottinghamshire. Further work is planned to undertake a multi-agency deep dive, in order to review the effectiveness and understanding of the graduated approach. It is anticipated that this will inform improvements and enable a detailed action plan to be developed, in order to improve inclusive practice and oversight of inclusion within settings. This will be supplemented by a review of the training offer for SENCos, to address any gaps and improve workforce development. Best practice examples will also be shared with SENCos, parents and carers in order to improve confidence in the graduated response pathway.

Outcome 4 (APA2): The needs of children and families with SEND are clearly understood so that immediate and long-term changes to health service provision can be made through effective joint commissioning

19. Work has been undertaken to support a better understanding of the SEND population needs in Nottinghamshire, so that services can be developed and commissioned collaboratively to effectively meet needs. This has been underpinned by dedicated data analytical support being put in place within the ICB; this enables data flows to be embedded from providers into the ICB, in order to generate data, insight and intelligence that enables the Partnership to drive quality improvement, monitor impact, reduce waiting times and improve access to services.
20. Variations have been made within health provider contracts to include explicit reporting requirements relating to SEND for Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, CityCare and the Healthy Family Services. Work is planned for this to be embedded into contracts for acute hospital trusts in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire by April 2024. This has allowed the Partnership a degree of quality assurance around commissioned services, as well as the mechanisms to monitor and challenge services that are underperforming in relation to their offer to children and young people with SEND. This will ensure a quality service going forwards. Trusts will be asked for bi-annual narratives to support strategic leadership and oversight across the Partnership.
21. Plans are in place to jointly commission integrated speech, language and communication need services by April 2024. In addition, there is commitment from all partners to jointly

commission a sensory therapy service by September 2024 (pending confirmation of funding streams).

Outcome 5 (APA2): Children and Young People receive timely assessment and treatment offer for assessment by the Neurodevelopmental Behaviour Service (NBS)

22. An extensive review of the neurodevelopmental pathway has been undertaken, enabling a greater understanding of the pressures facing the NBS. As a result, additional staff have been recruited to the NBS to support the reduction in waiting times. The coproduction of a child and young person neurodevelopmental website ('Minds of all Kinds') has also commenced. Furthermore, long-term service improvements have been identified and plans are in place to implement these by March 2024. This will allow for a more positive experience for those currently accessing the service, or who will access the service in the future.
23. Significant engagement with families, children and young people accessing neurodevelopmental services and speech, language and communication need services has been undertaken to support a broader understanding of the lived experience of people accessing these services. Early feedback has resulted in the implementation of 'waiting well' support for all children, young people and families on the NBS waiting list.
24. The work undertaken to date to support the neurodevelopmental pathway has cumulated in a reduction in wait times from 22 months in October 2022, to 62 weeks in September 2023. There has been a noticeable reduction in telephone contacts into the service from families enquiring about current wait times since 'waiting well' resources have been shared. This has, in turn, reduced pressures on the service and indicates that families feel more comfortable during the wait period.
25. Focussed activity is planned in the New Year in relation to the development of a shared care record to speed up the assessment process and subsequent waiting times, as well as the implementation of direct onward referrals from the NBS to Community Paediatrics through e-referral processes. Work is also being explored around opportunities for joint assessments with the NBS and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), to ensure the primary need for the child or young person is identified, be it neurodevelopmental or mental health.

Outcome 6 (APA2): Children, young people and families with SEND experience services that are easy to navigate, free from duplication and are adaptive to their needs

26. A system-wide review of all provision has been undertaken across the Partnership, to better understand services and identify commissioning gaps and duplication in the service offer. The service review confirmed that there are no hidden waits within services and therefore once assessments have been completed, therapy suited to current need can start immediately.
27. Additional speech and language therapists are now in post to reduce waiting times, specifically on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathways, which have the highest demand. In light of increased waiting times, 4 additional speech and language therapists are now in post to deliver a reduction in waiting times. All those on waiting lists are now offered the 'waiting well' support.

28. Work is underway within the specialist service to implement advice and drop-in sessions for schools to access generic advice and support. This will be fully embedded into the specialist service by April 2024. The enhancement of the traded offer within schools is also underway, with an aim to complete this by September 2024 (funding dependent).

#### Data and Insights

29. Focussed activity continues in relation to the development of a combined data set for our SEND population in Nottinghamshire, incorporating data sets from across organisations and providers. This is intended to enable the Partnership to better understand where gaps may exist in our reporting, deliver targeted improvement activity, better understand the needs of our population and ensure that areas of risk or pressure can be more clearly understood.
30. By ensuring that this infrastructure is in place as part of SEND improvement activity, this has set the foundation for an ongoing culture of meaningful data sharing; in turn, this can be used to drive service improvement locally, whilst also ensuring there is effective strategic oversight of the services offered to our children, young people, and families.

#### Leadership & Strategic Development

31. In parallel with the focussed improvement areas outlined in the SEND Improvement Plan, work has been initiated as a wider Partnership to frame our SEND improvement work within a revised outcome-based strategy. External support for this is in place through the Council for Disabled Children, achieved via the Research and Improvement for SEND Excellence (RISE) partnership with the DfE. This includes supporting the local area partnership with the development of a Strategic Outcomes Framework and exploration of data indicators to underpin an outcomes-led SEND Partnership Strategy.
32. Between September and December 2023, three full day events have been facilitated by the Council for Disabled Children, with good involvement from across the local area and strong representation from leaders with SEND responsibilities. Plans are in place for the Partnership to hold a range of consultation events in the New Year with key stakeholders, including practitioners who deliver SEND services and provision; children and young people with SEND; parents and carers; and wider groups of leaders across the local area, such as headteachers.
33. Delivery of the SEND Partnership Strategy will be overseen by the newly established SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group (PAIG), which held its inaugural meeting on 12 December 2023.

#### Engagement with Children, Young People and Families

34. A Parent and Carer Reference Group has been established to support SEND improvement activity. This reference group will allow us to conduct focused consultations with SEND families and provide us with an opportunity to coproduce solutions. This group was established in September 2023 and met for the first time in November 2023. A second meet is scheduled for January 2024.

35. An engagement project was launched in November 2023 to gain a better understanding of the experiences of those accessing, referring into, and delivering the Speech, Language and Communications Services. This engagement is ongoing, with an end date aimed for mid-December 2023. The subsequent report is due to be published by 31 January 2024. To date, three focus groups have been held to gain first-hand responses and allow in-depth conversation with families, young people and professionals within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Surveys have been shared extensively across the system to education colleagues, social care colleagues, health professionals and families living in Nottinghamshire, with over 75 responses had to date.
36. Following consultation with Nottingham Children's Hospital Youth Forum, a SEND champion has been identified. This is a young person with autism, who is actively wanting to support the SEND Improvement Programme and assist the Partnership to engage with children and young people for the purpose of co-producing services going forward.
37. Following consultation with Nottingham Children's Hospital Youth Forum, a transitions network of young people has been identified who have set up a workshop in February half term to highlight lived experience of transitioning through different health services in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
38. A co-production group has been formed to support the development of the Children & Young Peoples Neurodevelopmental website 'Minds of all Kinds'. The group includes young people and parents/carers with lived experience of neurodevelopmental conditions.
39. A new parent carer survey has been introduced into ICDS and will be shared with all families who have requested an EHCP assessment.

### **Other Options Considered**

40. No other options have been considered.

### **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

41. The local area partnership is committed to improving the experiences and outcomes of children and young people with SEND and will continue to focus on implementing the improvement plan and wider improvement arrangements moving forwards.

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

42. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.



## **Financial Implications**

43. Local authority costs associated with the improvement programme and associated partnership governance arrangements have been subject to the relevant approvals in line with financial regulations.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

That the Select Committee:

- 1) considers the content of the report and confirms whether Members have any further questions or recommendations in relation to progress with the required improvements.
- 2) agrees to receive further updates on progress on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities improvement activity in April and July 2024 and the format of the updates be considered.

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**Corporate Director, Children and Families**

**Rosa Waddingham**  
**Chief Nurse, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board**

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## **Constitutional Comments (CD 02/01/24)**

44. The recommendations proposed falls within the remit of the Children and Families Select Committee by virtue of the Terms of Reference set out in the Constitution.

## **Financial Comments (SS 02/01/24)**

45. Local authority costs associated with the improvement programme and associated partnership governance arrangements have been subject to the relevant approvals in line with financial regulations.

## **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[Improving the experiences and outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) - report to Cabinet on 25 May 2023

[Progress in Improving the Experiences and Outcomes for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities](#) – report to Cabinet on 22 June 2023

[Partnership Progress In Improving The Experiences And Outcomes For Children And Young People With Special Educational Needs And Disabilities](#) – Report to Children and Families Select Committee on 16 October 2023**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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