



**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. Progress reports were presented to Committee on 16 October 2023 and 5 February 2024, 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:
  - a. *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.

- b. *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 Support Team Service (NST) (formerly known as the Neurodevelopmental Behaviour Service).
  - 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.

### **Refresh of the SEND Improvement Plan**

5. Following the publication of the local area inspection report on 16 May 2023, the Partnership was given 35 working days to develop the SEND Improvement Plan (also known as a 'Priority Action Plan' or 'PAP' under the inspection framework) detailing the actions that would be undertaken to achieve the Areas for Priority Action and Outcomes. The SEND Improvement Plan was formally approved by CQC and Ofsted on 14 July 2023 and was subsequently [published](#) online.
6. In January 2024, it was agreed between the Partnership and the SEND Partnership Improvement Board that the SEND Improvement Plan requires a refresh, in order to remain fit-for-purpose and provide sufficient assurance of progress and impact. In February 2024, the Partnership refreshed the SEND Improvement Plan in order to reflect current and planned activity; while no material changes were made to the Areas for Priority Action or Outcomes, the aims, actions, action owners and timescales were updated. The updated Plan was approved by the SEND Partnership Improvement Board in February 2024.

### **SEND Stocktake**

7. As part of routine assurance and oversight processes, the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England (NHSE) undertook a six-monthly 'Stocktake' on 12 January 2024. This provided an opportunity for the DfE and NHSE to undertake a strategic review of progress, assess Partnership governance arrangements and receive assurance that wider SEND systems are effective. Formal feedback was received on 27 February 2024 and can be found in **Appendix 1**. Key highlights include:

- *We were pleased to hear that you have made progress against the activity in your PAP and how the partnership has matured with stronger collective leadership of the improvements needed across the county.*
- *It is the view of the Department for Education and NHS England that you are making progress in line with the PAP you agreed with Ofsted/CQC and in enhancing your partnership's leadership and governance of SEND. Considering the progress demonstrated and the ongoing commitment of your partnership, the department is assured that no additional intervention is required at this time.*
- *[There is] clear senior corporate interest and engagement reflected in regular meetings between the local authority and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) at Chief Executive level. This is coupled with changes to the County Council cabinet to reflect the Leader's priorities with the creation of two children focused members (one for Education and SEND and one for CSC and Families).*
- *A strong sense of partnership, and leaders working more collaboratively to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.*

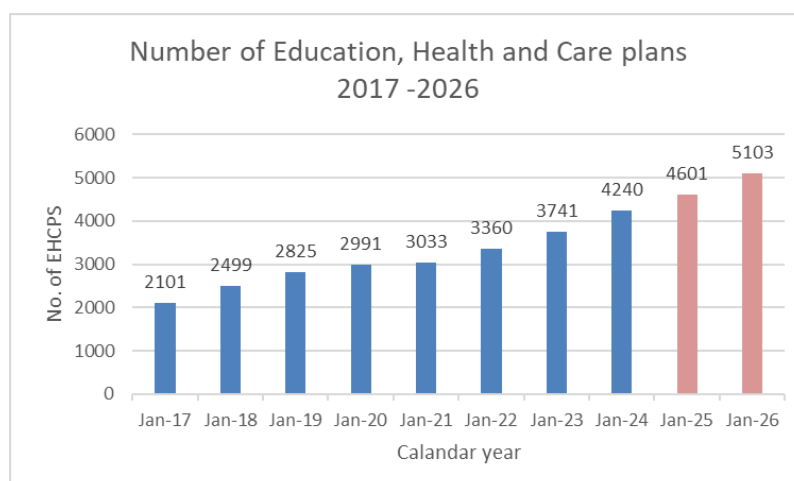
8. The findings of the Stocktake were supplemented by an operational, six-monthly 'Deep Dive' on 19 March 2024. This allowed the DfE and NHSE to review the Partnership's progress against the SEND Improvement Plan at an operational level. The feedback from this is expected in early April.

## 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

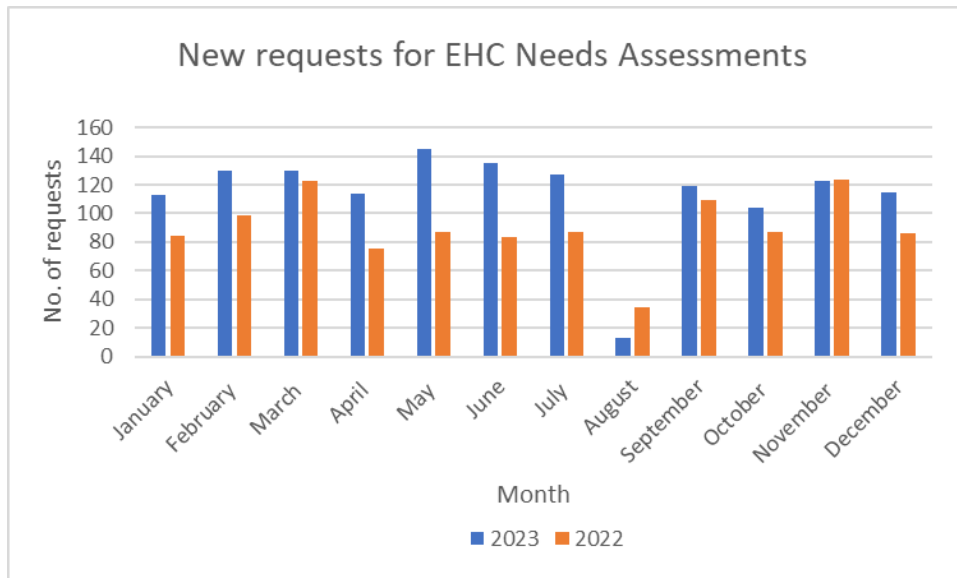
9. Over the last seven years the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) that the Local Authority maintains has increased significantly. The total number of EHCPs has increased from 2,104 in January 2017 to over 4,240 in January 2024. 35% of these EHCPs were made in the previous 2 years.

*Table 1 shows the increase in EHCPs maintained by the County Council including projections until January 2026*



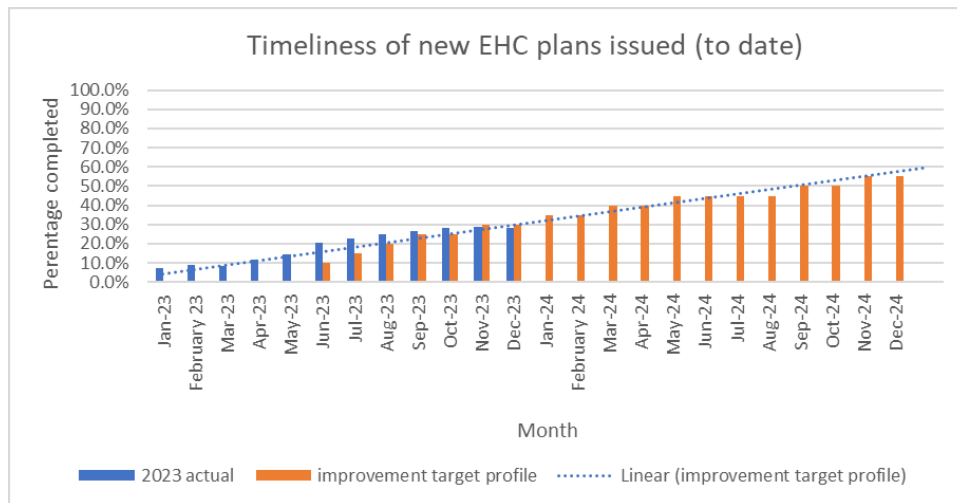
10. The demand for statutory Education, Health and Care (EHC) Needs Assessments continues to increase. In 2023, the Local Authority received 1,368 requests for EHC Needs Assessments, an increase of 26.9% from 2022. In the month of January 2024, the Local Authority received 166 new EHC Needs Assessment requests compared with 113 in January 2023. These increases continue to place services and provision for children and young people under significant pressure.

*Table 2 shows the increase in new requests for EHC Needs Assessments*



11. An overview of Nottinghamshire’s EHC Needs Assessment performance to date:
- During 2022, Nottinghamshire issued just 4.5% of new EHCPs within 20 weeks. The County Council is fully committed to reducing the length of time it takes to complete EHC Needs Assessment requests through statutory processes and reduce the length of time it takes to issue EHC Plans. The County Council has provided additional funding to increase the capacity of the Educational Psychology (EP) Service and the Integrated Children’s Disability Service (ICDS) EHC assessment team.
  - This had had a positive impact: more families are now receiving EHCPs within timescales; in 2023, 28% of our children and young people received their EHC Plan within 140 days compared with the year-end position of 4.5% in 2022; the backlog for EHC Needs Assessments has reduced; and more Educational Psychology assessments are now being completed each month.

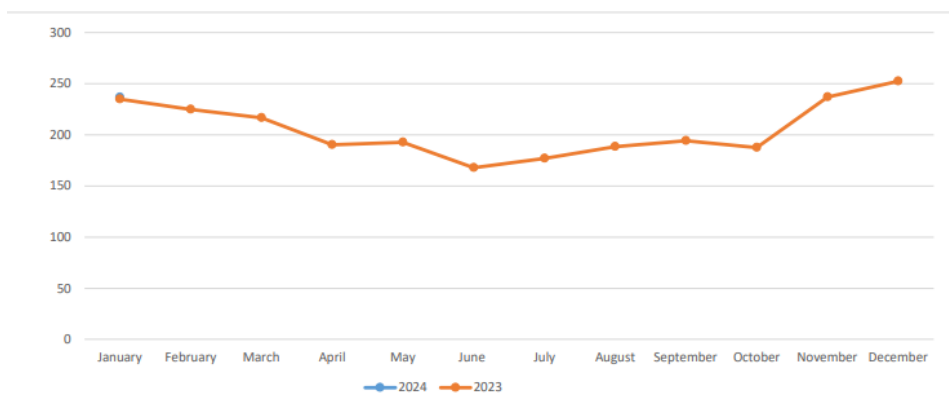
Table 3 shows the percentage of EHCPs completed within 20 weeks (to date) with the County Council's improvement target projections until December 2024



c) Nottinghamshire remains below the national and statistical neighbour averages for 2022 of 49.1% and 47.8% respectively, though it should be noted that these figures are lower than the averages in 2021 of 59.9% and 55.2% respectively. The Local Authority expects to see the timescale improve in 2024 to be in line with the national average, reaching 55% by December 2024.

Table 4 shows the average wait time for an EHC Plan to be produced

**Average wait time (days)**



d) The average wait time for an EHC Plan to be produced dropped significantly following commencement of SEND improvement activity and throughout 2023. By November 2023 we saw the increase in demand mitigate that reduction, with the average wait time rising again to over 250 days.

Table 5 shows how many families have waited longer than 30 weeks for an EHC assessment and plan



e) In addition to considering the average wait time, we also focused on our longest waiting families. Since March 2023 no families have had to wait over 30 weeks.

12. Factors impacting on performance are as follows:

- a. There are continuing delays to the EHC Needs Assessment process in Nottinghamshire largely due to the County Council, as well as other local authorities nationwide, experiencing a significant increase in the number of EHC Needs Assessments being requested and agreed.
- b. The Educational Psychology (EP) assessment is a key piece of information required to inform the assessment of a child or young person’s special educational needs and the provision they require to meet their specific needs. The Local Authority is required to seek psychological advice from an educational psychologist to inform the EHC Needs Assessment, and only then will the Local Authority be able to make the decision on whether to make special educational provision in accordance with an EHC Plan.
- c. The increase in demand for EHC assessments is occurring at a time of a national shortage of Educational Psychologists. Subsequently, the delay with carrying out the EP assessment is preventing the Local Authority from completing EHC Needs Assessments within statutory timescales.

13. Mitigating activity that has been undertaken to address these issues are:

- a. The Local Authority has taken steps to address the delays being experienced as a result of a local and national shortage of Educational Psychologists. This includes expanding and recruiting additional internal EP capacity and commissioning locum EPs at significant additional cost. The number of children and young people waiting for educational psychology EHC Needs Assessments reduced from 488 in September 2023 to 338 January 2024. The longest predicted waiting time also reduced from 12 months to 5 months during this period, with the mobilisation of additional locum EP capacity.

- b. The Educational Psychology service will continue to increase its capacity over the next two years. It is expected that by September 2025 the Educational Psychology Service will have secured nine additional full-time posts. 3.6 of this full-time capacity has already been recruited for start dates in September 2024 and 2025 and further recruitment has just begun in March 2024.
- c. In addition to increased staffing and a long-term recruitment drive, the Educational Psychology Service is continuously considering ways to improve efficiency in their assessment systems. To reduce waiting times, the Local Authority has set a four-week deadline for the EP to complete their assessment from the date of allocation, reducing this timescale by two weeks. More educational psychology assessments are being completed each month; on average 93 young people received an assessment each month so far in 2023/24 compared with 72 in 2022/23 (academic years).
- d. Five SEND Education Pathway Officers commenced their role in January 2024. When a request for an EHC Needs Assessment is made, these officers now engage with young people, parents and carers and offer support and challenge to education settings to ensure that children and young people receive the right support at the right time. These officers are connecting with activity under Outcome 3 of the SEND Improvement Priority Action Plan to help children and young people have their needs better met within the Graduated Response Pathway, helping them to access support earlier rather than through an EHC Plan.
- e. Despite the measures put in place, the Council is still having to operate a waiting list to access EP input for EHC Needs Assessments at present. To ensure fairness to all children who are waiting for an EHC Needs Assessment to be completed, this waiting list operates on the basis of when the request for assessments is received, however exceptional circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis. All children and young people who are waiting for an EP assessment have their needs and circumstances reviewed to assess whether they are considered as being in 'exceptional circumstances' before being added to the EP waiting list.
- f. The Local Authority has also made a significant financial investment in the EHC Assessment team. Six additional EHC Co-ordinators have been secured in this area to increase capacity to draft new EHC Plans and communicate effectively with parents and carers. Three Senior Practitioner posts have also been secured to ensure that there are appropriate levels of support and supervision across the service.
- g. For children and young people who do experience a delay in their EHC Needs Assessment, parents and carers are contacted at regular eight-weekly intervals to explain the delay and the actions that the Local Authority is taking to reduce them.

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

- 14. Over the last six years the number of EHCPs that the Local Authority maintains has increased significantly. The total number of EHCPs has increased from 2,101 in January 2017 to 4,240 in January 2024, an increase of more than 101% in 7 years (See *table 1*

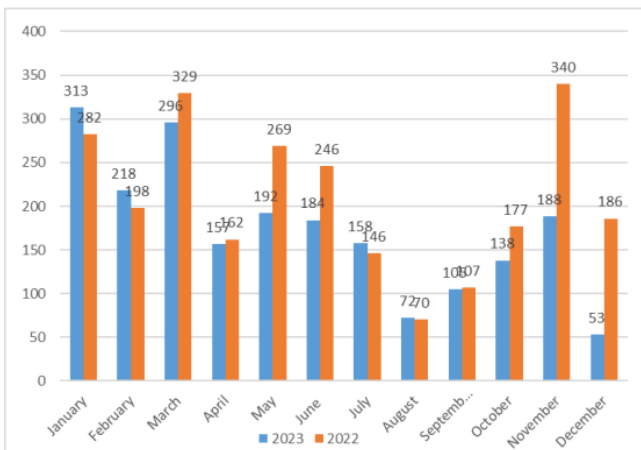


above). Current forecasts suggest we will continue to receive approximately 500 additional requests each year.

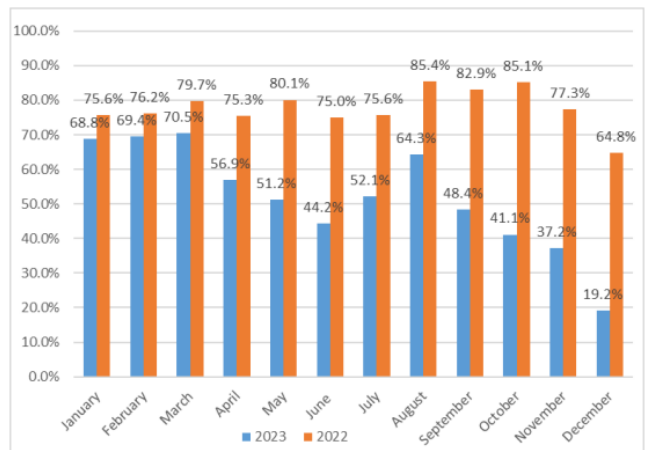
15. As the number of EHCPs grow, so therefore does the number of Annual Reviews. In the previous years, the Local Authority has responded to the increasing demand for EHC Needs Assessments and EHCPs by investing in additional staff. However, the significant increase in requests for EHC Needs Assessments and EHCPs has outstripped the predicted increases. As a result, the additional resources secured did not have the expected impact. This is considered the root cause of the complaints made from 2021 and 2022 that have been escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).
16. The Annual Review process can be described as follows:
  - a) EHCPs must be reviewed, and the process completed by the Local Authority as a minimum within every 12 months. For pre-school children with EHCPs, this review must be within six months. Schools must co-operate with the Local Authority in the review process and, as part of the review, the Local Authority can require schools to convene and hold annual review meetings on its behalf. The educational setting is required to prepare a report of the meeting, this is the record of Annual Review.
  - b) After receiving the Annual Review report from the education setting, the Local Authority must issue a decision within four weeks whether to (a) make no amendments to the EHCP and simply maintain it without change or (b) amend the EHCP or (c) cease to maintain the EHCP. If the Local Authority agrees to amend the EHCP, this must be issued and finalized within eight weeks of the decision being made.

Tables 6 and 7 below show the volume of Annual Reviews completed in 2022 and 2023.

**Annual Reviews Completed in Timescale**



**Percentage of Annual Reviews Completed in Timescale**





17. Mitigating actions that are being taken to improve Annual Review performance are as follows:
- a. Following the Nottinghamshire local area inspection in January 2023, there has been a significant financial investment to support the timely issuing of EHCPs and holistic oversight of these plans through Annual Reviews.
  - b. In June 2023, the Local Authority invested in six new EHC Plan writers. These positions have been secured to solely focus on the Annual Review process. This is to ensure that the decision following an Annual Review is made within four weeks and, if required, the amendment to the EHCP will be completed within a further eight weeks. Since securing the additional staff, approximately 96% of EHCPs that have required amendments following an annual review have been completed within timescale.
  - c. A further six EHC Co-ordinators have been secured to reduce the high number of children and young people a single worker is responsible for. These posts will improve the level of service and communication that children, young people and their parents or carers receive. The caseloads of EHC Co-ordinators have reduced from over 220 to approximately 150.
  - d. Three Senior Practitioner posts have also been secured to ensure that there are appropriate levels of support and supervision across the service. Senior Practitioners now have the capacity to support, and quality assure complex casework.
  - e. An Outcome 2 working group continues to promote a multiagency approach to improving the annual review process, as feedback from across Health, Social Care and Education partners has indicated that more should be done to understand collective challenges and constraints around the process in order to work more effectively together.
  - f. Work is currently underway to hold a cross organisation workshop during April, which will focus on potential process and system improvements, communication and training.
18. Activity remains ongoing to ensure that the impact of improvement activity is being measured, including the impact on the experiences of children, young people and families:
- a. To ensure the additional staffing can be deployed as quickly as possible agency staff were recruited. Recruitment to fixed term two-year contracts with the County Council is ongoing. Most Annual Review meetings with educational settings are held virtually on Microsoft Teams. These arrangements make the best use of the resources within the team; there is a significant saving in travelling time and as a result the service is more efficient.
  - b. The additional EHC Plan writers that commenced employment in summer 2023 cleared a backlog of 450 EHCPs that needed to be amended following their Annual Review; while the backlog has been cleared, increasing demand has meant this increased resource must now be deployed to deal with incoming cases also.
  - c. For children and young people who are not on a school roll the Local Authority must convene the Annual Review. The Local Authority has arranged Annual Reviews for all

children who are electively home educated or educated otherwise than at school for this academic year.

- d. The Annual Review performance monitoring group meets every month to review the progress that is being made. The aim and ambition are for 100% of annual reviews to be completed within 12 months and building from current performance in a staged approach to improvement, in 2024 the Local Authority seeks to ensure over 80% of annual reviews are completed within 12 months.
19. Further steps that are being undertaken to improve Annual Review performance: the Local Authority's Annual Review performance relies on educational settings and partners to ensure that Annual Reviews are held on time. To improve performance the Local Authority will be using additional resources to improve partnership working and offer support and challenge to educational settings to ensure that the Annual Review timescales are met. This will include the Local Authority seeking direct confirmation that Annual Reviews have been arranged and have taken place.

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

20. Children and young people receiving SEN support (but without an EHC Plan) account for around 80% of our overall SEN population. EHC Plans utilise statutory processes to formalise the assessment and provision of support to our children and young people with special education needs or disabilities. For many years, children and young people in Nottinghamshire have been able to access additional support in educational settings (e.g. additional funding, input from specialist services) without the need for an EHC Plan, resulting in us having a lower number of EHC Plans when compared nationally.
21. Whilst we have been able to provide evidence which supports this approach and have demonstrated effective outcomes for our children and young people with and without EHC Plans, during the February 2023 inspection the SEND Partnership was criticised for not having sufficient data or reporting information concerning the progress and outcomes for the 'SEN support' cohort. In addition, it has been identified through feedback from families and professionals that there are inconsistencies in the identification and provision of 'SEN Support'.
22. Identification and provision of SEN support is predominantly made within schools and educational settings, with support from Education, Health and Social care professionals and is usually referred to as '[The Graduated Response Pathway](#)'. School budgets contain notional per pupil funding and schools can request [additional top-up SEND funding](#) from the Local Authority High Needs Budget. In Nottinghamshire, SEND funding processes can be accessed by schools and educational settings via their SENCO and Family SENCO, without the need for an EHC Plan.
23. Work is underway to improve SEN support reporting, through combining pupil funding information with academic performance, attendance, and exclusion data. Once complete this reporting will form part of the strategic SEND performance reporting.

24. Through this work we have identified an opportunity to collate SEN support pupil information directly from schools using new technology, rather than rely on information retrieved quarterly from the school census.
25. Working in conjunction with the 'Early Help Redesign' work, multiagency workshops have commenced to create a map of the Nottinghamshire Graduated Response processes, which will be shared as accessible infographics in July 2024 to help parents, carers and professionals understand what to expect from our local SEND processes. The Early Years and School Age workshops are complete, and the final Post 16 workshop is pending.
26. Activity remains ongoing to ensure that the impact of improvement activity is being measured, including the impact on the experiences of children, young people and families:
  - a) A pilot with a small number of schools is underway to monitor funding provision and pupil, and parent/carer feedback. This pilot will help us inform next steps around data and feedback collation following Spring Term.
  - b) A survey of the views of SEND leaders across educational settings has been completed, with a follow up scheduled for Autumn Term. The output of this survey will help us better understand training gaps or opportunities for workforce development.
  - c) A significant part of this workstream is focused on developing new reporting metrics which previously did not exist. Although some surveys and feedback are available, the new performance monitoring is not expected to be complete until the end of Summer.

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

27. Following the Partnership refresh of the PAP, colleagues met in early February 2024 to review the collective understanding of the local SEND population within Nottinghamshire, in order to ensure that both immediate and sustainable, long-term improvements can be made that best support local needs.
28. Collaboration between the Partnership and local providers and services has facilitated the development of a SEND System Intelligence Report detailing local understanding of services and experiences for children, young people and their families with SEND in Nottinghamshire. This has allowed for a system-wide understanding of areas of challenge and for targeted work to be considered and agreed by the Partnership.
29. Specific focus areas for integrated service development and/or joint commissioning have been agreed for 2024/25 and has been approved through the Strategic Partnership Group (SPG). These focus areas are:
  - an integrated sleep support pathway for children and young people with SEND.
  - the development of a sensory support service and understanding of local therapy services; and

- the redevelopment of local Speech, Language and Communication Needs services to reduce long wait times and enhance patient experience.
30. The Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Programme Board, responsible for overseeing joint commissioning arrangements, will be established by April 2024. The proposal to jointly commission a sensory occupational therapy service will be considered by the Board by July 2024. This will include decision-making in respect of funding contributions, subject to individual organisational governance arrangements.
  31. To support in these ambitions, a key priority for Outcome 4 is for the publication of an up-to-date Joint Commissioning Strategy. Work on this will commence from 8 April 2024, where a Partnership meeting is planned, with aims for the final strategy to be published in July 2024.
  32. Alongside collation of service data, engagement with families has been undertaken to understand, from the perspective of those with lived experience, areas of concern and challenge so that improvement measures can be put in place that are reflective of their voice. Key messages shared by families through extensive engagement around the redevelopment of Speech, Language and Communication Needs services include the need for education staff to be more aware of early indicators of need, so that early intervention strategies can be put into place. In response, the Partnership has explored jointly commissioning support for education staff through existing resource within the System. A memorandum of understanding for this work has been written and is awaiting signature for work to commence within the summer term (capacity within services allowing).
  33. Alongside Outcome 4, and to support the system understanding of our local population of children, young people and their families with SEND, and their needs, Nottinghamshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHT) (local specialist provision provider) has developed a SEND dashboard that highlights to the Trust children and young people on current caseloads (and multiple caseloads) who have SEND. This aims to ensure appropriate oversight and understanding of needs and to support enhancing their experiences whilst engaged with specialist provision. This work will feed into Partnership work to develop the system-wide dashboard that can be utilised by everyone working within the system to further understand and drive improvement.
  34. Specific read-codes for SEND have been developed by Providers, and training shared to ensure that all staff interacting within children, young people and their families understand the importance of coding SEND onto a patient's electronic patient record. This will allow for easier data collation and a more sustainable, and accurate, understanding of the local population of children, young people and their families within SEND in Nottinghamshire. This will also enhance a patient's experience with healthcare providers, as the codes allow for immediate recognition on acceptance onto a caseload of any additional needs. Read coding is currently being done within NHT and the 0-19 Services. Work is ongoing to support other services within Nottinghamshire to do the same (communications are being disseminated regularly from 27 March, including to GP practices and Acute Trusts). Further work on coding specific diagnosis, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders, is ongoing within Acute Trusts to further support local understanding of this cohort. This has been completed in Nottingham University Hospital Community Paediatric Services and Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals, while Sherwood Forest Hospitals Foundation Trust aims to complete the work by April 2024.

35. In order to facilitate a long-term Partnership understanding of the local population of children, young people and their families with SEND in Nottinghamshire amendments to local contracts have been made to require regular reporting into the Partnership through the SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group (PAIG). Reporting requirements have also been amended to provide more reflective information around services that support children, young people and their families with SEND, so that areas of success, challenge and opportunity can be shared through Partnership governance arrangements to promote ongoing improvement as business as usual.
36. Work continues to develop the Partnership understanding of the local population of SEND children and young people and their families, through the ongoing development of a SEND Partnership Dashboard, and the production of quarterly data pack reporting to PAIG and the Improvement Board. The next iteration of which will include a further breakdown of waits for Speech, Language and Communication Needs and a broader understanding of local authority commissioned occupational therapy services.

Outcome 5 (APA2): Children and Young People receive timely assessment and treatment offer for assessment by the Neurodevelopmental Support Team (NST)

37. Development and improvement activity in relation to the review of the neurodevelopmental pathway continues to focus on ensuring improved experiences for children, young people and their families. This includes:
  - a. Any inappropriate referrals or missing information are now being identified at the point of referral receipt (previously being identified at the point of triage), reducing frustrations and prolonged wait times for families.
  - b. 3-year-olds and under with red flag indicators such as developmental delay or regression are now being prioritised and triaged within 2-3 weeks of referral receipt for direct referral to the Community Paediatrician (where appropriate), previously being identified at the point of triage, which is currently a 5 month wait.
  - c. Children aged 4 years and under who are referred for an ADHD assessment are now being identified upon receipt of the referral and no longer at the point of triage. These children are then referred to the Health Family Team for support, as the Community Paediatrician does not accept referrals for ADHD assessment for those under 5 years and 9 months of age.
  - d. There is no waiting list for parental workshops; these are all now on an opt-in basis, giving quicker access to support for families.
38. Improvements continue to be made to communications with children, young people and families who are waiting. NST newsletters are now being sent to all families at the point of referral receipt. From April 2024 a monthly newsletter will be sent to all families, highlighting average and maximum wait times, along with signposting resource support information. Feedback forms are submitted to families once the assessment process is complete and following parental workshops.

39. A recent survey has gone out to families to determine communication preferences and support needs. A 'you said we did' action plan is to be developed in response to this. Neurodevelopmental pathway infographics are also being disseminated to families at the point of referral receipt for the NST pathway along with the Community Paediatrics pathway information (where appropriate).
40. Risks and mitigations continued to be managed across Outcome 5. This includes referral data not being up-to-date due to a lag in processing referrals. This is impacting on some elements of the quarterly reporting. Additional resources have been targeted on this part of the service to resolve the issue, with a plan to get this up to date from March 2024 with full reporting commencing in quarter 1 2024/25, in line with the new online referral form.
41. Additional investment to increase capacity is non-recurrent, therefore the service has been relying on the use of agency staff to fill additional posts quickly. There is a risk the pace of progress will be lost due to high turnover of agency staff, which is already being experienced as staff find longer-term employment.
42. There is also an increased risk of waiting times increasing if additional recurrent investment is not made to support the sustainability of the capacity and demand needs of the service when the contract ends in May 2025.
43. In mitigation for the risks outlined in points 41 and 42 above, our focus in 2024/25 will be taking forward the recommendations of the pathway review - including capacity and demand analysis - to develop and agree our pathway and service model and specifications, for ICB agreement to procure/award contracts post-May 2025. This will ensure that services are sustainable and meet the needs of our population.
44. The NST improvement plan is available upon request, outlining ongoing and planned actions as part of the neurodevelopmental pathway review.

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

45. Following the Partnership refresh of the priority action plan, colleagues met in early February to review and agree areas for priority under this outcome.
46. In January 2024, funding was secured to support the development of an integrated sleep pathway across Nottinghamshire, free from duplication and gaps in offer. System Partners have identified a proposed service model and mapping work to better understand the current offer in Nottinghamshire has been undertaken. Partners will meet in May 2024 to workshop the development of an integrated pathway with final recommendations being presented to SPG in June 2024.
47. Occupational Therapy (OT) service providers from across the Partnership have met on several occasions to collaboratively map out a joint understanding of roles and responsibilities across the system, with an aim to identify areas of duplication and opportunities for more efficient, integrated commissioning arrangements. Plans are underway to jointly develop a system resource that can be shared with professionals and families to support a broader understanding of services and be used to actively signpost



to support that is available. This will be a collaborative piece, that all services across the Partnership contribute to, and aims to be completed during May 2024.

48. Significant feedback from families has highlighted a gap in current commissioning arrangements for children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire around accessing support where there are sensory processing difficulties. A universal offer is under development which will sit on the Minds of All Kinds website. This will aim to support families understand sensory processing difficulties, to share management techniques and to empower self-management where possible.
49. Learning from other areas and from pilots that have previously been commissioned within the Partnership has been considered, and an options appraisal has been developed alongside recommendations to the Partnership for long-term and sustainable commissioning of a Sensory Support Service. The Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Programme Board responsible for overseeing joint commissioning arrangements will be established by April 2024. The recommendations and proposal to jointly commission this service will be considered by the Board by July 2024. This will include decision-making in respect of funding contributions (subject to individual organisational governance arrangements).
50. Feedback from professionals and families highlighted challenges related to missing or amended equipment. Work has been completed to develop a proforma and photographic checklist for each piece of equipment to ensure what is received by the service is complete and quality assured and that subsequently what is shared with families meets individual requirements. Broader scoping of potential improvement measures within services sharing equipment with children, young people and their families with SEND in Nottinghamshire has begun and recommendations aim to have been identified and made by July 2024.
51. Waiting times for Specialist OT and Physical Therapy (PT) are currently at 13 weeks. For specialist Speech, Language and Communication Needs services the average waits are:
  - Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) pathway - average of 45 weeks
  - Complex Care Pathway – average of 9 weeks
  - Community Pathway – average of 20 weeks (working towards 18 weeks from September 2024).

Capacity and demand modelling has been undertaken for the ASD pathway with a recovery plan produced based on a system requirement for additional workforce and funding.

52. Additional funding has been secured to support the recovery of local Speech, Language and Communication Needs services, where long wait times have been identified as requiring urgent improvement. Additional, short-term resource will be recruited into the specialist service to support a waiting well ethos. Increased capacity will target long waiters in order to reduce the back log in waiting lists, and to offer generic support sessions and an advice line that can be accessed by families, children and young people awaiting intervention. Furthermore, key messages shared by families through extensive engagement around the re-development of Speech, Language and Communication Needs services include the need for education staff to be more aware of early indicators of need,



so that early intervention strategies can be put into place. In response, the Partnership has explored jointly commissioning support for education staff through existing resource within the system. A memorandum of understanding for this work has been written and is awaiting signature for work to commence within the summer term (capacity within services allowing).

53. Additional support for schools will be available through a jointly commissioned pilot project from September 2024. The Partnership for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools project will test an innovative model for the effective, efficient deployments of the specialist health workforce and strengthening of parent/carer and school partnerships in mainstream education settings, focusing on supporting neurodiverse pupils who represent a fast-growing group among the children most likely to benefit from more inclusive mainstream environments.
54. Feedback from young people has identified the need for strengthening and individualising support received on transitioning from paediatric to adult health services. A statement of intent has been co-developed with young people and will be added into the SDIP (Service Development Improvement Plan) or all health held contracts for services that support children and young people with SEND in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Aims for a Transitioning Support Strategy to be developed by December 2024 are to be incorporated into all speciality service specifications and for a Transitions Network to be implemented (first meeting held in Summer 2024) that will feed into the Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Board.

#### Data and Insights

55. 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.
56. 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

57. Following the development of the draft outcomes for the new SEND Strategy as part of the RISE Support programme, the outcomes were consulted with families and practitioners across the local area between during December 2023 and January 2024.

58. In total, 557 responses were received from the SEND Outcomes Survey. Overall, over 85% respondents supported the proposed 6 strategic outcomes for children and young people with SEND around which the revised Strategy will be developed. These were:

SEND Strategic Outcomes	Percentage rated 'very important'
1. I want to be well physically and emotionally.	92%
2. I want to be and feel safe.	93%
3. I want to be loved and valued by someone I trust.	89%
4. I want to be prepared for the future I want.	81%
5. I want to be able to play and have fun.	83%
6. I want to be asked first.	73%

59. Subsequently, six SEND Strategy Engagement Events (five face-to-face events and one virtual event) were held during March 2024, with a focus on developing Nottinghamshire's SEND outcomes-based Strategy, which is due to be published by the end of June 2024. Nearly 300 colleagues from across the local area, including parents and carers, were able to take part, with the opportunity to review the draft outcomes, shape the SEND Strategy and determine our key actions for delivering the strategic outcomes.
60. On 18 March 2024, the SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group (PAIG) agreed the final wording for the agreed strategic outcomes, based upon the feedback provided by respondents to the survey and the SEND Strategy Engagement events. The agreed outcomes are:
- I need to be listened to and heard.
  - I need to be the healthiest I can be.
  - I need to be safe and feel safe.
  - I need to be accepted and valued by people I trust.
  - I need to be prepared for my future.
  - I need to enjoy life and have fun.

### Engagement with Children, Young People and Families

61. A SEND Parent and Carer Reference Group is in place to support SEND improvement activity. This Group meets bi-monthly and allows the Partnership to conduct focused consultations with SEND families and provide us with an opportunity to coproduce solutions. There are in excess of 140 families on the mailing list for the Group.
62. The SEND Parent Carer Reference Group held a virtual meeting on 19 February 2024, which focussed on how the SEND Improvement Programme can determine the impact of its improvements, as well as what success looks like for parents and carers. Feedback from the 14 families in attendance was invaluable and supported the refresh of the SEND Improvement Plan, in order to ensure that impact measures and success criteria reflected the feedback of parents and carers. Broader feedback included:
- *"Thank you for your time in the meetings. These are hugely appreciated, and I know it's really helpful for parents to feel heard"*

- *“The more we have face to face (onscreen) the more I hope they get to understand. I’ve been that person”.*

63. The next meeting of the SEND Parent Carer Reference Group is scheduled to take place in April 2024.

### **Other Options Considered**

64. No other options have been considered.

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

65. 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**

66. 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**

67. 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 Children and Families 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 a further update on progress on SEND improvement activity in July 2024.

**Colin Pettigrew**  
Corporate Director, Children and Families

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

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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**Constitutional Comments (LW 29/03/24)**

68. The Children and Families Select Committee is the appropriate body to consider the content of the report.

**Financial Comments (SS 27/03/24)**

69. 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

[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 5 February 2024

**Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All.

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