

Appendix 1

Updated response to the recommendations arising from the Children and Families Select Committee review of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

Overview Committee recommendation	Cabinet Decision	Original action (December 2023) to be taken (if any) and timescale for completion	Updated position as of September 2024
<p>1. That the Select Committee receives progress reports on the implementation of the activities being delivered to address the Areas for Improvement and Priority Action identified by the Area Special Educational Needs and Disabilities SEND Inspection of the Nottinghamshire Local Area Partnership.</p>	<p>Accept</p>	<p>The SEND Improvement Board are overseeing the progress of activities being delivered to address the Areas of Priority Action. Monthly updates are being provided to Select Committee members through Stakeholder Briefings following each SEND Improvement Board. Regular reports can also be received by Select Committee.</p>	<p>This regular oversight via Stakeholder Briefings continues and is shared regularly online Stakeholder Briefings</p>
<p>2. That the Council should take all available steps to maximise its partnership working with schools to ensure that mainstream educational settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. participate fully in the early intervention agenda, ii. take advantage of the available support to achieve educational environments 	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Outcome 3 in Priority Area 1 of the SEND Improvement Priority Action Plan is dedicated to this recommendation. <i>‘Children and young people with additional needs, but without an EHC Plan, have their needs identified, met, and monitored effectively.’</i> A programme of work is planned and underway led by Dr. Órlaith Green, Group Manager, Psychology and Inclusion Services.</p>	<p>Better reporting data systems are now in place to track outcomes and cohort data for children who have SEND but do not have an EHC Plan. This cohort is identified as SEN K or SEN Support and are mostly educated in mainstream schools, with additional support. Data for the SEN K cohort is now included in the <i>Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) SEND Monthly Report</i> and shortly will be included in the new NCC-Integrated Care Board (ICB) shared data dashboard <i>Children & Young People [SID 2024]</i>.</p>

<p>that are as inclusive as possible for the widest range of children,</p> <p>iii. integrate children with SEND effectively and flexibly so that they do not experience periods of being outside school, and</p> <p>iv. maintain implemented SEN provision where it is required, to give parents and carers confidence that this provision will not be discontinued if a child accessing it does not have an EHCP.</p>	<p>Within the academic year 2023-2024 actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Piloting of a SEND funding tracker tool with 2 families of schools (Started Nov 2023). This tool will help schools and NCC colleagues to track the allocation of High Level Needs (HLN) and Additional Family Needs (AFN) funding within mainstream schools. - Multi-agency review of the Nottinghamshire Graduated Response to include health, social care and early help colleagues (Action to start January 2024). School and settings representatives will be involved in this work. - Direct work with District, Family and School SENCOs to re-build confidence in the Nottinghamshire Graduated Response (Started November 2023). <p>Group Managers from Education Learning and Inclusion are also working with NCC and ICB colleagues and educational setting representatives (Schools and Private, Voluntary and Independent Settings) to review and summarise the local Early Years</p>	<p>New SEND funding strategies are in place for mainstream schools as of September 2024, as per Changing the allocation process for delegated Additional Family Needs (AFN) SEND top-up funding to families of mainstream schools</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SEND funding tracker tool and fairer allocation of Additional Family Needs (AFN) funding to families of schools. 2. Early Years Bridging funding – additional funding to support children with SEND transitioning into school from childcare and nursery settings. <p><i>Family and School Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators, SENCOs who were involved in piloting the SEND Funding tracker tool shared the following feedback 'Our inclusive schools will be able to provide more funding for children with SEND, in line with expectations across the county. The funding will more closely match the pupils in the school and support the inclusivity of that school. Ultimately, this will help to improve outcomes for our children with SEND.'</i></p> <p>During the academic year 2023-2024, 3 multi-agency deep dives of the local graduated response led to the creation of our new SEND Journey Map - 'A guide to local support for children and young people with SEND in Nottinghamshire'. This interactive map of local SEND processes across education, health and care will shortly be live on NottsHelpYourself, our Local Offer.</p>
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			<p>Inclusion Processes to clarify the support available to early years settings to support children with SEND who do not have EHC Plans as well as support more effective information sharing during transitions (Action already underway, to be completed by the end of January 2024).</p>	<p><i>As part of this outcome, school staff, parents/carers and young people have shared their experiences and ideas for improvement on the graduated response to supporting children with SEND in Nottinghamshire. 'It's a valuable resource... If I'd had this earlier, I'd have been armed with so much more information.'</i> (Parent of a Child with SEND)</p> <p>In June-July 2024, leaders and team members of the Educational Learning and Inclusion Department, Nottinghamshire County Council invited school leaders from Nottinghamshire mainstream and special educational settings to join discussions about inclusive practice within our local educational provision. The key review question was - <i>What are our school leaders' views and ideas to support inclusive practice for children and young people in our Nottinghamshire schools?</i> We facilitated 7 in-person workshop events at community venues in each of our Nottinghamshire Districts. Over 250 educational leaders attended to discuss what inclusive practice means to them, the current challenges they face in leading inclusive practice and ideas on how to address these challenges at a local, district level. <i>School leaders reported that they felt 'hopeful' and 'heard' as part of the ongoing collaborative engagement work.</i></p> <p>The summary report provides a summary of the views of educational leaders across Nottinghamshire, to inform strategic planning</p>
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				within the local area, including within the Local Area SEND Improvement Plan . This report will also be formally presented to the Nottinghamshire SEND Partnership Assurance and Improvement Group .
3.	That, as a result of the internal review of the Council's SEND offer, the appropriate measures and allocation of resources should be implemented to ensure that future service provision is sustainable in the context of increasing demand.	Accept	The service resource requirements have been increased to reflect increased demand and this will be monitored and reviewed through the budget setting cycles.	Funding review pending in Report of the Executive Director Children and Families – Resourcing to support improvements in the outcomes and experiences of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, 23 July 2024.
4.	That the Council engages with the local authorities that participated in the benchmarking exercise that are undertaking transformation activity for the improved delivery of EHC Assessments and Plans, to consider any further measures or approaches that could also be used effectively in Nottinghamshire.	Accept	As part of the SEND Improvement Plan there is a commitment to learn from other local authorities especially regarding timescales for new EHCPs, the Council has already engaged with several local authorities.	Ongoing support and guidance from other local authorities is being included in SEND Improvement work via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Authority SEND Regional Group - East Midlands Principal Educational Psychology Group and East Midlands Service Directors for Education Group - Regular guidance from Regional Department for Education SEND Advisor 'Nottinghamshire Integrated Children's Disability Service EHCP Assessment Team & Educational Psychology Summary Report' 6.2.2024.
5.	That the effectiveness and sustainability of the current cap on the time that Educational Psychologists	Accept	Current arrangement for Educational Psychology Service (EPS) capacity reviewed and validated via a new EPS activity audit completed in September	Ratio of EPS activity is regularly under review for effectiveness. The previously detailed arrangements continue to be moderated nationally and regionally through East

	<p>employed directly by the Council spend on carrying out statutory assessments is reviewed, to ensure that it is set at the right level.</p>		<p>2023. Ratio of statutory work to early intervention work has been moderated nationally.</p> <p>Current ratio of EPS activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% Statutory Casework (New EHCP Assessments 45% and Other Statutory Assessments including tribunals and annual reviews 5%) • 35% Early Intervention School Casework (25% core and 10% traded) • 15% Essential Professional Requirements (e.g. Psychological Supervision, Continuing Professional Development, Supervising Trainee EPs) • Critical Incident support offer to all schools and educational settings continues to be a priority area of service delivery which is delivered immediately when required. <p>Current strategy ensures 100% of available time allocated to EHC assessments, without reducing our core offer to schools and essential professional requirements for EPs to practice. The issue now is one of capacity, which will be addressed by the extension of the EPS establishment and additional use of locum EPs</p>	<p>Midlands Principal EP network. Ratio of core staff and locum working also moderates against our statistical neighbours in the region e.g. Derbyshire.</p> <p>Current impact data shows that the number of Educational Psychology EHC needs assessments continues to increase with additional capacity and streamlined processes, while the full range of EP early intervention work is valued and appreciated by schools and EPs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The number of children and young people waiting for educational psychology EHC needs assessments reduced from 359 in December 2023 to 265 in July 2024. - There is a significant increase in the number of educational psychology assessments completed each month; on average 124 children received an assessment each month in 2024 to date compared to 72 in 2021/22 - Qualified and Trainee Educational Psychologists have all now been appointed for the service expansion of 9 Full Time Equivalent EPs by 2026. We continue to attract assistant and trainee EPs to our service. Staff retention also remains high, we have had only one EP leave our service this past academic year, due to a
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			<p>Impact of our current strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% staff retention in the academic year 2021-2022. Our EPS is fully staffed. This compares well to our regional neighbours, some of whom are carrying 50% vacancies. • Protected EP time for early intervention work in schools to support confidence in the graduated response, inclusion in mainstream schools and schools' ability to meet needs outside of the EHCP process (SEND Improvement PAP - Outcome 3). <p>Hartlepool Area SEND Inspection Outcome - Positive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>'The educational psychology team is a strength of the area. The team provides school leaders with valuable advice, support and training. This directly contributes to the accurate assessment of children and young people's education, health and care needs.'</i> • <i>'Leaders have made a significant investment in the educational psychology provision for the area. This investment means that children and young people benefit from accurate identification of needs and timely support'</i> 	<p>professional promotion not available to her in Nottinghamshire.</p>
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			<p>Sustainability of Impact: Our strategy is to increase efficiency of EP assessments and maintain EPS capacity for early intervention work in schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36% Increase in EP EHCP assessments completed by our core staff this year, without a staffing increase • New efficient assessment and report writing processes with 96% of internal EPS deadlines being met. • We are also using agency/locum EPs to reduce the backlog of 400+ assessments. Working on advice from Derbyshire EPS who cleared a similar backlog using locum staff. Additional locum contract with Skylakes/Sanctuary agency has been secured. 	
6.	That, to manage the demand for EHC Assessments effectively, consideration should be given to an increase in resources within the Educational Psychology Service for the provision of additional Educational Psychologists, to enable further early support to be implemented within mainstream educational settings.	Accept	<p>Expansion of our Educational Psychology Service has been approved – Cabinet Report: CF0078 EPS capacity 15.09.2023. The increase is planned as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional 9 Full Time Equivalent EPs – 3 per year for 3 years • Additional Trainee EP (TEP) placements aiming towards 3 x Year 2 TEPs and 3 x Year 3 TEPS asap. Recruitment 	<p>Qualified and Trainee Educational Psychologists have all now been appointed for the service expansion of 9 Full Time Equivalent EPs and 6 Trainee EPs by September 2026.</p> <p>Full details are contained in the decision report <i>Building and Securing the Future Capacity of the Council’s Educational Psychology Service – Update April 2024.</i></p>

			processes are currently underway.	
7.	That effective assurance and audit processes should be maintained to ensure that all statutory assessments and EHC Plans are produced to a high standard and within the required timescales.	Accept	Senior practitioners with the EHC assessment team carry out quality assurance checks of all new draft and amended EHCPs. This is done by using a digital form that collates strengths and areas for improvement.	<p>Independent SEND consultants are currently supporting the NCC Integrated Children's Disabilities Service leadership to review efficacy of our quality assurance and quality control processes. A new report is in preparation, presenting a process review and suggested improvements.</p> <p>Further improvements in the quality of our EHC Plans is needed; quality control and quality assurance pose an increasing challenge with increasing numbers of EHC Plans. This process needs full engagement from all professionals across education, health and care services who contribute to the EHC assessment and review process.</p>
8.	That it should be ensured that schools, parents and carers are communicated with regularly, clearly and in good time by the Council during the EHC Assessment and Plan development process (making full use of the EHC Hub), particularly if it becomes apparent that an EHC Assessment or Plan will not be completed within the statutory deadline.	Accept	At the point of an EHC Needs Assessment being agreed the EHC assessment team explains in writing that there may be a delay in completing the statutory assessment due to current capacity issues within the Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Further communication is sent at 8 weeks and 20 weeks if required.	This additional communication with parents and carers relating to delays in EHC assessments continues. As waiting times have reduced, services report reduced numbers of complaints from parents and carers relating to EHC assessment delays.
9.	That parents and carers should have a clear and	Accept	The local authority has established SEND education pathway officers who	SEND Education Pathway Officers are now in place. They have been having structured

	accessible point of contact at the Council for queries and support during the process of applying for an EHC Plan.		make contact with parents and carers when they apply for an EHC Needs assessment. These posts have been created to ensure children and young people receive the right support at the right time. When an EHC Needs assessment is agreed, children and young people are allocated to an EHC Co-ordinator who will oversee the process for parents and carers. They make contact, by telephone or email, to explain the next steps in more detail.	conversations with education settings 95% of the time to date, at the point at which a request for an EHC assessment is received. Structured conversations have also been recorded for parents/carers since June 2024. For decisions due in July 2024, conversations with parents/carers were held 93% of the time. Monthly figures will fluctuate at times, due to school holidays.
10.	That the Council should work closely with individual educational settings to ensure that the EHC Plan annual reviews are carried out with the right level of participation from health partners, other professionals and the relevant Council officers, and are completed within the required deadlines.	Accept	Annual review dates are available on the EHC Hub. All educational settings are contacted to remind them of their responsibility to complete the annual review within timescale. An escalation process, providing support and challenge has been established for settings that miss key deadlines. Further workstreams regarding participation are due to be reviewed as part of the priority action plan.	To improve annual review performance, the local authority will be using additional resources to continue to improve partnership working and offer support and challenge to educational settings to ensure that the annual review timescales are met. Between April-May 2024, 20% of families involved in an Annual Review responded to a survey. 48% felt the right people attended the Annual Review of their child's EHC Plan.
11.	That, where an annual review concludes that the EHC Plan should be updated, the Council ensures that the amended EHC Plan is completed in a timely way.	Accept	There has been a significant investment to secure additional EHCP writers in the EHC assessment team. These have been secured to ensure that the local authority can meet the 12-week timescale for amendments to take place.	Improvements are underway; in June 2023, the local authority secured 6 EHC plan writers in to carry out the amendments to EHCPs following their annual review. In 2023, 2005 EHCPs required amendments and 76.4% have been amended and finalised within 12 weeks of the annual review meeting compared to 55% in 2022. 100% of agreed EHC plan amendments following annual review have been completed in timescale in the month of July 2024.