

Appendix B

Response to the recommendations arising from the Children and Families Select Committee review of Education, Health, and Care Plans

Children and Families Select Committee recommendation	Cabinet Decision	Action to be taken (if any) and timescale for completion
<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 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>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 that are as inclusive as possible for the widest range of children, iii. integrate children with SEND effectively and flexibly so that 	<p>Accept</p>	<p>Outcome 3 in Priority Area 1 of the SEND Improvement Priority Action Plan is dedicated to this recommendation.</p> <p><i>‘Children and young people with additional needs, but without an EHC Plan, have their needs identified, met, and monitored effectively.’</i></p> <p>A programme of work is planned and underway led by Dr. Órlaith Green, Group Manager, Psychology and Inclusion Services.</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

	<p>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 EHC Plan.</p>		<p>Family Needs (AFN) funding within mainstream schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 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 2023).</p>
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.
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	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.

	Assessments and Plans, to consider any further measures or approaches that could also be used effectively in Nottinghamshire.		
5.	That the effectiveness and sustainability of the current cap on the time that Educational Psychologists employed directly by the Council spend on carrying out statutory assessments is reviewed, to ensure that it is set at the right level.	Accept	<p>Current arrangement for EPS capacity reviewed and validated via a new EPS activity audit completed in September 2023.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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>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). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hartlepool Area SEND Inspection Outcome - Positive ○ <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>Sustainability of Impact</p> <p>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.
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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 – <i>Cabinet Report: CF0078 EPS capacity 15.09.2023</i>.</p> <p>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. <p>Recruitment processes are currently underway.</p>
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.
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.

9.	That parents and carers should have a clear and accessible point of contact at the Council for queries and support during the process of applying for an EHC Plan.	Accept	<p>The local authority has established SEND education pathway officers who 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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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	<p>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.</p>
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	<p>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.</p>
12.	That the Council should engage further with the DfE to request that the criteria for justifying the carrying out an EHC Assessment is raised, and that the existing direct liability risks to local authorities for processes outside of their control are mitigated.	Partially accept	<p>The Council should not request raising the criteria for justifying the carrying out an EHC Assessment however we continue to work with the DfE regarding the SEND reforms and implementation of the SEND and AP Improvement Plan in order to better identify and meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. We will continue to engage</p>

			regionally and nationally to seek proper funding for SEND provision.
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