

5 September 2023

Children, Culture and Communities Scrutiny Committee

Report of the Assistant Director, Education and Skills

SEND Update: Delivery of the SEND Operational Plan, 2023-2025

Summary

1. This report provides the members of scrutiny with an update on the work that has taken place since the SEND (special educational needs and/or disabilities) inspection re-visit in November 2022. Specifically, the report will focus on the development and implementation of the local area SEND Operational Plan (Annex A) and will allow the members of the committee to scrutinise the effectiveness of actions taken and to gain an understanding of the challenges the local area faces in delivering the local area SEND Strategy.

Background

2. The SEND Inspection revisit took place in November 2022 and assessed Impact of the delivery of actions in the local area written statement. The Inspectors found that there has been sufficient improvement made to remove the written statement and recognised that the next steps for the local area partnership would be to embed the improvements made and to develop operational plans to show how the SEND Strategy, 2021-25 was implemented.
3. The SEND Operational Plan was developed post inspection to outline the actions that would be taken between 2023-25 to deliver the SEND Strategy and will also inform the review and revision of the SEND Strategy beyond 2025.
4. The current SEND Strategy was developed at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is important to note this in the context of the future review of the strategy. The national lockdowns meant that the development of the strategy was largely conducted through virtual meetings, and this limited the amount of stakeholder engagement that

could take place. This will be addressed through the review and revision of the current strategy which will begin in January 2024.

5. It is also important to note that the experiences of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and families were significantly impacted by the pandemic and the legacy of this is continuing to be felt both in the city and nationally.
6. Post-pandemic school attendance of children and young people with SEND has decreased across all age groups, and the numbers of electively home educated and those education other than at school (EOTAS) has increased. This is particularly the case for children with complex autism, anxiety, and ADHD. They have found the return to busy classrooms particularly challenging.
7. The development of the local area operational plan has been influenced by the need to demonstrate the actions being taken to implement the priorities in the SEND Strategy, but has also responded to learning from the pandemic and the challenges, both locally and nationally, created by increased demand and increased complexity of need, sufficiency of specialist provision (in education and health) and the challenging financial context in which all public sector partners are operating. In York the specific challenges relate to waiting times for some therapies, in particular speech and language therapy and the sufficiency of places in the primary special school, due to an increase in prevalence of complex SEND in the early years.
8. The SEND operational plan has focused on the delivery of the 4 priorities in the SEND strategy, which are:
 - **Voice** – the voice of children and young people is paramount.
 - **Sufficiency** - the right support is in place in the right place at the right time.
 - **Early identification** – children and young people’s needs are identified at the earliest opportunities.
 - **Transition** – effective transition is secured so that young people are able to live the best adult lives they can.
9. Annex A provides a commentary on the delivery of the Operational Plan to date. The SEND Partnership Board holds partners to account for the delivery of the plan and receives updates on the workstreams identified in plan.

10. The SEND operational plan also aligns with the priorities outlined in the Safety Valve agreement, which seeks to ensure that the historic deficit in the High Needs block of the dedicated schools grant has been written off by the Department for Education (DfE) through the removal of in year deficits by 2025. The council is currently on track to achieve this however, the work on the Safety Valve is now entering its most challenging phase as the agreement is designed to promote transformation across the local area through a focus on 4 areas of activity:

- Managing demand appropriately
- Sufficiency
- Inclusion in mainstream
- Preparation for adulthood

All require high levels of partnership working and ensuring that co-production with children and young people, parents and carers remains a central principle driving change management in the local area.

11. Since the inspection re-visit in November 2022 there have been and continue to be, changes in staffing both in SEND leadership at City of York Council, the parent carer forum and in health. Ensuring that these changes do not impact on the delivery of workstreams is a priority to ensure that there is a consistent drive for continuous improvement and that the momentum achieved between June 2020 and November 2022 is not lost.

Consultation

12. The operational plan was developed through consultation with partners across the local area SEND partnership, including the parent/carers forum.

Options

13. This purpose of this paper is to provide an update on the SEND operational plan. The members of scrutiny may want to consider further scrutiny of any specific aspects of the plan and the review of the SEND Strategy as part of their annual workplan over the next 2 years.

Analysis

14. Conducting a deep dive into specific aspects of the plan would allow the members of scrutiny to maintain an overview of SEND provision in the local area.

Council Plan

15. **Affordability** – through delivering SEND transformation which ensures that partnership resources are used to jointly commission and achieve best value outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

Health & Wellbeing – the delivery of the SEND strategy and operational plan promotes integrated working across, education, health, and care.

Equalities & Human rights – through ensuring that children with SEND have access to education that meets their needs and that they are able to live their best lives in York.

The Environment – promoting active travel where appropriate through independent travel training.

Implications

16.
 - **Financial** - Successful delivery of the Safety Valve agreement is crucially important.
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - There are no HR implications.
 - **Equalities** - The Equality Act needs to be considered alongside the Children and Families Act when SEND provision in the local area is being reviewed.
 - **Legal** – work on SEND is governed by the Children and Families Act, 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice, 2015.
 - **Crime and Disorder** - There are no crime and disorder implications.

- **Information Technology (IT)** – The Synergy SEND casework system has been implemented by City of York Council and went live with the SEND in May 2023. On-going development work is taking place. The move to digital recording is a one of the requirements in the DfE SEND and AP (Alternative Provision) Improvement Plan.
- **Property** - SEND capital projects are taking place to address sufficiency.
- **Other** – None.

Risk Management

17. Risks to the delivery of the SEND operational plan include:

- On-going changes in staffing and leadership across education, health, and care.
- The challenging financial climate across public sector partners.
- Growing complexity and sufficiency of appropriate provision to meet need.

These risks are being mitigated through the work taking place to deliver the operational plan, continued development of the local area partnership, particularly with parents and carers and the Safety Valve agreement.

Recommendations

18. Members are asked to note contents of the report and consider plans for ongoing scrutiny of the issues.

Reason: To ensure that the Committee to maintain an overview of SEND provision in the local area.

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Report
Approved



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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A – City of York Local Area SEND Partnership Operational Plan, 2023-25

Abbreviations

SEND – Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities.