

Somerset County Council  
Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee  
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## **Changes to the Physical Impairment and Medical Support Team**

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Cabinet Member: Frances Nicholson, Member for Children and Families  
Division and Local Member: All wards

### **1. Summary**

- 1.1.** This report, provided at the request of the Committee, provides an update on the implementation of changes to the PIMs team, plans for further engagement on future service delivery and the impact on children and families. This report seeks to update the committee on actions and progress.
- 1.2.** When the Committee last considered PIMS at its 20 April 2018 meeting, it agreed a number of recommendations following its discussion:
1. Endorse the importance of individual needs of every child and that the Council works closely with children, parents and schools to ensure individual needs are met;
  2. The key priority must be to keep children in mainstream schools and improve outcomes;
  3. If there is an identified skills gap, we need to ensure that staff are appropriately upskilled to meet need;
  4. Provide the very best service with the resources available;
  5. Progress is reported to the Committee in September.

### **2. Issues for consideration/ Recommendations**

- 2.0** The Committee is asked to consider this report and comment on the progress made to change the PIMs team, following the recommendations made at the Committee's 20 April meeting.
- 2.1** The Committee is asked to note attention has been focused on ensuring the whilst the changes have been implemented that the Council has worked closely with children, parents and schools to ensure individual needs were met.

#### **Update since 20 April Committee meeting**

- 3.2** Inclusive Mainstream provision: Parents and Scrutiny were concerned that the Local Authority do not support Mainstream inclusion. The Local Authority is committed to inclusion in mainstream schools for pupils with physical and medical impairments and has a range of information and advice which can support children with SEND in mainstream schools.

Following a review of SEND Services in 2016 a range of changes have been made to ensure schools are able to meet the needs of all pupils with additional or special educational needs. These include introducing new school based universal funding and

co-produced Core-Standards. These go alongside individual School Information reports and the Local Offer, which are statutory pieces of information to help parents know what can be provided in each school to meet the needs of children with SEND. Individual pupil and/or whole school support is also available to schools and parents through SSE teams, special school outreach, and schools can additionally commission support from teaching schools.

SSE have a number of advisory teams including educational psychologists, Learning support, Autism and communication, hearing impairment and visual impairment and PIMS. All teams work in line with National Guidance standards where available.

PIMS service details: There is an historical lack of clearly defined thresholds for involvement from the PIMS team in Somerset. This is partly because there are no nationally agreed standards for service delivery beyond those which are in place for access to regional AAC hubs.

On reviewing the caseload of the PIMS team, it was found that 202 (43%) of the reported caseload did not require any further direct support. This means that schools are able to meet the needs of these pupils with their existing school-based support. The caseload lists were therefore revised on the following basis;

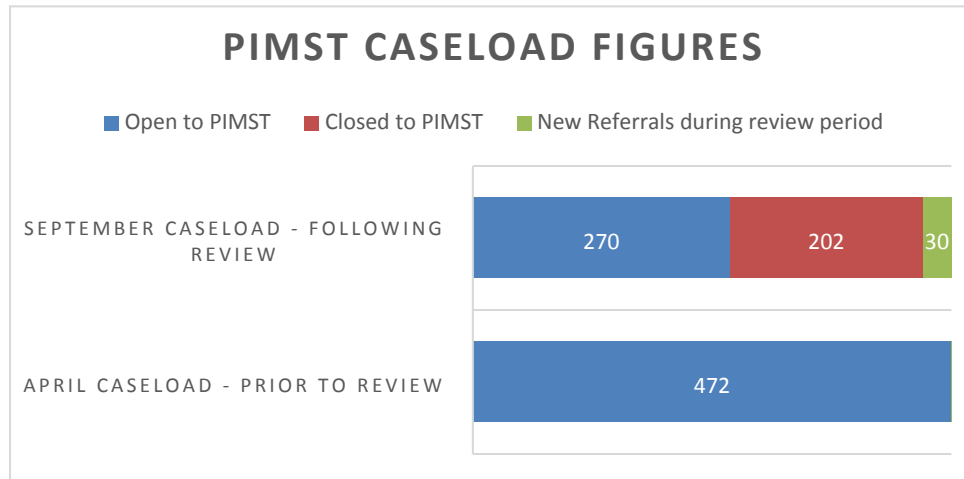
- cases being a 'one-off' involvement of advice or support to schools and this has been provided (85%)
- pupils leaving school due to age or moving to a more specialist provision, and where necessary involvement was no longer required (7%)
- school no longer needing the input of a specialist teacher (8%).

All families where one or more of the above criteria applied have been informed with an offer to have an individual discussion if wanted. 1.6% have contacted us with a concern about this subsequently and the Lead Advisory Teacher for PIMS has contacted them and all concerns are now resolved.

As many of these families received no ongoing support or recent involvement there has therefore been minimal disruption or change to any support, which was the major concern expressed by Scrutiny. The small number of parents subsequently raising a concern about the cessation of PIMS involvement suggests that the original high levels of concern were not reflected by all parents but was, understandably relevant for those parents of pupils with the most complex needs.

Parents of children with the most complex needs or those who had raised specific concerns through the scrutiny process were contacted and offered individual meetings with a senior officer or Advisory Teacher. Of those 33 meetings offered, fourteen took up the offer and subsequently met with the Lead SEND Advisor. The remaining nineteen were contacted by a Lead Advisory Teacher, three of those nineteen took up the offer of a face to face meeting.

Summary caseload breakdown below:



**3.3 Staffing changes: Scrutiny requested that no changes be implemented until further engagement with parents.** Changes to the staffing team through re-location and voluntary severance have been managed successfully with minimal impact on the service users.

Following the initial staff consultation, requested voluntary redundancy were put on hold until the end of the academic year, while research and further engagement into new service models are undertaken. Further engagement with parents, carers and young people is planned (see 2.4)

Four staffing changes for September have required progression; two are related directly to the consultation changes. To ensure minimal disruption additional capacity was provided in the form of a full time equivalent advisory teacher from the Autism and Communication Team, to support those pupils with communication needs. In total the changes to staffing in the PIMs team is as follows:

Reduction of 0.5 FTE advisory teachers from 3.3 in April 2018 to 2.8 in September 2018 a reduction of 15%, significantly less than the closing of cases with no active involvement of 43%.

Families who will have, or have had, a change in staffing have been informed and the interim team manager has facilitated this transfer through discussions with the advisory teachers. Any parent who have contacted the service to raise concerns about the possible changes have also been contacted by a Lead Advisory Teacher.

The impact of this mitigation and transition arrangement with the additional capacity from the Autism and Communication team is that those families who remain open to the PIMS team have received no reduction in support as previously offered. For those with complex needs which include communication and learning needs, the amount of input from the advisory teams in some circumstances has been increased to ensure they are well supported in their current mainstream placements, and schools are supported providing an accessible and meaningful curriculum.

**3.4 Further engagement and co-production:** Five engagement events are planned for

September.

These events will include families of children and young people with hearing, vision, or physical and medical impairments. The focus will be on service design and delivery to co-produce an offer which will ensure the needs of the learners are met while efficiencies are also realised. Somerset Parent Carer forum will be involved in these sessions, as well as National Deaf Children's Society, and advisory teachers from the three teams.

**3.5 Other Local Authority models:** Members are asked to bear in mind the service offers of other similar local authorities

Children and young people with complex communication needs may be able to access a regional Hub. This is funded and delivered by NHS England and the local hub is in Bristol. Arrangements for ongoing support for these users is expected to be agreed locally.

PIMs offer this support to those who are also receiving support from the Regional Hub in addition to offering a supplementary service to those who don't meet National threshold.

Research into the offer for PIMS or equivalent teams from other local authorities has evidenced that, where provided, PIMS-type services are jointly commissioned and funded by Children's Services and the CCG.

Liverpool: offer an Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Service to those pupils who don't meet the threshold for the regional Hub. Liverpool AAC team is comprised of Community Speech and Language Therapists, Community Occupational Therapists, and physiotherapists as well as teachers and support staff.

Cornwall: have two staff for physical and medical needs plus one advisor for AAC, supported by technical officers. This team works closely with the NHS Speech and Language, as well as the Regional (Bristol) Hub. The Vision for Cornwall shows a clear commitment to join commissioning for SEND services, however this is yet to become embedded.

Derbyshire: have one team for both Sensory (visual and hearing impairment) and Physical needs, which are overseen by one service manager. This enables monthly referral meetings and a co-ordinated response to pupils with complex needs.

These models will form the basis of a proposed service design, to be considered at the Parent/Carer engagement events taking place in September. Initial discussion with the commissioners for the CCG, and service managers for Integrated Therapy Services have taken place to investigate the input of Community Therapists; these may well be progressed once the views of parents are clear.

## 4. Background

- 4.1** The Children and Families Act 2014 places a duty on maintained schools and academies to make arrangements to support pupils with medical conditions. The SEND Code of Practice states in section 6.9 that schools **must** make reasonable adjustments, including the provision of auxiliary aids and services for disabled children.

The Physical Impairment and Medical Support Team (PIMS Team) provides educational

support for any child who may have a physical impairment and/or medical requirements in response to a school request. This is above the LA minimum statutory expectations but supports schools to enable them to carry out their statutory duties.

Schools will be able to access the retained central support from the LA and may choose to supplement this with the funding provided for the pupil where children and young people are in receipt of an EHCP or where the school are exercising their duties under the Code of Practice for children and young people on SEN support.

## **5. Consultations undertaken**

### **5.1 Consultation and engagement with families has taken the form of:**

- All families received a letter before Easter about the proposed changes. 1.2% of parents responded.
- Engagement sessions with parent/carers through the Parent carer forum took place through April – the findings from these sessions were fed back to Scrutiny in the report produced by Somerset Parent/ carer forum
- 33 families of children with complex needs were offered an individual meeting with the SEND Advisor or an Advisory teacher. 17 families took up the offer.
- All families of pupils accessing PIMS have received a letter explaining the changes to staffing if applicable. 4 parents contacted the service for further clarification and were reassured by the Lead Advisory Teacher. This equates to 0.8% of responses from 472 letters.

Consultation with staff:

- Formal consultation in line with Somerset HR policies has been undertaken with staff in the PIMS Team.

## **6. Implications**

Co-produced service design will realise efficiencies for the local authority with minimum impact on the level of delivery, improve the clarity of co-ordination of support to the children and young people.