

Review of SEND Peer Review May 2017

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1. Summary

Review of progress made against the findings of the 2017 Local Area SEND Peer Review.

2. Background

Gloucestershire County Council (GCC) was asked to undertake a peer review of Somerset County Council (SCC) and partners in May 2017, as part of their preparation for a Local Area Inspection of Special Educational Needs and Disability.

3. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- To note the progress made since the Gloucestershire SEND peer review.
- There have been no changes to the inspection framework however SEND inspections have developed since the peer review held in 2017. It is therefore relevant for future inspection preparation to form Local Area SEND updates.

4. Somerset SEND Strategy 2016-2019 sets out 5 key strategic outcomes;

- Our families, **children and young people report a positive experience of our SEND systems**, and feel empowered and confident to engage and make decisions
- **Timely and accurate identification and assessment** of SEND across education, health and care
- **Inclusive and equitable access to good quality local education**
- **Smooth and effective transitions** happen at key points
- **Creative partnership** working delivers effective, fair and transparent systems and services

Our vision: We want every child and young person to have the greatest possible opportunity to be the best they can be, to be happy, and have choice and control over their life.

The Gloucestershire Peer review added additional “points to consider”;

- Create multi-agency forums to build on the local SEND strategy and ensure consistent and cohesive messages are embedded across the local area, and at all levels.
- Address information management systems and data sharing protocols to underpin development, inform strategy and track outcomes achieved.
- Partnership working across health agencies needs to be further developed in order to gain buy in from all areas of health provision.

5. Progress

5.1 Developing local area partnerships

The Local Area Improvement Network (LAIN) has been established since May 2018 and has 6 strategic programmes. The LAIN acts as a multi-agency forum with responsibility to support the necessary transformation of teams, services and culture across partners at all levels to improve the outcomes for children and young people with SEND and their families in line with the 5 strategic outcomes.

Programmes were identified and formed following the Gloucestershire peer

review and remain relevant. Recently two further groups have been established to support the development of SEND specific functions in each agency; these are health and social care. Each programme has a committed SEND champion who leads the programme and works collaboratively across internal teams and multi- agency partners to increase the pace of transformation across the Local Area.

The LAIN also undertakes Local area SEND inspection preparation and communications to partners. Each programme holds responsibility for the predicted key lines of enquiry that could inform the SEND Local Area Inspection.

To communicate progress, deliver key messages across all partners, a weekly SEND Newsletter is prepared across the local area.

Greater connectivity between key partners, programme group members and the link between strategy and operational delivery are developing well. Routine reporting mechanisms are established through the SEND intervention board and there are increasing number of examples where increased partnership working can show improving outcomes for children and young people. Ongoing improvement activity will continue to prioritise partnership working at all levels.

5.2 Purposeful data sharing

The sharing and analysis of statistical information across key partners is progressing, however this remain a risk given that data across partners is used for different purposes and is not easily matched at individual level. Information sharing protocols with Health care providers remain a challenge, and are further hampered by inconsistent use of electronic information management systems across partners.

The SEND intervention Board has called for a joint workshop to explore this issue and this is being facilitated by The Council for Disabled Children (CDC) in May.

5.3 Partnership working across Health agencies

Additional capacity has been added by the Designated Clinical Officer to compliment the Dedicated Medical Officer (DMO) and this has supported the development of the Health group. This provides the partnership forum for health commissioners and providers. This group contributes to the Local area improvement network.

5.4 Other Progress

Somerset's Local Offer has been co-produced and developed but is not yet the first choice of parents or professionals for information advice and guidance. Feedback and ongoing development of the Local Offer is required to identify opportunities for joint commissioning.

A significant capital programme has been developed to address historical gaps

and to reflect local need. Building programmes are underway however increasing demand continues to be result in an over reliance on independent schools.

Participation remains a strong feature across the Local area supported by the Parent carer forum. Strategic Leaders across the local area participated in 5 Local Offer Live workshops led by Somerset Parent Carer Forum, enabling leaders of services to meet with over 200 families and practitioners.

This was further reinforced through the SEND Big Day held in March 2019 where parent carers were invited to participate in clinics with practitioners across the area. Over 150 parent/carers attended, and the evaluation of these events have been that they have restored trust and confidence across the system.

5.5 Risks

Inclusive schools, parental choice and performance

Current Tribunal appeals remain high with 70% of the 23 current tribunal cases being defended by the local Authority in relation to an independent placement rather than mainstream or maintained special schools with resulting risk relating to higher than average placements in the independent sector until the capital building programme is realised. The SEND team continue to work closely with parents however disputes are likely to continue.

The sharp increase in statutory assessment requests and move from funding only to EHCP planned to take place over the next 24 months places additional capacity pressures on partner/ internal advice givers and the SEND casework team. Statutory requests for assessments have nearly doubled since the review in 2017. Performance data in relation to the statutory SEND team is now routinely reported and analysed to understand how to manage future demand and performance against the 20-week target is stabilising at just over 40% this continues to be significantly below National average (65%).

The CCG continue to have significant difficulties in managing demand in relation to children and young people with behavioural presentations impacted by staff shortages. Waiting times for referrals and assessment for paediatricians remain a challenge.

5.6 Consultations undertaken

Not relevant to this update

5.7 Implications

Somerset is one of only 3 LA's in the South West still to be inspected.

A significant number of SEND inspections are now resulting in joint written statements of action for Local Authorities and CCG's. Somerset Local Area has made progress across Peer review recommendations and those which remain relevant will be taken forward as part of ongoing Local area improvement. This ensures that activities remain relevant and supports the pace of improvement. Focus by all partners continues to be required.