

Health & Wellbeing Board – SEND Update

21 March 2022



Joint working between services is underdeveloped...

Children, young people and their families are not at the centre of leaders' thinking.

... services working in isolation

The autistic spectrum condition (ASC) assessment pathway in Somerset is dysfunctional.

...too much variability in the implementation of the reforms across front line services... even when children and young people have had their needs identified accurately, many do not then have these needs met well enough

The rate of exclusion of children and young people with SEND is too high.

...limited capacity to bring about the improvements that are needed.

little evidence to show anything is leading to a better experience for children and young people with SEND and their families..

The timeliness of the assessment process for plans is too slow.

March 2020

...started to implement the SEND reforms too late.

Joint commissioning is limited and in its infancy... opportunities to pool resources to tackle areas of need in the area are underutilised.

The quality of assessing and then meeting needs across the area is inconsistent and often weak.

...widespread weaknesses in the identification and meeting of children's and young people's needs.

EHC plans are generally education plans, with little and often no input from health and care professionals

A circular diagram with a white center containing the text 'Somerset SEND WSoA'. The circle is divided into four colored segments: blue (top), teal (right), pink (bottom), and teal (left). Four lines extend from these segments to four rectangular boxes: 'Culture of inclusion and collaboration' (blue), 'Joint working and commissioning' (teal), 'Inclusive education' (pink), and 'Better assessment and planning' (olive). To the right of these boxes are four colored panels, each containing a list of implementation priorities (IP1-IP9) corresponding to the boxes. The panels are light blue, light teal, light pink, and light yellow. A vertical teal bar is on the left of the panels. A footer bar at the bottom is divided into four colored sections: blue, orange, teal, and yellow. The 'ing hip' logo is in the bottom right corner.

Somerset SEND WSoA

Culture of inclusion and collaboration

- **IP1:** Work more closely with children and young people with SEND and their families to understand and learn from their experiences when formulating strategies to improve the area.
- **IP2:** Further improve leadership capacity across services

Joint working and commissioning

- **IP3:** Continue to strengthen partnership working across education, health and social care.
- **IP4:** Improve joint commissioning arrangements to ensure they meet needs, improve outcomes and achieve cost efficiencies.
- **IP5:** Develop a more effective neurodevelopmental pathway, specifically for autism

Inclusive education

- **IP6:** Extend inclusive practice across schools across the local area and in turn reduce exclusion rates which mean too many children and young people are not accessing education

Better assessment and planning

- **IP7:** Drive out inconsistency in our practices which at times causes unsatisfactory assessment and means we are not meeting the needs of some families
- **IP8:** Carry out assessment, writing and publication of education, health and care plans more swiftly
- **IP9:** Improve the quality of professional advice to ensure consistency of high quality education, health and care plans

How are we implementing WSOA?

- Each **improvement priority** has named lead
- Improvement priorities (IP) grouped in **themes** to avoid “silo working”. School leaders and parent-carers involves in each IP area.
- Dedicated **project management** support from County Council and CCG
- **External support** available from DfE and NHS programmes
- Fortnightly **Delivery Group** led by Programme Manager (Jo Dowling) and Programme Senior Responsible Officer (Rob Hart) brings together IP leads to monitor delivery
- Monthly **Strategic SEND Partnership Board** provides forum for strategic discussion, forward planning and strategic join commissioning.
- Monthly **SEND Improvement Board** chaired by CCG and SCC Chief Execs receives monthly progress report, provide
- Quarterly **Monitoring Meeting** with DfE and NHS England Advisors

Culture of inclusion and collaboration

- More families are attending listening events and new families are getting involved.
- 445 new families have joined the PCF since inspection enabling them to share their experiences
- Beginning culture change around willingness to involve families in service design (e.g. autism pathway)
- We have improved our communication with the SEND community
 - Increase numbers of users are visiting Somerset's Local Offer
 - Improvements in site quality
 - Increased uptake of SEND news
 - Established agreed channels for school communications
 - Increase in Facebook Local Offer page
 - Improvement in School website compliance

Joint working & commissioning

- Undertaken multiagency audit of compliance with statutory duties and taken action to address non/ partial compliance.
- Development of Joint Commissioning Strategy
- Joint work in progress focusing on access to therapies, specialist equipment, habilitation.
- Interim autism service in place removing barriers to assessment – from 20% starting assessment within 3 months (April '20) to over 80%.
- Pre-assessment pathway in place increasing joined-up work between schools, LA and health services – schools can refer.

Inclusive education

- School-led Inclusion Enquiry has engaged with school leaders and partners to agree recommendations to strengthen inclusive practice.
- School associations have recruited schools to “Whole Education” programme to strengthen inclusion
- Positive feedback about test and learn “Locality Inclusion Support” meetings in two areas that bring together inclusion and early help so schools can access support and advice in one place.
- Development of area inclusion partnerships so school leaders are more involved in decisions about the provision in their area and how it is used.

Identification, assessment and planning

- Strengthened processes for identifying children at 2½ year check and notifying relevant agencies
- Better awareness of learning disability annual health review
- Improved timeliness of contributions to EHC assessments, and sustained improvements in the time taken for an EHC plan from <20% in 20 weeks in Jan '20 to consistently above 60%.
- More EHC plans identified as good or outstanding

January '22 DfE & NHS Monitoring

- Despite intense pressures caused by Covid and other wider developments, e.g. ICS and LGR overall the **local area has maintained good progress** in implementing the WSoA since September.
- For those planned **actions that are behind or at risk of delay, reasons have been identified and mitigations noted or corrective measures put in place**. Any amendments to the original WSoA have been endorsed by the SEND Board, which continues to meet on a monthly basis and is attended by at least one adviser from the DfE or NHSE.
- SEND **leaders continue to pay close attention and provide robust oversight** of the nine priority workstreams, with implementation of the WSoA continuing to be project managed to a high standard. The establishment of an 'Executive Group' enables urgent matters and barriers to be addressed by those who have the necessary authority to alter operational arrangements.
- Both the LA and CCG continue to arrange additional resources to support the implementation of improvement actions within the WSoA. There has been **significant improvement in collaborative activity** across the local SEND partnership since the inspection.

A headline summary of progress since September:

- Feedback across the partnership has been one of notable improvements since the inspection.
- Stronger partnership, coproduction and 'joined up' working – 'supporting service development together'.
- Positive response to improving inclusive practices for the most vulnerable CYP.
- Higher quality EHCPs produced in a timely fashion, based on better advice.
- Data reflecting improvements in SEND service areas.
- Leaders are confident in securing better outcomes for CYP with SEND as recent changes impact.
- Better use of the local area's resources increasingly evident.

Risks and challenges

- **Engagement** – some work with families and providers has not been able to take place as planned, mostly due to COVID-19
- **Data** – we have not always been able to get systems talking to each other or extract data we need from systems leading to delays in progress in some areas
- **Commissioning restrictions** – COVID-19 has led to restrictions on what changes can be made to health contracts
- **COVID-19 pandemic** – Capacity in services; diversion of resources. Schools, health services under extreme pressure
- **Significant reorganisations** – move to integrated care system (ICS) and local government reorganisation
- **Financial** – High needs budgets under pressure. Somerset's high needs budget is in the lowest quartile nationally.

What more do we need to do?

- Assessing and learning from **impact** of improvements
- Continuing to strengthen **joint working** and culture across system
- Strengthen **working with families** through assessment processes
- Implementation/ roll-out of:
 - **Autism** assessment pathway
 - Area-based structures for aligning **SEND and early help** support
 - Recommendations from **Inclusion Enquiry**
- Educational **inclusion**
- Improving **access** – therapies and mental health
- COVID impact and **system recovery**
- Development of new **SEND strategy** for 2023 onwards

Priorities: SEND Strategy Development



