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## Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) update

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<p><b>Summary:</b></p>	<p>Following a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) local area inspection in March 2020, and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a joint Written Statement of Action (WSOA) was required to address nine areas of weakness in the local area's SEND practice.</p> <p>A programme of work is in progress to address these areas of weakness and feedback from the Department for Education (DfE) and NHS advisers following the fourth WSoA monitoring meeting highlighted that despite intense pressures caused by the Covid pandemic and other wider developments (Integrated Care System and Local Government Review), the local area has maintained good progress in implementing the requirements identified through the WSoA.</p> <p>The SEND Code of Practice, January 2015, outlines the expectation for local areas to have a Joint Strategic Need Assessment (JSNA) which includes 'specific analysis of the needs of vulnerable groups including disabled children and young people and those with SEN, those needing palliative care and looked after children' (3.23: SEND code of practice). This helps the local area to provide a 'clear relationship between population needs, what is procured for children and young people with SEN and disabilities, and individual Education, Health and Care plans (EHCPs)' (3.20: SEND code of practice).</p> <p>SEND strategic partners are asking the Health and Wellbeing Board to note the local areas progress across the nine improvement areas within the WSoA and to note and monitor the creation of a SEND needs assessment as part of the overarching children and family's needs Assessment.</p> <p>Following this, the local area will create a new SEND strategy outlining the future improvement priorities, based on:</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the SEND needs assessment,</li> <li>• the local area self-assessment against the SEND Code of Practice</li> <li>• Working together with children and young people with SEND and their families</li> </ul> <p>Progress against this action will be reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board at the next update.</p>						
<p><b>Recommendations:</b></p>	<p><b>That the Health and Wellbeing Board note and monitor progress against the nine improvement properties within the SEND WSoA and supports the next steps and key challenges for the future of SEND improvement in Somerset.</b></p> <p><b>That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the need for the creation of a SEND needs assessment as part of the overarching children and family’s needs Assessment to inform joint commissioning and SEND strategy development. This will be published on the Somerset Intelligence website and on the Local Offer.</b></p> <p><b>That the Health and Wellbeing Board allocates a development session on what the findings of the JSNA mean for the health and social care system.</b></p>						
<p><b>Reasons for recommendations:</b></p>	<p>To update the Health and Wellbeing Board on progress against the SEND WSoA and outline plans for the next steps for SEND improvement across the local area.</p> <p>To support the need to formalise SEND, as part of the wider Needs Assessment process for children, young people, and families, which will feed into the JSNA for Somerset. This will enable a comprehensive analysis of population need to inform commissioning intentions and to set the priorities for the SEND strategy.</p>						
<p><b>Links to The Improving Lives Strategy</b></p>	<p><b>Please tick the Improving Lives priorities influenced by the delivery of this work</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td><b>A County infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment</b></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td><b>Fairer life chances and opportunity for all</b></td> <td><b>✓</b></td> </tr> </table>	<b>A County infrastructure that drives productivity, supports economic prosperity and sustainable public services</b>		<b>Safe, vibrant and well-balanced communities able to enjoy and benefit from the natural environment</b>		<b>Fairer life chances and opportunity for all</b>	<b>✓</b>
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<b>Fairer life chances and opportunity for all</b>	<b>✓</b>						

	<b>Improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer</b>	✓
<b>Financial, Legal, HR, Social value and partnership Implications:</b>	<p>There are no financial, legal, social value or HR implications. The SEND WSoA outlines the local area commitment to fulfilling identified improvement requirements for children and young people with SEND and their families in Somerset. The JSNA is a system wide partnership document which will inform our joint commissioning and operational direction of travel.</p> <p>Work has already been commissioned by the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to better understand the information (data) available to develop a comprehensive JSNA and where improvements may be required. In addition, the CCG commissioned a parallel workstream to research, design and create personas of individuals accessing the current services, highlighting any frictions or enablers they experience - these can be used to help Somerset teams to identify and prioritise changes to SEND pathways (including digital channels) based on what people need the most.</p> <p>The next steps for SEND improvement will depend in part on the priorities set by the JSNA and will need to be development collectively by the local area.</p>	
<b>Equalities Implications:</b>	The JSNA and send strategy development will help the system to understand and address any equalities implications for this cohort.	
<b>Risk Assessment:</b>	Without a JSNA the SEND local area is unable to set coherent and needs led priorities for future strategy development, commissioning and working practice.	

## 1. Background

- 1.1 Following a SEND local area inspection in March 2020, and in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (Joint Area Reviews) Regulations 2015, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) determined that a joint Written Statement of Action (WSoA) was required to address nine areas of weakness in the local area's SEND practice:

1. The lack of focus on the experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families when formulating strategies to improve the area
2. The lack of leadership capacity across area services
3. Weak partnership working between services across education, health and care
4. Poor joint commissioning arrangements that limit leaders' ability to meet area needs, improve outcomes, and achieve cost efficiencies
5. The ineffective assessment pathway for autistic spectrum conditions
6. Too many children and young people not accessing education because of the disproportionate use of exclusion and poor inclusive practices across the area
7. Poor assessment and meeting of need caused by inconsistent practice leading to poor outcomes for children and young people with SEND
8. Poor timeliness of the assessment, writing and publication of education, health and care plans
9. The wide variances in the quality of education, health and care plans caused by weaknesses in joint working

1.2 The WSoA therefore contains nine improvement priorities designed to tackle these areas of weakness. These are overseen by the SEND Improvement Board and a regime of monitoring visits (every three months) by the allocated Advisors from the DfE and the NHS. The fourth WSoA monitoring meeting took place in January 2022. This was very positive with advisor's feedback stating that despite intense pressures caused by the Covid pandemic and other wider developments (Integrated Care System and Local Government Review) overall the local area has maintained good progress in implementing the requirements identified within WSoA. In addition, they highlighted that for those planned actions that are behind or at risk of delay, reasons have been identified and mitigations noted, or corrective measures have been put in place. Finally, they were encouraged by the continued momentum, stating that SEND leaders continue to pay close attention and provide robust oversight of the nine priority workstreams and that barriers are addressed by those who have the necessary authority to alter operational arrangements through the SEND Partnership Board.

- 1.3 The last monitoring report feedback highlighted the following headline areas of progress apparent from the evidence provided:
- Feedback across the partnership has been one of notable improvements since the inspection.
  - Stronger partnership, coproduction and 'joined up' working is apparent – 'supporting service development together'.
  - There has been an overall positive response to improving inclusive practices for the most vulnerable children and young people.
  - Evidence shows an overall higher quality of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) which are produced in a timely fashion, based on better advice.
  - Data reflects improvements in SEND service areas.
  - Leaders are confident in securing better outcomes for children and young people with SEND even as recent changes start to have an impact.
  - Better use of the local area's resources is increasingly evident.

- 1.4 One key area of improvement identified was across the joint commissioning arrangements between Somerset County Council and the NHS to improve leaders' ability to ensure they are meeting area needs as well as improving outcomes and achieving cost efficiencies. This was underpinned within the WSoA with an agreed outcome to ensure there is a clear and shared understanding of the local area needs by ensuring that the Somerset strategic needs assessment accurately reflects the needs of local children, young people and their families.
- 1.5 In July 2021 work was commissioned by the Somerset Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to conduct a data mapping exercise to better understand the information (data) available to develop a comprehensive JSNA and to help identify where improvements may be required. In addition, the CCG commissioned a parallel workstream to research, design and create personas of individuals accessing the current services, highlighting any frictions or enablers they experience - these can be used to help Somerset teams to identify and prioritise changes to SEND pathways (including digital channels) based on what people need the most.
- 1.6 The data mapping exercise supported the well documented issues that Somerset is data rich, but intelligence poor and there is a paucity of understanding of local data to inform the planning of services around children's and family health. The resulting report has made the following key recommendations:
- Data needs to be viewed more collectively to inform commissioning and targeted service delivery. Information should be brought together to deliver a system wide needs assessment, a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for children and families. Statutory needs assessments such as SEND could then sit under this wider umbrella
  - The route for development, ownership and sign off for a children's and Families JSNA needs to be established
  - Wider data sources need to be brought together to inform system wide performance reporting e.g. SEND performance reporting utilising data from across the system to provide deeper insight enabling informed challenge and improved outcomes
- 1.7 WSoA is now in year two of its delivery and the local area has succeeded in making progress against all nine identified priority areas. Using evidence from the SEND JSNA, the local areas self-assessment against the must do and should do statements within the written statement of action and working together with children and young people with SEND and their families the local area will create a SEND strategy outlining the future improvement priorities.

## 2. Improving Lives Priorities and Outcomes

- 2.1 Fairer life chances and opportunity for all and improved health and wellbeing and more people living healthy and independent lives for longer – Evidenced by the improvements achieved through the WSoA. A JSNA will help commissioner to identify where precious resources can be fairly distributed and will help the system to prioritise the response at a strategic level.

## 3. Consultations undertaken

- 3.1 The Somerset Parent Carer Forum are actively engaged in the delivery of the WSoA, the development of the SEND Strategy and in supporting the improvements to joint commissioning across the Local areas and beyond. They endorse the requirement for a children, young people and families JSNA with a topic specific focus around SEND

## 4. Request of the Board and Board members

- 4.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board note and monitor progress against the nine improvement properties within the SEND WSoA and supports the next steps and key challenges for the future of SEND improvement in Somerset.
- 4.2 That the Health and Wellbeing Board note the need for the creation of a SEND needs assessment part of the overarching Children and family's needs assessment to inform joint commissioning and SEND strategy development. This will be published on the Somerset Intelligence website and on the Local Offer.
- 4.3 That the Health and Wellbeing Board allocates a development session on what the findings of the JSNA mean for the health and social care system.

## 5. Background papers

- 5.1 [SEND Code of Practice](#)  
[Somerset SEND Written Statement of Action](#)  
[Somerset WSoA Progress Report January 2022 FINAL.pdf](#)

## 6. Report Sign-Off

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	Seen by:	Name	Date
Report Sign off	Relevant Senior Manager / Lead Officer (Director Level)	Lou Woolway	10/03/22

	Cabinet Member / Portfolio Holder (if applicable)	Claire Paul	Click or tap to enter a date.
	Monitoring Officer (Somerset County Council)	Scott Wooldridge	Click or tap to enter a date.