

Addendum - Scrutiny Committee - Children & Families – 12 July 2023

Public Question Time

1. Questions submitted by Elvira Elliott – to be read out at meeting by Stephanie Mathivet

(The agenda items the questions relate to are - Children and Families Work Programme, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset)

EE

I am bringing some questions on behalf myself and other members of the group Somerset SEND and EHCP support who have experienced serious delays and lapses in communication from the SEN department causing serious disruption to our lives and our children's education.

The following are just a handful of quotes from other parents dealing with the SEN department showing the typical lapses in communication and removal of parents from the school consultation process which leads to children being out of education for years at a time. I gathered these quotes on May 25th 2023.

“ it was about 20 something emails plus phone calls from us and Senco until we got a response, It took 3 weeks. Caseworker never responded to SenCo. I have a long list of other failings too.”

“Her stonewalling, missed deadlines and broken promises have caused my son such anxiety as we have only just been able to tell him what school he goes to in sept. EHCP states that a long and robust transition period must be in place for this but their failing didn’t meet this stipulation. Didn’t consult with school before adding it to EHCP. The list goes on and on”

“We received draft plan in October last year and still don’t have a named school or anywhere near a final plan due to being ignored for months at a time”

“..I sent back our first draft with amendments over a month ago and not heard anything...never hear from

	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>caseworker at all...</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“been waiting for our finalised plan, been regularly ignored by my caseworker and then have to ring the sen department to get them to book in a call with her, she then rings me and acts confused why she’s been asked to call me. Last I heard she was finalising the last bit and then found out from another parent she left around Easter time. I made a complaint re lack of communication and escalated it to level 2 and was told they’d done nothing wrong”</i></p>	
<p>EE Q1.</p>	<p>Were any EHCPs delivered within the 20 week deadline in 2022/23?</p>	<p>Response from: Claire Merchant-Jones – Strategic Manager – Head of SEND</p>
<p><u>Answer</u></p> <p>Yes - There are different time periods that numbers can be provided within. Below are both the most up to date Somerset picture (July 22 to July 23) as well as comparators by academic year. The national data included lags by a year so is not so current and runs on yet another annual timeframe – April to end March.</p> <p>Most up to date Somerset data 1st July 22 to 1st July 23 64% of plans (339 of 619 plans) were issued within 20 weeks.</p> <p>Somerset numbers by Academic years 2020/21 960 plans issued, 514 within 20 weeks (54%) 2021/22 708 plans issued, 483 within 20 weeks (68%) 2022/23 - this is still being collated to include the final weeks of the Summer term ending July 2023.</p> <p>National comparative data Information from the Department for Education SEND national data set (which lags by a year so is only to the end of 2022, and runs April 2021 – end March 2022) sets out average percentage of plans issued within 20 weeks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South West region – 35.2% • England – 50.7% 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Somerset – 69.4% 	
EE Q2.	How many complaints were upheld against the LA regarding the SEN department in 2022/23 both internally, by the ombudsman or by other professional governing bodies such as the HCPC or CQC?	Response from: Claire Merchant-Jones – Strategic Manager – Head of SEND
	<p><u>Answer</u> The time period for 22/23 is April 2022 to end March 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stage 1 complaints received 148, of which 88 were upheld, 27 were partly upheld and 33 were not upheld. Stage 2 complaints received 35 of which 7 have been upheld, 18 partly upheld and 10 were not upheld. Ombudsman outcomes- 10 outcomes - 6 upheld and 4 closed after initial enquiries. <p>There were no complaints recorded in relation to professional governing bodies such as HCPC or CQC.</p>	
EE Q3.	How many SEN children in Somerset will be not attending school in September '23 either because no placement has been named in time or because parents have had to appeal an unsuitable named placement.	Response from: Claire Merchant-Jones – Strategic Manager – Head of SEND
	<p><u>Answer</u> The position as at 10 July 2023 is :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6 SEND children have not yet been allocated a place to start Reception in September. There are currently 118 placements secured for September and 3 parental appeals ongoing regarding placement; 18 SEND children in Year 6 who are due to start secondary school in September have not yet been allocated a place. There are currently 297 placements secured for September and 17 parental appeals ongoing regarding placement; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 21 year 11 students due to start a post 16 setting in September have not yet had a place confirmed. There are currently 323 placements secured for post 16 settings for September and 5 parental appeals ongoing regarding placement. 	
<p>2. Questions submitted by Hefina Washbourne</p> <p>(The agenda items the questions relate to are - Children and Families Work Programme, Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset and 22/23 Budget outturn position).</p>		
<p>HW Q1.</p>	<p>There is not enough Social Care Transition to adulthood staff. The waiting list for action is over 11 months. When the non-urgent form process is followed with SEND, families are being told there is only one social care transition to adulthood social worker, and they recently resigned. Our local councillor was told about this and a transition to adulthood social practitioner made contact with our family within 3 days. We are concerned about the lack of social care staff, process, expertise, monitoring and evaluating. There are not enough staff employed to deal with the SEND levels in Somerset.</p> <p>Question: Can the committee explain where in the forward planning budget this area is (as we could not see it anything for disabled or SEND in the budget), specifically why the social care intervention is not happening earlier when the child is 13/14 yrs old (as outlines in your own partnership charter '21) and what is being done to monitor and evaluate its staffing levels, efficiency, function and output?</p>	<p>Response from: Chloe Boobyer Service Manager Preparing for Adulthood</p>
	<p><u>Answer</u></p> <p>There is now a dedicated Service Manager for Preparing for Adulthood (Chloe Boobyer – recently in post) who will be working across Operations and Commissioning to improve and develop our planning to support the transition between services. The Service Manager is in the process of completing a Service Improvement Plan and updating Pathways and processes which includes closer and joint working with CSC, Leaving Care, SEND, Health, Mental Health and other relevant services. There will be a clearer oversight of the referrals for young people coming through and we encourage referrals to be made to the team from year 9+ (13/14yrs) so that the team are aware of young people and their future needs much earlier and so that this can support future commissioning and budget, with the aim that their Care Act Assessment will be completed by the time they are 17.5yrs at the latest. This in turn</p>	

	<p>will enable appropriate services to be in place and a much smoother and effective transition to Adult Social Care at 18yrs. Some of this work has already started and will continue to develop over the coming months. The Service Manager is also working with colleagues in relation to improving how our recording databases support the referral process and work within the Preparing for Adulthood team along with ensuring appropriate data reporting so that key data can be monitored effectively.</p> <p>To help give some context to the Team; The Preparing for Adulthood Team sits within Adult Social Care and under the Learning Disabilities service within the Adult Social Care Structure. The team is Countywide and is comprised of 1 Advanced Practitioner, 4 Social Workers and 4 Adult Social Care Workers. There is 1 Social Worker and 1 Adult Social Care Practitioner based in each of the 4 Adult Social Care Locality Areas; Taunton and West Somerset, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, and Mendip. The team has experienced significant staff vacancies in recent months and whilst still carries a vacancy for the Advanced Practitioner post and 2 Social Worker posts; we now have 1 Locum covering a Social Worker post, 1 Locum due to start 14th Aug to cover the other Social Worker post and have Locum interviews scheduled at the beginning of August for the Advanced Practitioner Post. We are also reviewing our adverts to support with the recruitment of permanent staff to the Team.</p>
<p>HW Q2.</p>	<p>We are becoming increasingly frustrated about the promises made for the transition from school/college to the workplace for young SEND teenagers and adults. The LA charter of education/training/support to enter the workplace from 16-25 yrs states it is possible to achieve certain qualifications, foundation and experience through 6th form school/college, but this is not what most further education establishments or possible employers are willing to facilitate. These teenagers/young adults have value to add to society and their community. If not supported and nurtured, it will affect their self esteem, mental wellbeing and health.</p> <p>Question: Can the committee explain what monitoring measures are in place to ensure that 6th form schools/colleges are pro-actively extending opportunities for teenagers/young adults between 16-25 yrs, specifically what is the LA doing to ensure they have every possible chance to obtain gainful employment when they are ready?</p> <p>Response from: Julie Young Service Manager – Expert Advisor</p>
	<p><u>Answer</u> We are engaging with the NDTi 'Internships Work' project with the aim of doubling the number of Supported Employment opportunities for our SEND young people in Somerset by 2025. We have been working with DSN</p>

Project Search and key employers to increase the number of Supported Internship programmes and from this September 2023 we will have tripled the offer with the following Supported Internships with the following:

Project Search / Yeovil District Hospital / Yeovil College/ Discovery Supported Internship
Project Search / Musgrove Park Hospital / BTC/ Discovery Supported Internship
Project Search / Leonardo – Sodexo / Yeovil College/ Discovery Supported Internship
Shaw Trust / Palmers Garden Centre Trowbridge / Critchill School Supported Internship
Avon & Somerset Police Constabulary/ BTC / Discovery Supported Work Preparation programme
EDF HPC / BTC / Discovery Supported Traineeship
Somerset Council / SS&L / Discovery Supported Apprenticeships
MSN / Yeovil College Supported Apprenticeships
Polden Bower / IBIS hotel Supported Internships
Project Search / Millfield & Clarks Village / Strode College/ Discovery Supported Internship (Jan 2024).

Raising awareness of Supported Employment routes is a key priority and we have this year created parent resources ([Imagine the Possibilities \(somerset-ebp.co.uk\)](https://www.somerset-ebp.co.uk)) and are currently developing an Educators Guide which will be available from September 2023.

We have also held Special School Heads meetings, a Supported Employment Summit (19th April, attended by 94 people) and a year 10 Special School alumni and aspiration workshop on 4th July for 40 young people. From September we will be running a series of Parent/Carer workshops around Somerset to make sure parents continue to be informed about Supported Employment routes.

We have completed Career Plans/ Vocational profiles with all year 10s in our Special Schools and requested that these be sent to parents so they understand their young person's aspirations. We will be rolling this out to all EHCP students in our mainstream schools during 2023-24 with a pilot trial in South Somerset next term.

We are bringing our Special schools and Colleges together to undertake Transition Panels from Year 9 so that colleges know and understand the education and careers journey that students on a flightpath to work are on, and so that the transition from school to college to Supported Employment is understood and monitored effectively.

We have planned to deliver career understanding workshops with SENCOs, teaching assistants, SEND staff, etc so that they understand the different routes and options in Supported Employment and their roles in helping to promote and signpost.

We have secured funding for two Somerset Supported Employment Coordinators that have been in place for the last 3 years and are now bidding for additional funding to keep those roles in place once they finish in December 2023.

We have also secured Laurel Trust funding to create and deliver a communications and marketing strategy to help promote Supported Employment routes with all our key stakeholders.

Our main issue that we have encountered is that once we set up a Supported Employment programme we then find it difficult to recruit to these programmes – there are barriers from some parents/carers about allowing their young people undertake courses and ultimately move into employment, with regards to losing benefits, etc. So, we are working hard to break down these misconceptions.

We are already developing the following for September 2024:

- Young Somerset Supported Internship
- SS&L Supported Internship
- Somerset Council Supported Internship
- MSN Yeovil Supported Internship
- Logistics & Transport / Yeovil College Supported Internship

By 2025 we are aiming to have at least another 8 – 10 supported employment programmes being delivered across Somerset.

We are also in good levels of discussion with Yeo Valley, Numatic, Aldi and Thales about creating programmes.

We are intending to have them in all areas of Somerset so that transport doesn't become a deciding barrier to participation.

We will also help support independent training providers draw down suitable funding to be able to offer programmes, as they are often able to offer smaller, bespoke courses and we would like to be able to offer programmes to SEND support students / vulnerable young people without an EHCP – the NDTi are campaigning for this.

This is our action plan for 2023-24:

Outcomes to be achieved <i>Examples:</i> - SEND employment forum established - Three-year action plan developed - Local Offer has clear, accessible information about SIs - All EHCPs from at least year nine include employment outcomes	Breakdown of expenditure (activity) <i>Examples:</i> - Staffing - X days training - X days engaging employers - X days developing forum plans - X days hosting forums	Timeframe <i>Examples:</i> - December 2022 - January 2023 - January – March 2023
Key partners understand Access to Work and how it works and how to claim	Access to Work workshops for training providers and employers	April – December 2023
SEND parents understand the different routes into employment and see them as a viable and aspirational option for their son/daughter	Series of parental workshops across the regions and development and delivery of a County wide Comms and Marketing plan	May 2023 – March 2024
Ensuring greater linkup and clarity between career plans and EHCPs so that supported employment routes and opportunities are more explicit and understood as target outcomes for all parties.	SEND team/ Careers staff workshops so that skills to include careers pathways are developed. Including work around Annual Reviews so facilitators are focussing on good outcomes.	September – December 2023
Special School young people workshops that showcase Supported Employment	Year 10 workshop – 4 th July at Strode College and other regional workshops – one per special school.	July 2023 – March 2024

	routes and raise aspirations and understanding		
	Development and rollout of Pre-Employment curriculum that our special schools and colleges use to deliver Year 12 and 13 students in preparation for Year 14 Supported Internships.	Staff time to prepare work readiness curriculum. Workshops to present and train staff in the new curriculum model Creation and dissemination of Educators Guide	May 2023 – March 2024
	Key partners including employers understand safeguarding implications and considerations relating to Supported Employment	Workshop for key agencies involved in Supported Employment.	October 2023
	Creation of a Supported Employment Directory of Offer that links to a Marketing Strategy to ensure that learners fill the provision as it's put in place.	Printed and online Directory of Supported Employment offers in Somerset. Marketing strategy that helps with the recruitment of future pupils	May 2023- December 2023
	2 new Training Providers/ establishments selected to pilot Supported Internship programmes from September 2024	Funding will be made available to the two selected providers to help cover set-up costs ready for delivery	Selection process to be completed by the end of November 2023 £10, 000 (£5K per provider)
	Contribute to the continued work of the Somerset Supported Employment Coordinators	Staffing Costs for continued delivery of Supported Employment Forums and oversight of career plans.	September 2023 – March 2024
	Our Special School young people understand the physical requirements of employment and are developing their skills and stamina	Project to continue development and development of 'Fitness for Work' SASP project for Special School students	September 2023 – March 2024

	Young Supported Employment Champion(s) help spread the message to key partners	Recruitment, training and support for SE Champions including an online alumni forum platform	September 2023 – March 2024
	Employer Recruitment processes workshop	To investigate and showcase a range of diverse and inclusive recruitment processes, including reverse job fairs and work trial interviews.	Jan – March 2024
	Raising public awareness of Supported Employment options and their effectiveness	Sponsoring of Somerset EBP Awards – 2 categories – Best Supported Employment Employer and Best Supported Employment Employee.	July 2024
	<p>We are liaising with other nearby Authorities to share good practice and learning and are able to access free Job Coach training via BASE for the duration of the 'Internships Works' project and predict that this will help to build the capacity needed to continue to grow the number of opportunities in all areas of Somerset, and to successfully recruit to them.</p> <p>We understand that we are needing to change the culture and understanding around this area of work and are targeting all key partners to ensure that we take everyone along on this journey and we have definitely gained momentum this year.</p> <p>We sponsored two awards at the Somerset EBP Awards on the 6th July to help raise the profile of supported employment opportunities: Supported Employment Employer of the Year Supported Employment Employee of the Year</p>		
HW Q3.	Activities for teenagers/young people with SEND organised by Somerset Council for them in certain areas of Somerset is more than lacking. Chard for example has groups for up to 16 yrs and over 18 yrs but there is nothing for any between 16-18 yrs. Young SEND teens/adults want to be part of society. How is this possible when there are not the opportunities for doing so? As they get older the possibility of meeting their peers and interacting will lessen and if they don't make those relationships when they are young, it will affect their mental health and		

	<p>wellbeing, making them isolated and alone. Many of the activities groups have children and young adults attending whose ability and mental age is way below their actual chronological age, so why do the groups have to have an age range placed on them anyway!</p> <p>Question: What is the LA doing to make sure there are broader areas of opportunity for these children/teenagers/young adults to meet and be integrated into their communities across the whole of Somerset, not just parochial areas of the County?</p>	<p>Response from: Emily Fulbrook Acting Deputy Director Adults & Health Operations</p>
	<p><u>Answer</u> As we discussed when you kindly attended the Scrutiny committee in person, we would welcome your input into developing opportunities for older teenagers to be part of their communities. I have asked Louise Palmer from our commissioning team to contact you.</p>	
<p>3. Questions submitted by Vicky Pearson (The agenda items the questions relate to are - Children and Families Work Programme, Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing in Somerset and 22/23 Budget outturn position).</p>		
<p>VP Q1.</p>	<p>According to the Families Guide: Imagine the Possibilities (South Somerset 14-19 Partnership 2021) they state that:</p> <p>"Preparing for adulthood formally begins at Year 9 (age 13/14)..... Starting to plan at Year 9 allows time to research options, plan the appropriate path and put in place any support the young person needs in their final years at school and to make sure their progression in the future is successful.....Identifying young people's needs and aspirations early will help identify any gaps in service provision and shape the future provision of education, health and social care services...."</p> <p>Here in Somerset we know that this is very clearly not happening and therefore is failing our young people with SEN transitioning to Adulthood. Parents like Myself are finding that this process is happening way too late for our young people; all too frequently once the young person has already moved into adult services, by which</p>	

	<p>time it is even harder, if not too late to put in place any support to guarantee suitable future provision.</p> <p>Question: Parents of children with SEN are on their knees from continually battling to get their children's needs met! When it comes to Preparing for our child's adulthood and what we are told should be happening to "shape (their) future provision of education, health and social care services" how will Somerset be held accountable if this does not happen?</p>	<p>Response from: Emily Fulbrook Acting Deputy Director Adults & Health Operations</p>
<p><u>Answer</u></p> <p>There is now a dedicated Service Manager for Preparing for Adulthood (Chloe Boobyer – recently in post) who will be working across Operations and Commissioning to improve and develop our planning to support the transition between services. The Service Manager is in the process of completing a Service Improvement Plan and updating Pathways and processes which includes closer and joint working with CSC, Leaving Care, SEND, Health, Mental Health and other relevant services. There will be a clearer oversight of the referrals for young people coming through and we encourage referrals to be made to the team from year 9+ (13/14yrs) so that the team are aware of young people and their future needs much earlier and so that this can support future commissioning and budget, with the aim that their Care Act Assessment will be completed by the time they are 17.5yrs at the latest. This in turn will enable appropriate services to be in place and a much smoother and effective transition to Adult Social Care at 18yrs. Some of this work has already started and will continue to develop over the coming months. The Service Manager is also working with colleagues in relation to improving how our recording databases support the referral process and work within the Preparing for Adulthood team along with ensuring appropriate data reporting so that key data can be monitored effectively.</p> <p>To help give some context to the Team; The Preparing for Adulthood Team sits within Adult Social Care and under the Learning Disabilities service within the Adult Social Care Structure. The team is Countywide and is comprised of 1 Advanced Practitioner, 4 Social Workers and 4 Adult Social Care Workers. There is 1 Social Worker and 1 Adult Social Care Practitioner based in each of the 4 Adult Social Care Locality Areas; Taunton and West Somerset, Sedgemoor, South Somerset, and Mendip. The team has experienced significant staff vacancies in recent months and whilst still carries a vacancy for the Advanced Practitioner post and 2 Social Worker posts; we now have 1 Locum covering a Social Worker post, 1 Locum due to start 14th Aug to cover the other Social Worker post and have</p>		

	Locum interviews scheduled at the beginning of August for the Advanced Practitioner Post. We are also reviewing our adverts to support with the recruitment of permanent staff to the Team.	
VP Q2.	<p>An EHCP takes a child with SEN up to 25 years of age.</p> <p>Question: Does it not make sense now to review the level of funding/support for Somerset's Community Inclusion and Activity Team and amend the age limit accordingly from birth to 18 years, to that of 25 years, so that a young person can still continue to have invaluable access to their local community and opportunities for social integration?</p>	<p>Response from: Executive Director Children Families and Education</p>
	<p><u>Answer</u> As we discussed at the committee meeting that you kindly attended in person we plan to review our community offer to families with disabled children, soon in order to ensure that, within the budget that we have, we can provide inclusive activities so they feel part of their peer group and community.</p> <p>We would welcome your input into this work and I have asked Louise Palmer from our commissioning team to contact you.</p>	

28 July 2023