

Local Members Interest
N/A

Prosperous Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Thursday 10 November 2022

Staffordshire Local Area SEND Re-Visit Inspection & SEND Accelerated Progress Plan Six Month Review Recommendation(s)

I recommend that the Committee:

- a. Considers the contents of the local area SEND re-visit inspection report published in March 2022
- b. Considers the contents of the Department for Education and NHS England 6-month review of Staffordshire's SEND Accelerated Progress Plan (dated: 10th October 2022)
- c. Continues to endorse the actions set out in the Accelerated Progress Plan.

Report of Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

- a. Provide the Overview and Select Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment upon the contents of the local area SEND re-visit inspection report and the subsequent Department for Education (DfE) and NHS England 6-month review of Staffordshire's SEND Accelerated Progress Plan.
- b. Provide an opportunity for the Committee to endorse the actions set out in the Accelerated Progress Plan.

Report

Background

1. The Staffordshire local area SEND revisit inspection took place between 18 and 20 January 2022.

2. The purpose of a re-visit inspection is to determine whether the local area has made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the Written Statement of Action (WSOA).
3. Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission published the re-visit inspection report in March 2022 which detailed that sufficient progress had been made in 6 of the 8 areas of significant weakness.
4. Following the publication of the inspection report, the Department for Education confirmed that an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) was required to demonstrate the capacity and capability to deliver the required improvements in those areas where sufficient progress had not been made.
5. The local area drafted the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) to:
 - Improve co-production, particularly with parents;
 - Improve the quality of EHC plans.

Overview of the Re-Visit Inspection

6. The purpose of a re-visit inspection is to determine whether the local area has made sufficient progress in addressing the areas of significant weakness detailed in the WSOA.
7. Staffordshire had eight areas of significant weakness:
 - Leaders in education, health and care have not worked together to organise roles and responsibilities, establish a united vision and strategic plan, communicate effectively, drive improvement or share what works.
 - Aspirations and expectations for Children and Young People are not routinely high enough.
 - Co-production is weak. Parents feel that the local area does not listen to them or their child. The 'tell it once' approach is not embedded. The local area's relationships with schools and families are fragile.
 - The Quality of EHC plans is poor. The targets and outcomes in plans are not aspirational enough. Annual reviews of EHC plans are often not completed on time or do not contribute effectively to the review of the Children and Young People's needs.
 - The review of Children and Young People's needs at transition points in education is weak.
 - To improve the quality of the graduated response and spirit of Inclusion.
 - The oversight of improvement work in schools, alternative provision and the Independent sector is weak.

- Children and Young People do not always have access to the right support.
8. The inspection findings were that sufficient progress had been made in improving six of the eight areas of significant weakness that were identified in the initial inspection.
 9. The inspection report identified that the local area has established stronger working relationships across the education, health, and care sectors; made the shift towards more integrated working across services and worked with stakeholders to ensure everyone has the highest expectations and ambitions for children and young people with SEND. The report recognised that the local area has developed pathways for children and young people at key stages in their education and have developed a Graduated Response Tool Kit (GRTK) to address concerns raised in the initial inspection report. The report also recognised the work to improve the monitoring, evaluation, and oversight of alternative provision, PRUs and independent settings.
 10. The local area recognises that whilst progress has been made in six areas there is still work to be undertaken to embed the developments to date.
 11. As sufficient progress had not been made in addressing all of the areas of significant weakness, the DfE and NHS England requested leaders across health, education and social care to work collectively at pace and with determination to secure immediate and sustainable improvements to:
 - Improve co-production, particularly with parents;
 - Improve the quality of EHC plans.

Overview of the Accelerated Progress Plan

12. The local area formulated an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) using a 'Task and Finish Group' approach. The group included representatives from the Parent and Carer Forum (PCF), SENDIASS, schools, CCG, Social Care and education officers. This group worked together to develop the actions that form the basis of our APP.
13. The APP sets out:
 - The governance and accountability structures and processes that will support the next phase of improvement.
 - The actions the local area is now taking (and have taken since the inspectors' revisit) to respond to their outstanding concerns.

- The impact measures and milestones to which the local area is working, being clear on the improvements expected to be delivered in the next 3, 6 and 12 months.
14. DfE SEND and NHS England Advisers were consulted through the drafting of the plan.
 15. The APP was submitted to the DfE on 1 April 2022. This was followed a review meeting between the DfE and local area leaders where the APP and analysis was discussed, and next steps agreed. Initial feedback included a recognition of the progress Staffordshire had made in building a strong strategic partnership, developing the parent carer forum and the good work undertaken on the locality hubs but acknowledged that, in SEND, there is always more to do. During the meeting it was confirmed that the plan had been deemed fit for purpose.
 16. Subsequently, the DfE SEND, and NHS England Advisers have requested permission to share our APP with colleagues across the region, stating that:

It's such a great example, the format style and the way you have captured and articulated so clearly time scales, actions, impact measures etc. It's been one of the finest examples we have seen in the midlands.
 17. To monitor the implementation and impact of the APP, there will be formal monitoring progress review meetings at around six-monthly intervals, as well as ongoing challenge and support from the DfE SEND and NHS England Advisers.

Accelerated Progress Plan Six Month Review

18. DfE and NHS England Advisers conducted the first six-month review on 29 September 2022.
19. The resultant report concluded the following:
 - The inspectors were particularly grateful for the contributions from parent carer forum (PCF) and school representative.
 - It was clear that the local area is beginning to make sustainable improvements to SEND services and to the lives of children and young people.
 - The evidence provided alongside the feedback from partners demonstrated the range of actions in place to accelerate improvement.

- Parent representatives confirmed that they are building good foundations within the SEND Strategic Partnership. It was noted that the PCF is embedded in the work being undertaken in the APP along with other SEND developments including, contributing to the SEND newsletter.

20. Inspectors were encouraged that:

- The Strategic Partnership continues to show commitment and engagement in the SEND improvement programme.
- SCC have good systems in place to oversee the improvement programme.
- The programme management is focused on the need to capture evidence of impact, in addition, to completion of actions.
- The eight district hubs have provided an opportunity to strengthen the strategic partnership between the LA, health and schools.
- Work on the Voice Project included the Voluntary Youth Service (VYS), the PCF and SENDIASS.
- SCC undertake quarterly surveys to inform panel practice and use the analysis of that along with analysis of complaints and tribunals to inform improvements.
- SCC have introduced tight monitoring of annual review amendments and made changes to the district model to improve SEND key worker capacity.

21. The DfE and NHS England will continue to monitor the APP and review our progress at the 12-month review on 20 April 2023.

22. The key focus of the 12-month review will be:

- Embedding of the “tell it once” approach.
- A review of the impact of work being undertaken to focus on the voice of children and young person.
- The embedding of Children Social Care (CSC) training and engagement, and evidence that CSC are engaged in providing compliant, timely and quality advice to the EHC process.
- The progress being made in relation to the aspiration to have termly contact with Lead Family Practitioners within schools.
- Work being undertaken to accelerate the implementation of digital solutions between Capita and Hub.
- Progress and timescales within the risk assessment with a request to include RAG ratings.
- Workforce capacity, including Social Workers, Therapists, Educational Psychologists and SEND Case Workers.

23. The SEND & Inclusion Partnership Group continue to oversee the implementation of the APP and will provide regular updates to ensure

that partners are kept fully aware and informed of actions and progress.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Staffordshire joint area SEND revisit inspection report
- Appendix 2: DfE Letter Outcome of Local Area SEND Revisit report: Next Steps
- Appendix 3: Staffordshire Accelerated Progress Plan 1 April 2022
- Appendix 4: Staffordshire APP fit for purpose letter – approved
- Appendix 5: DfE Six Month Progress Review Against the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP)

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