

SEND Futures Plan Update

1. Introduction

- a. Under the terms of Richmond's "[Safety Valve](#)" Agreement, the Council is required to report on performance against conditions in the agreement on a quarterly basis. The Council has been judged by the Department for Education to have made sufficient progress with the implementation of actions in the SEND Futures Plan to receive all payments for this financial year.
- b. The total number of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans at the end of February 2023 in Richmond was 1,704. The Safety Valve Agreement's five-year financial model has the total number of EHCPs at the January 2023 census as 1812. The total number of EHCPs has grown at a lower rate than forecast in the Safety Valve Agreement, and the number of EHCPs was lower than that forecast in the Safety Valve agreement. However there is no room for complacency and there needs to be a continued focus on the content and number of requests for EHC needs assessments.
- c. From March 2022 to February 2023 Richmond received 320 requests for EHC needs assessments, representing a 30% increase on the same period in the prior calendar year. The proportion of these requests that have been submitted by parents and carers has increased from 28% from March 2021 to February 2022, to 34% from March 2022 to February 2023.
- d. Three new colleagues have joined the Integrated Care System (ICS) in key roles relating to SEND. Two of these are full time "transformation" (previously referred to as commissioning) roles, and one is a part time role as Designated Clinical Officer (with the outstanding part time element still to be recruited).
- e. The Department for Education's (DfE's) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Alternative Provision (AP) [Improvement Plan](#) was published in March 2023. This has set out the government's proposals to improve the outcomes for children and young people and deliver financial sustainability as well as considering specific issues within the alternative provision sector.
- f. The new local area [SEND inspection framework](#) went live at the beginning of the calendar year, with Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission now actively using this new methodology nationally. The local area will be working to update its self evaluation of practice against this framework between now and the autumn. This will include engaging with children and young people as well as parents and carers.
- g. The SEND Futures Plan was last updated in May 2021 and requires updating. The self evaluation described above will help inform this update, as will broader engagement with children and young people, parents and carers. The aim is to produce an updated SEND Futures Plan also by the autumn.
- h. The local area had its first formal monitoring meeting on the implementation of the [The Written Statement of Action \(WSOA\)](#) with colleagues from the Department for Education and NHS England in July 2022 and its second formal monitoring meeting in November 2022. In these meetings, progress with priorities one, two and three was broadly judged to have been good or satisfactory. For the full monitoring report of the November meeting please [see here](#).
- i. However, due to the level of concern relating to priority four (transition pathways in health are not embedded across the full range of services) an additional interim monitoring meeting, to focus on that priority only, was stipulated and this took place on 20th February 2023. The local area's update report on priority four for that meeting is published at [this link on the local offer website](#).

The next DfE & NHSE monitoring meeting, covering all four priorities, will take place on the 27th April 2023.

2. Workstream 1: Co-production, engagement and participation

a. Children and Young People (CYP)

- i. The new Participation Officer for Children and Young People with SEND joined Achieving for Children in February. This is good news as the post had been vacant since September. The new officer will work to ensure the views of children and young people are included in ongoing improvement work.

b. Parents and Carers

- i. The number of registrations with [Richmond's SEND Register](#) stood at 938 in early March, with an approximately 50:50 split between families with Education Health and Care plans (EHCPs) and those without. The register is an excellent vehicle for partners to communicate with families and to raise awareness of the support that is available locally for them and their children. The regular newsletters sent to those registered also highlights opportunities for families to have their views heard about improvements they would like to see and ways they can become involved in future service design. Families can sign up to [Richmond's SEND Register here](#).
- ii. Richmond's Parent Carer Forum arranged and delivered a very helpful event relating to the Written Statement of Action, attended by parents, carers and practitioners from across the system, on 13th March 2023. Statutory Partners are very grateful to the members of the Parent Carer Forum steering group for their ongoing work and support.
- iii. The main focus of this workstream in the coming months will be engaging with children, young people, parents and carers to include their voices in an update of the SEND Futures Plan and an evaluation of the local area's performance against the new Ofsted and Care Quality Commission inspection framework. This work will take place throughout the summer term to inform an updated plan and evaluation in the autumn.

3. Workstream 2: Commissioning and Transformation

Impact and progress

- i. Workstream 2, now Commissioning and Transformation, has been refreshed, with a new thematic approach now agreed. Working group meetings focused around Section 75 have also been set up, which will feed into the workstream.
- ii. The paediatric service specification is currently being updated, which once completed will need to be reviewed as this may impact workstream 2 priorities.

a. SEND Placement Commissioning

- i. The new SEND Placement Commissioning Team, established in April 2022, have successfully reduced actual expenditure compared with that forecast for the current financial year by more than £450,000.
- ii. Post-16 financial controls remain rigorous, with the next step being to develop a data-led approach to predicting future needs and strategic commissioning for Preparing for Adulthood with the post-16 sector.
- iii. As noted in the last SEND Partnership Board report, the South London Commissioning Partnership will close at the end of March 2023. A new contract will be signed with the Commissioning Alliance to

manage uplift fee negotiations. Membership to the Commissioning Alliance will be £8,000 per annum compared to £30,000 per annum.

- iv. SEND Commissioning, Placements Commissioning, and Richmond Adult Social Care have jointly agreed on how to manage uplifts that cut across shared providers. Contact has been made with South West London Integrated Care Board (ICB) to agree the same format for Children's Health uplifts.
- v. Moving forward the commissioning team will focus on carrying out bulk negotiations with providers receiving more than one learner via pre and post 16 phase deadlines. The commissioning team will also be introducing processes to ensure SEND teams bring in fee negotiations before a placement is agreed.

b. Special Educational Needs & Disabilities Information Advice & Support Service (SENDIASS)

- i. The recommissioning of the contract to provide the SEND information advice and support service (SENDIASS) has now concluded. From the beginning of April 2023 the new provider will be Polaris.

Areas of concern

- i. Education providers are reporting an increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining support staff, which has led to more of a reliance on agency staff. This is more expensive for the providers and is adding inflationary pressures which they are expecting to pass on in part to the Local Authority.
- ii. Commissioning Alliance, although the best option, is unlikely to keep the same level of tight control on fee increases as previous arrangements. However, the Commissioning Alliance works across 18 other local authorities, demonstrating that this is a reputable organisation, and that the Borough will be getting a reliable service.

4. Workstream 3: Local provision

Impact and progress

a. Therapies

- i. We are almost at the end of the third year of additional ICS (previously Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG))/AfC investment in Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and Physiotherapy services in Richmond. This investment has resulted in additional capacity across all services.
- ii. Apprenticeships for Occupational Therapy have commenced, and additional therapy apprenticeships, such as for Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy, are due to start soon after.
- iii. The Social Communication Assessment Team / Autism Spectrum Condition Team will continue to conduct weekend assessments at Moor Lane. This has helped improve wait times for diagnosis, but has also kept maximum wait times stable.
- iv. The key purpose/terms of reference of the Therapies Oversight Group is currently being reviewed.
- v. A key future priority will be to conduct a gap analysis of unmet need / gaps in provision firstly for Speech and Language Therapy, and then with Occupational Therapy.

b. Emotional wellbeing and mental health

- i. The final Mental Health Support Team (MHST) in Richmond was launched in January 2023, beginning initially with the cluster lead school; Sir Richard Reynolds Catholic College. All schools in Richmond have now been offered access to the MHST. The team are also looking at piloting some of this work within independent schools to ensure they can also access some of the MHST's resources.

- ii. The rollout of the [Quantitative Behavioural Test for ADHD](#) has now commenced for the Emotional Health Service Neurodevelopmental Training pathway. This is a computer-based, objective test which adds to the assessment for ADHD, thus improving clinician confidence and reducing the amount of time to diagnosis.
- iii. The Emotionally Related School Avoidance (ERSA) work has continued to develop well, with a new clinical psychologist now appointed in Richmond to work 2.5 days a week. Funding has also been received for a one year pilot to support development work with parents and carers around the ERSA.
- iv. Overall there have been fewer vacancies within the Emotional Health Service, with some locum staff having recently been converted to permanent positions. There are however still pockets of challenge in recruitment within some areas of the services.

c. Local Places

- i. Planning applications for both Strathmore School in Hampton and Clarendon School at Petersham are due to be submitted next month. Progress with Clarendon School has been delayed due to a family of badgers which must be evacuated from the site before work can begin.
- ii. The planning application for the London River Academy which was submitted in December 2022 has been validated. The next stage will be to attend the Planning Committee Meeting to outline the need for the school.

Areas of concern

- i. The planning application for the London River Academy is unlikely to be considered before May, which means that the earliest the school could open would be September 2025.
- ii. Within therapeutic services, recruitment remains an area of concern, given that there are currently vacancies across all services. However, initiatives have been recently launched to boost recruitment and retention. This has also placed strain on the current resources and capacity of staff, resulting in some gaps in provision.
- iii. There is a need for an agreement in relation to out of borough therapy provision arrangements across South West London, in addition to neighbouring boroughs.

5. Workstream 4: Early intervention and transitions

Impact and progress

- i. Workstream 4 meetings have been restructured, with each meeting now focused around a deep dive on a specific topic, based on items highlighted within the project progress tracker.
- ii. An Alternative Provision strategy has now been established, with a working group set up and four subgroups consisting of primary phase one, secondary phase two, post-16 and funding and commissioning. Currently any gaps in provision are being mapped, and work is being done to identify how other key stakeholders will need to be involved, such as youth services, the Integrated Care System and parents and carers. The next stage will be to map out tangible short and long term actions. Steps are also being taken to develop a SEND specific Alternative Provision pathway. Governance for Alternative (medical) Provision has also been established.
- iii. The Emotionally Related School Avoidance + team are now operationally established and systemic work is progressing.

- iv. Work is currently underway to obtain stakeholder views, including those of parents and carers, on the Inclusion Charter and Toolkit.

6. Workstream 5: Assessment and planning

Impact and progress

- i. A draft multi-agency meeting advice and guidance document has been created following on from the Secondary SENCO Collaborative meeting. This has now gone out to practitioners for feedback and review and will be subsequently updated.
- ii. We have seen improvements in our phase transfer process for young people moving from primary to secondary school in years 6 and 7. This is due to greater communication with schools and an increased offer of placements for young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
- iii. A working group has met and are in the process of creating a template and guidance which will help to standardise advice from professionals which can feed into an EHCP or annual review, this will work to drive quality and focus on SEND provision.
- iv. A universal quality assurance tool has been developed and is now being used across service providers, highlighting more consistent themes/issues to be addressed.

Areas of concern

- i. There continues to be challenges with the timeliness of annual reviews and meeting statutory deadlines. As a result of this senior leadership within AfC have written to all relevant headteachers/school leads to remind schools of their statutory duty.
- ii. Timeliness of advice as part of EHC needs assessment process continues to fluctuate, which then has the potential to impact on the timeliness of the issuance of EHCPs.
- iii. There have been challenges with recruitment and retention within certain teams including educational psychologists and social workers. This can have an impact on staff capacity within the system and contribute to delays in assessments and reporting. Work is being done to address these challenges, for example, a set of recruitment and retention incentives have been introduced for qualified social workers, including a market supplement and a welcome payment.

6. Workstream 6 (implementation of the [Written Statement of Action](#)):

Impact and progress

- i. Richmond Local Authority collaborated with the National Development Team for Inclusion to run the [Employment Forum](#), which has led to further development activity such as mapping out the sufficiency strategy to broaden the forum's reach.
- ii. A subgroup made up of practitioners and parents and carers have continued to meet to review what information is available and accessible through the Local Offer, including what information is readily available on transitioning from children's to adults health services.
- iii. Health pathways for young people aged 16-25 have now been mapped out and the links to these pathways are now on the [Local Offer website](#).
- iv. An easy-read newsletter has been created for parents, carers and young people in Richmond which details the progress that has been made in response to the Local Area's Written Statement of Action. This will soon be published.
- v. A business case on independent travel training for young people with SEND has been written and taken

to the Senior Leadership Team for approval.

- vi. The Secondary SENCO collaborative has continued to meet, focusing on areas such as available provision for young people with SEND, and the importance of holistic outcomes. The next stage will be to involve parents and carers with this work.

Areas of concern

- i. Continuing Healthcare has been experiencing challenges with recruitment and retention of staff, which can impact capacity and the Local Areas ability to comply with transition pathways.
- ii. There have been absences of some key staff members within workstream 6 which may influence the team's overall capacity to take forward some key activity and training.

7. Finance update

The Borough is currently projecting spend of £187.063m on Dedicated schools Grant funded education services in 2022/23 compared to a grant allocation of £184.925m (including recoupment). This represents a current projected overspend of £2.138m, including £0.1m for EHCPs that have not yet been approved but are expected to be approved before the end of the financial year. The funding is forecast to be spent as follows:

	Budget £m	Outturn £m	Variance £m	Future Demand £m	Variance incl Future Demand £m
2022/23 DSG Outturn					
Schools Block	134.505	134.505	0.000	0.000	0.000
Central School Services Block	0.818	0.778	(0.040)	0.000	(0.040)
Early Years Block	14.767	14.067	(0.701)	0.000	(0.701)
High Needs Block	34.835	37.613	2.778	0.100	2.878
Sub-Total	184.925	186.963	2.038	0.100	2.138
2021/22 Carry forward	(7.217)	0.000	7.217	0.000	7.217
Safety Valve Funding	4.000	0.000	(4.000)	0.000	(4.000)
Council Funding	1.200	0.000	(1.200)	0.000	(1.200)
Total	182.908	186.963	4.055	0.100	4.155

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