

# **Royal Borough of Kingston-Upon-Thames Remote Bespoke SEND Peer Challenge**

**26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021**

# The Peer Team

- Gail Tolley - Strategic Director, Children and Young People, Brent Council, Chair ADCS Educational Achievement Committee (Lead peer)
  - Cllr Carol Runciman- Executive Member for Health and Adult Social Care, City of York Council (Member peer)
  - Jackie Wright- SEND Consultant and former DfE advisor (SEND peer)
  - Sam Nowak-Head Teacher, Fryent Primary School (Education peer)
  - Karishma Parmar-Designated Clinical Officer for Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Sutton and Merton (Health peer)
  - Michael Hallick- Assistant Director, Business and Resources Children's Services, Wandsworth Council
  - Mark Smith-Head of Service, 0-25 SEND Project Lead, Bromley Council
  - Pete Ruse-Calderdale Parent Carer Forum
  - Angela Kawa-LGA Programme Manager (Review Manager)
  - Helen Galvin & Richard Holland (EHCP Reviewers)
-

# Remote Peer Challenge

- Context of DfE scrutiny and imminent Ofsted CQC Local Area revisit
  - Context of the pandemic and the effect on the council and partners
  - Not an inspection – invited in as “critical friends”
  - People interviewed provided a wide range of information and insight
  - Information is confidential and non-attributable
-

# The Challenge Process

- Scope confirmed
  - Document and data review
  - W/C 19<sup>th</sup> April review of 20 EHCPs
  - W/C 26<sup>th</sup> April 37 interviews and focus groups
  - We met people from: the Council, Achieving for Children, CCG, parents, carers, young people, schools and colleges
  - Feedback Presentation
  - Feedback Report (15-20 pages, the context of the pandemic will be included)
-

# The scope

**1. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements for its children's services, particularly its governance of SEND services, answering the questions:** Has the AfC delivery model contributed to the Council's ability to manage the high needs fund of the DSG and quality services for children and young people with EHC Plans? What improvements need to be made to the governance arrangements?

**2. The ability of the Council's SEND Futures Plan to deliver improvements to the quality of SEND provision within the allocated high needs fund of the DSG, answering the questions:** Is the scope and content of the SEND Futures Plan sufficient to deliver the Council's ambitions for SEND services and the Department for Education's requirement to achieve a balanced high needs fund within five years? What further actions could the Council take to improve its plan or delivery arrangements?

---

# The scope

**3. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements for improving its SEND services and their cost-effectiveness, answering the questions:** does the Council have effective mechanisms in place to ensure timely delivery of the SEND Futures Plan (including the deficit recovery plan) so that it can achieve the required improvements to the quality of services and a balanced position within the agreed timescales? What improvements could be made to these governance arrangements? Are there missed opportunities to save money, whilst maintaining a good quality response across the system?

**4. The council's assertion is that quality is improving. EHCPs are issued in a timely manner and benefit from effective input from all statutory agencies.** Is this assertion accurate and triangulated by the voices of children and families? Is there more the authority can do to improve its response for children with SEND who do not have an EHCP (SEND Support)? Finally, how effective is the LA's graduated level of response?

---

# SEND Remote Peer Challenge

## Presentation of findings

### **Feedback organised into:**

- Overview
  - Strengths
  - Areas for improvement
  - Recommendations
-

# Review of EHCPs

## **What we did:**

- 2 Reviewers
  - 2 days
  - Reviewed a cross section of 20 EHCPs dating from after the WSOA
  - Feedback to Achieving for Children on 27<sup>th</sup> April
  - EHCP Review Report submitted 27<sup>th</sup> April
-



# EHCP-Strengths

- In most cases, by taking an open approach there was a richness to the material gathered with a balance of views, aspirations and concerns.
  - In the parental section the majority of parents were able to express their views, aspirations and concerns clearly
  - It was positive to see that for the most part, language was used that was not overly complex or and did not include text lifted directly from reports
  - The plans and accompanying appendices showed that there is a clear system through the Single Point of Access Team (SPA) for families to be notified that Social Care input has been requested through the EHC assessment process.
  - SEN Provision was generally detailed and clear. The letter is carefully worded and meets all the legal and SEND Code of Practice requirements. It also directs families to the Local Offer.
  - Outcomes reviewed were generally clear and included indicators of success. Where a setting had a clear 'offer' or specialisation how they would work to the broader outcomes was clear
-

# EHCP-Areas for improvement

- About me: In two cases where English is not the main language spoken this section was not completed. We do not know what support was offered to the parents in this situation, to complete this important section.
  - Parents views: it was not possible to identify if all the recorded concerns had been addressed. None of the plans reviewed included the child/family having a Personal Budgets.
  - Short Breaks or direct payments were not recorded in any of the plans reviewed.
  - CAMHS: There is a mixed picture with some good practice and service. Some children waited a considerable time to access initial assessment and service.
  - Therapy services: health needs met through these services were recorded in the educational elements of the plan rather than under health headings.
  - There may be a lack of clarity in Social Care on how to respond to the referral and contributions to the EHC plan
  - It would be helpful to have the name and details of the officer completing the EHC plan and create ownership
-

# Overview

- Clear understanding of the challenge at a strategic level and that a whole systems approach is needed
  - Lead Members have a good grasp of the problems and challenges, are committed to making changes and take their accountability seriously
  - SEND Futures Plan is welcomed and understood at a strategic and senior level but its use throughout all relevant agencies could be strengthened.
  - Very good work with young people on engagement and participation.
  - PCF is committed and doing good work, and with more dedicated support the forum could have greater impact
  - Evidence of consultation with parents / carers but greater emphasis on co-production and engagement is needed
-

# Overview

- EHCPs improvement journey is evident in the EHCP Review report. The QA framework is well embedded; improvements are needed in quality of advice from social care and timeliness from therapies.
  - Annual reviews - improvements in tracking, monitoring and targeting; need to focus on earlier transition planning
  - Progress with DSCO role, however SEND ownership needs to be developed for all social care professionals
  - Managing demand - need to clearly articulate and reinforce the expectations at SEN Support. Appetite from parents for strong SEN support and mainstream schooling
  - The deficit reduction plan is a significant challenge. CCG, Schools Forum and schools need to be brought in more to meet the challenge. Shared understanding across all partners now needs to become shared responsibility
-

## 1. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements-Strengths

- Political buy-in from the administration. This is demonstrated by additional investment from the general fund and reserves and by further amounts being invested in this year's general fund to help mitigate expenditure.
  - There is good joint working between the Lead Member for Children and the Lead Member for Finance and Performance.
  - Chief Executive chairs SEND Partnership Board demonstrating that it is a key priority
  - S151 officer is Chair of SEND Delivery Panel which will have a finance focus. S151 officer has monthly 1:1 meetings with AfC Chief Operating officer.
  - AfC largely treated like a directorate re budget setting and monitoring
  - SEND Partnership has resulted in buy-in and brought AFC and the Council closer together too
  - Improved relationship between Council and the AfC was noted by many interviewees
  - Strong commitment to working together with parents, children and young people
-

## 1. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements-Areas for improvement

- Take the opportunity to streamline governance agendas and discussions to shift the focus to delivery and accountability
  - Schools Forum-better linking of Schools Forum with other existing arrangements is needed e.g. the SEND Delivery Group
  - Schools Forum-High Needs Block-sub-group to examine detail of all spend especially non-statutory to track savings plans; ensure value for money and impact
  - Schools and Schools Forum to develop further the culture of ownership and being open to specific challenge
  - Adult Social Care-oversight and linkages, they need to be brought in to the process earlier, they will be an important part of the delivery
  - Children and Adult's Social Care needs to be more integral to SEND governance issues, with an increased presence within SEND Futures Plan
-

## 2. The ability of the Council's SEND Futures Plan to deliver improvements to the quality of SEND provision within the allocated high needs fund of the DSG -Strengths

- The SEND Futures plan is a good plan
  - Good examples of quality and outcomes being improved as a result of the plan
  - The work that has started with the CCG is positive and welcomed, there are signs that the relationship developing further, e.g. 16 – 25 hub, therapy review, mental health
  - Clear focus on quality and joint working to improve outcomes for young people
  - The commitment in schools to SEN support is positive
  - Parent support for strengthening SEN support in mainstream schools, and for children and young people to attend local provision
-

## **2. The ability of the Council's SEND Futures Plan to deliver improvements to the quality of SEND provision within the allocated high needs fund of the DSG -Areas for improvement**

- More ownership is required from all partners, schools and CCG, with shared accountability at all levels
  - Communicate with all partners on the plan and progress, so that it permeates through the system (Golden thread). Adult Social Care need to be more involved in strategic implementation and review. This will build on good operational work already in place.
  - The financial challenge is very significant and interviewees had concerns about the savings and delivery within the timeframes; need to strengthen the message of expectation. There needs to be shared ownership of DSG deficit
  - Key priorities need to be captured in the workstreams more consistently. Greater evidence of impact is required
  - Annual stocktake-check in with parents and children, keep the document a live document not static; are the priorities aligned to those of parents?
  - There could be more clarity about the impact on other areas aside from the High Needs block. Some initiatives will generate savings for the CCG and/or Adult Social care e.g. 16 – 25 hub; we suggest tracking this with evidence of impact
-



### **3. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements for improving its SEND services and their cost-effectiveness -Strengths**

- Clear governance arrangements with high level buy-in; Chief Executive chairs SEND Partnership Board
  - Revamped SEND Delivery Group chaired by s151 officer with focus on funding
  - Workstreams link to the plan and where appropriate have specific savings identified e.g. local provision
  - All workstreams involve a range of partners; shared ownership developing
  - Some defined initiatives have now been started with a view to improving cost efficiencies.
  - Good work being done on early intervention in some areas such as early years and with youth services-is there an opportunity to do more?
  - The new special school development in collaboration with Richmond, and the 16-25 campus with associated supported accommodation, are positive developments.
  - Clear focus on quality throughout
-

### 3. The effectiveness of the Council's governance arrangements for improving its SEND services and their cost-effectiveness –Areas for improvement

- Post-pandemic, improve the pace of change and delivery; improve messaging about the need to focus on savings, as well as quality
  - Evidence of impact – need a more robust approach to gathering evidence including case studies and data
  - EHCP forecast are these robust? EHCP growth 30% when GLA projections for 0-25 population is only 3.5%
  - Preparation for adulthood- earlier transition reviews to ensure no over-provision (and reduced independence) at college particularly Year 11 transition to FE.
  - Improve co-production with parents and carers to improve transparency, communication and buy-in. Plan collaboratively to consider how to support young people and families to embrace preparation for adulthood as early in their life as possible, with a single point of contact.
  - Work with school headteachers and SENCOs to help ensure that there is consistency of the quality of SENCO impact, using good practice that is already happening in Kingston.
-

#### **4. The council's assertion is that quality is improving. EHCPs are issued in a timely manner and benefit from effective input from all statutory agencies—Strengths**

- EHCPs reviewed were generally clear and detailed, recording parents views and including detailed information about the child.
  - Parent surveys are a positive step, the response rate could be improved. Kingston Parent Consortium Survey Dec 2020- Quality of EHC Plans is good: 64% agree; 36% disagree. Support specified on my child's EHC Plan will help them make progress: 82% agree; 18% disagree
  - Plans are generally on time and within guidance (some impact on timeliness during the pandemic)
  - Quality assurance framework with deep dives very positive including contact with parent/carer and sometimes with the young person too
  - Improved timeliness from health overall but some issues with OT and CAMHS response times
  - SEN Buddies working with Social Care SEND Champions – good model but not well communicated
  - Therapy advice overall now reported to be of good quality.
-

#### **4. The council's assertion is that quality is improving. EHCPs are issued in a timely manner and benefit from effective input from all statutory agencies—Areas for improvements**

- Identify and share examples of good practice in relation to inclusive education and SEN support in mainstream schools
  - BAME communities-are they being reached and supported? There is a need to reach out to communities who may not seek support and raise awareness of the support available-more engagement with the community and voluntary sector organisations could help with this; ensure they are able to participate in needs assessments and annual reviews
  - Strengthen DSCO role to improve social care advice
  - Improve communication of the SEN Buddies working with Social Care SEND Champions; capture evidence of the impact they have.
  - Therapy advice: Work with health on OT and CAMHS response times
-

# Recommendations

1. Streamline governance agendas and discussions to shift the focus to delivery and accountability.
  2. Create a High Needs Sub-group of Schools Forum with TOR to examine the detail of the spend and track progress against projections delivering impact/value for money. Review top-up funding and implement a banding tool
  3. Improve communications on the SEND Futures plan across AFC, the Council and partners, creating shared ownership of the savings plans. Ensure there is constructive challenge.
  4. Co-production-work more effectively with parents for better outcomes and create a co-production agreement with the PCF. Consider using a 'you said, we did' framework for feeding back to parent carers.
  5. Improve parental confidence about in-borough provision. Consider creating a role for parent engagement from within available resources, collate case studies of positive experiences and develop a coherent support offer for parents and carers; consider what the voluntary sector can offer too.
-

# Recommendations

6. Develop consistently, highly effective, SEN support provision within all phases of mainstream schools, by identifying, sharing and embedding strong working practices of SENCOs and class teachers in relation to early intervention and QfT.
  7. Consider changes to ECHPs taking onboard the findings of the ECHP review
  8. Develop clearer transitional planning support for young people, along with stronger links with post-16 providers, colleges and adult social care.
  9. Reach out to BAME communities and those less likely to seek support, working with communities and the voluntary sector on this.
  10. Review demand projections on a regular basis, and link to projecting and monitoring spend. Monitoring spend and demand will also be key given the challenging savings and the timeframe they need to be delivered in. There needs to be a close watch on expenditure, by all concerned and at all levels, of the savings to be made.
-

# What next?

- There is now a chance to reflect on our feedback and recommendations
  - We will produce a draft Feedback Report for comment
  - The final version of the Feedback Report will be issued once it has been agreed and published
  - We encourage you to provide feedback to everyone who contributed to this Peer Challenge
-