

8 September 2022

## CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

### REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

#### SUNDERLAND LOCAL AREA WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION

## 1 Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To update members of the Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee on Sunderland Local Area Written Statement of Action (WSOA).

## 2 Background

- 2.1 Following a joint Inspection of the Sunderland Local Area SEND provision in June 2021 by Ofsted and the CQC, Sunderland Local Area were issued with a WSoA with two specific areas of focus:

*Priority 1: Joint commissioning, in a way that demonstrably and quickly improves provision and outcomes for children and young people, is not fully embedded. The information used to inform this process is not comprehensive, and coproduction with children, young people and families is inconsistent*

*Priority 2: The support for children and young people at times of transition across all services and age ranges is too variable in quality*

In order to address these two priorities a WSoA was produced, the content of which was agreed as fit for purpose by Ofsted and the CQC. Progress against the WSoA is monitored as part of the remit of the Strategic SEND Board and also by regular meetings with representatives from DfE and CQC, which are attended by key representatives from TfC and Health, plus our Parent Carer Forum Co-Chairs.

The WSoA can be accessed here:

[Sunderland Local Area Written Statement of Action for Special Educational Needs SEND December 2021.pdf \(togetherforchildren.org.uk\)](#)

## 3 Update on progress against Priority 1

- 3.1 (WSOA point 1.0) Improve integration of pathways, processes and governance between education, health and social care:

We have developed a new SEND Governance structure with multi-agency representation jointly chaired by between TfC and ICB with representatives from all key stakeholders. The group has met twice with the next meeting planned for September 14<sup>th</sup> 2022. Part of the remit of this group is to ensure adequate progress is made against the priority areas of the WSoA and the Board receives regular reports from sub-groups.

3.2 (WSOA point 1.1) Development of data in all areas to improve the sharing of data across health and TfC to allow more rigorous analysis to be undertaken to plan for services:

A revised Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is currently in the process of being finalised by the Performance team with a draft due to be shared with all stakeholders later this month (September 22).

The Life Start project is on track to achieve against agreed project plan objectives with a shared data platform due to be delivered in March 2023. This will enable data to be shared across education, social care and health in order to better inform key joint commissioning priorities. Although the project ends formally in March 2023 there is planned ongoing development work, including research with Sunderland University beyond this data.

3.3 (WSOA point 1.2) Improve Coproduction with CYP and their families:

Talking Mats: Two cohorts of professionals from health, education, early help, social care and commissioning have completed training in the use of digital and physical Talking Mats. This visual communication framework supports children with complex communication needs to express their views and feelings and will be used as a coproduction tool across services. These professionals are now using Talking Mats in their practice; initial feedback has highlighted that children with a range of special educational needs have responded well to the tool. Practitioners have requested additional Talking Mats resources for specific topics, such as bullying.

Healthy Parent Carer Programme: Commissioners are working closely with parent carers as part of the Breathing Space project. Four parent carers from the Sunderland Parent Carer Forum will begin train the trainer sessions in September 22 to enable them to deliver the University of Exeter's Healthy Parent Carer Programme to wider groups of parents and carers. The tailored, peer-led group programme can be delivered online or face-to-face and addresses the higher risk of poor mental and physical health for parent carers of children with SEND. It is designed to improve parent carers' health and wellbeing by promoting empowerment, confidence, and resilience.

Mind of My own: The SEND team are actively exploring Mind of My Own as a mechanism to capture views of CYP within Statutory processes. A meeting has been held with Jane Wheeler (Service Manager Early Help) to agree next steps and business processes have been shared. Initial proposal is to implement use of the tool for new statutory assessments and key PfA transition reviews (year 11 and 14).

3.4 (WSOA Action point 1.3) Implement a Dynamic Support Register and review Care, Education and Treatment Review processes and policies:

The Children's Dynamic Risk Register has now been established and is meeting on a monthly basis. ToR have been agreed. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact on individual CYP at this time.

3.5 (WSOA point 1.4) Review of therapy services.

This work is ongoing led by the Strategic Commissioning Manger and will report towards the end of this year. Timeline for any implementation of recommended changes is June 2023. This work is impacted by the recent changes in moving from Clinical Commissioning Group CCG to Integrated Care Board ICB.

3.6 (WSOA 1.5) Review of Community Equipment services

The joint commissioning task and finish group continues to review pathways and processes across community equipment services, including those which are independently commissioned by schools to ensure families have a clear pathway to access, update and maintain equipment within home and education. Commissioners have facilitated four mapping sessions to date. Therapy leads and other professionals from across health, education and social care have used case studies as worked examples of the strengths and challenges of current pathways. Several quick wins and longer-term priorities have been identified, including agreeing a revised MDT pathway and consolidating processes for the storage, maintenance and delivery of all equipment. A final mapping session is scheduled for Sept to draw together the key themes from the previous sessions. Following this, detailed actions will be agreed and progressed, including the development of a new service specifications and SLAs.

3.7 (WSOA point 1.6) Improve NHS Continuing Care processes and arrangements for the joint assessment, commissioning and procurement of services for children with complex needs:

A new process for commissioning children's continuing health care funding has been developed in conjunction with NEC. Training has been delivered to TfC Social Care staff and a session is planned later this month for SEND colleagues. At this stage it is too early to monitor the impact in terms of numbers and quality of referrals.

- 3.8 (WSOA point 1.7) Increase personalisation, including the uptake of personal budgets and integrated personal commissioning.

A draft report and action plan on development of Personal Budgets has been developed by commissioners. However, further input is required from Social Care and Education. A meeting is scheduled to share draft documents and agree next steps.

- 3.9 (WSOA 1.8) Agree an outcomes framework for joint commissioning

This action is ongoing. This work is ongoing led by the Strategic Commissioning Manger and will report towards the end of this year with a due date of December 2022. This work is also likely to be impacted by the recent changes in moving from Clinical Commissioning Group CCG to Integrated Care Board ICB.

- 3.10 (WSOA point 1.9) Access to appropriate short-breaks and leisure opportunities, with facilities that align closely with the interests of children and young people with SEND and meet the needs of families:

Breathing Space: Delivery of this DfE Respite Innovation Fund project has commenced. Breathing Space is a whole family model, designed to offer joined-up support and create positive opportunities for families with children who have a primary learning need of SEMH or ASD and are at risk of suspension or permanent exclusion from school in Years 6 -11. Short break sessions have ran throughout the summer holiday period. Weekend and after-school sessions will start from September. Positive Behaviour Support Planning will also commence in September, with the appointment of a PBS practitioner and a trainee.

Community Short Breaks: a review of community short breaks services is commencing alongside the review of personal budgets / direct payments processes. Commissioners are undertaking a benchmarking exercise and are liaising with regional colleagues to scope out potential commissioning models to address the sufficiency challenges in relation to the provision of individual, home-based and community short breaks support.

#### **4 Update on progress against Priority 2**

- 4.1 (WSOA 2.0) Improve the recognition and monitoring of SEND at an early stage within the pre-school cohort of children:

A health notification process for 0-5 children with SEND (or potential SEND) has been developed and shared with colleagues across health. Notifications are now being received and reviewed on a monthly basis by a multi-agency team including the Designated Clinical Officer (DCO), 0-19 Service Lead, Portage and Strategic Lead for SEND (TfC). The School Improvement Early Years Advisory team operate with a caseload of Early Year settings and monitor

the identified children within their settings to ensure needs are being met, appropriate funding is secured and transition takes place. Where children are not yet in an Early Years setting monitoring will fall to the most appropriate service involved (generally either 0-19 Health Visitor or Portage). Since implementation the process has identified a number of children who were not accessing relevant support, which has been addressed. In exceptional cases, where the level of need is significant, Statutory Assessment and / or an Assessment Placement in a Specialist setting has been agreed through this process, leading to earlier intervention. The process is well embedded within the 0-19 service but analysis of referrals indicates there is further work to do within some health teams. This is being picked up via the DCO.

- 4.2 (WSOA point 2.1) Deployment of the Early Years' Inclusion Fund (EYIF) so settings can ensure children get timely access to the support they need to make a successful transition into statutory education.

The Early Years Inclusion Fund (EYIF) process has been refreshed and a new process has been shared with all Early Years' settings for full implementation from this September. The new process includes structured opportunities to review the impact of the funding at the level of the individual child, with input and support from settings via the Early Years School Improvement Advisory Service.

An investment of up to £30,000 has been agreed from the EYIF to provide up to 6 part time nursery places at the recently established Communication Hub, which provides a 12 week programme of intensive support for children with SLC difficulties. These places will be focused on children due to transition into reception in Sept 2023 in order to provide a strong transition and boost progress before statutory education.

- 4.3 (WSOA point 2.2 Increased awareness and support of the School Health Nursing Offer so that the needs of children and young people are accurately identified at the earliest opportunity.

Deep dives of Health Visitor and School Nurse involvement by 0-19 service have taken place and are being used to plan allocation of services to schools.

The service completed a survey monkey to Early Years settings to highlight areas of concern as identified by nursery staff. This supported one to one interventions and delivery of health promotion sessions within some settings, which will in turn support transition sessions taking place between June - Sept 22.

A presentation was delivered at the Primary Head Teachers' meeting and to SENCO's to share the information about the Healthy Child Program and the findings of the deep dives. The offer has been circulated to all settings and all

Head Teachers have received a letter from the 0-19 service management team, sharing the name of their link Health Visitor and Early Years Practitioner and all school settings have also had the information regarding the link Specialist Public Health Practitioner and their link Junior Public Health Practitioner as well as the single point of contact number for the service.

- 4.4 (WSOA point 2.3 Upskill Early Years' workforce with a greater knowledge and understanding of SEND issues within Sunderland.

Thirty two PVI (Private, Voluntary and Independent) SENDcos underwent L3 SENDco training during the academic year 21/22. There are further plans to roll out the qualification to the remainder of settings this coming academic year 2022/23 in line with a revised CPD offer for the Early Years sector. There is a comprehensive offer of CPD planned for Early Years' providers for the academic year 2022/3. This is being circulated now for the new academic year and will be updated according to demand throughout the year.

- 4.5 (WSOA point 2.4) Phased transfer reviews will be completed in a timely manner There is a target in place to achieve at least 65% completion of statutory reviews by the statutory deadlines. These are February 15<sup>th</sup> 2023 (for year groups -1, 2 and 6) and March 31<sup>st</sup> (years 11 and 14). It is too earlier to report progress at this stage as the process begins in earnest from Sept 22, however, the SEND Team is now well supported by reports following the transition of Reviews to Capita One system. This will be a key business priority for the Statutory SEND team and progress will be monitored weekly throughout the Autumn term and Spring term. The challenge will lie in balancing the workload of the SEND Caseworker and Business Support teams against the significant increase in new statutory assessment requests.

- 4.6 (WSOA point 2.5) There will be a clear and consistent approach from schools and education settings to meeting children's individual needs at each stage of transition throughout school, and especially between Primary to Secondary and Secondary to Post 16

A suite of transition training sessions was designed and delivered in conjunction with NASEN (Whole School SEND). These were delivered between January and March 2022 and focused on each of the key age phases from nursery to Post 16. These included input from specialist teams, Social Care and health colleagues. Feedback and learning from the sessions was developed into a set of documents which will form a toolkit for schools. These will be shared will be shared with schools in the Autumn term.

- 4.7 (WSOA point 2.6) Access to clear and accessible information available to children, young people and parents at each stage of transition so they can make informed choices.

Funding has been secured for a Strategic Transition Lead who will lead on developing strong multi-agency pathways for young people transitioning between Children's and Adults services. A job description has been developed for this key role. Recruitment to the post will be progressed by the Head of Integrated Children's commissioning and the post will sit within the Commissioning team but the role will work in a cross-agency manner.

A parent and young person portal has been established to capture family and young person views as part of the EHCP referral process. We are currently exploring alternative ways of gathering child and young person voice, including Mind of my Own. These options are being explored using feedback from the STARS group.

A business case has been developed by Commissioning to explore actions required to refresh Local Offer and Family Information Service (Sunderland Information Point). This will include the resource to recruit staffing to manage the site.

- 4.8 (WSOA point 2.7) Access to a wide range of suitable opportunities for post-16 study including study programmes, supported internships, traineeships, and apprenticeships so pathways can be tailored to individual needs and aspirations

During the academic year 21/22 a new Supported Internship programme was launched in Sunderland by Health Education England (HEE), Project Choice. This was successful and year 2 of the programme has recruited healthy numbers.

A task and finish group is currently undertaking a mapping exercise for all post 16 provision within the local area with a view to sharing information effectively for young people, families and pre-16 providers to support transition choices and planning. This group will also identified how gaps in provision can be addressed if applicable.

The SEND team are working closely with Career and NEET team to strengthen joint working as part of statutory EHCP reviews and quality of advice feeding into EHCPs. A development and training session with Careers and NEET team in planned in September.

- 4.9 (WSOA point 2.8) Timely and clear transition plan to be developed for all with children, young people with SEND, alongside their parents, as they progress from children's to adults' services in social care and health.

Recruitment to Transition Coordinator role is being taken forward by Commissioning. This post will review transition arrangements between Children's and Adult's services and Health teams and ensure there are clearly understood pathways between services.

The Transition Management Group has been strengthened through participation Health (DCO) and SEND Team Manager. There is a multi-agency strategic working group in place which has recently developed, in co-production with PCF, a survey to explore families' experience of transition. This will be used to develop pathways and processes.

A joint adults and children's commissioning group also meets on a regular basis to plan services for specific young people with complex needs prior to transition. This group has a particular focus on helping to provide a seamless pathway towards appropriate supported living for young people who have lived in out of authority residential settings.

## **5 Recommendation**

The Children, Education and Skills Scrutiny Committee are invited to note the contents of this report.